BIG Review publishes portfolios of artist collections related to the world of borders—whether political, material, cultural, or conceptual borders. Portfolios are chosen by the Chief Editor and featured on the cover of each issue, and, like all BIG Review publications, available for free in open-access Creative Commons licensing, unless otherwise specified.
IAN HOWARD is an artist and Emeritus Professor at UNSW Sydney, Faculty of Arts, Design and Architecture. Previously he was Dean of the College of Fine Arts (COFA) UNSW, and Provost and Director of the Queensland College of Art, Griffith University. He trained in Sydney, London, and Montreal. His artwork progresses a cultural relationship between civilians and military institutions, concentrating on territory and border issues—walls, barriers, and containment, including enforcing vehicles—aircraft, tanks and ships. He works and exhibits internationally. Realism in the classical sense encompasses a practical understanding of life, accuracy of simulation, and theories that things exist objectively, and that statements have truth values. Howard’s artwork has been described as experimental realism using a direct-media technique. He argues that the interdependent relationship the subject has with the artwork image means each work contains an integrity of realism. This one-to-one relationship includes representation at size/scale, undertaken on location, and within the actual time and operational performance of that subject matter. Exhibited in public settings, this realism is arguably self-communicating and inherently, or at least latently, expressive. It therefore provides for the viewer of the works a pathway of image and context from which to assemble an informed morality based response.

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A BORDER THROUGH TIME—the Great Wall(s) of China, from the fifth century B.C.E. were built to separate warring states, to consolidate dynasties, and for defence against nomadic groups of the Mongolian and Eurasian steppes. As well, they facilitated expansionary thrusts, with forts, annexing ambiguous territories and solidifying territorial gains. The walls provided transportation corridors for goods and migration border controls along what became known as the Silk Road. However, built by millions, often in forced labour, the renowned writer Lu Xun (1881-1936) noted, “Mighty and accursed Great Wall, in reality, it has never served any purpose than to make countless workers labour to death in vain”. Sun Yat-sen and the early Republic embraced the Wall as a national symbol because it contained and preserved the Chinese race as well as symbolised a collective resolve. Mao and the People’s Republic amplified the positive symbolism of the Wall, undertaking repairs to the Badaling section in 1952. Later, Cultural Revolutionaries destroyed many other parts with dynamite and excavators. Locals over the centuries plundered the Walls for building materials. In 1980 Deng Xiaoping said, “Love our China and restore our Great Wall”. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987, it is now a foremost national symbol, the most popular tourist destination and an occasional catwalk for high fashion models.

HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/USER80342967/GREATWALLOFCNIA


https://vimeo.com/user80342967/berlinwall


https://vimeo.com/user80342967/israelibarr

BORDERS OF TERRITORIAL CLAIM—Five small islands and three rocky outcrops, totalling 7 sq km of uninhabited land in the East China Sea, NE of Taiwan and SW of Okinawa, are claimed by China, Taiwan and Japan, named respectively the Diaoyu, Tiaoyutai and Senkaku Islands. China's claim to territorial rights dates back to 1534 and is linked to a similar argument for Taiwan. Although at the end of World War II Japan was forced to abandon many of its various territories including Taiwan, the 1951 Treaty of San Francisco assigned the Senkaku Islands to the US which returned them to Japan in 1971. During the early 20th century, there was a Japanese fisheries factory on one of the islands and others passed into private ownership. The Japanese government moved to buy them back in 2012. This, along with the island's extensive fishing and potential underwater oil and gas reserves meant political claims and counter claims escalated. Chinese, Taiwanese, and Japanese activists have tried to reach the islands with each being intercepted by the Japanese Coast Guard. Hostile and deadly actions have ensued. In all three countries demonstrations have occurred in support of claims and protesting counter claims. Geopolitically, the islands are close to strategic shipping lanes and in 2013 were encompassed within China's new Air Defence Identification Zone. The expanded zone is not recognised by the US and many regional nations. 

https://vimeo.com/user80342967/diaoyusenkaku islands

BORDERS AGAINST DISORDER AND FEAR—The 2013 Australian election featured a "Stop the Boats" campaign by the conservative opposition which arguably swept them into power. The new government instigated operation sovereign borders led by the defence force, airforce, navy, and army were involved in surveillance, interdiction and turn-backs of asylum seeker boats. Little information was available to the public as it was argued revealing "on water matters" would assist people smugglers. Concurrently, a regional deterrence framework included an unsuccessful scheme to buy asylum seeker boats prior to embarkation. A 90% reduction in asylum seeker arrivals was claimed within OSB's first year. Turn-backs occurred including some where an unseaworthy boat was replaced by a navy delivered orange sea survival capsule. During 2014 legal challenges were brought against refoulement. Subsequently, legislation was enacted prioritising border policy above U.N. convention rights of refugees. Asylum seekers from vessels that were not turned back were taken to Nauru and Manus Island offshore regional processing centres. Many diverse refugee supporting groups and community organisations, legal experts and concerned citizens protested the politicisation of asylum seekers arriving by boat as a group to be feared, that at best were economic migrants and at worst, would-be terrorists. 

https://vimeo.com/user80342967/australiasborder