

“An Idea of a Boundary”

SAN FRANCISCO ARTS COMMISSION GALLERY

401 Van Ness Ave.

September 22–January 20

The title of this group exhibition derives from a passage in Ursula K. Le Guin’s science-fiction novel *The Dispossessed* (1974) describing a low, unassuming wall that acts as an absolute border between two planets. The ten artists featured here contend with boundaries that delineate both physical and psychological divisions. Several of the modest photographs in Park McArthur’s *Leads*, 2016, document thresholds at Chisenhale Gallery in London with door saddles that may look innocuous to some, but may be obstacles for people who use wheelchairs. Gina Osterloh’s film *Press and Outline*, 2014, also engages with the fraught relationship between the body and its surroundings, as the artist slowly traces the periphery of her own shadow on the wall, blurring the line between the tangible self and its fleeting companion.



View of “An Idea of a Boundary,” 2017.

The urban landscape and its frequent associate—gentrification—factor into several works in the exhibition, including Hannah Ireland’s *Carry On/Fall Out/Find Your Place Here*, 2017. Seven mesh knapsacks filled with eroding bricks collected from the shore of a San Francisco neighborhood in the process of upheaval are arranged in a line, speaking to the exposed weight of displacement. Two potent works by Davina Semo confront the viewer with archetypal exclusionary barriers. One of them, a stark gray mirror protected by a forbidding steel grate, borrows its title, *SHE SAID THAT THE OUTLINES OF THINGS AND PEOPLE WERE DELICATE, THAT THEY BROKE*, 2017, from Elena Ferrante’s novel *The Story of the Lost Child* (2014). Both the work and its title allude to the idea that solid boundaries can easily dissolve, and that spatial distinctions are often more complicated than they seem.

— Jeanne Gerrity