



(UN)GOVERNED SPACES - An exhibition by Gregory Thielker and Noah Coburn

written by Allegra
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October 28 - December 2, 2014
Opening October 28, 2014

Usdan Gallery at Bennington College
One College Drive, Bennington, Vermont
gregorythielker.tumblr.com



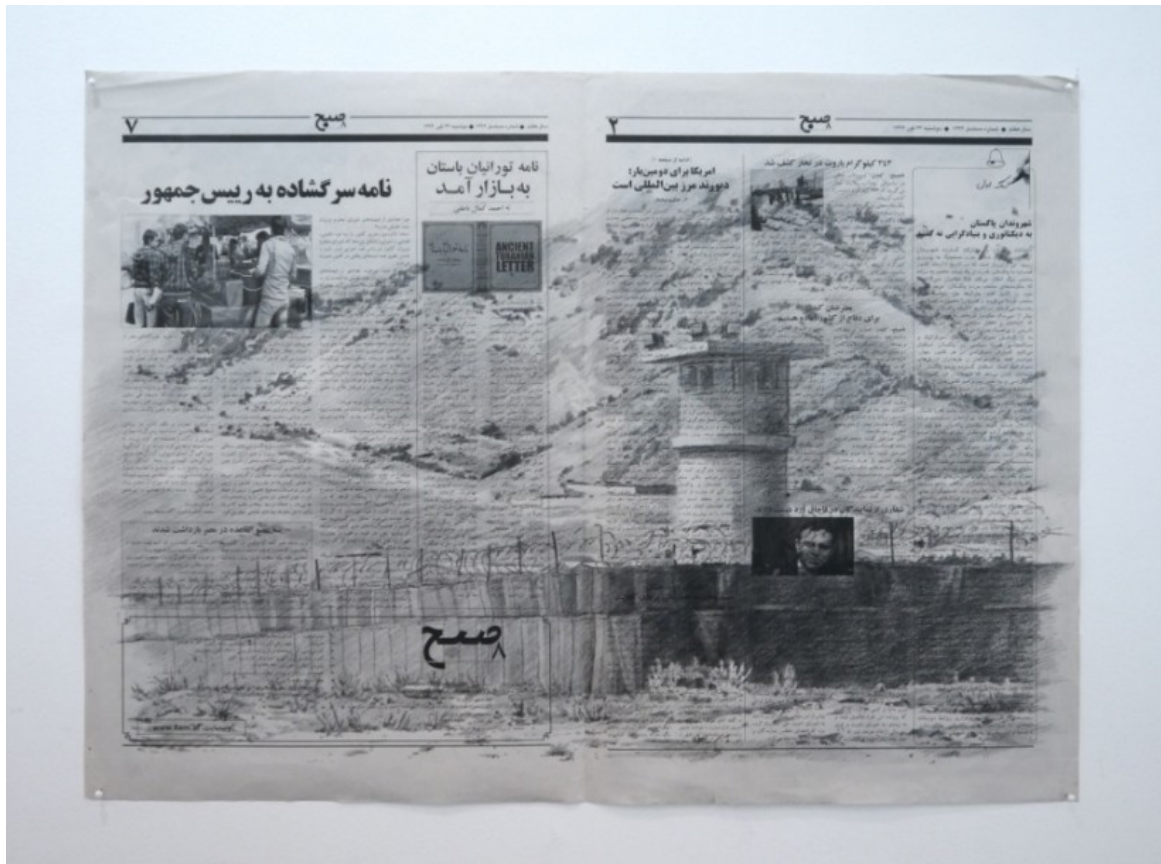
For this exhibition, artist Gregory Thielker collaborated with anthropologist, Noah Coburn, to create a complex portrait of Afghanistan today. Featuring a thirty-five foot long panoramic painting of Shomali Plain north of Kabul as well as smaller paintings, photographs, text, and video, the exhibit takes stock of the present political and social upheaval in Afghanistan as well as looks back to the history of conflict and forward to the legacy of US intervention. (Un)governed Spaces focuses on the region surrounding the US military base at Bagram, where the collaborators conducted on-site research for the last three years. Here, a rich history of military occupation from Alexander the Great to Soviet Occupation to Taliban and finally, current US military has created a crossroads of past and present. In the panorama installation, dramatic mountains and lush fields contrast with barbed wire and concrete of the base, creating a representation of the fractured political and social lives that people lead around the base.





Fig 270 - No 121 2013 oil on canvas 30 x 40 inches

The exhibition will also function as a discussion space for talks and special events related to reflect on the future of Afghanistan and US foreign policy. Considering the complicated political issues, the exhibition draws in the voices of Afghan experts, local residents, and Bennington College students, as well as exhibit visitors. While the interests of anthropology and art do not always align, this project grows out of a rich and occasionally conflicted dialog about place and shifting historical narratives. Over the course of the last three years, Mr. Thielker and Dr. Coburn lived, researched, and toured the region with no military oversight. This exhibition is the result of intimate conversations with people living near the base, interviews with soldiers returning from tours in Afghanistan, on-site sketches of the bazar and local houses, and historical and ethnographic research both in Afghanistan and the United States.



Event Drawing- Charikar military base 2013 black pencil on found Afghan newspaper 17 x 24 inches

Through the exhibition, the sense of the past is tangible and yet also hidden from view. A burntout government office, the walls of the Bagram airbase, and a Hellenic vase discovered nearby each tell different stories about the region. The fractured, yet intact surfaces reveal the damage and resilience caused by ceaseless warfare. The paintings, video, and photographs are paired with narrative descriptions of the region's history, ethnographic accounts, and interview selections. The result is viewing experience that aims to show the complexity of representing Afghanistan today and how the past seems to echo the current instability in the region. (Un)governed Spaces is a powerful contrast to the predictable narratives of Afghanistan because it combines anthropology and art to create a layered and open-ended presentation of life amid conflict.



Gregory Thielker lives and works in New Jersey, as well as abroad. His previous work includes a Fulbright grant to research the Grand Trunk Road in India as well as site projects in El Salvador and Norway. Recent solo exhibitions include “(Un)governed Spaces” at Republic Gallery, Paris, and “Highway” at Flashpoint Gallery, Washington, DC. His work has been reviewed in The Independent, La Repubblica, and The Washington Post. He is an Assistant Professor of Art at The College of New Jersey. Noah Coburn is a Professor of Anthropology at Bennington College, in Vermont, with many years research experience in Afghanistan. He is the author of “Derailing Democracy in Afghanistan” (Columbia University Press, 2014) and “Bazar Politics: Power and Pottery in an Afghan Market Town” (Stanford University Press, 2011).



Breakfast