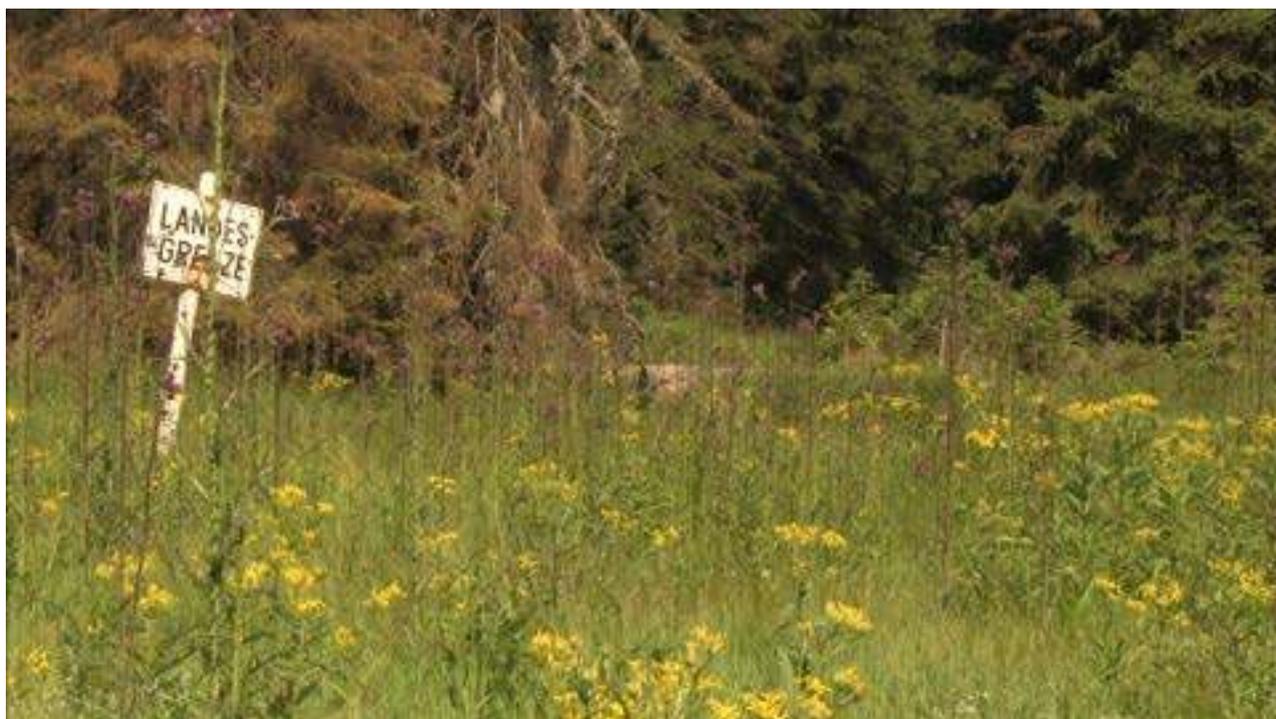


THIRD/TERCERO

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Milena Bonilla

January 13 – 21 March 21, 2015



Milena Bonilla, *An Enchanted Forest* (video still), 2013

A few years after the dismantling of the Iron Curtain in Europe, naturalists have found that a very rich ecosystem had come to life in the zone previously occupied by the border between East and West- a situation enhanced by the long-time fencing of the land.

The Iron Curtain covered around 6 800 kilometers of emptied fields, in which wildlife started to burst due to the absence of agriculture and industry in this area. Species of birds, moths, flowers and insects that had been thought almost extinguished, started a new life during the Cold War years.

Among several cases followed by environmentalists, one has been especially emblematic. In 2002 a group of scientists started to track the routes of the red deers that live in the area of the former Curtain between Germany and Czech Republic. Later they discovered that the deers' daily routine is still limited by the ghostly

presence of the Curtain. On each side of the former border, groups of deer come and go as if the fence still existed, even though it is no longer physically present since 1989. This phenomenon is explained by the biologist Marco Heurich, head of the tracking project in Germany, as being the consequence of the transmission of information from mother to female cubs.

THIRD/TERCERO, Milena Bonilla's second solo exhibition at **mor charpentier**, maps some of the trajectories of the deers, and ponders on notions related to the imposition of limits and the reshaping of land, life and society by structures of power. The title of the exhibition highlights the area that covers the former Bohemian Forest and which has been divided between the Bavarian Natural Park and Šumava Natural Park, as being a "third space", or a space of otherness according to American geopolitical theorist Edward Soja, as well as a "third landscape", i.e. a "space left over by man to landscape evolution - to nature

alone" (Gilles Clément, French landscaper). It is also important to keep in mind that the term "third world" was coined as a consequence of the Cold War.

An Enchanted Forest (2013-14) is an installation that brings together a video and related works, among which a map made of threads that shows the deers' route. Presented on the ground floor, the starting point of this project consists of two books mentioning the existence of an enchanted forest in the area corresponding to the current border between Germany and Czech Republic. The first book analyzes the behavior and itineraries of the red deers in relation to the border, and the second book narrates the story of an anarchist group called Ahornia whose members used to gather in the same area.

In the basement, a series of photographs, still part of **An Enchanted Forest**, reconstitutes the local landscape along the former Iron Curtain, echoing the installation **THIRD (2015)**, that consists of a thread ball on a table. The length of the ball is equivalent to the length of the Iron Curtain- 6 800 Km, at scale 1:100.

The artist followed the route of the former Curtain border by bike and by foot, documenting the landscape and investigating about the links between politics and environment. While making the video, she was reading Walter Benjamin's essay *Illuminations*, where the German theorist reflects on Franz Kafka's animal stories. The photograph **Untitled (2015)** shows the artist

reading in the forest alongside a page she tore apart from the book, underlining the sentence "these are not people" which evokes Giorgio Agamben's reading of the concept of inhuman. The idea of inhumanity is indeed fundamental to define what is literally a no man's land between the two lines of barbed wire that used to mark physically some parts of the Iron Curtain. The few meters left between the two lines are understood by the artist as a space of anarchy – a world freed from social order that belongs to nature.

Anarchy is an Inhuman Thing (2015) is precisely the title of the series of four drawings commenting on **An Enchanted Forest**. The drawings are attempts to map biological facts, allowing the observation of natural orders and chaos. Two of them illustrate a reduced version of a classic diagram representing how the vision works in the human brain, and one of them shows the route followed by the eyes when we look at a flat surface, but the artist took the lines beyond this surface. The fourth drawing traces the route a bark beetle takes while eating a tree from the inside, as if this destructive animal was disrupting the order formerly described in the other drawings. This phenomenon casts a new light to the caption of the video "we are a plague", a sentence attributed to the anarchist group Ahornia. The scientific and historical facts at the heart of the exhibition are partly real, partly invented by the artist. This playful ambiguity contributes to **Milena Bonilla's** reflection on the material and immaterial impacts of our history on nature.