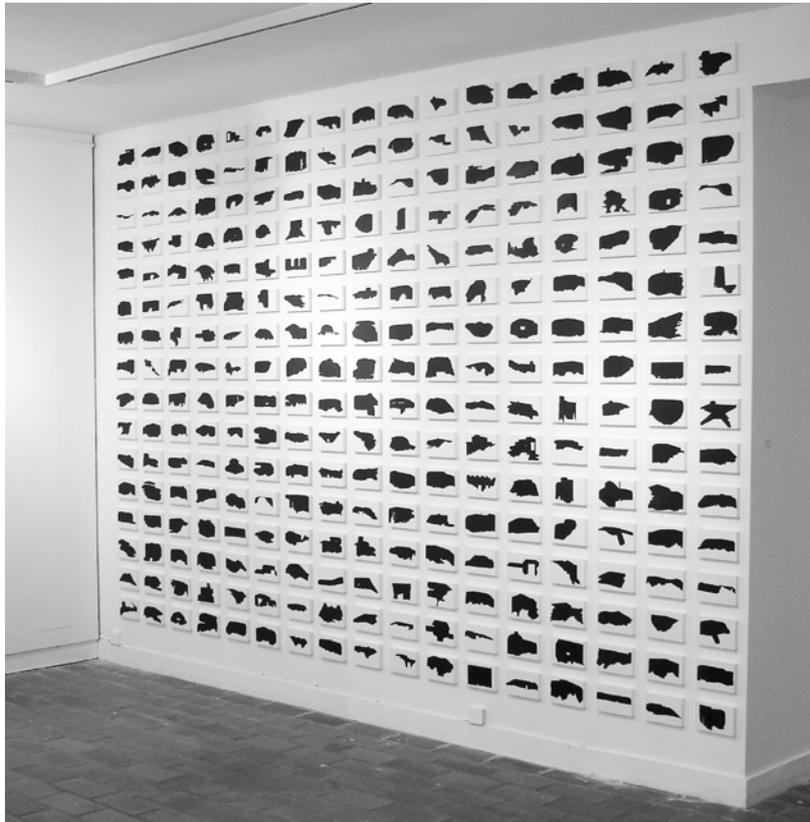


THE ATLANTIC WALL

Frederic Fourdinier



The Atlantic Wall

«The Atlantic Wall» is a series of works created between 2003 and 2006, focusing on the Atlantic Wall. This massive infrastructure, erected by the Nazi army during World War II, stretched from Narvik, Norway, to Hendaye, France. Designed as an impenetrable line of defense, this «wall» was composed of thousands of concrete bunkers scattered along the Atlantic coastline. Though it was intended to prevent an Allied landing, it ultimately failed to serve this purpose during the famous D-Day landings in 1944. Today, these structures, abandoned and sometimes swallowed by the landscape, continue to evoke both fascination and inquiry.

This work offers a reflection on human constructions and their ability to delineate, protect, or control a territory. It also invites viewers to question the aesthetic and emotional impact of these imposing forms, especially when isolated from their historical and geographical contexts. What remains of architecture designed for war when the conflict fades, leaving only a raw imprint on the land? Do these geometric forms, these volumes of concrete, still evoke their original function, or do they become almost abstract relics, inspiring contemporary reinterpretation?

The subject resonates with a deeply personal and intimate history that intertwines with collective memory. Born into a family marked by military influences, I grew up with stories and memories tied to these themes. My great-grandfather was a commander in the French army, and my grandfather, a member of the Resistance, carried the scars of a troubled era. Later, my grandfather made a singular decision: he acquired several bunkers and built his house against them near Boulogne-sur-Mer. These silent witnesses of history became a familiar backdrop, an integral part of my daily environment.

Over time, these structures nurtured a broader reflection on the concept of territory. What is a territory, if not a boundary erected, defended, but often reinterpreted or erased by the passage of time? These bunkers, once symbols of control and protection, are now integrated into the landscape or left abandoned, becoming architectural curiosities or supports for the imagination.



This immersion in places steeped in history also led me to reflect on the impact of human activity on the landscape. These structures, designed to endure, exist within a temporality far beyond that of the men who built them. They engage in a dialogue with nature, sometimes swallowed by dunes or eroded by tides, bearing witness to the constant tension between permanence and transience, between human intent and natural forces.

Thus, «**The Atlantic Wall**» is situated at the crossroads of aesthetic exploration and introspection, where personal memory meets history, and the analysis of form is accompanied by a meditation on the traces we leave—intentionally or not—on our environment.



DIE ATLANTIKWALL

2003

«Die Atlantikwall» is an installation consisting of five reconstructed military crates, each containing a scaled-down concrete casting of the internal spaces of bunkers. These crates, originally designed for the transport of sensitive ammunition, are marked with unique serial numbers. They serve as the starting point for a formal and symbolic exploration, where military history intertwines with broader questions about memory, architecture, and the representation of space.

Military crates, known for their robustness and utilitarian function, have been transformed into vessels of history and memory. Each casting represents a living space taken from a World War II bunker, reproduced



in scaled-down concrete. These living spaces, once designed to shelter soldiers under extreme conditions, are here captured in their raw form. The choice of concrete as the material follows a mimetic logic, with the gray color characteristic of bunker construction retained to maintain coherence with the original material.

However, the application of the gray color is inverted from its original function: it does not hide imperfections or flaws but highlights them, making visible the impermanence of these structures and their tension with time. This idea of inversion becomes a key to understanding the work: what was meant to be concealed is revealed, and what was designed to be utilitarian is transformed into a sculpture that interrogates the legacy of military architecture.

The presentation of the work emphasizes not only the components of the sculpture but also their relationship to the history of modernist sculpture. The arrangement of the different crates, with their castings and dissociated elements, recalls certain artistic practices of the 20th century that sought to deconstruct traditional forms and valorize raw materials. By exposing these elements, the work evokes how military structures, often conceived as instruments of domination or protection, can also be reappropriated, transformed, and interpreted from an artistic perspective.

Through «**Die Atlantikwall**» the work raises a reflection on how objects, materials, and structures can convey both a violent history and an aesthetic dimension. This project goes beyond merely reproducing forms; it imbues them with meaning and resonance, inviting a dialogue between past and present, between military architecture and contemporary art.



R 51 a

Tobrouk

R 688

S 449

STP 259



«Die Atlantikwall», concrete, wooden crates / Grandson of an Atlantic Wall bunker owner, Frédéric Fourdinier is fascinated by the architectural features of these buildings - celebrated in «**Bunker Archeology**» - which are literally integral parts of a device of life and death, as well as «machines of vision» and now anachronistic marks of the coastal landscape. Continuing the reflection on these plastic objects having lost all initial use, he wonders about the interior space of these robust constructions, and leads to the conclusion of materializing the hollow space ... in the material itself of the bunker! It thus reveals what is hidden: an organization with subdivision governed by the requirements of protection and the imperative to see without being seen. Cast in monoblocks and reduced, the resulting sculptures are presented (protected) in transport cases directly inspired by those used at the time for ammunition.]

Raymond Balau

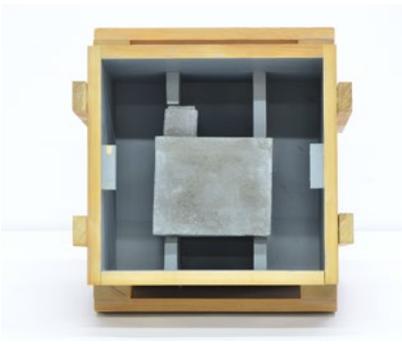
Raymond Balau : architect, urban planner, art and architecture critic, formerly Professor responsible for the Urban Space option at ENSAV La Cambre Brussels

S 449

box

38,5 x 60 x 30 cm





R 51 a
box
32 x 35 x 30 cm



Tobrouk
box
30 x 38 x 30 cm



R 688
box
38 x 39 x 30 cm



STP 259
box
41 x 61 x 30 cm



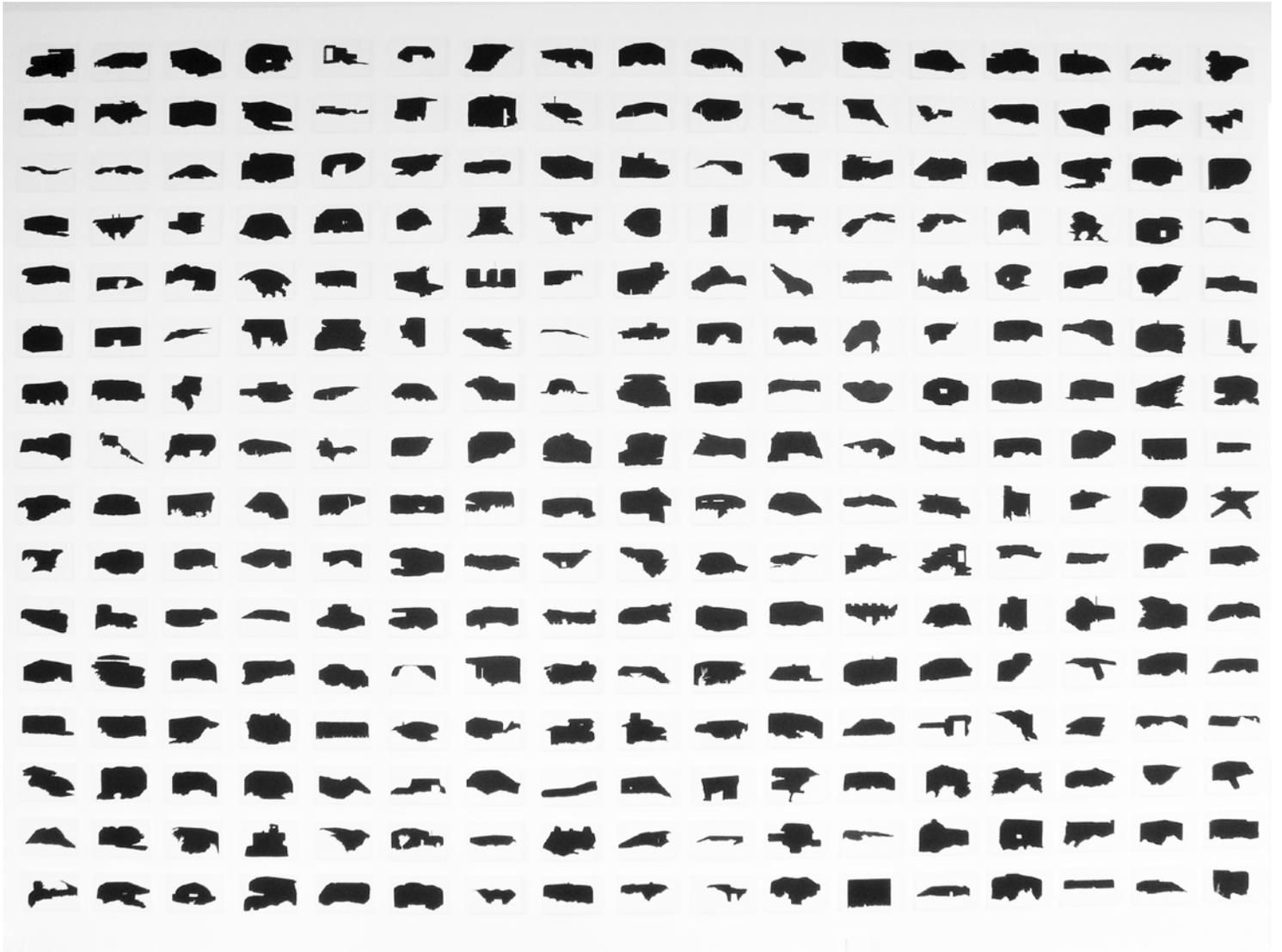
[NARVIK - HENDAYE]

[Narvik - Hendaye] is a series of gouaches mounted on wood, created from photographs of World War II bunkers collected from the internet. This work delves into a formal and conceptual exploration where the rigidity of architectural structures is juxtaposed with the fluidity and impermanence of natural elements.

Through this series, a clear intention emerges: to present austere, almost aerostatic architectural forms in a frontal manner, detaching them entirely from their surrounding natural elements. Bunkers, traditionally seen as imposing and functional constructions, are here isolated from their historical and geographical context, reduced to simple geometric shapes. Military architecture, with all its rigor, transforms into a visual abstraction—a mass of concrete whose materiality merges with the iconography of the drawing.

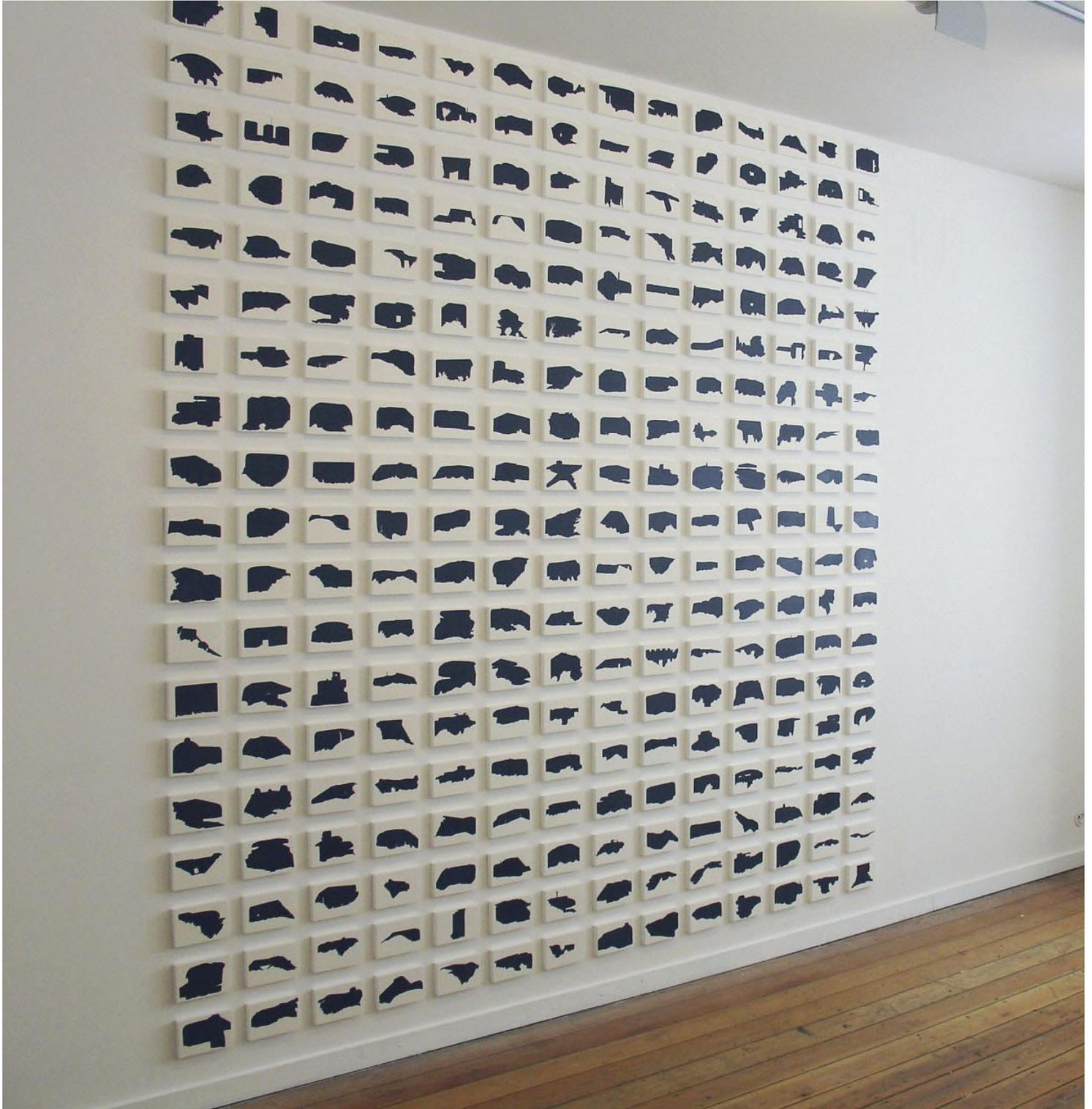
The contrast between these concrete forms and the surrounding nature is heightened by the fact that nature, in this context, retreats from the drawing. It remains wild and undefined, while the bunkers are meticulously rendered in their precise geometric rigor. This staging emphasizes a visual ambiguity: references to “abstract” architecture seem to blend with elements of nature, suggesting a hybridization where human and natural elements intersect but never fully align.

The organization of the gouaches, by their arrangement and dimensions, seems subject to a random logic, adapted to each space. However, an underlying order emerges from this apparent spontaneity: a



rigorous alignment, specific to the military spirit, which recalls the geometric precision of the bunkers. Each element is placed in such a way as to respect a certain discipline, subject both to a principle of randomness and to a controlled intention, a bit like the bunkers themselves, scattered along the coasts but in a rigid military layout.

Through **[Narvik - Hendaye]**, the work questions the way in which military architecture, far from being only utilitarian or violent, can be transformed into an aesthetic and graphic symbol. It also raises questions about the integration of these constructions in the landscape, their capacity to be perceived as objects of contemplation, despite their initial function of defense and control.



[Narvik - Hendaye]

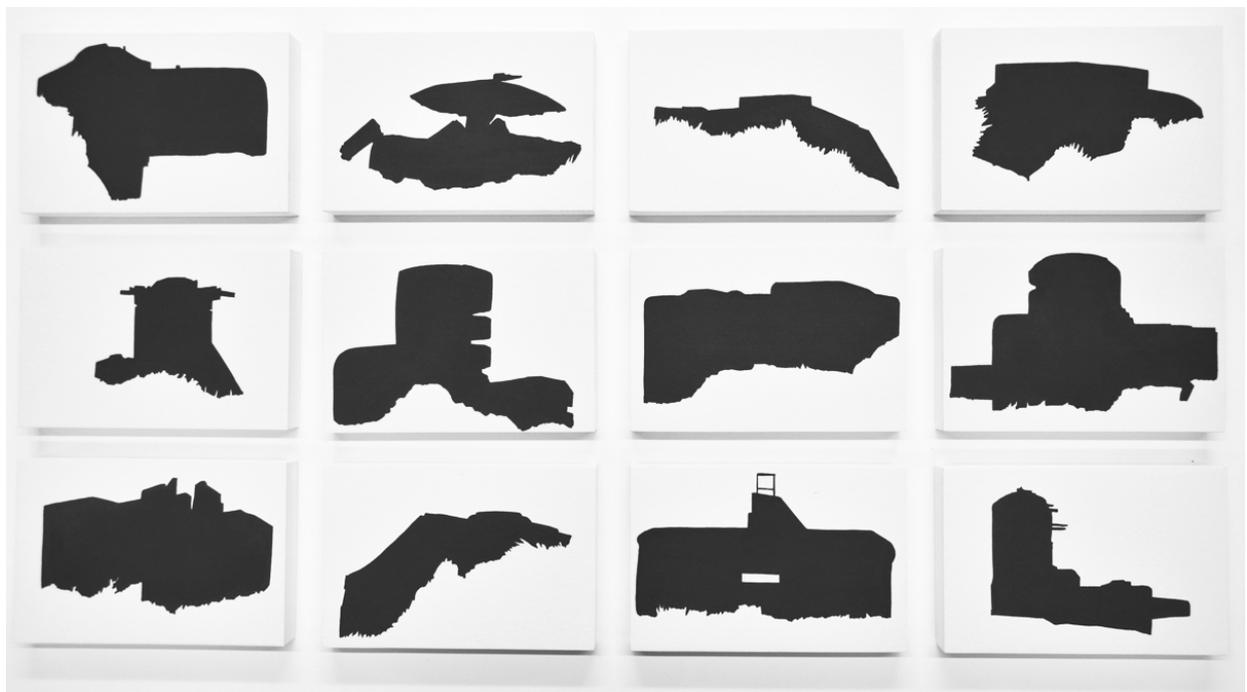
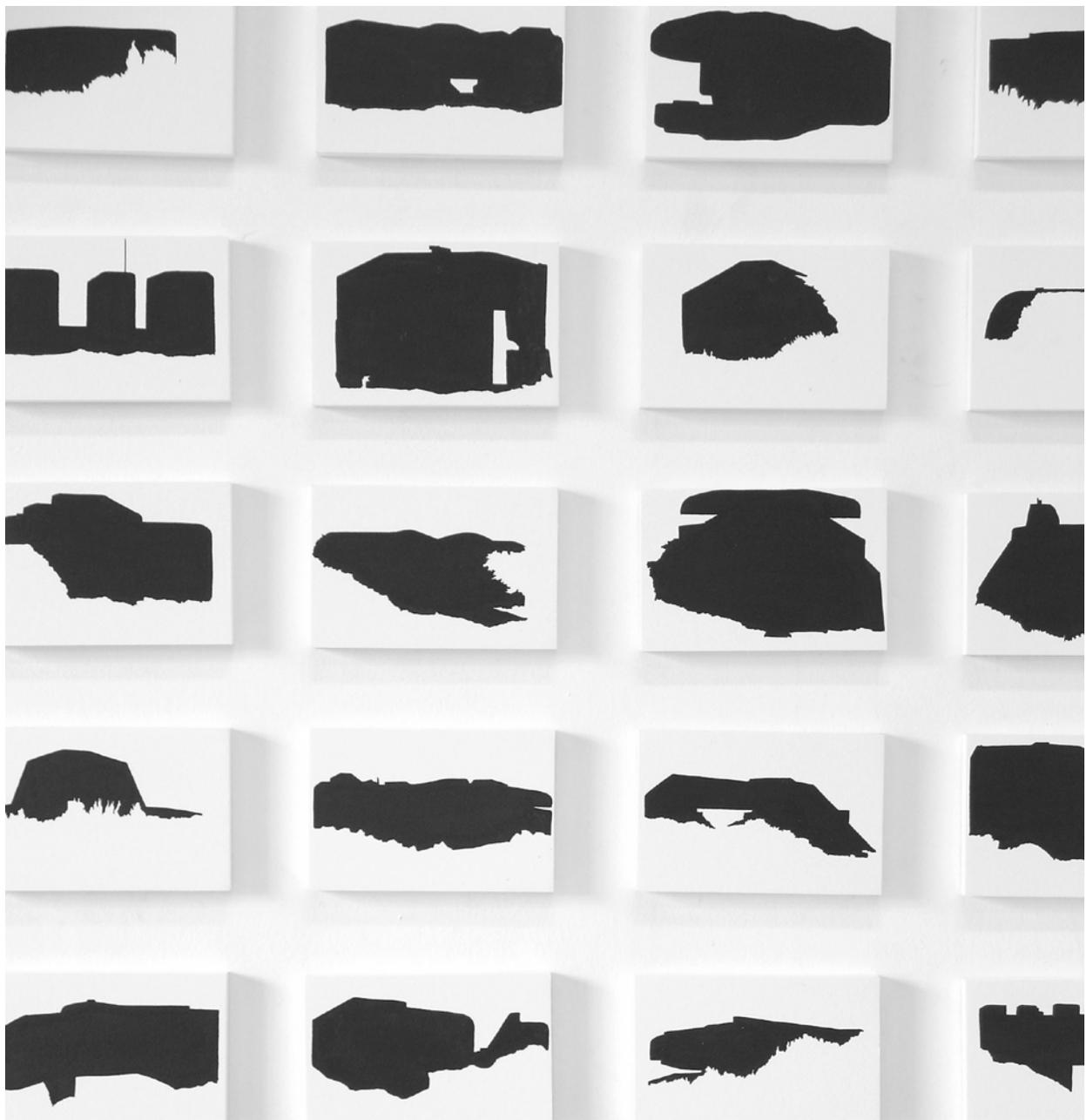
2005-2006

" the atlantic wall"

335x235x2cm - 272 elements 10x15x2 cm - gouache on paper glued on wood



Prize of the Government of the French Community, contest Médiatine, Bruxelles 2006



COAST TO COAST

“**Coast to Coast**” is inspired by a section of the “Jewish Trail” in Hardelot, chosen at random for this work. This trail, partly built by Jewish deportees and local workers, connected and supplied the blockhouses along the Atlantic coast, providing men, munitions and materials for the Nazi military effort. It represents both a strategic passage for the enemy and a place of suffering for those who used it.

In the work, this portion of the trail is redrawn to full scale on a wall or similar support, in order to recreate the physical experience of the journey. This redrawing allows us to understand in a more tangible way this link between the different military sites, while confronting us with the duality of this trail: a transport axis for the occupying forces, but also a territory marked by exploitation and deportation.

Cartography plays a vital role here, not only to mark the strategic divisions of the Atlantic coast—a line of defense between German forces on one side and the Allies in England on the other—but also to echo the geographical divisions that persist today. The English Channel, now seen as a natural border, was at the



Coast To Coast - 2006 - «the atlantic wall» - variable dimensions - wall painting

time a space of separation between two warring powers. This separation, marked on the maps of the war, resonates with today's reality, where the Channel has become a symbol of confinement and contemporary struggles, particularly with regard to migration. The passage between France and England, once a military and strategic border, is now a space where thousands of migrants attempt to cross each year, fleeing war, poverty, and persecution. This parallel between the history of war and the current situation of migrants allows us to twist cartography to make it a reflection on the way in which geographical borders, whether visible or invisible, dictate human lives and shape relationships between peoples.

“**Coast to Coast**” thus becomes a meditation on time and space, a reflection on the way in which geography can, from one era to another, crystallize lines of division, whether between the occupier and the occupied, between allies and enemies, or between the countries of the North and those of the South today. The work invites us to question the sustainability of these divisions, and to reflect on the means of overcoming them, through the rewriting of cartography and collective memories.

Coast To Coast
2006
«the atlantic wall»
variable dimensions - wall painting



HURDLES

“**Hurdles**” is a series of five drawings that represent the main anti-tank and anti-landing obstacles deployed on the beaches during the Second World War. These drawings, made with great attention to detail, seek to convey the ingenuity and brutality of these devices designed to prevent any advance by the Allied forces.

The obstacles represented in this series, although often perceived as simple instruments of war, are here studied as geometric shapes charged with profound meanings. On the one hand, these obstacles are symbols of a merciless defense, an architecture of war designed to deter, hinder and annihilate. On the other, they become graphic, almost abstract objects that emerge from the ground to question our perception of violence, protection and the border.

By isolating these elements in a graphic frame, the artist highlights their character, both functional and symbolic. Each obstacle becomes a hurdle, both figuratively and literally, a barrier in the path of humanity. Their forms, rigid and imposing, recall the cold logic of war, but also the way in which these objects have been integrated into the landscape, becoming today vestiges of a bygone era.

The drawings seek not only to document, but also to transform these structures into aesthetic elements. Each detail, each line, each shadow is a way to reflect on the presence of these objects in the landscape—their visual impact, their relationship to space, and their history. Through this work, the artist invites the viewer to rethink these hurdles not only as physical obstacles, but also as metaphors for what divides, separates, and impedes.



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frederic-fourdinier.com