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Laura Mackin: 120 Years at threewalls

Posted by [Pat Elifritz](#) on Jan 23, 2012 | [Leave a Comment](#)



Laura Mackin, *Driving (Dean, 1946-2006)*, 2011 Digital video, 2 minutes

On January 13th, Laura Mackin introduced a new exhibition entitled *120 Years* at [threewalls](#), the latest installment in the threewallsSOLO program. Upon arrival, those who traveled to the exhibition found themselves confronted with more terrain to navigate. A composite collection of disparate postcards organized according to their place of origin, an assemblage of home video footage of anonymous American highways shot from the passenger seat, an arrangement of small-scale photographic prints into a pseudo-skyline display—each indicate the artist's interest in tropes of travel, and these remain present throughout her archival practice.

Mackin navigates collections of accumulated imagery and ephemera, where she appropriates content and reconstructs otherwise inaccessible personal narratives. The material she collects is in itself readily accessible, often online. However her tedious examination into the lives of their original owners probes territory otherwise guarded from public display. The apparatuses of nostalgia—particularly dated consumer-grade photographic and video technology—allow the artist to play interventionist-archivist with the material residue of others' pasts.

While Mackin's practice appears analogous to the style of selection-reassemblage found in blogging culture, her commitment to idiosyncratic methods of dissection and redisplay facilitates a more conflicted interpretation of her subjects. *120 Years* presents two recomposed collections, each comprised of approximately 60 years of accumulated material. One half of the 120, assembled between 1910 and 1968, resides in a collection of destination-specific postcards addressed primarily to "Mrs. Ernest." These are aligned to construct a loose memory-atlas exploring the locations and subjects selected by their anonymous sender. The next 60 years are found in video footage showcasing a character known only as "Dean" traversing the United States between 1946 and 2006, which is cut and compressed into two rapid-burn investigations into long-term changes within the American landscape. In addition to the videos, photographic stills pulled from Dean's footage isolate the peculiar targets of his zoom lens. The stills and videos alike exalt Dean's rather unique style of home video production. However, it is Dean's handiwork on the interstate that echoes throughout Mackin's *120 Years*—a certain common attraction to exploring the terrain of personal recollections by way of photographic documentation.

[120 years](#) is on view through February 25th.

Artist talk: Thursday, February 9th, 7pm.

[threewalls](#)

119 N. Peoria, #2C

Chicago, IL 60607

Hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 11am-5pm

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