

# art

FILM INSTALLATION

## Road pic power

West Bank images impress **By FRAN SCHECHTER**

**ELLE FLANDERS AND TAMIRA SAWATSKY** at O'Born Contemporary Gallery (offsite, at 51 Wolseley), to September 18. Artists' talks Sunday (September 11) and September 18, 2 to 4 pm. [oborncontemporary.com](http://oborncontemporary.com). Rating: **NNNN**

IT HAS MISMATCHED CHARACTERS who make journeys by car, but Elle Flanders and Tamira Sawatzky's Road Movie isn't a conventional freewheeling adventure. Their six-channel film installation, screening as part of TIFF's Future Projections program at O'Born Contemporary's offsite space,

presents, in immersive loose narratives, a series of car trips around the West Bank.

Flanders and Sawatzky approach making art about one of the world's most documented conflicts by looking at ordinary people and situations rather than dramatic atrocities. In the spring they exhibited photographs from their What Isn't There project, depicting empty fields or bland new developments at sites of vanished Palestinian villages.

For Road Movie, the artists, while living in Ramallah in 2009, turned their cameras on the West Bank's



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Elle Flanders and Tamira Sawatzky's savvy set-up evokes Israel-Palestine inequities.

road system: modern multi-lane highways for Israelis; rutted, checkpoint-riddled tracks for Palestinians. Screen text and Anna Friz's haunting soundtrack offer fragments of interviews with, among others, Israeli settlers, a Palestinian ambulance driver and a family who "live in a cage," re-

fusing to move from a home cordoned off by mental fencing.

On three wall-like, 2-metre-high boxes sitting at angles on the floor of the long space, Israeli images play on one side, Palestinian on the other. The imposing set-up (Sawatzky is an architect) suggests that, though we

can walk around the screens, they might at any time close into the impermeable wall that separates the two nationalities.

The stop-motion filming technique – some sequences flow normally, but many have a disturbing, jerky quality – highlights the difficulty of the journeys. It keeps our focus on the images: the patience of people queuing inside prison-like barred checkpoint enclosures, the incongruity of new settlements in the scrubby desert, the brutality of the barrier walls, close-ups of flowers that speak to people's love of the land.

Supported by the National Film Board, Road Movie will eventually become a web-based project where we can stream the films and full interviews, but it won't have the presence of this installation. Road movies usually end with a changed hero finding a way home, but Flanders and Sawatzky's moving snapshots of the yearning for home have no easy resolution. ©

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