

## Review by Elaine Y.J Zheng

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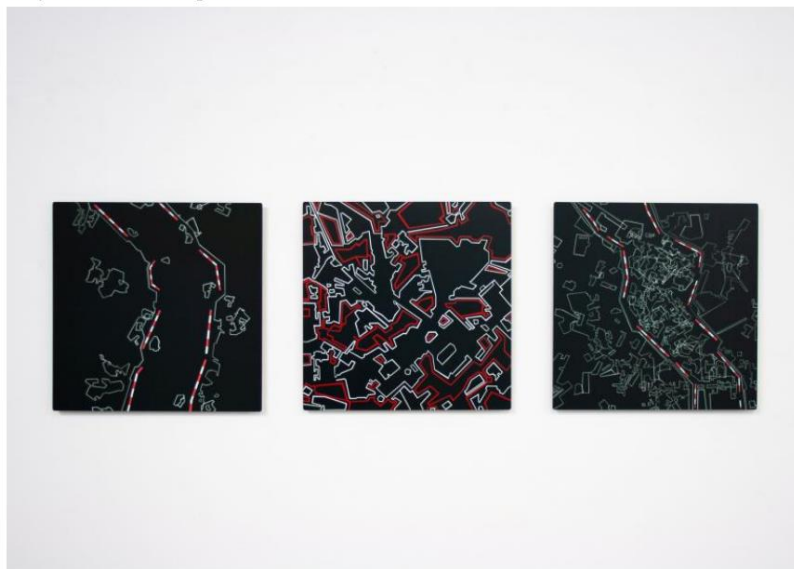
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Galeria Le Guern, Katowicka 25, 03-932 Warszawa, Poland

## Alicja Gaskon: Dividing Lines



**Artist :** Alicja Gaskon  
**Title :** Dividing Lines, installation  
**Date(s) :** 2019  
**Medium :** 30 x 30 cm each  
**Material :** Print on metal  
**Website :** <http://www.leguern.pl/wystawy/Alicja-Gaskon-Linie-Podzialu/>  
**Credit :** Courtesy the artist and Le Guern Gallery



### Alicja Gaskon: Dividing Lines

**Galeria Le Guern**  
**22 November 2019 - 18 January 2020**  
**Review by Elaine Y.J Zheng**

**Inspired by her recent trip to the North Korean border, Warsaw-based artist Alicja Gaskon presents 'Dividing Lines': a physical and conceptual representation of the most prominent boundaries through history. From North Korea to the Berlin Wall, and more recently, Trump's wall, Gaskon's inquiry accentuates the absence of ethical consideration within the rationale of national preservation.**

'Dividing Lines' at Le Guern Gallery is a reminder of human activity at the perimeter between staunch political divides. These are points of segregation, as much as points of reunion. Drawing parallels with the barriers of the past, Gaskon hints at a possibility for reconciliation at the very threshold of division.

A series of maps on display attest to a beauty contained within standardised uniformity, one that is revealed to those who are committed to locating the humanity in these political spaces. Gaskon's research and voyages have led her to secluded North Korean villages and hidden city-states along the US-Mexico border. In both, the proximity to the border informed the residents' understanding of relationships and personal identity.

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For each acrylic map, Gaskon forgoes any superfluous detail to draw attention to the barrier as a physical intrusion. On the immediate right, an aerial view of the Berlin Wall rendered on a life-size canvas is reduced to an outline of surrounding buildings and streets.

To its left, two small metal installations of equal proportion to the North Korean and the US-Mexico borders, rest in display cases before their sketched representations. On their way to the gallery in Warsaw, these were taken apart at US customs for inspection, later glued back together in an unintentional yet accurate performance of the self-containing nation.

Further on, 'The Unbroken Line' (2019), a replication of the metal fence at the North Korean border, is displayed behind a glass case. At the intersection of the barbed wire, granite stones painted in red and white are interwoven to hinder any hypothetical escapees.

In an adjacent room, 'Dream Making Zone' (2019), the most detailed of the canvases, maps out the geography of North Korean control by alluding to intellectual isolation. Its layered expression captures the rigid structures of a collective subjected to on-going propaganda with thick red lines outlining the segregated regions of thought confinement.

At last, a rendition of the US-Mexico border invites the viewer to consider its relation to boundaries of the past, and question the merits of nationalism in a globalised age.

In themselves, each of these works contains a lightness and ease that diverges from their solemn subject. The vivid colour and bold geometric patterns provide the whole with an aesthetic appeal. Yet, it is also this engaging visual language that creates the space to reconsider the nature of geographic delimitations and their socio-political consequences.

'Dividing Lines' urges us to reconsider the way in which we view space, beyond areas of jurisdiction. Space actively informs and shapes our opportunities, and points to an alternative conception of the nation as an expanding entity, rather than a means of containment for culture, collectives, history.

