

Oscar Palacio at FP3: Re-represented curated by James Hull

January 23 - April 25, 2009

Opening Reception: **Friday, January 23, 6 - 9 PM**

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346 Congress Street, Boston, MA. (in Fort Point @ A Street)

Gallery Hours: Wed, Thurs., Fri. 12 - 7 PM & Sat. 12 - 4PM



At a time of historic change in the racial politics of America, Oscar Palacio expands his investigation of how historic sites function to represent United States history. Photographers still have the power to make us face the truth even in a highly mediated, digitally manipulated visual environment, and Oscar Palacio's work is a canny reminder of the intense impact documentary photographs, especially war and protest photos have had on history and society. Through this new series of photographs taken at Gettysburg National Military Park and at Underground Railroad sites around Syracuse, New York while an artist-in-residence at Light Work, the artist re-contextualizes the American Civil War to foreground the complexities of our racial history. His large scale photographs use solemn objects, formal monuments and overlooked locations to make apparent the gaps and erasures from Gettysburg's dominant narrative of Civil War heroes and loss of life.

Palacio presses these emblematic images to include the dehumanizing narratives of racism and slavery and combines them with the overshadowed histories of abolitionism and freedom to create compellingly nuanced—and somehow more complete—histories of a person or place. The personal perspective that the artist draws upon as a recent green card recipient (Oscar was born in Columbia, S.A.) engenders a very specific reading of the role individuals played in legendary events. The struggle to become fully vested in a country other than one's place of birth requires an acceptance or at least acknowledgment of even the darkest parts of the history of that place. In response to his own clear-eyed review of American history Palacio pushes us to look beyond the ideologies of Northern and Southern, of Union and Confederate, of white and black to see and remember individual rebellions and affiliations that cost or saved thousands of lives—and eventually changed a nation.

Since we need to continue to hold ourselves accountable for the actions of our representatives in military, community and civil service, the poignant lessons of our past provide a very real example of both our stubborn brutality and our irrepressible yearning for truth and justice. The quiet beauty and unflinching views that these richly evocative images provide of our current relationship to the markers of our own past—both good and bad—are particularly timely reminders.

James Hull, Curator