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Press Release

Olaf Holzapfel

As an artist born in a country that no longer exists, and whose coming-of-age involved crossing a border between the East-West divide of the Cold War era that is fast becoming a distant memory, Olaf Holzapfel, born in Dresden in 1967, has long been interested in boundaries, demarcations, and frontiers—or, more precisely, in interstitial spaces, what is possible *in between*. Equally fluent in the languages of sculpture, painting, film, and photography, much of his work rests on the formal negotiation of the interplay between two-dimensional image (or plane) and three-dimensional form (or space), as can be gauged from his tripartite contribution to documenta 14: an open-air sculpture, a display of historical artifacts and architectural models that also encompasses a newly made film, and a series of so-called hay works and straw pictures—all gathered under the overarching title *Zaun* (Fence, 2017).

With Europe's anxiety surrounding its porous borders now central, sadly enough, to its paranoid sense of self, Holzapfel's project could not be more timely and more apt, choosing to shift his gaze to a frontier far from the eastern Mediterranean, namely in south-central Chile, the past site of a number of Holzapfel's projects; all of which have involved close cooperation with the local population and an elemental reliance on Indigenous traditions of building, constructing, and manufacturing. In the film component of *Zaun*, Holzapfel's interest in the arcana of Chilean geography masks a deeper concern with the interplay between natural and cultural forces, man and landscape, to generate the type of borders that are at the heart of our sense of collective belonging and identity. The elements gathered in the second part of *Zaun* range the gamut from architectural models of medieval churches and nineteenth-century mine shafts to the writings of Austrian critic Kristian Sotriffer and the graphic work of Hermann Glöckner, a leading abstract artist from Dresden. All these elements relate, in varying degrees of directness, to the question of art's determination (as well as, more benignly, inspiration) by the facts of the physical world. The sculpture, finally, continues the artist's long-standing interest in vernacular forms and regional inflections of man's use of the material world around, beneath, and above her or him: a wooden architectural structure containing echoes of Minimalism, though also present is the more emphatic local reference of traditional *Fachwerk*, a type of building wholly conditioned by something as ancient and immutable as the length and girth of trees. —*Dieter Roelstraete*