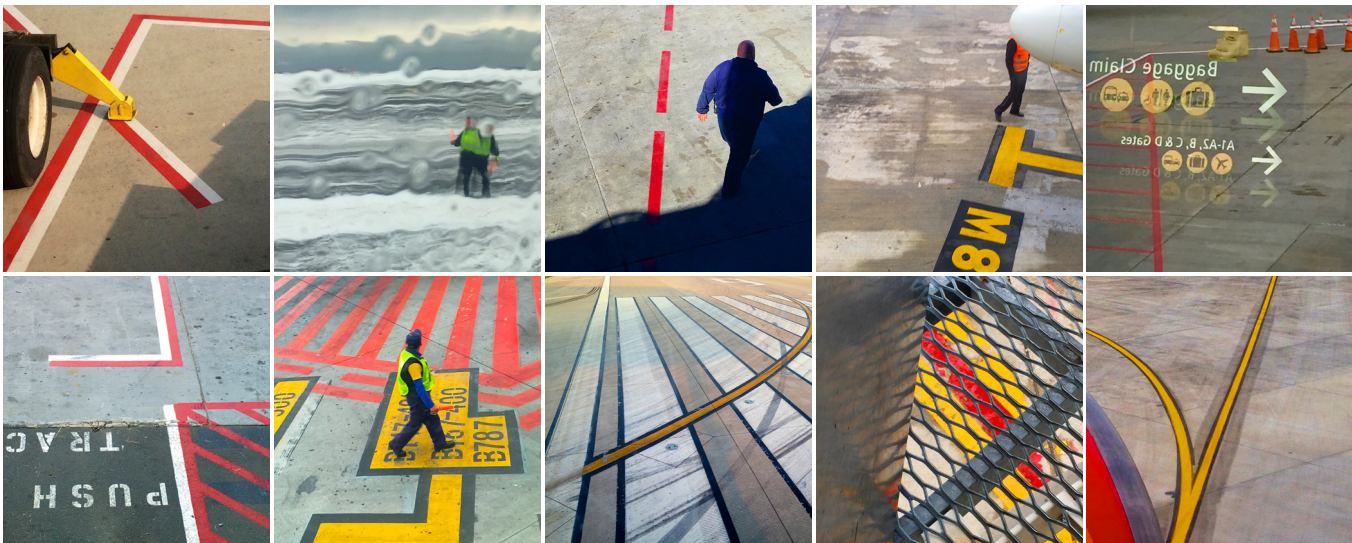


ON THE TARMAC

Rules, line-work, shadows and space



Dennis Pieprz

To most people, tarmac markings are hieroglyphics writ large: an obscure language that greets us as we glide down toward the earth. It is a code both intimately familiar and radically alien.

On the Tarmac reconceives this code. Designer Dennis Pieprz, who spends countless hours taxiing to distant terminals as part of his work, documented his travels, armed with boundless curiosity and an iPhone. As if collecting postcards along his journey, Pieprz framed images not to convey instructions but to capture vivid patterns and surprising juxtapositions, rigorous geometry and playful shadows. By freeing the tarmac from utility, Pieprz’s photos allow new meanings to emerge, exploring poetry of line work and the ballet of human activity. They are about catching glimpses of the hyper-local amid relentless globalization. They are about slowing the pace and paying attention. Most of all, they are about seeking the sublime in the everyday.



OSCAR RIERA OJEDA
PUBLISHERS

www.oropublishers.com
www.oscarrieraojeda.com



ON THE TARMAC

Rules, line-work,
shadows and space



ON THE TARMAC

Rules, line-work, shadows and space

Dennis Pieprz

ON THE TARMAC

Rules, line-work, shadows and space







CONTENTS

Foreword	010
Introduction	012
Interview	014
Locations	016
Plates	018
Appendix	184
Exhibition	186
Photographer	188
Credits	192

INTRODUCTION

By Pilip Barash

To most people, tarmac markings are hieroglyphics writ large: an obscure language that greets us as we glide down toward the earth. It is a code both intimately familiar and radically alien.

On the Tarmac reconceives this code. Designer Dennis Pieprz, who spends countless hours taxiing to distant terminals as part of his work, documented his travels, armed with boundless curiosity and an iPhone. As if collecting postcards along his journey, Pieprz framed images not to convey instructions but to capture vivid patterns and surprising juxtapositions, rigorous geometry and playful shadows. By freeing the tarmac from utility, Pieprz's photos allow new meanings to emerge, exploring poetry of line work and the ballet of human activity. They are about catching glimpses of the hyper-local amid relentless globalization. They are about slowing the pace and paying attention. Most of all, they are about seeking the sublime in the everyday.

The exhibition, presented by the Boston Society of Architects in partnership with Sasaki Associates, features over 200 images from Pieprz's archive. In addition, interpretive information and supergraphics invite viewers to decode and re-code meanings as they learn about the language of the tarmac and follow Pieprz on a whirlwind journey.

To most people, tarmac markings are hieroglyphics writ large: an obscure language that greets us as we glide down toward the earth. It is a code both intimately familiar and radically alien.

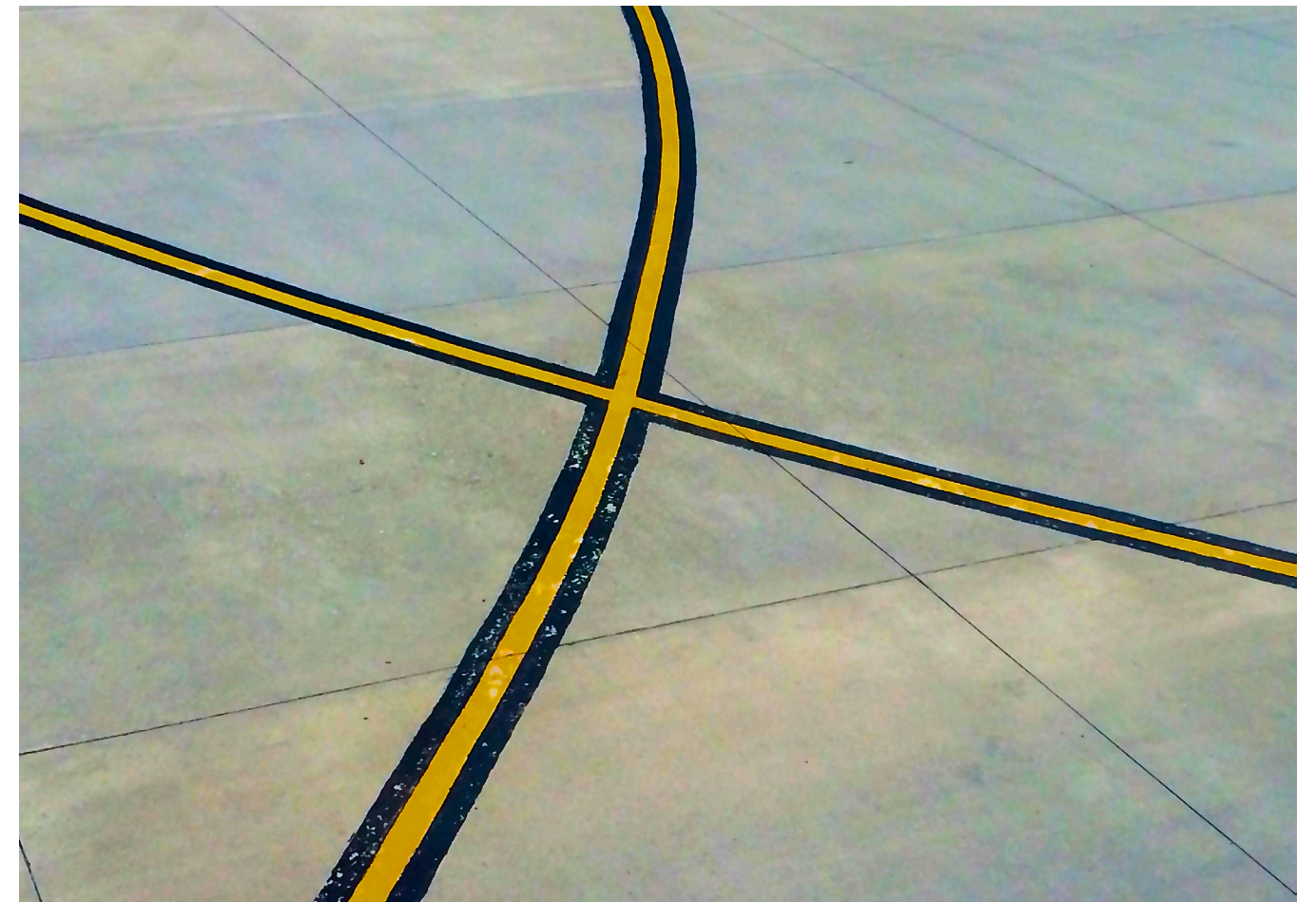
On the Tarmac reconceives this code. Designer Dennis Pieprz, who spends countless hours taxiing to distant terminals as part of his work, documented his travels, armed with boundless curiosity and an iPhone. As if collecting postcards along his journey, Pieprz framed images not to convey instructions but to capture vivid patterns and surprising juxtapositions, rigorous geometry and playful shadows. By freeing the tarmac from

utility, Pieprz's photos allow new meanings to emerge, exploring poetry of line work and the ballet of human activity. They are about catching glimpses of the hyper-local amid relentless globalization. They are about slowing the pace and paying attention. Most of all, they are about seeking the sublime in the everyday.

The exhibition, presented by the Boston Society of Architects in partnership with Sasaki Associates, features over 200 images from Pieprz's archive. In addition, interpretive information and supergraphics invite viewers to decode and re-code meanings as they learn about the language of the tarmac and follow Pieprz on a whirlwind journey.

On the Tarmac reconceives this code. Designer Dennis Pieprz, who spends countless hours taxiing to distant terminals as part of his work, documented his travels, armed with boundless curiosity and an iPhone. As if collecting postcards along his journey, Pieprz framed images not to convey instructions but to capture vivid patterns and surprising juxtapositions, rigorous geometry and playful shadows. By freeing the tarmac from utility, Pieprz's photos allow new meanings to emerge, exploring poetry of line work and the ballet of human activity. They are about catching glimpses of the hyper-local amid relentless globalization. They are about slowing the pace and paying attention. Most of all, they are about seeking the sublime in the everyday.

The exhibition, presented by the Boston Society of Architects in partnership with Sasaki Associates, features over 200 images from Pieprz's archive. In addition, interpretive information and supergraphics invite viewers to decode and re-code meanings



F. Philip Barash is creative director at Sasaki, where he oversees the firm's place branding practice. An accomplished writer, curator, and brand-builder, Barash helps clients define and communicate the vision, strategy and design principles for major real estate developments and public realm projects.

- His critical writing about design culture frequently appears in regional and national publications. Recent curatorial proj-

ects include the first solo exhibition of iconoclastic designer Jimenez Lai's work and a collection of architectural photography on permanent display at the University of Chicago. Barash explored the intersection of identity and the built environment in the Master of Arts Program in the Humanities at the University of Chicago and studied digital media at the University of Detroit Mercy.

INTERVIEW

A conversation with Dennis Pieprz

What was the genesis of your project, On The Tarmac?

Over the years I've spent a lot of time traveling. I'm interested in culture and what's different about the places I visit. In airports, I've started to notice the language of tarmacs, the instructions that we see for pilots and ground personnel every time we head to and from the runway. There was a fairly consistent language throughout the world; I figured this must be some set of codes and rules, but also noticed that each airport is slightly different. In some countries, the lines are very precise and accurate and in others they're wobbly, and in the heat some of the tarmacs are even melting. With the technology of the iPhone camera, it became very easy [to document], a habit that is part of my travel routine. It's a hobby that turned into a passionate photography game.

How has your project changed over time?

This project actually started with my digital camera about five years ago. With the switch to the iPhone, I'd say it's been three years capturing photos in this format. I have 29,000 photos on my iPhone and I picked just 250 of my favorites for the show. Over time, the focus definitely evolved. I used to be completely absorbed by the geometry and lines and lettering and now I've become interested in people and how they interact. The best subjects are the people who guide the planes in. They have these Star Wars-like torches and when you capture them moving around and intersecting with the various geometries it just makes for fascinating imagery. They bring a human touch to the images.

Where else do you seek inspiration for this work?

I've always been interested in Russian Constructivist paintings. I was in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and I saw some of their collection and thought, 'my goodness, this looks like runway markings!' I made the connection and began looking for moments to abstract something ordinary to transform it from mundane to artistic. In this case, I know that the last thing on the minds of the designers and operators of airports is some sort of aesthetic concern when they paint their tarmacs; for them it's all about safety and regulation and control of movement. I wanted to take something like that, something that's super-functional, and look at it in a whole new way. This started as a fascination with tarmac markings and at the time you never thought of it as a photography project to be displayed in a gallery.

What was it like converting what was meant for digital consumption on Instagram to a tangible artwork that can be displayed?

Over the holidays last year I decided to do an experiment. I picked some of my favorite images and I used Blurb book-making technology to produce a book, which after many titles, was named On the Tarmac. It was a lot of fun because it revealed the relationship between different photos, geometries, and content. It showed how they might become yet another thing as you look at the pages next to each other, juxtaposing themes and locations. I used the geographical pins on my phone to track every photo by its place. Adding on the layer of place brought a contextual dimension. Suddenly I could compare tarmac language from Boston, Syracuse, Monterrey, and see the collective bring more power to the individual images.

What are the challenges of your medium?

Between the iPhone's limitations and the glass barrier of the plane window, you can't get perfect large-scale shots. I've learned to use the dirt or the rain on the windowpane to add a kind of twist to the photos rather than letting the imperfect conditions ruin the images. And while the technology doesn't allow for very large prints, I think that's ok. Each image is no larger than a postcard, which I like. We don't really use postcards anymore but perhaps this is a new kind of postcard.

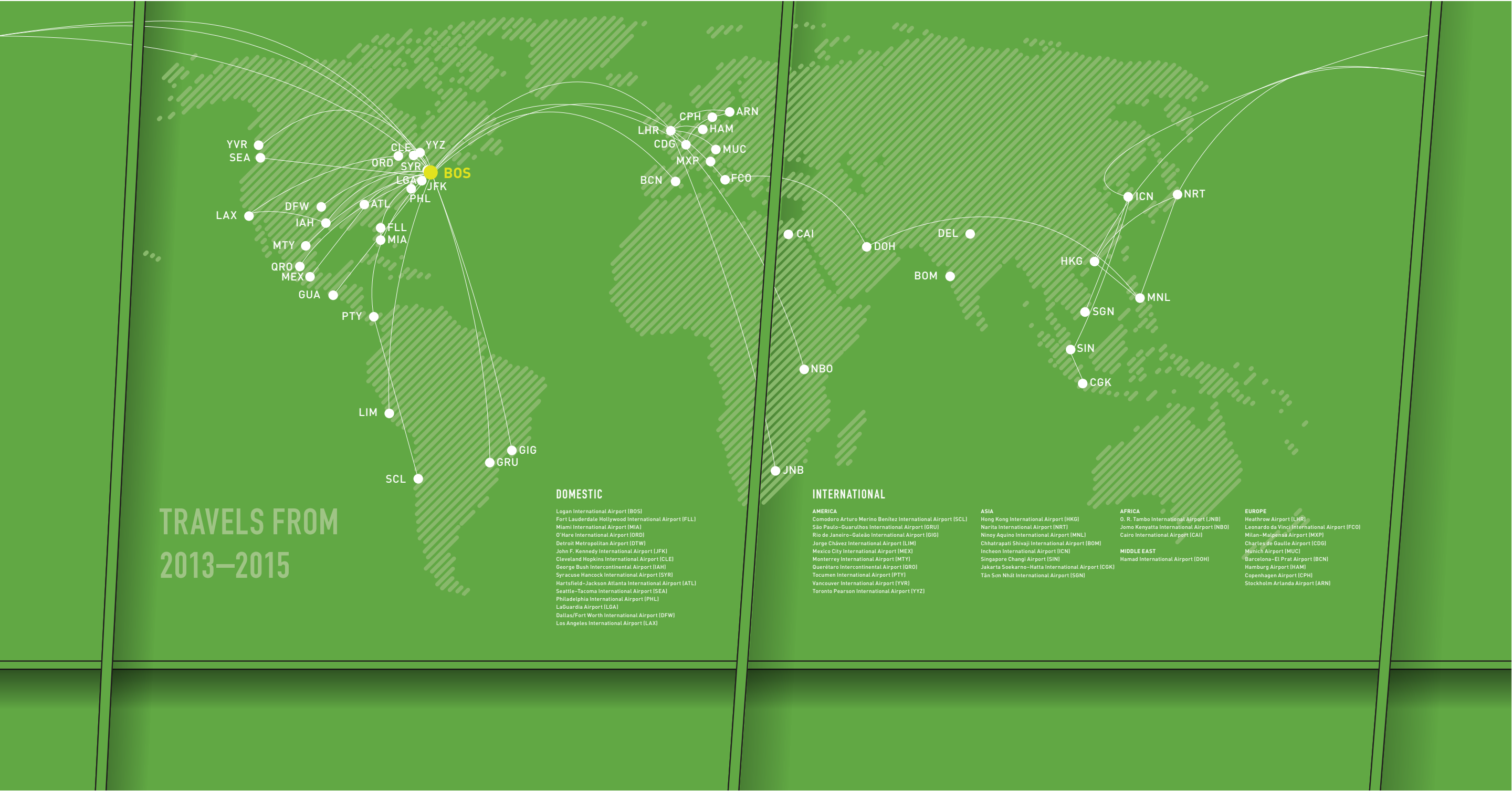
How does being an urban designer change the way you view the world and the pictures you capture?

There are so many big forces going into our work and how we design cities—forces of context, location, culture, program aspirations, systems-thinking. Urbanism also involves geometry of many kinds and there are many ways of being inspired and many ways of working. Sometimes the sweeping geometries and grid-like expressions on the tarmac can be inspiring for my work in cities. It's ultimately one more way of seeing—one more ingredient in the pot.

Beyond the tarmac, are there other subject areas or fixations that have grabbed you?

Another area of interest that is somewhat related to flight is the view of cities from above. Obviously, many people are taken by that. I always make sure I get a window seat in front of the wing. I can tell you in America it can be quite horrifying, to see what's out there, because there is so much sprawl and so much waste and lack of adding up to anything. You think of Boston as pretty urban, but when you fly into Boston and you see how spread out it is—or a place like Houston or Dallas or Detroit—it's kind of shocking to see that the sprawl is just everywhere. But flying into places like Manila or Jakarta, or Ho Chi Minh City, you see the informal settlements and the density, and there's a whole other set of problems. It's a related passion to see the macro urban problems from the aerial vantage point but, I think that many people have done that before. I've never seen anyone focus on the Tarmac in the way I have come to do over time. We'll see what's next.

LOCATIONS

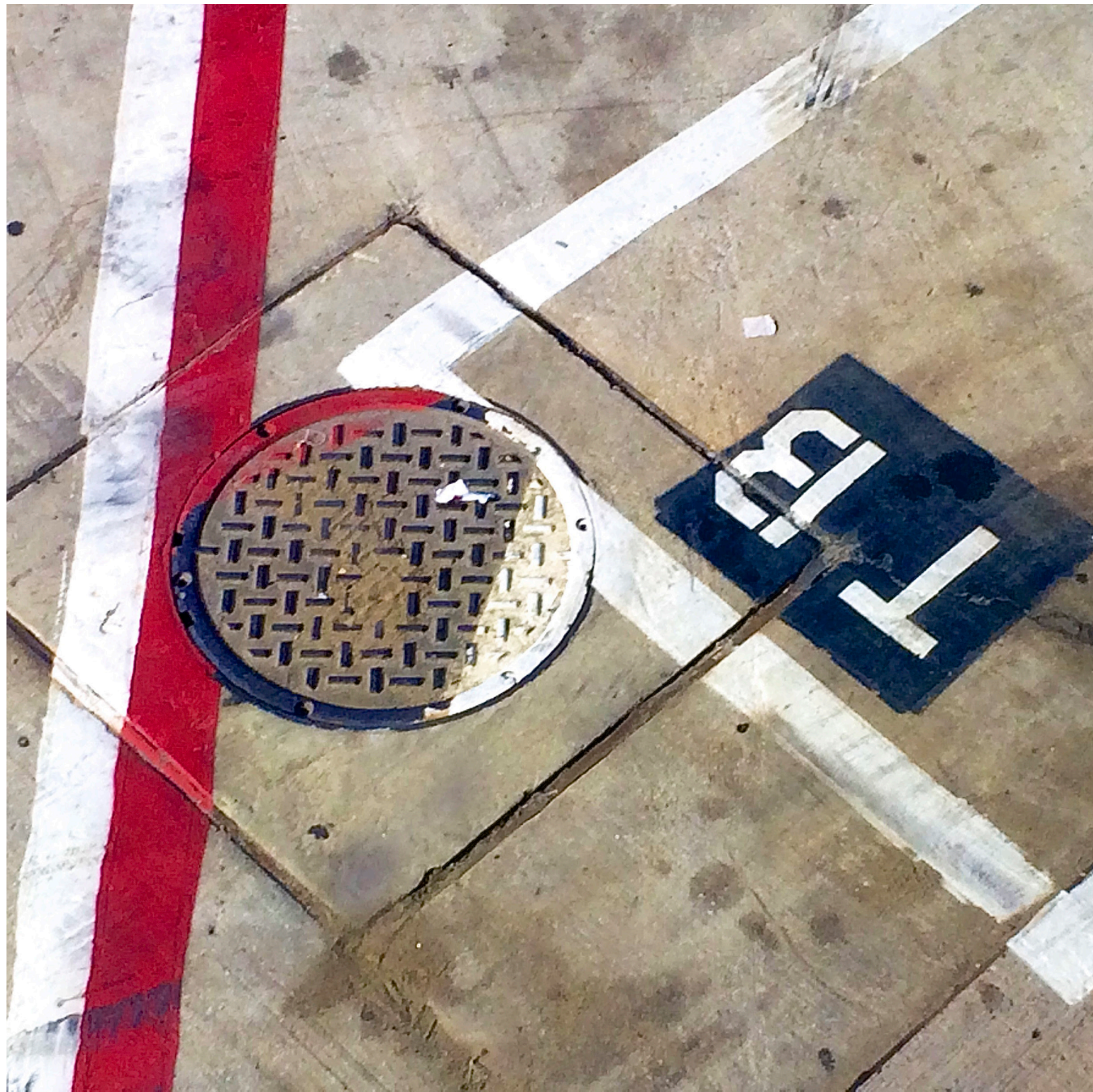


PLATES

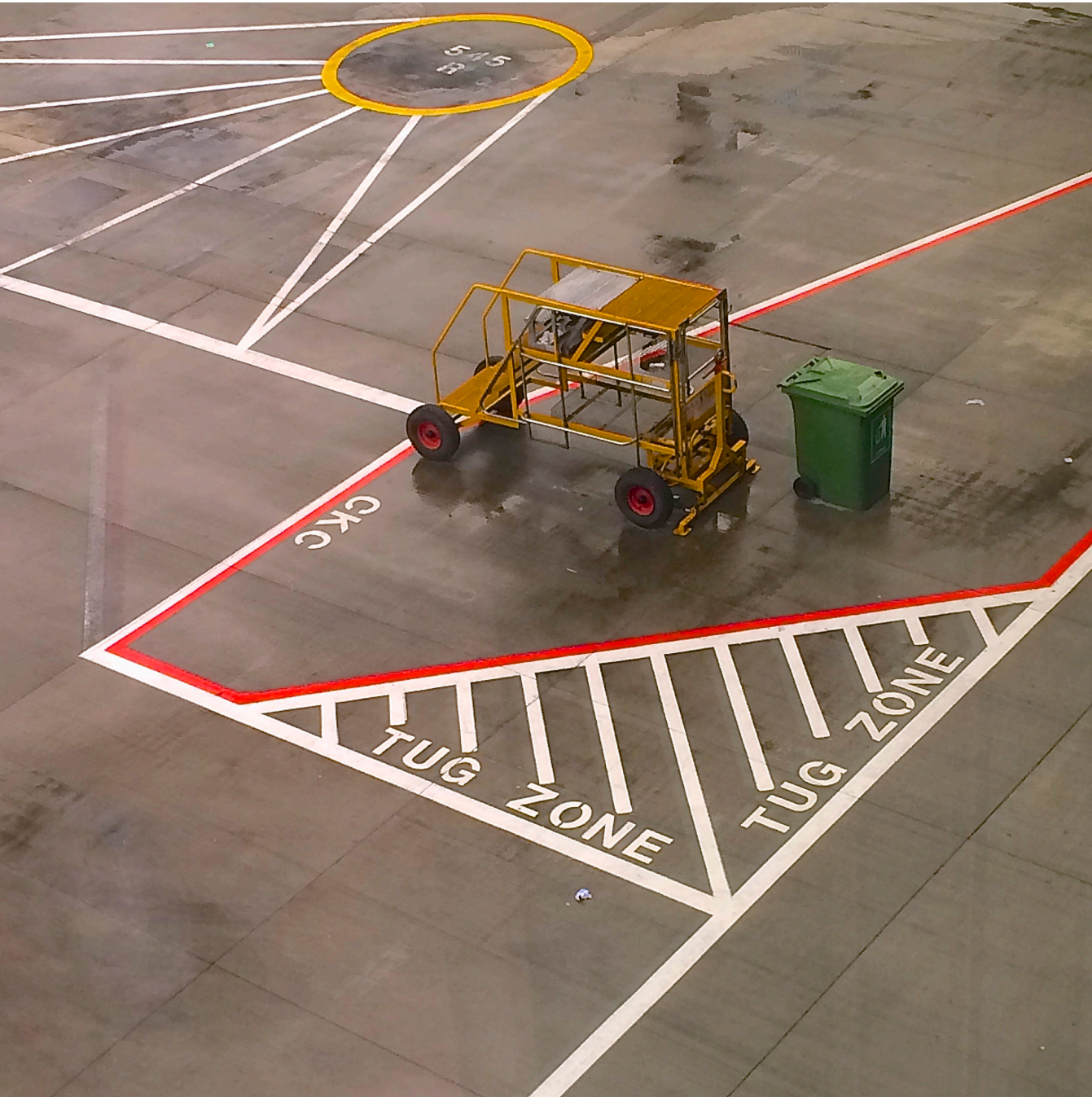
PLATES

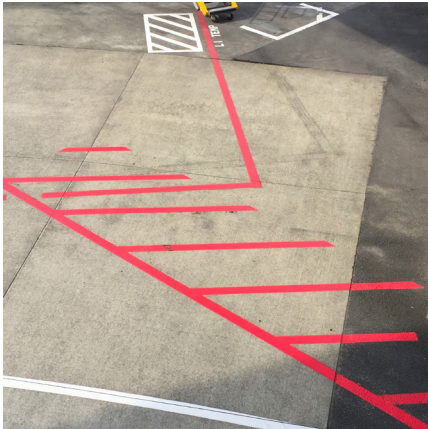
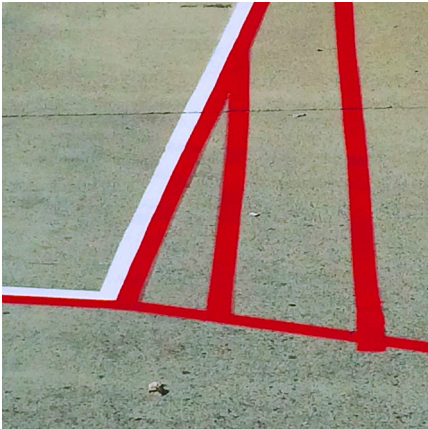
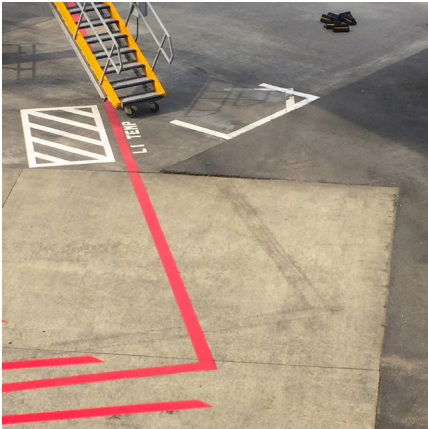




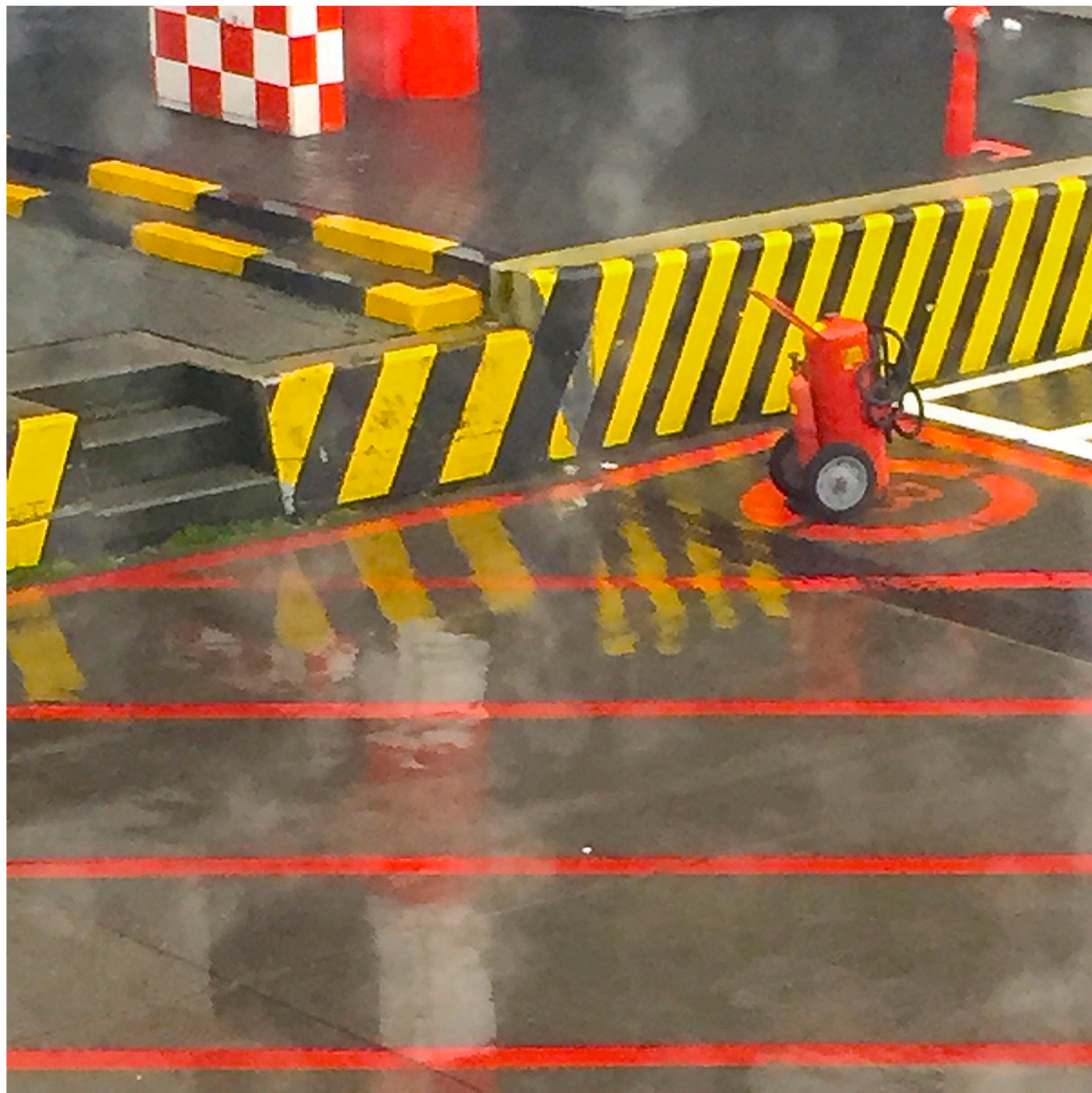




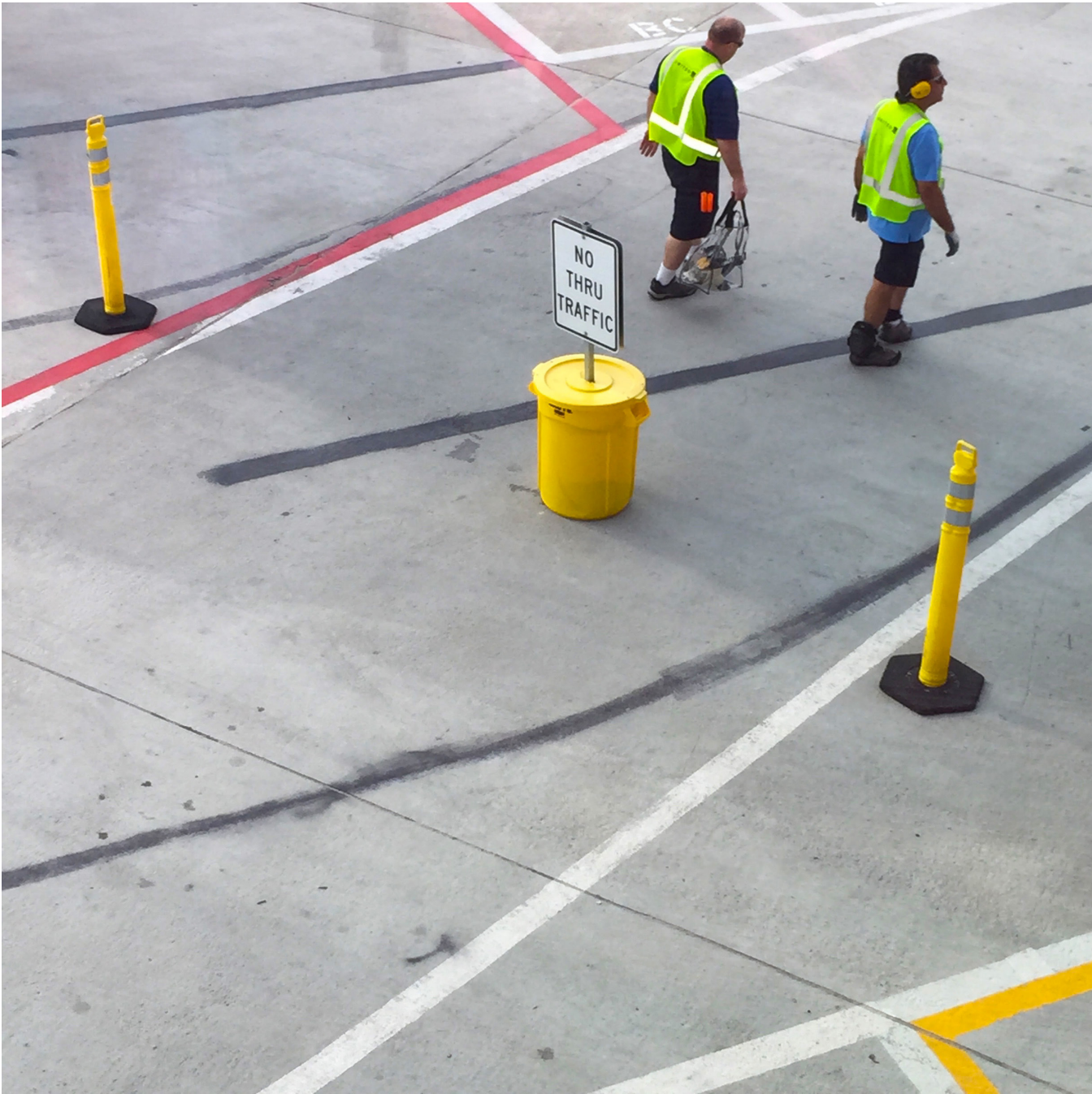










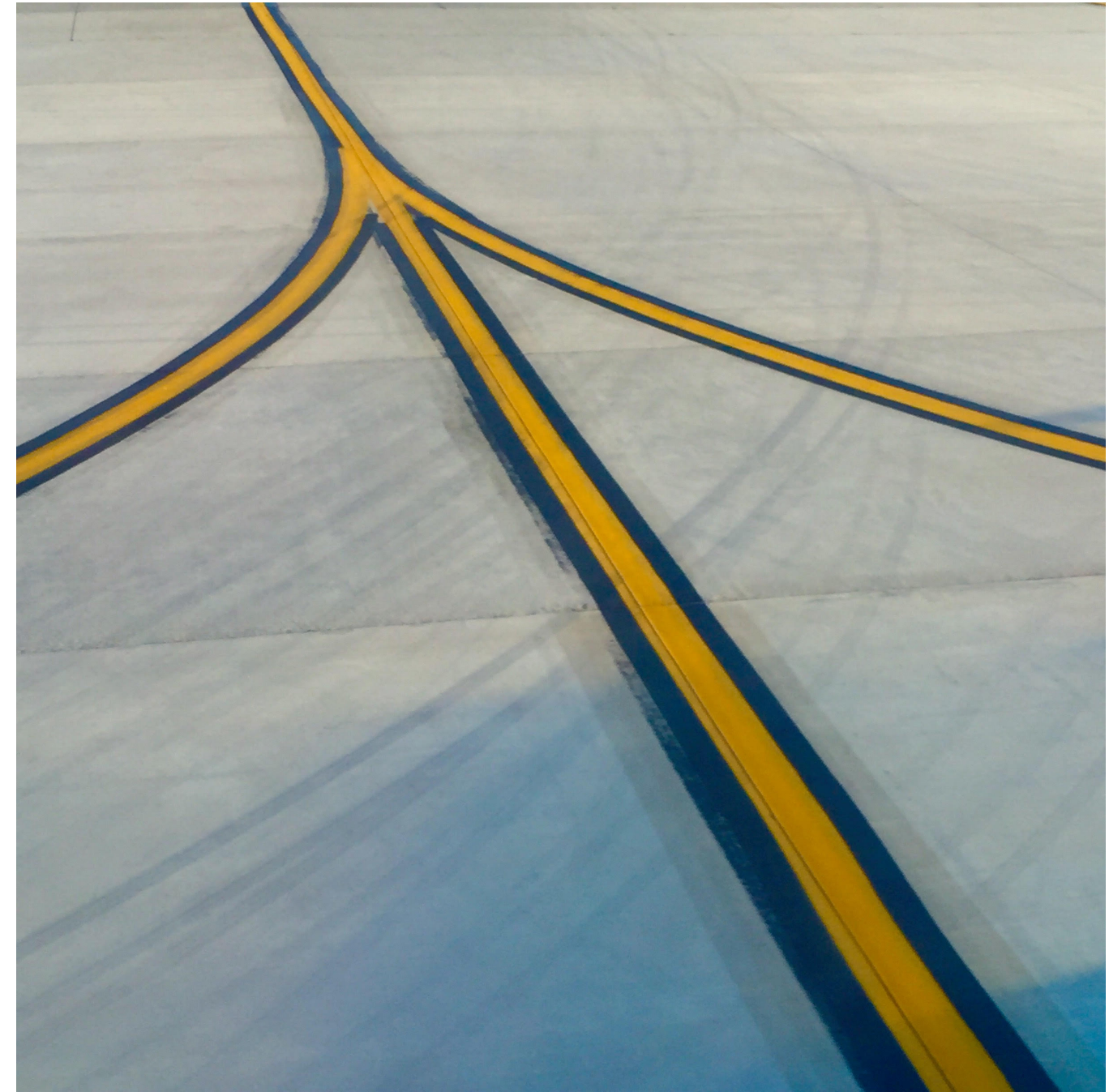
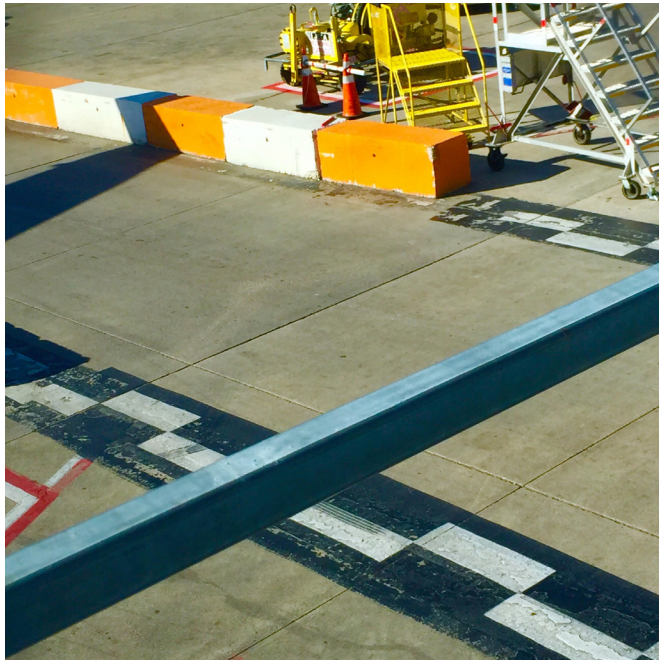






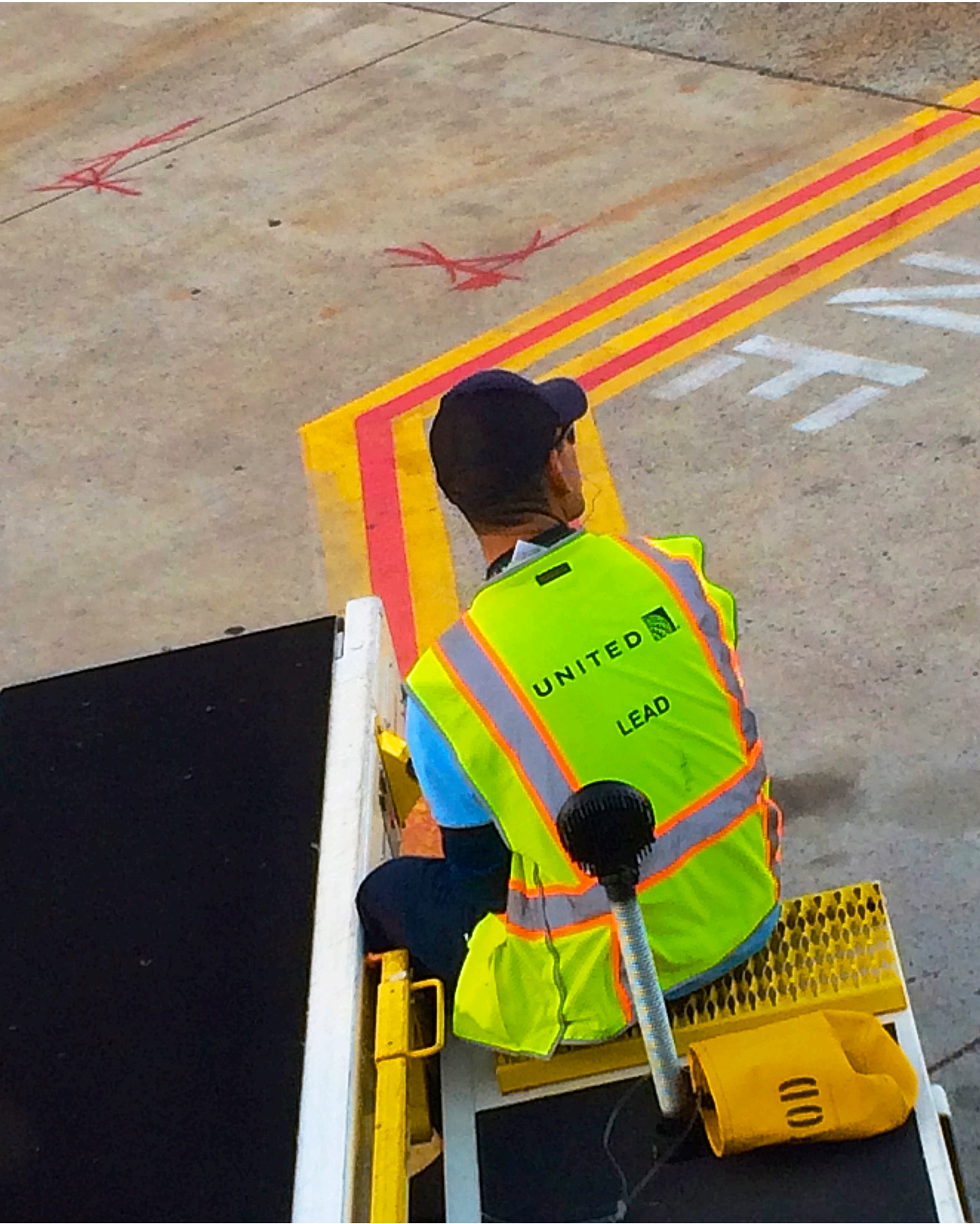


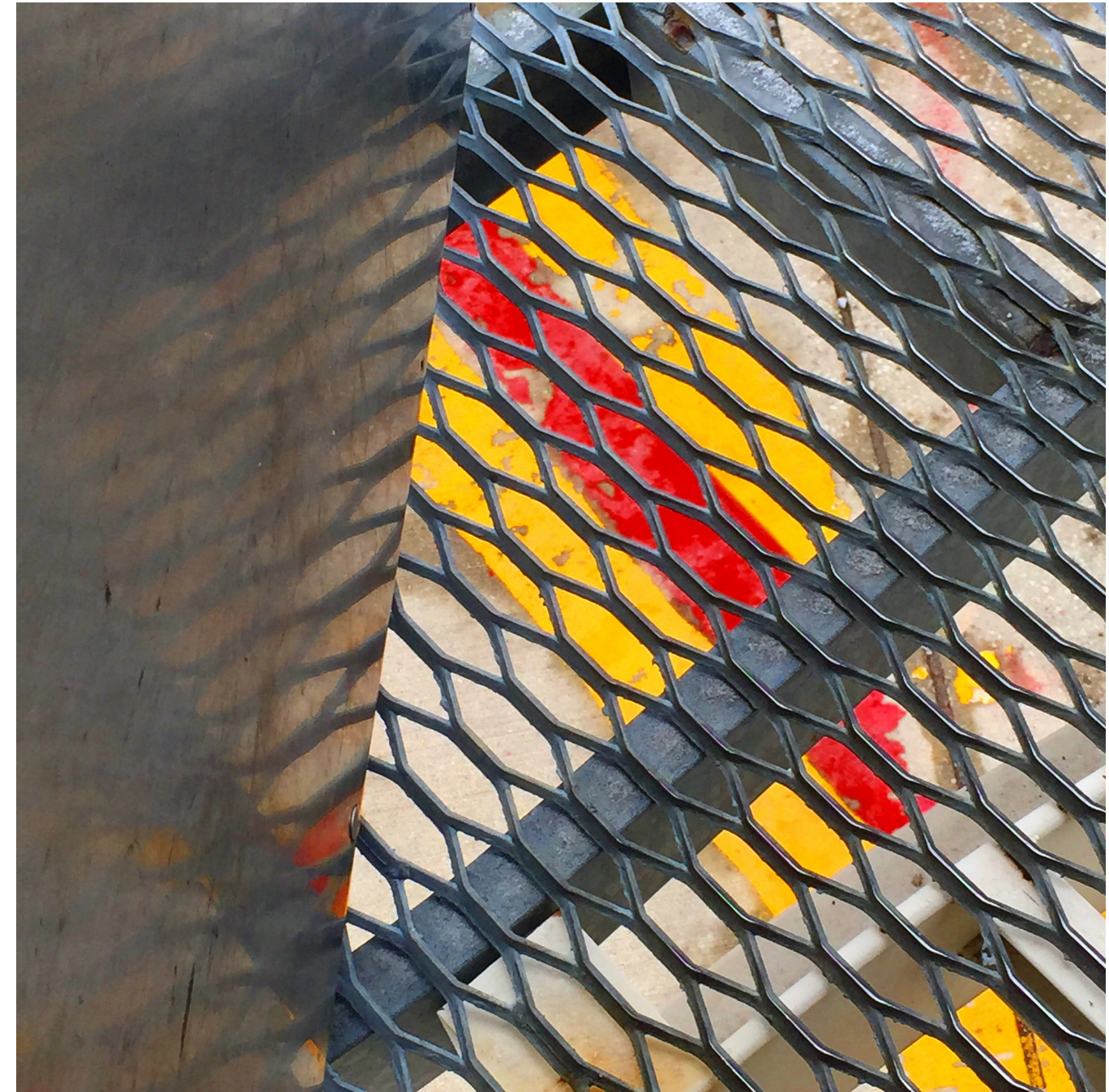
















APPENDIX

APPENDIX

EXHIBITION

