

ARTFORUM

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CRITICS' PICKS | WILL BOONE

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View of "Will Boone: The Highway Hex," 2019-20.

Texas is surrounded by legends of violence and bizarre phenomena that are surpassed in strangeness only by the land itself. Will Boone's site-specific exhibition "The Highway Hex" embraces and tests perceptions of the state's ethos.

With reference to "highway hypnosis"—a sort of trance caused by driving for long distances—the show traces a route from California to the artist's home state of Texas. The centerpiece of the exhibition, *Sweet Perfume* (all works 2019), is a fan-fiction video based on Leatherface, the infamous character from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), here played by the artist's wife, Stephanie Boone. Shot on a VHS camcorder, Boone's homemade film imagines a future where "Face" has moved to Los Angeles and spends time wandering, fishing in the Los Angeles river, and gazing at flowers, until being summoned back home to Texas by a letter from a concerned neighbor, played by Terry Allen.

Positioned in the middle of the gallery, the projection of *Sweet Perfume* is surrounded by objects that appear in the video. *The Melting Cowboy*, the combined sets for scenes where Face visits a pawnshop and a bar, fills a quarter of the room and is replete with true crime memorabilia, including floor tiles from the house of Charles Whitman, the Texas Tower shooter. A group of paintings covered with the bright hue of fake blood flanks the installation; floating on their surfaces, isolated like remnants of a crime scene, are objects from the road trip, encased in resin. Together, the works in the exhibition perform a theatrical sleight of hand: Signifiers for violence are layered into a sentimental portrait of an illimitable land.