

GREAT WALL

Photographer Joe Ovelman tags the city's urban landscape

Joe Ovelman's "Two Walls" embraces at least two art traditions at once: the click-click camera presence of the documentary photographer and the urban verve of the rebel graffiti artist.

Ovelman photographs a variety of images, each having a direct link to what he perceives as his primary role: the medium providing the link between lives we may not know and our own. Whether the image be a sexy guy, a bare foot, a child in his mother's arms, a comely surfer, or the artist as a transformed psychotic diva, Ovelman presents his images *en plein air*—in plain sight—as a way to effect a profound social and political transformation in the viewer's attitude about identity.

His walls could be thought of as crystal-ball prisms whose faces have been sliced, pried open, and displayed flat. Unjoined, the images comprise in their new form a discontinuous narrative in which various people and places are unrelated. However, each image is usually a deeply personal and intimate encounter for the artist, unlike an untrustworthy voyeur.

Ovelman can be considered a graffiti artist who "tags" with pixels instead of spray paint. The unsuspecting urban dweller, used to seeing pictures of Hollywoodiana on bare plywood walls of ubiquitous construction sites, gets to pause and discover the beautiful yet impermanent presence of life's possibilities—where it isn't expected to be found. G

