

For Immediate Release

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**Improbable Borders: The Equator**  
Photographs by Alan Cohen  
at  
The Museum of Contemporary Photography,  
Columbia College Chicago

January 10 through February 5, 2003

CHICAGO, October 2002 – Since the late 1990s, Alan Cohen (United States, born 1943) has photographed “improbable borders” around the world. His abstract black-and-white photographs are visual evidence of generally invisible geological or geopolitical demarcations. Examples are borders between states or territories rich in historical context, or navigational tools such as lines of longitude and latitude. All of these marks are usually found only on maps, which are themselves a flat field of abstract information about the world.

This exhibition focuses on Cohen’s documentation of the equator on land and sea. Although the site is 24,901.46 miles long, it lacks true physical dimension. Cohen, however, has located two sites in Ecuador where the equator becomes both physical and visual.

Just north of Ecuador’s capital city, Quito, is a small tourist site that rests directly on the equator. Designed to represent a typical Ecuadorian village, with a main square, church, cockfight ring, homes, and stores, “Mitad del Mundo” features a painted line that goes up and down stairs, through a church, and through a monument before disappearing into the Andes. Cohen documented his walk straddling this equator with one foot in each hemisphere.

The equator becomes visible again in the Galapagos Islands, a territory of Ecuador 600 miles west of the mainland. The Galapagos are located at the confluences of five ocean currents. Here Cohen documented physical lines on the surface of the water where two of these currents collide at the equator.

The exhibition’s opening reception on January 10, 2003, from 5 until 7 pm, at The Museum of Contemporary Photography is free and open to the public. Alan Cohen will give a gallery talk on Thursday, January 16, 2003, at 6 pm in the museum.

The exhibitions, presentations, and related programs of The Museum of Contemporary Photography are sponsored in part by the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Kaplan Family Foundation; the National Endowment for the Arts; the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs/Gallery 37; and American Airlines, the official airlines of The Museum of Contemporary Photography.

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The Museum of Contemporary Photography is free and open to the public weekdays from 10 am until 5 pm (Thursdays until 8 pm) and Saturdays from 12 until 5 pm. It is located at 600 S. Michigan Avenue at Harrison Street. Phone 312-663-5554 or visit [mocp.org](http://mocp.org) for additional information.