



**Matthew Northridge**, *Mississippi* (detail); installation view of related work at KANSAS gallery, 2011-12  
Courtesy of the artist and KANSAS, New York

### **Matthew Northridge: Rio Grande**

July 15, 2012, to February 24, 2013

A long fissure insinuated down the length of a high wall. A deep crack gouged into the Museum. A minimal gesture displayed as art. It is difficult to immediately discern in Matthew Northridge's sculptural installation what might be accidental, what is site-specific, and where the artist has intervened in his subtle process of creating meaning. The title is critical to this installation. *Rio Grande* literally gives shape to the line Northridge routed into The Aldrich's sheetrock wall and tinted with gray paint.

Northridge often plays with geographic recontextualization and extreme shifts in scale. In his *aerial studies*, a body of work from the last decade, he carefully removed all architecture from aerial photographs and relocated it within the confines of a blank page. This effort to conjure vast geographies with economical gestures is both literal and metaphorical in intent. But *Rio Grande* references more than nature. The river's 1,900 mile length defines the border between the US and Mexico. This highly contested natural divide is a place of dangerous exodus for the many illegal immigrants who risk death to cross its currents. It is what the artist calls "an American Rubicon."<sup>9</sup>Northridge, however, eschews an overly political interpretation of his work. He is open to the viewpoint each visitor brings to bear upon his art.

The Rio Grande, like Niagara Falls in John Stoney's work on the opposite side of the Museum's atrium, is always changing. The natural boundaries of both bodies of water constantly shift, and with them the contours of our national boundaries. Both artworks speak to the passage of time and a state of flux that is not often associated with the idea of national borders. Together they engage dialogue about the evolution of the United States itself, geological time, and its long slow process of nevertheless dramatic change.

-RT

<sup>9</sup> Northridge artist's statement, 2012.

**John Stoney**, *You Can't Go Home Again*, 2005  
(Scale model of the American side of Niagara Falls with Moby-Dick)  
Courtesy of the artist