Ding Ren

\textit{when a line becomes a mountain}
Upominki
Kapelstraat 32, Rotterdam, NL
October 20 - 28, 2012
Opening: October 19, 19:00 – 21:00

i went to the beach and stared west
Amsterdams Centrum voor Fotografie
Bethaniënstraat 39, Amsterdam, NL
November 3 - 24, 2012
Opening: November 3, 17:00 – 19:00

I used to draw straight lines. I searched for them in green fields and followed their traces. I projected them onto walls and looked for them in library book titles. Living in the Netherlands, I no longer draw straight lines. The topography is flat. The search is unnecessary because the line is already there. It is in the horizon that is visible all around. It extends beyond the green farmland and into the sea. It keeps going. I was born in China but moved to the United States at a young age. These two lands, rooted in varied topography and vast wilderness have influenced my mindset and identity. I grew up on the hyphen, in-between Chinese-American. Here, I am either Chinese or American. The line connecting the two is no longer relevant. Instead, it has become a curved topographic line—an absent mountain that I now yearn for.

The beach town, Praia das Maçãs in Portugal is at the same degrees latitude (38.8° N) as Washington, DC, my former home. It is also the furthest point West on continental Europe. I traveled to this point specifically so that I could stand on the beach and stare west, at the same latitude as the city I used to call home. Growing up on the East coast of the United States, I have always gone to the beach and stared east. Now that I am living on the other side of the Atlantic, I can go to the beach and stare west. I still face the same Atlantic Ocean, but from another direction, from Europe to North America, instead of vise versa. This change in direction is a small gesture, but it represents a new point of view—a shift in perception that is both connected and separated to the old one by an invisible latitude line.

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The exhibitions, \textit{when a line becomes a mountain} at Upominki and \textit{i went to the beach and stared west} at ACF are the first showing of photographs from the \textit{Topographic Mindset} project. The photographs represent a selection taken while traveling throughout Europe, SouthEast Asia, and North America in the past two years. The series examines the relationship between topography, identity, and place. All photographs in the exhibitions are hand-printed chromogenic prints made in the last remaining independent darkroom in Amsterdam.