Gabriel de Guzman: You visited Wave Hill for the first time this past winter. What was your initial inspiration for this project? How did you decide you were going to approach the subject spatially?

Isidro Blasco: When I first visited Wave Hill—it was in December 2011—I walked down the hill and around the path toward the main house [Glyndor House]. I remember very clearly the feeling of open space. I also had a feeling of clarity. It’s difficult to explain, but I imagine it must have been the distribution of those enormous trees, along with the smaller ones, and the thousands of branches, as well as the light coming from the south. I felt the space around me very vividly, like it was vibrating. I remember thinking that whoever designed that garden knew what he or she was doing.

It was only a few weeks later that I first visited the other side of the river, the Palisades. And the same sense of open space was also there. It felt like nature in its original state. The trees had no leaves on them, and the rocks were totally exposed. That is exactly what I was looking for; I needed sharp edges in my subjects. They needed to be there for me to visualize the volumes that I could bring out in the photographs.

How does working with the natural landscape differ from working with the urban streetscapes that you have portrayed in your previous work?

It was totally different. If I had a tree in one of my cityscape pictures, I would just work as if it wasn’t there—the same with people and even cars. I always take photos of the buildings in the streets and later cut through the sharp edges of the sides of buildings and other elements of the built environment. This gives me the volume that I am looking for. In this case, where almost nothing was man-made, I didn’t know what I was going to do at first, but I did have that first, pleasant impression of perceiving space, just the empty air between me and the trees, branches and rocks. Of course, I have been doing art for many years, so I do have a few tools in my bag, and taking the pictures in the winter was key. I went back a few months ago, when it was springtime, and all I saw were walls of greenery—which is great, but I would not know what to do with that. So it was a challenge, but I did find a way to represent that space.

What is your process? How did you decide what to include and not to include in the collage?

I do have a method when I first take the images. I stand in one place and take photos all around me, then I move to a different location and I repeat, taking photos all around me. This time, I tried to keep an order and walk only a few feet until I’d stop to take photos again; but very soon, I found myself wandering around the different paths of the Palisades and just taking photos of places that looked interesting. Later, at the studio, when I developed and printed all the images, I tried to keep the images together that belonged to the same scene; however, I often found myself mixing different parts of the landscape. I tried to keep a method, but in the end I made decisions based on intuition. I am not really trying to create a complete picture but rather trying to capture the visual and spatial experience.

How does photography function in your work? How do you use it in conjunction with the sculptural and architectural elements in your work?

I use photography because it is the best way to express the way we look at reality. I am really not a photographer in a traditional way. I take photos because I need to look at them later when I am at the studio and need to “feel” the space that is represented in the images; and I think by cutting and popping up the images, I can better achieve that same sense of space. That is why in most of my installations, the photographs tend to surround the spectator.

The photographs you used in this installation are mostly black and white with splashes of color. How did you think about color?

I was looking for sharp edges on the trees and rocks, and I started adding more and more contrast to the images. I also experimented with monochrome images, using yellow, green, blue and red. I decided to use color sparingly, the same way you would see buildings painted in colors in an almost homogeneous-looking street. This is actually a recurrent thing in Bushwick, where I have my studio, so maybe it comes from the streetscape that I see every day.