



Postcards from/at Donde Rebotan Los Sueños*

*Where Dreams Hit the Wall by Rogelio Alejandro Lopez and Emilia Yang

Postcards from/at *Donde Rebotan Los Sueños* is an installation composed of an assemblage of pictures and video interviews that traces both real and imagined immigration and border experiences of both sides of the wall that divides Tijuana and San Diego. Each component is an exploration of how project collaborators and people at the site feel this division, becoming a multi-voiced shifting mosaic of ways to consider and live the border. Opening up intersubjective exchanges through dialogues and encounters, the installation is a place for people to wander in and respond to a landscape of images, ideas, and stories about the border wall.

Growing out of a collaboration with Univision's Fusion brand, this project aimed to capitalize on the attention to the US-Mexico border, an ongoing global refugee crisis, and Donald Trump's racist and xenophobic 2016 election campaign through a benefit concert called "Rise Up As One". In a political climate where a presidential candidate mobilized his base through an alarmist and nativist discourse, calling for mass deportations and insisting on a crisis along the southern border, the goal of our research team and collaborators was to document the lived experiences of those directly affected by the U.S.-Mexico border and its policies, including communities in the United States and Mexico. Such an effort required an international partnership between students and educators in Tijuana from Iberoamericana University México and Los Angeles from USC.

Challenging the wall's attempt to divide people and cultures that permeate it, our first phase consisted of Mexican students in Tijuana documenting life along the border and the physical structure itself with photography, as a means to create a bi-national dialogue about its impact on envisioning the world. Our student partners photographed that which is often overlooked- the casual ways people live along the border, the artisan communities making a living from cross-border traffic, and recently arrived refugees (from Haiti and countless other places) forging meaning and community despite displacement. These photographs, and their powerful imagery and symbolism, served as the substance for an international dialogue when shown to the attendees of Univision's "Rise Up As One" concert in San Diego, California.

The photographs created by our Mexican partners, which were transnational in nature despite only traveling mere miles northward, became "postcards" and

were presented to attendees of the Rise Up As One event. Researchers from USC's Civic Paths presented the postcards to concertgoers inviting them to interpret the images and to share their own experiences with life along the border. They also were able to send messages to the student photographers that took the pictures. Responses ranged from stories about families separated by deportation, to what the wall itself symbolizes in terms of dreams and aspirations. One photograph in particular evoked the strongest emotions and reactions, which depicted the border wall with the words "Aquí es donde rebotan los sueños/This is where dreams hit the wall." As with the art installation itself, we used the concept of the civic imagination ("What is the civic imagination?" <https://www.civicimaginationproject.org>) to guide our dialogue and to facilitate a speculative space for the border, teasing out aspirations and fears for the future.

The video, photographs, audio recordings, and written responses (captured through printed postcards) from our bi-national project comprise the content of this living installation, with the hope of recreating the space of reflection and dialogue surrounding the border that our collaborators experienced in Tijuana, Mexico and San Diego, California. We situate this experiment as a living (Gaudenzi, 2013), participatory and open space documentary (DeMichiel and Zimmerman, 2013), since these theoretical models invoke collaboration, multiple iterations, decentralization and migration across media platforms and through distinct communities where multiple agency, fluidity, permeability, and mutability are key.

In collaboration with Andrea Alarcon, Linda Artola, Luciana Chamorro, Viviana Bernal, TJ Billard, Elsa Alejandra del Callejo, Ana Luz Duarte, Yomna Elsayed, Brooklyne Gipson, Henry Jenkins, Sara Jiménez, Molly Jones, Rogelio Alejandro López, Pablo Martínez Zárate, Miguel Parro, Gabriel Peters-Lazaro, Paola Saracho, Sangita Shresthova, Gustavo Vargas, Emilia Yang, Sulafa Zidani

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