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## inSite\_\_05: Art Practices in the Public Domain

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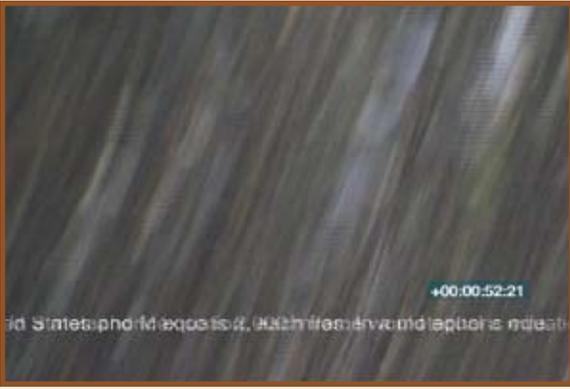
# inSite\_05: Art Practices in the Public Domain San Diego Tijuana

Magaly Ponce



**inSite** is a network of contemporary art programs and commissioned projects that map the liminal border zone of San Diego-Tijuana. One of those programs is Scenarios, which examines the artistic practice in a public domain that transcends urban spatial locations as well as sites of action that require the convening of an audience. Within Scenarios there were three intangible time-based practices including ELLIPSIS, a live visual and sound image event, curated by electronic musician and filmmaker Hans Fjellestad. A group of four artists were invited to generate a collaborative art project: Damon Holzborn, New York City, USA; Liisa Lounila, Helsinki, Finland; Magaly Ponce, Providence, USA; Ivan Díaz Robledo, Tijuana, Mexico.





The artists chose the Caliente dog-track in Tijuana Mexico as the final location for the live visual and sound event. ■ There were three residencies leading up to the one night event. Here the artists collected materials, defined specific logistic, techr share observations about the border area. I became interested in creating a satellite drawing of a Tijuana stray dog's whereabouts. I used this as a parallel project to understand the Tijuana culture, research new technologies and reflect on the issues of free will.

■ On one hand I was working with the limiting and pre-defined paths of the racing dogs, yet on the other hand the free and random path of the stray dog. I used this metaphor to evoke both countries' unequal wealth and access to technology. Technology has the potential to create a spectacle out of meaningless events, and to exercise power over them by becoming an omnipresent surveyor. It was our technology and budget that allowed us to change the stray dog's future, and in result it ironically became an animal that would no longer stray. This applied an element of surprise and humor to the project. ■ The process to track the stray dog was technologically unavailable in Tijuana at the time, yet available in alternative locations around the world. BSC Prof. Uma Shama recommended I work with computer science student, Ethan Heilman, who worked at the GeoLab at the Moakley Center. We researched and tested numerous options, and by the end of the summer 2005 Google Earth released international maps that allowed the project to be feasible. The satellite drawing was then implemented successfully in Tijuana and the documentation of the experience later became part of the 'video' for the collaborative performance. ■ Each artist generated

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his or her individual work that would later feed the common project. The individual material was re-processed conceptually, formally and collectively assembled into a ninety-minute video and sound performance. The event took place on a Saturday night on September 2005 at the Caliente dog track. The performance involved two computers, six DVD players, two video mixing boards, one sound board, three live video cameras, one live microphone, speakers, nine TV sets, three 16 feet projection

screens, and free local beer. ■ The audience was a mix of the art community of Tijuana, San Diego, as well as the local gamblers. ■ The dog track became a space with a multiplicity of meanings and metaphoric associations; a space of spectacle embodying the transaction of hopes and monies. ■ The elliptic cycle is a visual reminder of cycles of life, of money transactions, of the flux of language, the flow of energy and the passage of time. The dirt registers the imprint of the dogs' steps; they stay as evidence of the race, waiting to be re-written. The collaboration between the artists created a project that was cohesive, political, dynamic, profound and humorous, yet its ephemeral nature contrasted to the reality of the San Diego-Tijuana border.

—Magaly Ponce is Assistant Professor of Art.

