

MIT School of Architecture and Planning

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Border Crossings

A Traveling Archive of Work on Immigration, Migrant Labor and More

Ute Meta Bauer, head of the Visual Arts Program in the Department of Architecture, has curated a timely project focused on issues involving immigration politics, migrant labor, class, gender, race and the cultural diversity that constitutes border zones and border life.

Conceived as part of *inSite_05*, a contemporary art program organized by cultural and educational institutions in the US and Mexico, the idea is being developed now for the border of Austria and Slovakia and will likely be transferred in time to other border zones, as well.

With support from the Goethe-Institut Mexiko, Bauer's *Transborder Archive* created interactive situations in San Diego and Tijuana in an attempt to draw connections between researchers and activists on both sides of the border, and existing archives of their work. The aim was to make their work better known not only to each other but also to various audiences in Mexico and the United States, and to international visitors. The project was executed in collaboration with associate curator Elke Zobl and intern Haydee Jimenez.

The effort consisted of three parts: two stationary exhibits - one at Tijuana's Centro Cultural and another at San Diego's Athenaeum Music & Arts Library - and a mobile unit that moved between organizations and institutions on both sides of the border.

The stationary exhibits, drawn from private and public collections, covered such topics as labor, environmental issues, migration and human rights, questions of identity, women's rights and youth culture in the border region. The mobile unit combined printed matter such as texts, books, postcards and photos with online resources, films, videos and oral histories; by visiting different localities in San Diego and Tijuana, about fifteen over the course of three months, it facilitated events, discussions and film screenings addressing a wide range of issues and audiences.

As a model for future efforts, *Transborder Archive* could serve to make the structural similarities and specific differences of border regions more visible. A long-term outcome could be an international archive of materials from different border regions around the world, including the Palestinian-Israeli border, the Indian-Pakistani border, the Sino-Vietnamese border and the border region between Norway, Finland and Russia.

The *inSite* program has been commissioning site specific art projects in the San Diego-Tijuana border region for the past twelve years. Curated by artistic director Osvaldo Sanchez, *inSite_05* included more than 100 artists, theoreticians, curators, architects and promoters from around the world. The program included 22 projects by artists from 13 countries, including new works in three arenas not traditionally associated with the visual arts.

In addition to *Transborder Archive*, the program included an online project, *Tijuana Calling*, curated by Mark Tribe, that enlisted an international roster of artists for an online exhibit of interactive, web-based projects; and a sound and image project, *Ellipsis*, curated by Hans Fjellestad, that unfolded as a

multimedia performance/ spectacle.

inSite_05 also included four television broadcasts of *On Translation: Miedo/Fear* by Antoni Muntadas, a visiting professor in MIT's Visual Arts Program. As part of InSite2000, the *Cecut Project* was presented by Krzysztof Wodiczko, a senior faculty member in the Visual Arts Program and director of MIT's Center for Advanced Visual Studies.

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