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## Human cannonball set to hit Mexico border

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SAN DIEGO: David Smith Sr holds a world record for the longest distance travelled by a human fired from a cannon. He planned to add to his cannonball coups by shooting himself across the US-Mexico border later yesterday.

The feat is the brainchild of Venezuelan artist Javier Tellez and inaugurates a series of public art projects in the two border cities of San Diego and Tijuana, Mexico.

Smith will be shot from a Tijuana beach over a rusty, corrugated metal fence into a park in San Diego. David Smith Jr, also an accomplished human cannonball, said his father will be the first person to fly across an international border from a cannon.

Tellez organised the event with psychiatric patients at the Baja California Mental Health Center in Mexicali, Mexico, as a therapeutic project. It is part of an art series that was to begin later yesterday and will run through the fall, sponsored by in Site05, a binational arts partnership in the border region.

The artist said in a statement he was inspired by circus performers to explore "the notion of spatial and mental borders in the context of Tijuana and San Diego."

Tellez, 36, and Smith Sr worked closely on the backdrop, music, costumes and advertising for the project, "One Flew Over the Void." Although it is illegal for anyone to enter the US outside an official port of entry, US Border Patrol Chief David Aguilar made an exception for Smith Sr, a patrol spokesman said. Smith Jr, 28, said the family insisted on the government's approval. "I had to have some kind of official OK high enough up to make sure he doesn't land in the US and go to a federal penitentiary," he said.

Smith Sr, of Half Way, Missouri, is listed in Guinness World Records for record distance for a human fired from a cannon. He flew 185 feet, 10 inches, (56.64 metres) on May 29, 1998, in West Mifflin, Pennsylvania.

The Smith family has five cannonballs: father, son, two daughters and a cousin. Smith Sr built seven cannons designed to fire humans, and his family operates five of them, travelling around the world to perform at events including parades and concerts, his son said.

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