

Animal Vegetable Mineral: Comida para su Sombrero

a

Collaboration Experiment

For the occasion of inSite '94 we have engaged in a yearlong collaboration. During this time we have arranged our experiences of two sites, two countries, and two personal histories into an installation that occurs simultaneously on either side of the U.S.-Mexico border. Although we are very conscious of the politics and more importantly the realities of this border, much of the emphasis in this work exists around the utilization of found materials, poetry, and ritual as they collide with the history of our two specific installations. To fully experience this work, one must see both sites.

El Sótano, the Mexico Site:

El Sótano, formerly a small family owned mop factory, was the site of our one month residency in the city of Tijuana. During this time we explored the subterranean factory (filled with cotton, dust, and piles of machine parts), reinventing uses for the raw material we found. This musty cement womb has now become the locus of a fictionalized domestic space of invented structures, and hybrid languages, that speak both to the direction of our collaboration before arriving for our residency and to the community surrounding El Sótano, many of whom contributed to our time spent there with a warm generosity of spirit. Without doubt, the opportunity to *live* and *work* in Tijuana - our daily walks to la ferreteria, los taquerias and Parque Guerrero permeated our work and broadened our sense of Tijuana and its living rhythms.

The Museum of Natural History, Balboa Park:

Throughout this cumulative art experiment, we have been making and mapping our own "natural histories" in the midst of a living working process. Using the camera as a participant, we performed (over the course of one year) a series of actions/rituals that allude to a history of human presence in the landscape.

We see the Museum of Natural History as a kind of cultural portrait. A way of telling story about what situates us amongst the genus and species of the physical world. In contrast, our efforts have been to cultivate our own version of a collection, and to shift the parameters that divide human beings from the natural world. In a sense, the opposite of collecting bugwings, dinosaur molars and Dire Wolf skeletons.

The Inter-relatedness Of The Two Sites:

Much of the collaborative aspect of this piece is rooted in acknowledgments of **place** (two countries), **ritual** (personal mythology), and **history** (amnesia). Rather than simply go to another country and create an art work, our decision to make a piece that co-exists in the U.S. and Mexico, seemed to us a more apt set of conditions for the cultural fusion that characterizes this particular region; as well as the fusion of our own cultural heritages in the nurturing and resistance of collaboration.

By creating a work that encourages a voyage between two spaces and a physical crossing of 'la linea', we sought to have our piece disperse into the viewer's own experience and imagination as they witness a connectivity between two simultaneous art works separated by time, space, and governing body.

Storytelling forms a skin between these two places. Whereas the Museum of Natural History houses a certain human effort to arrange the evidence, our performances and object arrangements are an ongoing story/response to the world around us, recognizing that we are but one element in an evolutionary spiral.