



Butterfly Wall section

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: "The Welcome Wall"
Where: The National Butterfly Center
When: No specific de-installation plans

Art Against the Wall

This amazing project speaks out against Trump's proposed 2,000-mile Border Wall between the United States and Mexico.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

World renowned street artist Ron English has brought his visual art genius our way once again. English has invited other street artists to join him in creating a "Welcome Wall" along the U.S.-Mexico border as a counterpoint move against Trump's projected 2,000-mile, "big beautiful wall". The RGV wall section represents a powerful creative response to the White House's proposed destruction of habitat in the Wildlife Conservation Corridor and affirms international friendship. The colorfully irreverent wall is designed to be a conceptual message board for an ongoing discussion about the border, wall, wildlife and immigration issues. The first section of the border Welcome Wall was completed in Mission at the National Butterfly Center on April 26. A thousand artists from Mexico and the United States have agreed to participate in the proposed 2,000-mile project. An independent funding campaign is underway on Indiegogo.

Marianna Treviño Wright, Director of the National Butterfly Center, stated, "Unlike the 36-foot concrete slab and street bollard wall with which our habitat is threatened, the Welcome Wall will have ample space underneath the panels to allow for the free

migration of javelinas, Texas tortoises, bobcats, and ocelots to their water source – the Rio Grande river.”

Located away from the entrance of the reserve through the brush towards the river, this wall section consists of works by seven wall-artists. Reading like connected billboards, beautiful and relevant paintings on plywood sheets rise two-feet above the ground. A small, friendly, white picket fence atop the wall runs its length. Each invited artist was given one-hundred feet of wall space to present a different perspective of the border situation in which we currently find ourselves. Artists with an intimate relationship with the issue of the border wall and immigration are the soul of the artistic concept, but the ecology has not been ignored. Wall-artists who joined English for this section include Anat Ronen, Jessica Monroe, Helena Martin, The Ghost, Federico Archuleta, The Deathhead, Jose Ramirez, and Jason Perez. Ronen, a Houston-based artist, painted a powerful and emotionally effective symbol of friendship imaging clasped hands, appropriately dramatized by Monarch butterflies. Austin-based Martin’s large contribution, “Coyote and Boy”, deals with children and immigration. “Coyote is a name for people who bring people across the border illegally,” she explained, “so I was going for a double entendre.” Feeling that children are the most abused demographic in the world and also the ones who are hurt the most by what’s going on at the border, she wanted to intermingle the boy and the coyote. English’s own art has always been about freedom of thought, and his own sections reflect biting commentaries on immigration and freedom issues. His large painting of butterflies at first seems decorative; then the feeling that something’s not quite right kicks in - they are depicted flat against a brick wall.

Although the project is being independently funded, English said that not only would his wall be more beautiful than Trump’s, but Mexico would pay for it. And sure enough, he has received offers of support from several Mexican millionaires who want to provide construction crews and purchase property for the project. Their interest lies mostly in the Baja California area. “These things are official and take a long time,” said English. “It took us four months to get the permit in Brownsville. Things move slowly. But the offer from Mexico is still on the table. And yeah, they’re going to pay for the wall.”

English coined the term POPaganda to describe his signature mash-up of high and low cultural touchstones, from superhero mythology to totems of art history. On this wall, we have his alien, Trump, both political parties, the Statue of Liberty as an ethnic victim, and warnings about Fascism. And there is also the boy white enough to be allowed into the United States.

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