



Greetings from the Border by Kerianne Quick

SURFACE TREATMENT

With COVID-19 rebounding and slowing gallery openings, we will keep your art experiences alive by looking back at some memorable shows. Today we revisit an international exhibition of contemporary jewelry from 2013 whose theme was the Texas-Mexico borderlands.

La Frontera: An Exhibition of Contemporary Jewelry

Ninety artists representing twenty-one countries showed works in Mexico City informed by the U.S.-Mexico borderland.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

Is the whole world watching our border? It certainly seemed like it at the showing, "La Frontera: An Exhibition of Contemporary Jewelry", displayed at the Museo Franz Mayer in Mexico City. I felt right at home in this remarkable exposition. Ninety artists representing twenty-one countries showed works speaking of the U.S.-Mexico borderland. In their curator's statement, Mike Holmes, Lorena Lazard, and Elizabeth Shypertt affirmed, "La Frontera is the physical space where the relationship between the U.S. and Mexico is most evident."

The thematic impetus of the exhibit focused on current issues of border life. An interesting statistic: 25% of the artists identified themselves as being from more than a single country; these are people already sensitive to international borders. The artists'

statements posted next to their respective works allowed viewers to step into the mind and heart of the creator, facilitating a deeper understanding of the significance of the image. Artistic inspirations are often revealing for those of us who may not have had personal experience with borderland issues, but think we know it all by mere proximity.

"Not the dazzling jewels that adorn like a princess' trophy, the millionaire's wife, or the drug trafficker's desire," commented Benito Taibo, noted Mexican writer. Indeed, the variety of expressive materials used in this showing could merit a discussion of its own. Isn't preciousness always subjective?

"Different from Myself," a brooch by Alja Neuner, Austria, visualized an extended wooden shadow falling behind a tiny silver figure. It speaks of the immigrant who leaves an identity behind, but has yet to find a new one.

A stunning collar, "Somos Frontera (We are all border people)," by Andrés Fonseca, Mexico, appropriated the actual shape of the Border frontier, rendering it in felt. He is enclosed by it. A rack of souvenir key fobs by Kerianne Quick, USA, presented AP photo images of thirty-seven most wanted drug lords in "Greetings from Mexico!" Ramón Puig Cuyàs from Spain presented an abstract expression with his brooch, "Silent Conversations Beside the Wall III."

USA artist, Holland Houdek, addressed an unexpected issue. Her brooch, "Removal of the Larynx-Laryngectomy Tube", was informed by the complex export regulations combined with the drug problems, which created bureaucratic hold-ups at the Border crossing (over 70% of such implants used in the Mexican medical industry come from the United States).

Many pieces commemorating the hardships and deaths of immigrants were on display, and the Border Fence also played its role in creative body ornamentation. Among the arresting Fence-inspired designs was a set of three brooches, "Passing Through", by Brigid O'Hanrahan, USA. "They represent three different ways of looking at the border," she explained. "I saw it as a story - the first is closed, but you can see through. The middle one is breaking through, where you can make passage. In the third one, the border is open; you're welcome.

The exhibition's modestly scaled works explode with big ideas, as "La Frontera" offers relevant and often poignant viewpoints regarding the

social, economic, and transient nature of the U.S.-Mexico borderland. With these works, adornment seems to be a by-product of the creative process, with a range of materials and inspirations coming together to produce fresh insights and visualizations.

After its debut in Mexico City, "La Frontera" traveled to Velvet da Vinci Gallery in San Francisco, The Center for Contemporary Craft in Houston, and had its final showing at the Museum of Art and Design in NYC.

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