

Pushing Border Art's borders (Mexico City, 31 Jan 25)

Mexico City, Palacio de la Autonomía + online, Jan 31, 2025

Deadline: Dec 15, 2024

Anne-Laure Amilhat Szary & Andrea Masala

Pushing Border Art's borders.

Call for papers / artistic presentations.

Symposium in Mexico City, Jan. 31st, 2025

+ monthly series of online conversations.

Organizers: Anne-Laure Amilhat Szary (Université Grenoble Alpes)

Andrea Masala (Université Grenoble Alpes & Università di Genova)

On the occasion of the opening of the Explorando fronteras / Exploring borders exhibition to be held at the Palacio de la Autonomía (Ciudad de México, Fundación UNAM) from January 29th to March 15th, 2025, co-curated by Anne-Laure Amilhat Szary, Andrea Masala and the Procuraduría collective, we are hosting a scientific and artistic series of events.

We are witnessing a growing number of artworks dealing with the specific geopolitical issues raised by international borders, be them "art on the border, art born from the border, art against the border, etc." (Amilhat Szary, 2012). These are challenged by artists working on different kinds of borders. Is there any relationship between art produced about these very differently scaled boundaries? If so, which? This question has been for decades at the center of the discussion amongst different actors from both the art world and from academia, to the point that the term "Border Art" has been widely adopted to encompass the multiplicity of approaches and the diversity of art forms in different parts of the world. "Border Art" was coined in 1984 on the US/Mexico border, by the art collective Border Art Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo (BAW/TAF) (Sheren 2015). For them, it was meant to challenge the dominant representations of one of the main geopolitical divides on the planet through artistic creations. Recent violent bordering processes seem to have stemmed Border Art worldwide. Those pieces connect in different, complex and complementary ways, to the point that the term Border Art has gone global to encompass them. However, this term remains very wide, yet too limited. As Border Art seems to be developing into both "a wider audio-visual and artistic sphere produced at, against, and about geo-political and conceptual borders" (Masala, 2022), it may be time to collectively question these categories. From a critical and de-colonial perspective, we may question what circumscribing Border Art to an aesthetic category performs. Does Border Art function as a category offering new potential horizons? What new forms of determinisms and exclusions does it create? What if Border Art existed only to be queered? Different perspectives and disciplines (geography, social sciences, art history, literature and linguistics, etc.) will certainly provide a variety of nuanced answers to these interrogations. Critical social scientists have pointed out that "Border thinking" (Mignolo 2012, Tlostanova

et al., 2016) takes the peripheral perspective to reframe understanding, acting and creating. From this epistemic point of view, the border appears as a concept and a method (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013), beyond its traditional geopolitical dimensions. Border Art maintains a very strong link with politics, if only because of its frequent proximity to geopolitical sites, but also because it challenges the main, male-dominated narratives of geopolitical divides (Alonso Gómez et al., 2023). It offers a potential emancipatory space that many artists are exploring. However, while participating in the spectacularization of borders, it may not always be as radical as it claims. This inherent tension, as well as the contradictions of the market branding and commercialization of such artworks have to be questioned too. Does Border Art have the agency and power to truly transform borders? What kind of art is produced in relation to borders? Does it have a common denominator or not? We will also ask ourselves whether Border Art has borders, and which. Most Border Art deals with the dynamics of de/re/bordering and walling. But a lot of recent artworks deal with migration: can these be considered Border Art and why? What does the climate crisis and global systemic problems – such as a pandemic – change for Border Art? Can this sphere express radical approaches to geopolitics and borders, such as a perspective from the Autonomy of Migrations and Noborders struggles?

We are looking for papers addressing all kinds of artistic expressions, be them visual, aural, and musical, digital, cinematographic, theatrical, literary or poetic... if not synesthetic. We, therefore, welcome scientific papers that encompass pluri and trans-disciplinary perspectives. We also wish to gather artistic presentations that consider or not themselves as border artists. What does it mean for them to be involved with borders? Who (or what) is a border artist? How do people who struggle with hard border regimes engage with Border Art, as producers and receivers?

If you are interested in a presentation in the conference, please send us an abstract (max. 700 words), with a short bio in Spanish or English by Dec. 15th, 2024 to contact exploringborders2025@gmail.com.

Please express your preference (in presence in Mexico on Jan. 31st, 2025, or during the course of the 2025 monthly online talks). Papers will be also attributed to the symposium or the online conversations according to their themes.

It is planned to publish the symposium's papers.

Open call deadline: Dec. 15th, 2024

Communication of acceptance: Dec 23rd, 2024

Date of the symposium: Jan. 31st, 2025

Location of the symposium: Palacio de la Autonomía, Centro Histórico, Ciudad de México, 06060

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