

EWA ANTOSZEK

U.S.–MEXICO BORDER RE-VISIONS:  
BORDER ARTIVISM IN TIME AND SPACE

In one of the most recent books on the frontier in the U.S. culture, *The End of the Myth: From the Frontier to the Border Wall in the Mind of America*, Greg Grandin analyzes the history of the frontier myth and U.S. expansionism, examining the transformations this spatial and metaphorical concept has undergone in time. His research, among others', aims at demythologizing the story of the border and Mexican-American relations enacted in that space. Consequently, Grandin provides explanations for specific vicissitudes of the borderlands and challenges the myths that have consequently arisen around this contested space. Throughout his analysis in general and in Chapter Nine, "A Fortress on the Frontier," in particular, Grandin emphasizes the incongruity of walling-off of what used to be an interdependent and interactive space and undermines the rationale of the border wall designed as a physical marker of the U.S.–Mexico border. Grandin's argument begins with general remarks about borders, how they "represent the absurdity of human efforts to force the concrete to conform to the abstract, to take the world as it is and try to make it be as it ought" (148) and at the same time how "they [borders] also announce the panic of power" (148). To reinforce the paradoxical and absurd character of borders Grandin evokes Robert Frost's words about the tenuous status of walls that are often quoted in the debates about borders and supports them with his observations regarding how "people do take enjoyment in efforts to subvert walls, especially when they are used to mark international boundaries" (149). His commentary resonates with Foucault's concept of limit and transgression—how the two are interrelated, as "[t]he limit and [the] transgression depend on each other ... a limit

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EWA ANTOSZEK, PhD, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Faculty of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, Department of American Literature and Culture; e-mail: [antoszek@umcs.edu.pl](mailto:antoszek@umcs.edu.pl); ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2714-3031>.

could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusions and shadows” (Foucault in Casey and Watkins 18). Grandin continues his discussion on border subversions, placing it in the particular context of the U.S.–Mexico border, and argues that even if acts of subversion are only temporary, they disrupt and change the dynamics of power in this space. Moreover, “[i]f people didn’t keep coming up with new ways to beat the border—tunnels, ramps, catapults, and homemade cannons (to launch bales of marijuana to the other side), Radio Shack drones—then the United States wouldn’t have to keep trying to find new ways to fortify the border” (Grandin 149).

These examples of challenging the wall echo various actions of activists and artists, who have questioned the validity of the existence of the wall at the U.S.–Mexico border and whose aim is to undermine the power and influence of the border markers. Therefore, what Grandin does from a historical and socio-political perspective has been part of activism on the border that responds to the urgency of issues related to this space. The scope of this paper does not allow a thorough analysis of the examples of border *artivism* dating back to the 1980s and the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which witnessed a plethora of artistic actions, happenings or performances, including the famous Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s *Border Brujo* and were subsequently examined by such critics as Claire Fox, Norma Iglesias-Prieto, Debra Castillo, María Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba, or Jo-Anne Berelowitz. The purpose of this analysis is to examine selected examples of the post-2000 border activism<sup>1</sup> with particular focus on how post-millennial re-visions of the border re-define this conflicted space and how the time-determined form of those activities influences the aforementioned transformations of the U.S.–Mexico border.

Works, actions and performances discussed in this article can be all categorized as examples of border *artivism*. Combining art with social activism, the first instances of border *artivism* date back to the 1990s in East Los Angeles and Mexico, respectively. As such the concept can be adapted to describe examples of border activism that have taken place on the U.S.–Mexico border and range in scope from simple, individual acts of defiance, which include graffiti slogans written directly on the border fence in response to current political events, to large-scale events that engage members of communities on both sides of the

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<sup>1</sup> The year 2000 is a turning point in many aspects, but in the context of this paper the post-millennial examples of border *artivism* have been much more numerous than in the previous decades, which has also been aggravated by new legislation on the border and the border wall that appeared after 2000.

border, require long logistical preparations and permits from the authorities. Consequently, some forms of border *artivism* will have a more informal character, while others are more formal. Border *artivism* also varies in terms of organization—there are events that are grassroots and spontaneous; others are coordinated and facilitated by a leader or leaders, who are usually artists and/or social workers. In either case the participation of the community members in an event is crucial. Apart from those differences all acts of border *artivism* share a common denominator, typical of such events: they all aim at challenging the divisive power of the border and turn it into a contact zone that facilitates dialogue. As well as drawing attention to the current problems at the U.S.–Mexico border, they not only reveal the complex and misaddressed questions of immigration, human rights or environmental destruction but they also attempt at re-writing the story of this conflicted space.

One of the earliest transgressive initiatives aimed at subverting the existence of the material marker at the U.S.–Mexico border is graffiti written directly on the corrugated fence, or on the fragments of the already erected wall separating the two countries. It can be of both formal and informal character, depending on whether its authors act as individuals or work in groups or during some actions. Edward Casey and Mary Watkins in their analysis of border-wall art, refer to one of the most frequently photographed slogans that was written on the fence in Nogales, Mexico, “Fronteras: Cicatrizes en la Tierra” (Borders: Scars on the Land), which immediately evokes Anzaldúa’s description of the U.S.–Mexico border as “*una herida abierta* [an open wound] where the third World grates against the first and bleeds” (25). At the same time, this statement is an apt commentary on the absurdity of borders in general and their detrimental and divisive effect on the land in particular; a concept illustrated in the work of a Chicana artist, Consuelo Jiménez Underwood. In one of her installations from the *Borderlines* series—“Flowers, Borders, and Threads, Oh My!”—Underwood depicts the border “as a horrific scar that slashes across the world ... a stark depiction of the future. When border-phobia prevails, and all the flowers are hovering across the land as Spirit” ([www.consuelojunderwood.com](http://www.consuelojunderwood.com)).

Border-wall graffiti includes slogans undermining the rationale of the fence/wall such as “#No Walls” and its Spanish equivalent “#No Muros” which was featured in Tijuana, to more complex slogans that are often a reaction to current political events, such as new waves of deportations of migrants, more restrictive legislation on immigration, the separation of families or individual examples of violence and oppression against border crossers. In some areas known as particularly perilous for those who cross the border illegally, the fence slabs

are transformed into the memorial wall for those who died or disappeared while crossing the U.S.–Mexico border. Their names are listed on the fence, resembling the lists on war memorials and simultaneously serving as a commemoration of many more whose names are often not known or whose bodies have never been found. In some places, including Tijuana, graffiti writers address directly the issue of deaths on the border, for example postulating: “Ni Una Muerte Mas! Reforma Ya!” (Not one more death! Reform now!) which “is the slogan of Border Angels, a nonprofit organization focused on American immigration reform and reducing the number of immigrant deaths in the Tijuana-San Diego area” (“US-Mexico Border”). These appeals are sometimes combined with piled-up crosses hung directly on the fence, which have a striking effect on the viewer, as they vividly illustrate the numbers of deaths on the border. Those crosses acquire additional symbolism on the border in Ciudad Juárez, where they are installed on the fence as a grim reminder of the phenomena of femicide that began in the 1990s; as such they function as this permanent reminder of the destruction and violence the border generates.

On the other hand, the wall performs also as a canvas featuring more uplifting messages. Enrique Chiu, the initiator of The Mural of Brotherhood, “is leading a bi-national effort to turn the fence into a work of art that spreads a message of hope to people who cross the border” (Grozdanic). His *artivism* includes graffiti messages and a mural “expected to stretch more than a mile in Tijuana and shorter spans in Tecate, Mexicali, Ciudad Juarez, Naco and Reynosa” (Grozdanic) and whose aim is to “create an artistic riposte to Trump’s nationalist and anti-immigrant politics” (Grozdanic). This project is a reaction to a political situation regarding both the U.S.–Mexico border and the question of immigration in general. Its aim is also to mobilize the whole community—to proliferate messages about the effects the wall has on communities, environment, and people living in the shadow of the wall but also to counter detrimental effects through the action that turns this space into a contact zone.

A similar undertaking has been conducted by a group of artists and activists in Tijuana/San Diego. Jill Marie Holslin, “an American artist and professor who lives in Tijuana” (Woods), together with the Overpass Light Brigade group project lights that shine messages looking like graffiti on border-wall prototypes. Similar to graffiti slogans on the wall these messages pertain to the current situation at the border. The choice of mottos is very telling, as they range from those protesting against the proposed wall (“Build Bridges, Not Borders”), to others commenting on the U.S. immigration policies (“Refugees Welcome Here,” with a silhouette of the Statue of Liberty underneath; “#NoOneIs Illegal”),

to those aimed at drawing more attention to border issues. “¡LLEGALE!” reads one of the slogans, accompanied by a cartoon-like drawn/light-projected figure of a person with their hands up as if caught by the Border Patrol. The immediate connotation this projection evokes is that of an illegal immigrant crossing the border, but in fact the message it conveys is the opposite: “Llegale” means “Come in” in Spanish (Morrissey). This is an intended pun, as Holslin observes and combined with other projections, such as the ladder image “propped” against the border wall prototype that allows for a transgression of the wall they serve to challenge and subvert the divisive potential of the wall. The artist confirms such a role of light graffiti and she explains: “You can think of it as power games but you can also think of it as the long tradition of the clown and clowning around, using humor to deflate the power of an over-leaning government” (Morrissey). Holslin’s comparison of the role of the artists and activists working at the U.S.–Mexico border to that of a clown evokes inescapably its reiteration: the figure of the court jester, who was sanctioned to reveal that the emperor had no clothes. As such the artists and activists are both entitled to and obliged to speak out about what happens in this conflicted space and thereby reveal the stories of the silent and the silenced. In this sense the function of border wall graffiti slogans and mottos is analogous to the “Black Lives Matter” graffiti sprayed on the Confederate monuments and memorials across the U.S., which has been described by some critics as an act of sheer vandalism, but which for most commentators is an example of the re-vision of history through “artivism” (Schierbecker).

Border graffiti is a good example of transgressive *artivism*, as in most cases it presumes that the act of writing will take place directly on the border fence or wall (with the exception of the Overpass Light Brigade’s actions) that should remain “untouchable,” which is reinforced by the growing militarization and surveillance of this location. Moreover, graffiti writing is performed by community members from both sides of the border. It often allows them to vent their emotions, especially in reaction to particular events taking place in the region or address border-related issues that appear on the national level. It frequently involves both anonymous, “undercover” actions and more public acts of tagging or writing, though it has to be noted that parallel to the increasing militarization of the U.S.–Mexico border, such activities occur less frequently, as the access to the fence is oftentimes prohibited by the Border Patrol, which at the same time makes such operations even more subversive.

The temporal aspect of these actions is very significant, as they are often conducted in an impromptu manner and characterized by immediacy, in a sense

that graffiti slogans or commentaries appear on the fence/wall as a reaction to political changes soon afterwards those events take place. As such, these acts lack convoluted preparations and thus may seem “undone” or unfinished, yet this to-the-moment reaction to the event or action that has triggered the response is its main asset. In other words, it allows activists to voice their concerns or opinions without the filter of time that might change the form and content of expression or make some reactions obsolete. Consequently, graffiti immediately brings to light issues that would be otherwise silenced and does so directly on the canvas of the border fence/wall. Through their transgressive actions graffiti writers re-write mainstream renderings of the border and raise awareness about the possible stories behind that construct, including those tales that are not included in the official accounts.<sup>2</sup> Their presence directly on the fence and consequently in various media helps draw the attention of larger audiences to the situation at the border and thus enables these stories to be heard, potentially, all over the world.

Other projects aimed at re-visioning the border include actions and performances taking place on or near the border. They mainly involve artists, activists and ordinary citizens from both sides of the border, but some are coordinated by artists from different parts of the world, which implies the urgency of the problem of borders in the contemporary world in general and hints specifically at the pressing issue of the U.S.–Mexico border. Those projects are another type of border *artivism*; the actions are mediated, or moderated by the leaders, yet at the same time they emphasize the participation of border community members. Finally, with respect to the temporal aspects of these projects, they are negotiated in time, thereby missing the impromptu character of graffiti yet gaining the aforementioned performative function, where the border is transformed from a canvas into a stage.

One of such projects is “The Giant Picnic” organized by JR—an artist who authored a famous installation that may be called “Kikito—the Dreamer,” which was placed directly on the U.S.–Mexico border in Tecate in 2017. Following the popularity of the “Kikito” installation, JR organized “The

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<sup>2</sup> Another example of border-wall *artivism* includes paintings and murals as well as installations placed directly on the wall. One of the most well-known installations of this kind is “The Parade of Humanity” (El Paseo de Humanidad) decorating the fence in Nogales, Mexico, between 2004 and 2010, created by Guadalupe Serrano, Alberto Morackis and Alfred Quiroz, or M. Jenea Sanchez’s border tapestry with the famous “La Tapiz de la Virgen de Guadalupe,” created in collaboration with Gabriela Muñoz at the border in Douglas/Agua Prieta in 2009. I do not analyze them in this paper, due to the limitations of space and the fact that time-wise they do not share the immediate character of graffiti writing.

Giant Picnic” in October 2017 in the same location. This time, however, “The Picnic” was quite literally a transborder and transnational event, as it was organized on both sides of the border with a large table featuring Kikito’s eyes placed to the south and north across the border. It gathered people from both communities; and as JR relates on his website: “Kikito, his family and hundreds of guests came from the US and Mexico to share a meal together. People gathered around the eyes of a Dreamer, eating the same food, sharing the same water, enjoying the same music (half of the band on each side). The wall was forgotten for a few moments ...” (René). In this way “The Giant Picnic” served the function of Paulo Freire’s limit act that both challenged the separating role of the border and transformed the divided space of the borderlands into one community celebrating together this encounter. And even if the border fence did not actually disappear, the show of solidarity demonstrated by people gathered at the event questioned and undermined the wall’s divisive powers. This meeting—just as other activities of that kind, including transborder yoga classes or across-the-fence volleyball games organized regularly by activists in different places along the U.S.–Mexico border—serve to counter the border’s presence and revoke “the erosion of social infrastructure” (Rael, “Boundary Line” 80) the border creates. As such, these events or happenings function like a performance, which as Mieke Bal claims “is not; it occurs. It happens and takes time. It has a past and a future, and hence, a present. From linguistics and the philosophy of language, we take the notion that utterances do something: they perform an act that produces an event” (miekebal.org). The performative aspect of this type of border activism reinforces *artivism’s* power to change the space of the U.S.–Mexico border into the space of dialogue. It is also a type of grassroots activism that has proliferated in the borderlands in recent years. However, in this case the involvement of ordinary community members, including borderlanders and people from more remote regions of the U.S. and Mexico is of a particular character. They are not focused on what may be called intervention activism, such as Tuscon Samaritans or Madres Buscadoras de Sonora—Searching Mothers of Sonora, who help border crosser in perilous conditions and look for the bodies of those who disappeared on their way to the U.S. respectively. Without their activism the border would indisputably bear more casualties and significantly more deaths and incidents of maltreatment would be left uncovered. However, such actions have to be accompanied by what I call limit acts activism, or what Norma Iglesias-Prieto calls “transborderism” (Rael, *Borderwall* 22), as this type of activism concentrates on a permanent transformation of this conflicted space

into a barrier-less territory. “The Giant Picnic” is a good example of this type of grassroots activism performed directly on the border.

Ronald Rael is another artist involved extensively in transborder activism. His preoccupation with borders in general and the U.S.–Mexico border in particular, has resulted in several projects, including *Prada Marfa*, “Borderwall as Infrastructure,” “Board(er) Games” (Rael, *Borderwall* 29), referencing various stages of a border crossing, or snow globes with various scenes reflecting the reality of life in the borderlands. He is also the author of *Borderwall as Architecture: A Manifesto for the U.S.–Mexico Boundary*, which is, in his own words, “an expanded study on rethinking the existing wall by redesigning it into something that would exceed its sole purpose as a security infrastructure and ameliorate the wall’s negative impacts and, perhaps through intervention, make positive contributions to the lives and landscapes of the borderlands” (Rael, *Borderwall* 4). Rael’s book not only relates the story of the border wall illustrated with the artist’s drawings and maps, but it also puts forward several ideas for both transborder infrastructure aimed at improving environmental and social conditions in the borderlands as well as community actions that would bring people from both sides of the border together. Rael’s designs range in scope from environmental projects, to religious and cultural activities and infrastructural constructions, but at the same time they have a common denominator: all of them indicate the absurdity of the physical marker of the political line, i.e., the U.S.–Mexico border wall, demonstrating, among other things, its porosity. Moreover, they are designed to challenge and re-define the wall so that it can transform borderlands into a space for exchange and dialogue, as in the case of other projects discussed above.

In July 2019 Ronald Rael together with Virginia San Fratello made one of his projects—“Swing Wall” (also known as “Teeter Totter Wall”)—come to life at the U.S.–Mexico border in El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico where they installed three pink seesaws on the U.S.–Mexico border fence. As he observes, the purpose of this installation was “to allow families on each side to ‘meaningfully connect’ with each other and highlight the bond between the two countries. Rael said the seesaws turned the wall into a “literal fulcrum for U.S.–Mexico relations” (“Pink seesaws”). Videos of the installation show people enjoying the seesaws in an atmosphere of excitement, joy and fun. In this way the location of the fence transforms from a militarized zone of surveillance into a playground. The barrier becomes the fulcrum, in the artist’s words, supporting the connection between the two sides rather than separating them. Moreover, in order for the seesaws to work they must be operated on both



sides, hence the cooperation of both parties is needed and they do work together, for once a seesaw becomes empty on either side, people run immediately to the site and occupy the space. The participants' activity at the seesaws thus illustrates the interdependence of both sides of the border; and their visible reactions to this performance emphasize their similarities rather than differences. The very construction of the installation testifies to the overarching theme of binational cooperation as well, since Rael and San Fratello produced it with Taller Herrería, a workshop from Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Finally, as Rael reveals, owing to this project, "children and adults were connected in meaningful ways on both sides with the recognition that the actions that take place on one side have a direct consequence on the other side" ([www.instagram.com/rrael](http://www.instagram.com/rrael)).

This project, similar to Rael's other designs, illustrates Foucault's idea of the interdependence between limit and transgression mentioned at the outset of this article (Foucault in Casey and Watkins 18). Rael himself refers to that interrelationship in his TED presentation, "An Architect's Subversive Reimagining of the U.S.–Mexico Border Wall" when he provides an account of "resilience at the wall" ("An Architect's" 1:51) and juxtaposes the examples of actions and reactions, or counter-actions from both sides of the border. His argument is that when there appears an overt urge for the border to be impermeable on the U.S. side—reflected for example in research, legislation, extra surveillance and the militarization of the border—it is automatically challenged by the opposite reactions from the other side. Therefore, if the U.S. authorities come up with the idea of a taller fence/wall, people from the Mexican side will construct draw-bridges or find taller ladders to scale the wall anyway, because, as Rael points out, "[T]he wall itself is an arcane, medieval form of architecture.... It's an overly simplistic response to a complex set of issues" ("An Architect's" 2:49–2:55).

Consequently, with his projects and performances Rael fights the destructive effects of the fence and lays the groundwork for the future transformation of this space into an environmentally clean and people-friendly area. The cooperation of people from both sides of the border illustrates the actual status of the borderlands. In other words, regardless of the militarization of the border, and in spite of stricter regulations or legislation pertaining to that area, border transgressions have been happening and will be appearing in the future. The two communities that constitute the space of the borderlands cannot be regarded as separate locations or closed-off territories with no contact between them. "Swing Wall" overtly challenges the power of the fence/wall to divide and instead re-inscribes the U.S.–Mexico border as a space with capacity to connect.

The last example of grassroots border activism to be discussed in this paper is the project “Borrando la Frontera—Erasing the Border” by Ana Teresa Fernández.<sup>3</sup> Born in Tampico, Mexico and raised in San Diego, CA, the artist is a border crosser herself. In her artwork and performances she often addresses the question of her hybrid identity and the influence the two sides of the border have had on her personal and professional life. The artist reveals in one interview that “[i]t was with the ability to see and understand the world on both sides of this wall that I began to find my voice” (Interview). Consequently, she has done the work and actions at the border for a long time, which she compares to Sisyphean, impossible tasks (Interview 5:45), due to manifold paradoxes that are intrinsic to this space. She first had the idea to conduct a protest against the fence, which would take place “directly on the wall, not in front of the wall, or around it, or about it, but ... using the wall itself” (Interview 6:29) in 2011. Painting the fence rods blue (wearing a black dress and stilettos) and filmed by her mother, she almost got arrested. However, after a long discussion, the authorities allowed her to finish the project and the outcome was spectacular: the fragment of the border fence painted blue “disappeared” against the blue skies. The images appeared on the Internet, and in 2015, while in residency in Arizona, she was asked to repeat this protest/manifestation, but this time she decided to do it as a community project. As she recollects in an interview, the project drew about forty people not only from Nogales, but also from Arizona, including those who had been deported (Interview 8:13). The painted area was much larger than in her previous projects, as it was nearly 50 feet in length and, as she admits, “[i]t was this really beautiful coming together of people wanting to see this thing go away” (Interview 8:34). On her website the artist includes report-like information about the purpose of the project and reveals how it influenced the community: “For residents of the border town of Nogales, Mexico, blue has become a promising signal of open skies and porous borders.... For those participating in and witnessing ‘Erasing the Border,’ the blue-painted fence represents not just a new view, but a way of reflecting on the experience of the border and connecting with others whose lives are impacted by the fence” ([www.anateresafernandez.com](http://www.anateresafernandez.com)).

Fernández’s project simultaneously united people who had been strangers before the project and also defied the power of the border to divide, separate,

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<sup>3</sup> I conduct a comprehensive analysis of Fernández’s project and painting (of the same title) in “The U.S.–Mexico Border as a Palimpsest in Ana Teresa Fernández’s Art.” *Polish Journal for American Studies*, vol. 12, Spring 2018, pp. 197–210.

and antagonize.<sup>4</sup> And even though that transborder engagement and solidarity was very powerful and empowering at the same time, Fernández reveals that aside from signs of support for her action, she received numerous hate messages which reflected the attitudes towards immigrations issues. She admits: “Fear had erected those walls. It was the sheer illusion of the wall not being present that terrified people” (Interview 5:16). However, for the artist the protests against her temporary (and illusory) border erasure did not deflate the power of that limit act; on the contrary, she vowed to continue grassroots work on the border since, as she observed, “It’s time we learn to listen and hear each other, without prejudices, without walls interfering” (Interview 15:41).

Apart from individual transformations and changes, each of the actions and performances described attempts to defy the destructive powers of barriers in general, and the U.S.–Mexico fence/wall in particular. The marker of the border has for a long time created “incongruous counterparts” (Casey and Watkins 6) on both sides, witnessed asymmetrical interdependence of the two nation-states, and “concretize[d] the metaphorical walls” (Casey and Watkins 7) or what Davis calls “third border[s]” (Davis 71), haunting Latinx in the U.S. daily, yet “local citizens have worked out ways of living together that exemplify an emerging transborder ethic” (Casey and Watkins 8). Border-wall graffiti and performances represent an act of transborderism by challenging historical myths about *la frontera*, re-writing its story, and re-defining and re-designing this space into the territory that will facilitate dialogue rather than individual monologues. Casey and Watkins underscore this particular function of border *artivism* and argue that “[b]order-wall art portrays marginalized points of view, critiques dominant messages, and not only posits alternate possibilities but creates them.... Performative border art also defies the limit of the wall, rehearsing transgressions that allow imagination to transcend the wall’s brute technologized and material limit” (Casey and Watkins 208). Towards the end of his analysis of the transformations of *la línea* Greg Grandin juxtaposes the concept of the frontier and that of the barricaded border and concludes that “[t]he wall ... is a monument to disenchantment, to a kind of brutal geopolitical realism: racism was never transcended; there’s not enough to go around; the global economy will have winners and losers; not all can sit at the table; and government policies should be organized around accepting these truths” (Grandin 272). Therefore, as he maintains, “the wall offers its own illusions, a mystification that simultaneously recognizes and refuses limits” (Grandin 273).

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<sup>4</sup> The project was subsequently repeated in 2016 as what the artist calls a triptych, taking place simultaneously in Mexicali, Baja California, Agua Prieta in Arizona and Juarez (Interview 8:30).

The rationale for the wall is rooted in avarice, uncertainty, fear and hostility towards those who are portrayed as the Other—the stranger/foreigner. Border *artivism* challenges such attitudes, as it transgresses physical and metaphorical limits, in spite of adverse circumstances, because all in all, as Grandin maintains, “[b]orders can’t stop historical change” (Grandin 149).

All the examples explored in this article demonstrate how acts of *artivism* possess the power to challenge the border’s divisive character and transform it into the space for dialogue and exchange, in spite of adverse circumstances. Border *artivism* is an important instrument in the battle for the re-vision of the history of the border, borderlands and border crossers. The acts usually appear as a reaction to political changes soon afterward those events take place and, as such, address border issues with immediacy. These undertakings reach wider audiences all over the world, due to social media, which allows artist activists to propagate their ideas. Finally, they are all produced and performed with the view to expand the U.S.–Mexico border history by providing alternative narratives. They do that by showing *artivism*’s versatile aspects and telling diverse stories of the border and border crossers. Owing to such an approach, this history can be re-written by those who live in the shadow of the border (Casey and Watkins 215), instead of being another example of the official historiography imposed by the mainstream and thereby excluding and further marginalizing some groups. All the activists and artists—from graffiti writers to performance artists—challenge those silences and give voice to borderlands communities. Perhaps most significantly, they humanize this story, while emphasizing the inescapable need for communication across borders.

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U.S.–MEXICO BORDER RE-VISIONS:  
BORDER ARTIVISM IN TIME AND SPACE

S u m m a r y

The question of the U.S.–Mexico border has always been important for Latinx living in the U.S. and its versatile roles as well as its influence on border crossers and the environment have been presented by various Latinx and non-Latinx authors and artists. Their artistic productions illustrate the transformations of space into a contact zone and challenge the rationale of the wall. They vary in form from immediate responses to those interventions undertaken with the privilege of preparation, i.e. time. The purpose of this article is to examine how those post-millennial re-visions of the border re-define the conflicted and contentious space of the U.S.–Mexico border and how the time-determined form of selected examples of post-2000 border *artivism* influences those transformations.

**Keywords:** the U.S.–Mexico border; border re-visions; border *artivism*; contact zone; transborder activism; borderlands.

RE-WIZJE GRANICY AMERYKAŃSKO-MEKSYKAŃSKIEJ:  
TWÓRCZOŚĆ GRANICZNA W CZASIE I PRZESTRZENI

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Kwestia granicy amerykańsko-meksykańskiej zawsze była ważna dla Latynosów mieszkających w USA, a jej wszechstronne role, a także wpływ na osoby przekraczające granice oraz na środowisko, są przedstawiane przez różnych autorów i artystów latynoskich i nielatynoskich. Ich artystyczne produkcje ilustrują przemiany tej przestrzeni w strefę kontaktu a tym samym kwestionują racjonalność budowanego na granicy muru. Różnią się one formą – od działań, które stanowią natychmiastową odpowiedź na pojawiający się na granicy problem po interwencje podejmowane z „przywilejem” przygotowania, tj. czasem. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest zbadanie, w jaki sposób re-wizje granicy powstałe po roku dwutysięcznym na nowo definiują skonfliktowaną i sporną przestrzeń granicy amerykańsko-meksykańskiej oraz jak wybrane przykłady artystycznej aktywności społecznej wpływają na te przemiany.

**Słowa kluczowe:** granica meksykańsko-amerykańska; re-wizje granicy; artystyczna aktywność społeczna na granicy; strefa kontaktu; aktywizm transgraniczny; pogranicze.