

# Border Origins

The following essays offer perspectives on property, landscape, material, and infrastructure that shape the U.S.-Mexico border imaginary. The authors illuminate critical spatial practices which destabilize assumptions about the border and the seeming simplicity of its binary divisions and exclusionary logics. These perspectives argue instead for constructive transgressions of this destructive border myth, as it is being implemented to advance political agendas. These articles are offered as *origin stories* of a land, a people, and a space whose origins are routinely questioned and defied, entrenched and overcome.

The fluidity of borderspace—as we have seen in past weeks—can abruptly change course: Its infrastructures can mineralize political whims into seemingly permanent institutions and protocols. The border is a place where the abnormal and unimaginable routinely slip into normalcy. But it can also be, as we hope the following demonstrates, a cauldron where positive, alternative futures are forged.

Special News Section, guest edited by AGENCY

## The Future/Past on a Monorail

These days the conversation about the United States–Mexico border is dominated by the implications of building a wall between the U.S. and Mexico. But back in the mid-1960s, there were concerted binational efforts to build a monorail to further connect the commercial districts of two cities conceived as part of one binational community. A 1965 document outlining the proposal for a Juárez–El Paso Monorail System invoked the common origins of both cities. The river was referred to as an obstacle to be overcome: “No other metropolitan community of equal size has been so restricted and contained by so relatively a small item as a channelized river.” Recently, the idea for a monorail has surfaced again, but this time riding on top of a 2,000-mile border wall promoted by an American president to further separate the U.S. and Mexico.

The 1960s were a period when ideas for urban planning boomed in the Juárez/El Paso border area. This was the context of the 1965 proposal for a transportation project designed to move passengers back and forth across the border. Although the idea did not come to fruition, it gives a glimpse of how certain sectors viewed the future of Juárez/El Paso as an integrated border metropolis. A prototype of the monorail can be seen in the 1967 film adaptation of Ray Bradbury’s novel *Fahrenheit 451* by François Truffaut. It was built on the outskirts of Paris as a demonstration facility by SAFEGE, the company chosen to install the El Paso/Juárez monorail. Guy Montag, the main character, enjoys a smooth ride between the city and the suburban neighborhood where he lives. The suspended train featured in the movie is the same as that in the photomontages published in the booklet that circulated in the Juárez/El Paso area two years earlier. It was estimated that the nonstop ride between stations would transport commuters between the San Jacinto Plaza and the Juárez bullring in less than three minutes. Both cultural and aesthetic considerations were made, along with technical, commercial, and other economic aspects of the interaction between the two cities. The project was proposed



Juárez/El Paso Monorail System terminal design.

not just to satisfy a growing demand for a rapid transit system that would minimize crossing time, but also as a potential tourist attraction. It anticipated that visitors from all over the world would visit “to witness the most advanced form of mass transit functioning commercially in a modern community.” It would have been an invitation to take a glimpse into a science fiction future, one where limitations imposed by geopolitical borders were meant to be overcome.

The design considered how to implement inspection of passengers by Mexican and American immigration and customs officials, and proposed that this process would take place upon arrival at either station rather than at traditional border checkpoints. The document stressed that authorities considered this viable. But did this pitch really correspond with the sociopolitical context of the epoch? Or was this early globalization, pro-trade discourse merely boosting rhetoric aimed at gaining sympathizers for

a binational entrepreneurial group trying to get a piece of the border transportation business? At first glance, the mid-1960s were a promising time for a project that gave the impression that Juárez/El Paso were twin cities living in harmony. But in fact, these notions were contrary to national border control policies that produced the infamous Operation Wetback, which resulted in numerous human rights violations and the deportation of over a million people.

More recently, Donald Trump has been reviewing prototypes for a different kind of border project: the construction of an “unscalable” and “unpenetrable” wall. His idea has prompted architects and builders from both countries to make proposals. Earlier this year *The New York Times* ran an article posing the question, “Is Donald Trump, wall-builder-in-chief, a conceptual artist?” It was a report about Christoph Büchel, himself a conceptual artist who circulated a provocative petition seeking to save the

prototypes—built with \$3.3 million in federal funds—from demolition by invoking the Antiquities Act of 1906. According to Büchel, the set of textured slabs, which can be seen from across the border, was “a major land art exhibition of significant cultural value.” Not surprisingly, the petition created an uproar in the art world.

Although some proposals were made in jest and did not reach the prototype stage, there have been numerous bids that attempt to subvert Trump’s purpose to isolate and supposedly protect the United States from the perils of contact with its southern neighbors. *The New York Times* reviewed a dystopian parody consisting of a 2,000-mile pink wall housing seemingly disparate facilities like a detention center and a mall. This was a collaborative effort by Estudio 3.14, a design group in Guadalajara, Mexico, and the Mamertine Group, a design lab at the University of Connecticut. The designers used minimalist concepts and colors reminiscent of the style of influential Mexican architect Luis Barragán: “It is a prison where 11 million undocumented people will be processed, classified, indoctrinated, and/or deported.” The project also contemplates the wall housing a mall with a Macy’s in the Tijuana section.

*The San Diego Union-Tribune* accounted for an apparently serious plan presented by a Southern California firm named National Consulting Service that envisioned a wall topped by a monorail serving both countries. The train would run along the border and would feature “voice analysis technology to detect different emotional states of riders to possibly assist law enforcement.” According to the firm, the system was designed to keep Americans safe, but also to improve and revitalize sister cities along the border.

The future is still in the past.

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# The Remittance House

In discussions of the U.S.-Mexico boundary region, what often gets lost is a full exploration of the geographic and social networks produced by the lives that span it. Taking in the meaning of the U.S.-Mexico border region, the largest migration corridor in the world, requires an understanding of both ends of the journey as well as what lies in between. One way to do this is to follow the money—in this case, migrant dollars earned in various locations throughout the U.S. that are channeled back to households in Mexico. The economic term for this capital flow is *remittances*, typically used by political scientists, demographers, and NGOs that investigate, among other things, how and if remittances alleviate poverty in receiving regions. I follow this capital flow to its material conclusions as manifested in migrant hometowns. The “remittance house,” a term I use to describe houses built in Mexico by workers performing unskilled or semiskilled wage labor (or migrants “from below”) in the U.S., reveals Mexican pueblos as distant hinterlands of American cities and as critical nodes in our understanding of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands at large.

I first became interested in the remittance house through the stories of my co-workers, Mexican male migrants who lived and worked in Berkeley, California, while investing a portion of their earnings into new homes in Guanajuato, Mexico. The Central Bajío state of Guanajuato and its neighboring state of Jalisco have historically high rates of both emigration and remitting. Economist Paul S. Taylor documented migrants using dollars to build or remodel homes in Jalisco as early as the 1930s. Jalisco is an epicenter of remittance construction that includes homes as well as communally funded public projects like rodeo arenas and cultural centers. Today, Mexico ranks as the world’s fourth-largest remittance economy after China, India, and the Philippines, receiving approximately \$20 billion dollars annually, and new construction financed by remittance dollars is evident across Mexico’s 32 states.

Formally and materially, the remittance house has become a source of curiosity both for people who live in Mexican towns as well as for those peering in from afar. This has to do with the houses’ heavily articulated facades that present a dizzying array of representational strategies. Fluted columns, zigzagging concrete cornices, and repetitious pediment-shaped window frames grace facades topped with false fronts that represent gable roofs or brick battlements. These eclectic arrangements clash with the built fabric of small towns composed of adobe or fired brick buildings with teja tiled roofs—towns once marked by uniformity and homogeneity.

In the remittance house, architectural style carries great symbolic weight, as design ideas are pulled from various corners of migrant experiences and journeys. Homes with recessed yards, metal fences, carports, and picture windows are referred to as “*estilo Californiano*,” or “California style.” Yet they are hybrid forms, where the image of wooden stick-frame construction is translated into local masonry traditions, supported by migrants’ desire to have homes “built to last.” New migrant homes have created a maelstrom of commentary throughout small towns. A local architect in Jalisco described the migrant building style as “*garigoleado*,” or excessively adorned, pointing out a lack of



Top: Abandoned remittance house, Jalisco, Mexico.  
Above: Pink remittance house, Jalisco, Mexico.



rhythm, proportion, and pattern in the use of generic classical ornamentation, while some neighbors described migrant homes as distinctly modern. Whatever their stylistic attribute, the homes, as defined by artist Walterio Iraheta, are *autorretratos*—or self-portraits—of their makers. They are a material transformation of the built environment directly linked

to the interior world of the self.

But the remittance house is not primarily an opportunity for migrants’ personal expressions; it is the material manifestation of the specific political and social conditions under which contemporary social mobility and immobility for migrants takes place. Structural inequality, an absence of access

to legal documentation in the U.S., and diminishing opportunities for economic and social mobility in the U.S. and Mexico have produced the spaces in which the remittance house becomes a viable, albeit imperfect, option.

To understand these newly constructed homes as imperfect is to ask about the costs and consequences of binational building from below, building a dream home in one place while living and working in another. In order to remit, nuclear families are often separated or fragmented across geographies. For example, mothers and daughters live in a remittance house in Mexico, while fathers and sons work in and send money from the U.S. Meanwhile, elderly parents live in a home built with dollars on a street mostly abandoned or empty due to what neighbors refer to as “the floating population” abroad. Families split by gender or generation incur social and psychological costs as bodies are replaced by dollars, and living at a distance from one’s immediate family is normalized.

The project of building a remittance house—of attempting to secure and invest in a future for one’s family—is also susceptible to the complexities of living life as a migrant in the U.S. Both documented and undocumented migrants might lose their jobs, build new relationships in the U.S. while attempting to maintain marriages or relationships in Mexico, become responsible for their ill parents in Mexico, or become ill themselves. Undocumented migrants are especially vulnerable as they live under the terror of apprehension, incarceration, and deportation, and are generally unable to return home without incurring great risk. For any number of reasons, homes may be incomplete or abandoned altogether.

Ultimately, the remittance house teaches non-migrants important lessons. They are evidence of migrants’ strengths, the discipline required to achieve personal goals. They are evidence of complex social patterns and costs for families fragmented by global capital, and for whom remitting has become a way of life. Scaling up, they are also evidence of the Mexican and U.S. governments’ unwillingness to enact binational protections and opportunities for a flexible and exploited labor force that the U.S. economy has depended on for over 100 years. Understanding the remittance house in its messy complexity can cultivate the public’s awareness of the extended and complicated spaces that “migrants” are enmeshed in and co-constituting. If Mexican migrants in the U.S. were collectively supported, the term “remittance house” would become obsolete. With the capacity to choose where to live and work, and with the ability to travel, those who built homes in Mexico would join the millions of elite Americans and Mexicans who have second homes or vacation homes. For now, the remittance house captivates, and its meaning reverberates within Mexico and across the Rio Grande.

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# Concrete Politics

In the border metropolis of El Paso-Ciudad Juárez, the power relations of international negotiation are not only performed through the apparatus of control over the movement of bodies, but are also embodied in a concrete architecture that exposes the calculus of separation and asymmetrical infrastructural development between the two countries. In the borderland, the control of water—as territory, commodity, and reproductive agent—produces its physical spaces. While the shared waters of the river and the underground aquifers contribute to the reproductive capacity of land within the desert climate, the infrastructures of water supply and sanitation are material evidence of the socio-spatial injustices and imbalances that structure and reproduce social relations within the border cities.

## Negotiation

The geopolitical history of the river as a border and of the partitioning of its waters is inscribed within the built environment as a thick constructed zone. The international border between the United States and Mexico was defined by the 1848 and 1884 Treaties, which delineated that the border follow the Rio Grande (Rio Bravo del Norte) from El Paso to the Gulf of Mexico. This rendered the border an unstable condition, as its line needed to be redefined by the International Boundary Commission each time floods caused the river to relocate. A treaty in 1933 attempted to “fix” the river by engineering it into a constructed channel. However, this location left several hundred acres of disputed Mexican territory to the north of the river—the result of a violent change in course in 1864. The 1963 Chamizal Agreement relocated the river and the international boundary once again, moving the Rio Grande back to its 1852 survey location. In this highly publicized moment of international diplomacy, the disputed land was “returned” to Mexico, and a new channel was constructed to reroute the Rio Grande north so that both river and international border aligned. The division between the two countries was now emphasized, further asserted by the open lands of the former riverbed on the Juárez side and a new elevated border highway on the U.S. side of the channel.

## Management

The colonization of the U.S. would not have been possible without the massive campaign of dam projects in the early 20th century that commodified the waters of the West and irrigated the farms and settlements of homesteaders. Four dams manage and distribute the Rio Grande waters in the El Paso-Juárez region: Elephant Butte, Caballo, American Diversion, and the International Diversion Dam. Water is distributed according to the 1944 Water Treaty, drawn up when the population of Juárez was less than one-tenth its current size. In 1965, the binational Border Industrialization Program enabled maquiladoras, foreign-owned manufacturing plants, to be located within Mexico's border zones, and to move materials and products with reduced tariffs and trade barriers. This propelled an influx of new residents who arrived to work in the Juárez border zone maquilas. The treaty, which retains the majority of the river water in the U.S., has not been revised since, and contains no provisions for sharing the rapidly depleting Mesilla and Hueco Bolson aquifer waters, which traverse the binational region underground.



The division of the river water produces politically charged urban spaces. The U.S. Franklin Canal materializes as a physical barrier within the U.S. border zone, flowing deeply and rapidly in a concrete channel alongside the Rio Grande. In Juárez, the diverted water flows along the Acequia Madre, which takes a diagonal course, traversing some of the city's main public spaces. This once green irrigation channel and common space is now largely neglected and has deteriorated into a toxic line of sewage and trash.

## Biopolitics

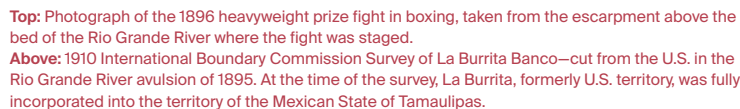
Water is not only scarce in the desert city of Juárez—it is also dangerous. The paper worlds of politics materialize as realities on the ground and in the tissues of bodies. Due to the explosive population growth of Juárez, large portions of the city have been rapidly and often informally constructed, typically without proper municipal sewage or drinking water services. The residents of these informal settlements, known as *colonias*, rely primarily on truck-supplied water, which has a much higher likelihood of being contaminated and results in high rates of water-borne diseases. Only about a third of the city's sewage is actually treated. Some *colonias* have additionally encroached on the city's drainage gullies and arroyos, putting residents at further risk during flash flood events.

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly “explicitly recognized the right to clean drinking water and sanitation as essential to the realization of all human rights.” If this mandate is taken seriously by the binational region of El Paso-Ciudad Juárez, new treaties and agreements will need to be negotiated that address not only the scarcity and distribution of its shared waters, but also the shared responsibility of water rights to citizens on both sides of the border. What remains to be seen is not only what shape these take in terms of political agreements, but also how they will reshape the physical urban spaces of the paired cities.

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Top: Thick infrastructural zone of negotiation and control at the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez border.  
Middle: Children in Juárez play in the space of the former channel of the Rio Grande.  
Bottom: Playgrounds now occupy the former channel of the Rio Grande in Ciudad Juárez.





# Prada Marfa: Immigrant Architecture?

## Political Context

Prada Marfa is a building born out of the political tensions arising in post-9/11 America, in which Afghanistan, Iraq, and Mexico become scapegoats. In 2003, a United States-led coalition invaded Iraq, beginning an eight-year war, and in 2005, Duncan Hunter, who at the time was chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, called for the construction of a wall along the entire border between the U.S. and Mexico. This led to his amendment to the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005, which called for 698 miles of wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. This paved the way for the Secure Fence Act of 2006, which President George W. Bush signed to "help protect the American people" from several purported threats, but primarily terrorism, which was the major focus of the era's political rhetoric.

## Borderlands Architecture

Prada Marfa is constructed out of traditional adobe bricks which have long been used in the region but are frequently perceived as an inferior material despite their ecological and climatological responsiveness. Adobe bricks provide the foundation for the oldest extant buildings in the region, as well as many of the area's most important cultural and heritage sites, including artist Donald Judd's own Block compound in Marfa. Directly referencing Judd and the military building traditions he emulated, the adobe bricks are intentionally set in a cement-based mortar. Judd recognized that this was the technique employed in the construction of barracks, hangars, and forts in the region, and Prada Marfa is constructed to reflect this mistrust of local traditions that the militaristic architecture that secures the border displays. Adobe brick was validated as a construction material, but not adobe mortar, which is more likely to be used on the humble houses of Mexicans and Mexican Americans on both sides of the contemporary border.

## Material Lineage

While the adobe walls of Prada Marfa are indigenous, they are not perceived to be native to the United States, as the tradition is a spoil of the Mexican-American war. The form of the building recalls a West Texas vernacular, which is influenced by the melding of many cultures at the border. The artists Elmgreen and Dragset are from Denmark and Norway, respectively. The details of the interior come from Italy. The specifications for the shelves, the typography (a variation of a type popular with American engravers and typefounders in the last third of the 19th century), the color of paint for the interior walls, the lighting, and the carpet were directly sampled from Prada's own architectural details for retail outlets in Milan. The inspiration for the facade is sampled from German photographer Andreas Gursky's photograph *Prada II*. The building is sprayed with an elastomeric white latex coating to reflect the powerful rays of the sun and withstand the extreme expansion and contraction of the building's structure in the fluctuating desert temperatures.

## Xenophobia and Cultural Assimilation

Prada Marfa was a very new kind of work. Unlike the reserved and apolitical work of Judd—who in Marfa had already laid claim to art and what it should be—Prada Marfa blurs the boundaries between architecture, art, politics, and culture. The very same night that



JAMES EVANS



RONALD RAE

**Top:** The Fall 2005 line of Prada shoes and bags are on display.

**Above:** The adobes used to build Prada Marfa are set in cement mortar like the walls of Judd's compound in Marfa.

Prada Marfa opened, xenophobes attacked the work, stealing the shoes and purses, destroying the building's facade, and spray painting "dum" [sic] and "dumb" on the inside and outside of the building. Prada Marfa represented a very new kind of artistic expression that was unfamiliar in the region and challenged conservative artistic sensibilities, calling into question the juxtapositions between wealth and poverty, the U.S. and Mexico, anglo and Mejjicano, of the region that the building highlighted.

Since Prada Marfa's construction, it has had to evolve to survive in the political and environmental climate of both art and the borderlands. Since the first attack on the building, it has been vandalized several times—the

glass windows were shoddily replaced by scratch-resistant and shatterproof acrylic to withstand bullets and the continual "peeling out" of cars in front of the building, which kicks up rocks and debris onto the facade. The fabric awnings had to be replaced due to smokers continually burning holes in the cloth with their cigarettes, and the font size of PRADA was increased to almost match the size of the letters on the black metal signs above, suggesting that the delicate typography on the original awnings may not have been good enough in a state where "everything is bigger."

Many other forms of vandalism have taken place. Men's underwear was shoved into the drain pipes, causing the roof to flood

and inundate the interior, which required the shelving to be rebuilt and repainted and the carpet to be replaced. Most dramatically, an artist by the name of Joe Magnano was found guilty of two counts of misdemeanor criminal mischief and required to pay Ballroom Marfa, the caretaker of Prada Marfa, \$10,700 and a \$1,000 fine for attempting to paint the building blue and pasting TOMS, the logo of a shoe brand founded by Texan Blake Mycoskie, on it, perhaps in an inadvertent attempt to make a structure perceived to be "not from around these parts" more Texan. The vandals who destroyed the building after it first opened, however, have never come forward, although it has been suggested that the borderland surveillance systems used to monitor immigrants traveling in the desert may be able to reveal these criminals.

## Haji

Prada Marfa has become a pilgrimage site where those making the journey to visit the building have left mementos as part of what has become a kind of haji to this art Mecca. The various offerings at the Prada Marfa site have included visitors leaving one used shoe, placed around the building or atop the fencing surrounding the building. Perhaps this references the single shoe found in the faux shoe shelves of the store, or maybe the worn-out shoes of immigrants who journey by foot to the U.S. from Mexico until the soles of their shoes wear away, before being picked up in the landscape surrounding Prada Marfa.

Not unlike the Jewish mitzvah where visitors to a grave leave small pebbles on a gravestone, visitors have also left small rocks, holding down a piece of paper with a name, message, or a business card, on the narrow ledge that surrounds Prada Marfa. This act reminds us of the harsh reality of a landscape where countless die in the desert, just as the wall has pushed people to greater extremes on their journey north.

The shoes and the pebbles left by art pilgrims were systematically removed as they were also perceived as a form of vandalism—a crime, rather than a new tradition—and a fence was constructed around the building made of welded wire mesh, reminiscent of the transformation of the U.S.-Mexico border from a barbed wire fence to stretches of welded steel. The construction of the fence surrounding Prada Marfa, however, has prompted another tradition of offering at the site. While called Prada Marfa, the building is technically just outside the small town of Valentine, Texas. Despite a population of 217, the town is inundated with over 1,000 people on Valentine's Day, as well as hundreds of Valentine's Day cards that are sent through the local post office, which has been known as a "love station." Today, "love locks," padlocks used by sweethearts to symbolize their love, are attached to the new fence surrounding Prada Marfa, and the keys are thrown away. Perhaps this, too, symbolizes the time we live in, mired in a national struggle between the fences that divide and the love that could bring us together in the borderlands.

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# Texas Instruments: Detention Prototypes in a Border State

*"So much of what is built on the border is to contain, restrain, detain, constrain, restrict, wall off, fence up. When there is so much natural beauty there—the river, the desert, the mountains to enjoy and celebrate. So many families who want to be together, so many people who just want to be. I wish that we were building more bridges (flat, easier to cross and connect), tearing down the walls that we have; wish that we had immigration and asylum laws that matched our values and our interests so that we weren't locking so many people up. Wish that there were no more private prison companies so that there wasn't a profit motive to do that."*

—Beto O'Rourke, El Paso native, U.S. Representative for Texas's 16th congressional district, and the 2018 Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate in Texas

Texas, the state with the longest continuous land border with Mexico, has been uniquely formative in the construction of spaces and narratives that define national dialogue in the borderland. The state is home to more ports of entry than any other state. These entry points are legible crucibles of biopolitical power, routinely collapsing spaces of speculative commerce, incarceration, and the projection of national identity.

Assessments for constructing a new border crossing, connecting Tornillo, Texas, with Guadalupe, Chihuahua, began in 2001. A new bridge, a 2,000-acre industrial park, and 300 acres of "border facilities" were initially meant to bring economic development to the remote area and improve regional health, reducing pollution from idling traffic at congested bridges in El Paso. A presidential permit was issued for the bridge in 2005, but its construction would be stalled, and its purposes changed.

In 2008, the Juarez Valley, a remote collection of agricultural communities in Mexico south of Tornillo, saw one of the highest murder rates in the world, gaining it the reputation as the "Valley of Death." Victims of the violence would increasingly flee to Tornillo to seek asylum. Some speculate that the rampant violence was a scheme sponsored by the Mexican government to evacuate residents in the area in preparation for, and to expedite construction of, the bridge. In 2010, modular detention facilities in nearby Fabens, Texas, built to accommodate the flow, were over capacity. Violence in the valley eventually stabilized, and plans for the new crossing were rekindled.

The Tornillo-Guadalupe International Bridge opened in 2016, and was hailed as an achievement in cross-border infrastructure. The adjoining U.S. checkpoint exemplifies an architecture designed to manage, block, and process bodies, an outpost at the edge of empire. The architects of the LEED Gold facility describe the materials and performance as specially suited to the site's desert context, with integrated technologies promoting the efficient monitoring of populations, noting that the design "inspires the spirit of place." The optimism for the port to rapidly realize a future characterized by collaborative binational security efforts was captured in its christening. It was named for Marcelino Serna, the most decorated U.S.



**Top:** This image was taken from a car on the Mexico side of the Paso Del Norte International Bridge border crossing where U.S. immigration officials are reportedly turning away migrants before they get to the checkpoint at the U.S. border.

**Above:** The U.S.-Mexico international boundary line at the Paso Del Norte International Bridge.

soldier from Texas to serve in WWI, who happened to be an undocumented migrant.

The anticipated traffic never came. Less than a year after its opening, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) had shut down the only lane dedicated for northbound commercial traffic. Without the economic engine to support the new complex, the overbuilt site quickly found new use in a growing economy of detention. Tornillo opened a temporary overflow center in 2016, typical of an increasingly common ephemeral incarceration infrastructure. These pop-up sites are rapidly installed and disassembled by specialist companies who navigate remote terrain in far-flung locales as easily as their practices navigate the constraints imposed on such facilities by case law. Tornillo continues to be an ideal site for such installations, far from the public eye yet enmeshed in the

infrastructure of detention. In June 2018, Tornillo would be home to its most notorious tent city.

The Tornillo checkpoint currently holds over 300 minors in tents just south of the bridge. As the Trump administration's "zero tolerance" policy has separated families across the country, the Tornillo site grows as a center of life for the unwanted, the detained, and the displaced. For a few days, however, a contrasting occupation resisted the isolation, anonymity, and placelessness of the remote facility. On Father's Day 2018 and the following Sunday, floods of protesters descended upon the border checkpoint, appropriating the isolated node as a center of active resistance.

The site joins a growing host of detention sites in the border state, which index nationwide trends in detention. Taken collectively,

the sites represent a growing impact of private speculation and profit models impacting the construction of detention facilities, all of which are adapting—and therefore helping to realize—a near future in which the remote, prolonged detention of families and children is commonplace. Since 2006, Texas has been home to the much-maligned T. Don Hutto Residential Facility, which, at the time it was built, was the only privately run facility used to detain families. The largest detention site in the U.S., the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, Texas, can house up to 2,400 women and children. The site is part of a constellation of for-profit, superscaled sites on a stretch of interstate highway between Laredo and San Antonio dubbed "detention alley." A new contract seeks a 1,000-bed center nearby—similar to a 1,000-bed facility built outside of Houston last year—which will be the eighth in the South Texas area. As military advisers advocate for detention centers on military bases to create even more "austere" and "temporary" environments, Texas leads the charge here as well. Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio housed migrant children in 2014, repurposing a dormitory once used for recruits. El Paso's Fort Bliss housed 500 unaccompanied Central American children in 2016. A June announcement revealed that two Texas military installations—Fort Bliss and Goodfellow Air Force Base—would be among the select sites to continue the trend. Other sites in the state, such as the now infamous former Walmart in Brownsville, signal a shift toward speculative investment in detention trickling down to private properties and actors.

At the Paso Del Norte International Bridge, connecting downtown Ciudad Juárez with downtown El Paso, CBP is pushing the edge of U.S. jurisdiction beyond the spatial limits of the bridge. Although due process of asylum claims is guaranteed within the port of entry, agents have ventured onto—and reportedly across—the bridge to deny access to the port. Uniformed border agents ask for documents on the bridge to identify and turn away Central Americans seeking asylum, a few hundred feet from their destination. On June 27, CBP confirmed to El Paso immigration rights advocacy groups that this prescreening and advance rejection has become official policy borderwide. Without access to the legal framework enabled by the ports, many asylum seekers cross in unsanctioned locations. Those caught crossing outside the ports, some with otherwise credible asylum claims, face criminal charges and deportation. By denying a space for lawful entry, the policy artificially amplifies the numbers of illegal crossings and a myth of increased illegitimate entry. The port thus transforms from a site capable of processing identities to an instrument which actively constructs and deconstructs citizenship.

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