

# FUSE

## A BOMB PODCAST

ARTIST AND ACTIVIST & VISUAL ARTIST AND CURATOR

## Tanya Aguiñiga & Julio César Morales

SEASON 3 | EPISODE #1

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*Tanya Aguiñiga is an artist, designer, and craftsperson, who works with traditional craft materials like natural fibers and collaborates with other artists and activists to create sculptures, installations, performances, and community-based art projects. In her installations, furniture, and wearable designs, Aguiñiga often works with cotton, wool, and other textiles, drawing upon Mesoamerican weaving and traditional forms. Her solo exhibitions include the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Museum of Arts and Design. Additional exhibitions have been held at the Annenberg Space for Photography, and the Craft and Folk Art Museum—among others.*

*Julio César Morales investigates issues of migration, underground economies, and labor on the personal and global scales. Morales's practice explores diverse mediums specific to each project or body of work. He has painted watercolor illustrations that diagram human trafficking methods, employed the DJ turntable, produced video and time-based pieces, and reenacted a famous meal—all to elucidate social interactions and political perspectives. Morales's work has been shown at SFMOMA, Museo Rufino Tamayo, LACMA, Hammer Museum, Muca Roma, Prospect 3 Biennale, Lyon Biennale, and Istanbul Biennale among others.*

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**Libby Flores** Welcome to FUSE: A BOMB Podcast. In each episode, we bring together artists to discuss their work and creative practice.

We've been taking this approach since 1981, delivering the artist's voice. Here's how it works. BOMB invites a distinguished artist to choose a guest from any creative discipline— an art crush, a close collaborator, or even a stranger they have admired from afar— and we bring them together. For this episode, we asked artist, mother and activist Tanya Aguiñiga which artists she'd most like to speak with. She named visual artist and curator Julio César Morales.

**Tanya Aguiñiga** When I was asked to participate in this podcast and to pick somebody, and they were wanting to see if there was anyone that was going to be in the Platform section of The Armory Show, I was looking through, you know, the list of artists and then when I saw your name, I was like, "Oh my God, I cannot believe this is the same person and I cannot believe that he's also from Tijuana." And then, I didn't know that and then I hadn't put everything together. I grew up in Tijuana also and this opportunity has been a super huge gift, just for me to be able to take a snorkel deep dive into finding out more about your work and about your history.

**LF** This episode is in partnership with The Armory Show. Both artists appearing in the episode are part of the curated sections of the fair's 2022 edition. Tanya Aguiñiga's work is presented by *Volume Gallery* in Focus, curated by Carla Acevedo-Yates, while Julio César Morales's piece *La Linea* is presented by *Gallery Wendi Norris* in Platform, curated by Tobias Ostrander.

Julio César Morales investigates issues of migration, underground economies, and labor on the personal and global scales. Morales's practice explores diverse mediums specific to each project or body of work. He has painted watercolor illustrations that diagram human trafficking methods, employed the DJ turntable, produced video and time-based pieces and reenacted a famous meal. Morales's artwork has been shown at SFMOMA, Museo Rufino Tamayo, LACMA, Hammer Museum, Muca Roma, among others.

Tanya Aguiñiga, an artist, designer, and craft person, works with

traditional craft materials like natural fibers and collaborates with other artists and activists to create sculptures, installations, performances, and community-based art projects. In her installations, furniture, and wearable signs, Tanya often works with cotton, wool and other textiles drawing upon Mesoamerican weaving and traditional forms. Her solo exhibitions include Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Museum of Arts and Design. Additional exhibitions have been held at Annenberg Space for Photography and the Craft and Folk Art Museum, among others.

In this episode, they discuss the versatility of the border experience, unlikely influences, and functional art practices.

**TA** Do you usually identify as Transfronterizo, Chicano, Mexican American, Latinx? How do labels, I guess, work for you?

**Julio César Morales** According to what they want to hear, I tell them I'm a naturalized citizen. So I don't say American, Mexican, or Chicano. I just say I'm a naturalized citizen. And some of them are surprised by that.

**TA** With work stuff, giving like a lecture about your art, how do you usually identify?

**JCM** First generation immigrant from Mexico. There's so many different labels. I think when we were working on the *Phantom Sightings: Art After the Chicano Movement* was the subtitle. And we were interviewed, a lot of the artists about, you know, do you represent yourself as Chicano? You know, how do you represent yourself? And I think it depends on the context that you are in: whether you're crossing the border, you're one thing, if you are representing a country in a biennial, you're another thing. So once I represented Mexico, once I represented the United States. And so it's using that duality to your comfort to what you can use it because it can be very derogatory, very traumatic as well. And, you know, why do you also have to associate to just one way of being? Because in the border experience, you experience multiple things in different languages in different contexts and different economies. And so, in

a way, it took me a while to figure out that that's very versatile as an artist, as an experience. Because when you are in Tijuana, people in Mexico don't consider border towns actual real, quote unquote, real Mexico. The same thing with border towns in the United States like El Paso or San Ysidro. That's really not the United States because it is this free flowing, I don't know, third space, perhaps.

**TA** For sure. For sure. Yeah, no, it's the weirdest thing. And I think that's why I like talking about this stuff with people that are actually from the border because I think we all understand the existence of this third culture that's created. And how we relate to it and belong to both sides but also to neither in a way. And how I think, and I'm not sure if it's like this, you know, in other large border towns, but I feel like in Tijuana, everything is always analog because everybody has to kind of figure out how to cobble together a way of surviving. So then you have to kind of constantly hustle and constantly—yeah, like, Okay, this label goes with this label. This word doesn't exist so I'm gonna make up a word. And I'm gonna just figure out how to get through because I gotta just keep going and keep moving.

**JCM** There is this urgency of survival that I felt that I feel. Being in a border town, either you're one side or the other side, but it's true, what you're saying that it's a visceral thing as well.

**TA** Yeah. And I think it's important for people to kind of understand the complexity and the layers of our existence and how we are a really integral part of both countries. I mean, even like, from the Mexican side, I was in Mexico City one time and some taxi driver was like, "Oh, you're from Tijuana?" I was like, "Yeah." And he's like, "I thought nobody lived there no more. I thought that was the forgotten lands."

**JCM** Wow.

**TA** So I was like, "Holy shit." Yeah, for a lot of people, the border is a forgotten land. Because unless you're hearing about the physical fence, or immigration issues, or violence issues, people don't really think that there's vibrant communities that exist on the border that

want to live there, and that are happy living there. Because I think we're constantly painted as maybe people that don't want to be there.

**JCM** And I think he's also referring to no tourism anymore. You don't have Marines going to party in Tijuana. You don't have underage kids with fake IDs and that really was a huge amount of [the] economy in Tijuana. And after the Narcos and all that started happening, you know, basically, there's really no more tourists and the locals took over the whole tourist area and made it their own. Now there's galleries, there's amazing restaurants. I remember going to dinner with my uncle. And we were in Revolución Avenue where all the bars used to be. And he said, "I haven't been here since I was a kid because this was not for me. This was only for gringos." And now they've created their own communities within the area that used to be designated only for tourists.

**TA** Yeah and I think that was the really amazing combination. Also, September 11, I think, really killed, you know, like—it was taking my mom eleven hours a day to cross the border. Because my mom, my parents still live in Tijuana. But my mom worked at Vons at the grocery store in San Ysidro. So then, to go a few blocks, it would take her that long. I mean, it was amazing what happened after these different waves of stuff. Not saying that, obviously, that 9/11 was amazing. But the lack of tourism in Tijuana, which I don't know a lot of people if they know but, a lot of Tijuana, the growth happened first because of prohibition. So our proximity to the US and being a place where the US comes to play has always largely shaped the focus of a lot of border towns, as well as maquiladoras and production of goods. But anyways, it's been so incredible to see. I have two younger sisters and all of the amazing stuff that they got to grow up with, you know, and talking about, it felt like such an amazing cultural revolution that happened with Nortec and with the music scene, pairing up with fashion and art and all this stuff. It totally just revolutionized our spaces.

**JCM** I'm glad you mentioned that because that was so phenomenal to witness. I remember seeing Nortec at the Jai Alai. That's the

fastest game in the world, the ball is going 90 miles an hour. And then all of a sudden, you have this phenomenal music that is helping create this culture. And all of a sudden, Tijuana was on the cover of Time Magazine. And I ended up being friends with the majority of everyone there. And I remember talking to Pepe Mogt and he had this beautiful way of describing how Nortec came about. Because when Revolución was still with lots of tourists, if you stood in a specific corner, you could hear norteño music, which was the red light district.

[Music: “Tijuana Sound Machine” by Nortec Collective]

**JCM** And then you can hear techno music with your right ear, because that’s the tourism. And he said, if you stood in the same area, that was the sound that evolved from Nortec, where, you know, it’s pretty amazing where they were—instead of using bass in electronic music, like you usually do, they would use trombones as the bass. So super amazing, creative things are happening and Torolab and Tania Candiani, all these amazing artists from Tijuana, they just made it this phenomenal scene. And that really, I think, helped the culture in Tijuana survive those years in the early 2000s.

**TA** For sure, and I feel like it provided such a place of pride for everybody and also to reclaim space—physically reclaim space—that had for the majority of my parents’ lifetime, and everybody’s lifetime, been spaces that Americans came to piss on. Spaces they came to like piss and fuck on, and to be able to take these places like the old theaters that were abandoned for so long that could never have like theater productions anymore but, to have these amazing parties was just—oh my God, it was such an amazing feeling to see the spaces come back to life and places like discotheques that my parents partied at and then all of a sudden, I’m partying in those spaces, too. It was just really beautiful to have some sort of continuum and reclaiming of space.

**JCM** I mean, and it’s really interesting, because in those kinds of situations, you rarely have music that becomes the leader in changing culture in that sense. And you know, and there were young



people, it was anything from musicians to architects like Raúl from Torolab. It was just so wonderful to be there and witness that. And then, it went out into the world. All of a sudden, a lot of these artists were having shows in Europe and the United States. And I think also a big supporter was the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art.

**TA** Oh, for sure. I feel like that energy in your work. Like when I see your work and I don't know if it's because the pieces that are more like graphic, if it's speaking in a similar language to like what I remember of a bunch of Torolab stuff, but it feels like in a continuum of this really amazing energy, but also I can feel like the musicality in your work.

**JCM** A lot of that is because I grew up in Zona Norte next to the red light district. And so I always loved hand-painted signs, you know, all the amazing neon from the old bars. I actually—and then I ended up working with Torolab on some t-shirts, where I actually did a series of outlines of street vendors. And then I went to school. I went to Southwestern College. A lot of people from Tijuana, like Sergio de la Torre and Yvonne, all these amazing artists, we all went to the same school because it was a junior college, it was inexpensive, and it was great. And so I actually began studying design. I didn't start studying art. I was officially into design and I love aspects of that. And only recently I've come back to kind of do that with the neon signs and other photographic works that I'm doing now. But that's always been a big influence to me: what you mentioned... the vibrancy of Tijuana, the Zona Norte, and all that, really, you know, it kind of surfaces. I'm glad you see that.

**TA** That's so awesome. And even hearing you explain stuff. It makes so much more sense and feels so much more alive. To me I can feel the kind of weird living connection to now being able to see it, you know, and it has a pulse. *(laughter)* Yeah, I went to Southwestern College too, I was there. It was a two year college. I was there for seven years. I also started, well, I ended up getting a Master's in design and an undergrad in design. So my background is in furniture design.

**JCM** I know, I saw that when I was looking at your website. I was wondering, how does that play into your work now? I know that—one of the things that I love is your use of fiber. And how you deconstruct and construct these really amazing installations.

**TA** Thank you. So I started getting into design just out of being like a really creative person that always wanted to do art. But you know, because of my parents crossing the border every day and how hard it was for me to even just be like in school in the US, like physically the amount of energy it took for me to get there. And so when I—my dad and my uncle worked at NASSCO at the shipbuilding company in National City. And so my dad was a ship grinder. So they would put a 40 pound grinder strapped onto his body and throw him over the side of a battleship, and he would grind the weld with his body. And so I felt as someone that grew up working class, and my parents are both from Colonia Libertad so they both grew up right next to the fence next to the border crossing. Like my dad dropped out of school in eighth grade, the ideas of what art is, were never—I was never exposed to like, I never got to go to an art museum. I got to go to like lowrider shows, but I didn't get to go to an art museum. *(laughter)* So the idea of telling my family, "Oh, I want to study art," was just, like, super sacrilegious. You know, it was like the biggest slap to everybody's face for multiple generations. And so I was like, Alright, I have to figure out what I can study that's actually a useful thing that I can get a job as a cabinet maker. I can, if I'm a badass welder, nobody's gonna take those props away from me. I'm gonna be a badass welder. And so I first got drawn to making functional work and to learning about functional stuff through just wanting to have something that my dad could relate to. Like, they could understand, "Oh, yeah, you can sit on it. Cool, you can sit on it." *(laughter)* And then later now that I've been involved in craft longer, I think a lot of it was looking for places of connection to ancestry, to lineage, because of our lack of that through forced migration. Like, our family is having to move up to Tijuana because of poverty. And the border, being somewhere that's not that connected to Mexican culture and tradition. I think I just really yearn for a rooting. And so then that's how I started getting into the world of craft, was through function.



**JCM** My grandfather and grandmother moved during Prohibition because they were coming from Guadalajara. So they moved to Tijuana because before it was—there's 5,000 people only. And then after Prohibition, there were just so many people going there for work. But I mean, you know, I've worked a lot with artists from Guadalajara, where the craft is just so instinctive and inherent, that they don't think of it as craft. But, you know, what were some of the first things in Mexican craft or indigenous Mexican craft that you gravitate towards?

**TA** So the first thing that I like fully, like it just took me over, and I'm still in it, is fiber. So, I was lucky enough because my family also never traveled anywhere, because all of our family was in Tijuana on both sides. *(laughter)* So, my mom's family is actually from Jalostotitlán, from one hour north of Guadalajara. But her family, because of poverty, she became an orphan really young, they never went back. So I didn't grow up having ties to Jalisco. And so the first big award that I got when I was 27, I was like, "Okay, this is when I'm gonna go travel, like, to some parts of Mexico and find out what it's about." And so I ended up going to Puebla, Oaxaca, and Chiapas, just to kind of do a survey. It was me and my sister. And as soon as I got to...I had already started learning weaving in grad school. But, as soon as I got to San Cristóbal de las Casas in Chiapas and witnessed, you know, backstrap weaving, that like it means—that was like mind blowing, just to see like how the body is so intricately connected to an outcome and to a material and how a material can actually be a witness to whatever's happening in your body and in your mind, and like that direct connection between yourself and your movement and your intuition to, like, making of something. Yeah, just like totally blew my mind. And when I got to Oaxaca, I was going to all the different craft villages to see, you know, what it is that people make. And I got to Teotitlán del Valle, which is where the—it's a weaving village that's been weaving for thousands of years. And they had these massive looms that looked really heavy and really kind of hard to use. And so I asked them, you know, "Why is it that you weave on these looms?" And they were like, "Oh, because the Spanish brought them." And then when I got to Chiapas, and I asked women, "Oh, why do you weave with a backstrap loom?" And they're like, "Well,

because we always have.” And so at that point, I was like, “Holy shit, I have a choice.” (*laughter*) I don’t have to work with stuff because it’s shown to me or given to me, or that I’m taught on it. I actually can like, question the materials, the methodologies, the tools. And then that’s when I started getting deeper and deeper into working with fiber, and really using it to talk about...

**JCM** But I mean, you’re also creating a custom sort of styling of creating the work too, aren’t you?

**TA** Yeah. So I ended up figuring out how to develop techniques that could be taught to anybody, and that don’t have like, no up no down, like, you can throw it off of a roof and it’ll survive. There’s a lot of preciousness kind of taken away from it. And yeah, it’s like cooking. Like we all get to kind of do our own thing. Kind of, you know, letting the language come out of your hands that you have, like your signature, you know, like we all write differently. So we all tie things differently. We all like—yeah, so I ended up figuring out different ways of just having what comes out be more connected to like your intuition in your body.

**JCM** I noticed that one of my biggest influences as well was Border Art Workshop.

**TA** Yeah, so I was part of the Border Art Workshop.

**JCM** I was lucky enough to see them when they were still—the majority of them together, before I moved to San Francisco to go to the San Francisco Art Institute. But I became friends with Richard Liu. He was in one of my last shows, it was called *Soul Mining*, and it was about the influence of Asian culture in Latin America.

**TA** Oh, that’s so awesome.

**JCM** He’s half Chinese, half Mexican. And if you remember, he has this beautiful piece where he installed a door with 137 keys. And when you look at the image from the late ’80s, there’s no border fence. There’s just barbed wire that’s been broken. And he places the

piece there. It's really a phenomenal piece. But I wanted to ask you, what was your involvement or your experience working with Border Art Workshop?

**TA** That was like the best thing to come out of, like, me going honestly to school. I ended up going to Southwestern College and I met Michael Schnorr. One of the founding members of the Border Art Workshop. And so he's the one that kind of kept it going into the 2000s. So after a lot of the major artists had moved on, Michael kept it going. And so he asked me to be part of the Border Art Workshop and so I was part of it from '97 to 2003. And so at that point, they weren't doing a lot of performance work, they weren't doing a lot of site-specific installation stuff, they weren't really exhibiting that much. A lot of the work was really about focusing on migrant rights, and focusing on using art as a tool for empowerment and radical change. And so when I was a part of it, the majority of our time was spent working in a town called Maclovio Rojas, which is an autonomous community that's all run by women in Tijuana. And so then, I work there co-building and running a school. We also had a sculpting school that we built to teach people how to make their own headstones because we also built a cemetery. I was in charge of building a reproductive health center, soccer fields. We did tons of really amazing programs with children, but then also spent a lot of times helping with infrastructure, making sure that all the wires were raised up on poles and stuff so that children and animals wouldn't get electrocuted when it would rain because everybody was tapping in the maquiladoras water and electricity. Because as an autonomous community, they didn't have running water, schools, police, electricity, any type of services. So then we helped, you know, with anything that we could, but also using art as a way to bring attention to what was happening and the governmental brutality because this community was autonomous and fighting for their rights.

**JCM** And I know it's also one of the most dangerous places in Tijuana. And it's very famous in the way for vernacular architecture where people would build houses made from old garage doors that would come from California.

**TA** Yeah. And that was, it was \$16 a door, and you would—for under 100 bucks, you can get five, and then you'd have a house. And the reason why it grew so big and so many people wanted to be there was because as an autonomous community, they also would give you land for free if you agreed to be part of the community. And so then you would have to work. So it was this collective way of existing as a community and helping each other. And a lot of it was tied to the Zapatistas, a lot of it was tied to really amazing ideas of how we could exist differently.

**JCM** Right. And what you mentioned, how art can make social change. With your involvement, it sounds like it really did. And for people who don't know, Border Art Workshop, it's a collective of artists from both sides of the border that have been working together since the '80s. People like Guillermo Gómez-Peña were part of it. And so it's always been kind of redeveloping itself. And I'm glad that Michael was still there to keep it alive and do amazing projects, like what you were doing.

**TA** Yeah. And I think a lot of it—I mean, it was different because, like, he was the only—he was like an elder, you know. And he was also, you know, a white man. There's also that which (*laughter*) has to get, you know, named. And the majority of us that were working were his students, you know, and a lot of us were women. And so the way that we learned stuff, we still learned really amazing things. But if he was alive now, I would love to have some amazing conversations and questions about, like, how all the stuff rolled out.

[Music: "Aftersun" by SverreV]

**JCM** I also wanted to ask you—I'm really amazed to be in this project at The Armory. I've worked with Tobias before in Miami, and at the Tamayo Museum in Mexico City, and you're on the other Platform series as well. I'm wondering what you're showing?

**TA** So I'm there with my gallery, *Volume Gallery*, and the works are these pieces that I made in the pandemic. So the series that I started

in the pandemic, and the series is called *Extraño*. So, you know, in Spanish, extraño means 'strange,' but it also means 'I miss,' like, 'I miss it.' So it's missing, but also strange. And so really exploring, making works that are just like a little bit absurd, a little bit surreal, but still, they're all like these very linear, kind of poetic, knitted pieces that are all hand dyed, in this very, like water color, experimental way. And they're probably the closest thing that I've made to just pure sculpture that doesn't have a lot of real intense social justice, spin on it. And some of the sculptures are obviously very much like sculptures, it's hard for me to describe the things that they hold for me. But they hold a lot of the strangeness of the pandemic like yearning for just happiness, and things that are just a little bit off. They have a bunch of synthetic hair in them. And a lot of it was thinking about like Jodorowsky films. (*laughter*) Just thinking about like, [*The*] *Holy Mountain* (*laughter*) and thinking about minimalist art, which was the first thing that I gravitated to when I—my first introduction to art was working at the San Diego Museum of Art. (*laughter*) And I was obsessed with the Robert Irwin pieces. So I started getting really obsessed when I first found out about art with minimal art. And so for me the pieces, these pieces from the *Extraño* series kind of have a bunch of really weird, like surrealism, like Latin American surrealism, but also minimalism, and Bruce Nauman neon works.

**JCM** Yeah, I mean, I love your choices of color. Sometimes it's muted, sometimes really bright, but I like the sort of rhythm that happens in your choice of color. So I can kind of see now how you're talking about the Bruce Nauman neon and the Irwin.

**TA** So, how have your thoughts about the borderlands or the themes that come up in your work changed as you moved to San Francisco and to Arizona? Did they change or did they stay the same?

**JCM** I've always worked with family experiences where, you know, in my family, it's very diverse. So we'll have a police officer, or you'll have a drug dealer or judge, and it rams that kind of gamut. And so it's always been like a lot of family stories, or, you know, my aunt told me about this new way of smuggling people or drugs. And so a lot



have a drug dealer or judge, and it rams that kind of gamma. And so it's always been like a lot of family stories, or, you know, my aunt told me about this new way of smuggling people or drugs. And so a lot of that kind of street scholarship comes from stories I hear, but then it changes. I think it changed even more drastically when I moved here to Arizona, and I've been here 10 years now. And again, being more close to the border, there's a lot more influence of that coming into the recent work that I've made. And the work that I'm doing for The Armory is neon. And it's the neon of the border, the US-Mexico border today. And then there's one that is from 1845, when this was still Mexican territory, and there's one from the 1600's, before Europeans came to the southwest. And then there's one for the future of 2028 when New Mexico and California become their own sovereign areas. So, that's what's being presented. But you know, I think being here, and being closer to the border, you know, I think some of the work has shifted to be more direct about those issues. And, you know, I also want to ask you, as an artist, do you always feel compelled to do work that is based on the border? For me, sometimes it's hard to detach, but I can make what you're saying, more abstracted work. But somehow it's still sort of in there.

**TA** Yeah, I try. If something feels really urgent to be addressed, then it just has to come out. But, I'm really lucky because I also have the AMBOS project, which is Art Made Between Opposite Sides, which is a project that I founded in 2016. Because I have that as another conduit, then some of the strictly border based work and strictly social justice and community-based work, I can kind of fit under that umbrella if I don't want it to be in the same space as works that are consumable. Yeah, so sometimes I'm able to separate them. And I think that's the hard thing for me, and why I was having such (*laughter*) a hard time explaining what I'm gonna have at The Armory, is that I still have this great sense of guilt for making work that is just because. I think that there's so much amazing liberation and healing that happens. And being able to allow myself to do that. And to take back a lot of things that were taken away from generations of my family. Like the freedom of being able to just make something beautiful that is just a pure expression of joy. It's kind of hard to sit with sometimes (*laughter*) when it's like, Oh, shit, but then on the



opposite side, what's really good is that, because I do so much social justice work, then the sale of those things allows me to be able to pay for a bunch of just straight up humanitarian work.

**JCM** It's also a strategy, like we talked about the watercolors that I do. It's almost a strategy where you want it to be aesthetically beautiful. And when people notice, "Oh, that's a little kid inside a piñata." Then there's like, Oh, okay, but in fact, it is about this content. It is about, you know, US-Mexico relations. It's about the border, you know what I mean? So, I always felt that the work I do, that I have to do, always aesthetically somehow engages you. But then the other layer is the truth of it or the content of where it's coming from. So in a way, I've always figured I'd had to work that way in order to talk about some of these issues. So I loved how you have your other AMBOS project and then you have your—not gallery practice, but your other practice, and it's nice to have. That's how I figure the curatorial in my work is almost like AMBOS, and then I have my other work. And they both feed off each other but, you know, it's nice to recognize and it's nice to have that way of an output.

**TA** Yeah, that's awesome to think about it that way because I feel like your curatorial practice seems so collaborative versus a lot of curators that, you know, just tell you what to do. But it seems like you found a really beautiful way to use curation as a conduit to continue these really important conversations.

**JCM** Yeah, and here at the ASU Art Museum, I mean, 80 percent of what I do is commission-based work. So, it's always new work that is being created. It's also a work that has a dialogue within this region. And so, I can span many different types of mediums. But, it always ends up having a dialogue with the southwest, the border, [and] other issues that we're currently dealing with in this cultural climate.

**TA** It's so amazing, and looking at some of the programs that you guys have like that LACMA partnership, you know, with helping new curators.

**JCM** Yeah, that basically comes out of like—I'm 5 percent, only 5 percent of all curators and museum directors are of color in the United States. So LACMA was pretty amazing to work with us and create this new art history fellowship for students of color to be more in the field. And essentially, it's a fellowship, where you get an MA art degree, you work for the museum for 32 hours. So you get experience, and you get mentored by phenomenal people like Olga Viso, Rita Gonzalez, and then Perez Art Museum just joined as well.

**TA** It's so awesome. It's so amazing. Do you have a dream collaboration that you'd like to do? Either in your work or in your curatorial practice?

**JCM** Right now, I'm working on something I just wanted to dream. And it's sort of happening, which is, I'm working on a new series of artworks with poets and musicians about the sounds and the experiences of the border, including Mexican Institute of Sound.

**TA** Oh, awesome! Yeah.

**JCM** Natalie Diaz, the poet. So I'm working my way through all these amazing people that I always wanted to work with. And so we're beginning to talk about it. So those are really, really something I've been wanting to do for a really long time with my experience with sound art with music, and also being a DJ a long time ago, starting a record label, all these other things coming together to create this amazing series of projects. So I'm really happy to do that in the near future. I'm working on it now, actually.

**TA** That's so cool. That's super exciting.

**JCM** This is what I usually tell artists, and that's how I get into trouble. What is your dream project that you haven't had a chance to do?

**TA** I am kind of trying to figure it out right now. I want to go back into, like spend time with the Border Art Workshop archives, which are housed at UCSD and kind of read through a lot of that stuff.

And kind of—right now I’m at a place of really thinking about how it differs to work on the border as like a mother, as a woman, as a femme bodied person. Because so much of traveling the border in the last few years has felt, you know, like it’s a space that is increasingly violent towards women. And so wanting to kind of examine more, what is it like to come at border-based work from a place of nurtury and motherhood? I guess, how am I shaping this border-based experience differently than the way that I was taught? See the way that we experienced it, and the way that it was done before. And maybe it’s through performance, and kind of—which makes me uncomfortable because I also—it’s really hard to do performance stuff, mainly because I tend to put upon myself, like, durational, really emotional shit. But yeah, I do kind of want to take some time to explore. Yeah, what it’s like to exist as a femme-bodied person.

**LF** FUSE is produced by me, Libby Flores, Associate Publisher at BOMB. It’s edited and engineered by Will Smith, with production assistance by Sage Swaby. Our theme music is “Black Origami” by Jlin. Subscribe to FUSE on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you listen.

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