



Fwd: Museums

"Alien"

2018

edited by
Therese Quinn & Lauren De Jesus

Copyright © 2018 Therese Quinn, Lauren De Jesus, and the *Fwd: Museums Journal* (Museum and Exhibition Studies Graduate Program, University of Illinois at Chicago)
Released on June 8, 2018
Published by StepSister Press, 600 S. Crescent Avenue, Park Ridge, IL, U.S.A., stepsisterpress.org

ISBN: 978-0-9802300-9-3

The *Fwd: Museums* publication team selected and edited content in collaboration with contributors. The views and opinions expressed in this volume are solely those of the original authors and contributors. All contributing authors and artists retain copyright to their own works and have explicit permission to share PDF copies of their own articles and images as presented in this volume. The publisher would like to thank Therese Quinn and members of the UIC community for committing their time and resources to this publication.

Thank you to our Patreon sponsors for making this publication possible.

Cover and interior design by Annie Heckman.
This book was typeset using Cooper Hewitt and PT Sans typefaces. It is printed on acid-free paper by Ingram Spark.
The editorial team has chosen to place *"Alien"* in air quotes to signal the problems and provocations that accompany this term.

The Publication Coordinator position, currently occupied by Lauren E. De Jesus, has been made possible through a Humanities Access Grant received from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Views expressed in this journal do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE

Humanities



Fwd: Museums

"Alien"

Issue 3

2018

edited by
Therese Quinn & Lauren De Jesus



Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	3
Introduction • <i>Chelsea Ridley</i>	5
1. Welcome Writer: Maid Poem #7: HR • <i>Jan-Henry Gray</i>	7
2. Field Notes: At the Museum • <i>Tessa Withorn</i>	9
3. Alienation in the Museum of Capitalism • <i>FICTILIS</i>	13
4. Don't Put Us Back in the Closet • <i>Kaycee Moore</i>	23
5. Grafted Blouse from an Alien Resident • <i>Sherwin Ovid</i>	28
6. Welcome Writer: Curious Faces • <i>Jocelyn Munguía Chavez</i>	31
7. Displaying Philippine Co-curation: A Wedding Dress at the Field Museum • <i>Melissa Hendrickson and Neal Matherne</i>	35
8. Why We Need Multilingual Accessibility in Museums • <i>Ivan Guzman</i>	47
9. Book Review: <i>Women in the Museum</i> • <i>Jackie Peterson</i>	59
10. Loving the Alien Spaceship • <i>León De la Rosa-Carrillo</i>	65
11. Welcome Writer: Live from Planet Stateville – Vol. III • <i>Ricky Patterson</i>	89
12. Alienated: A Museum Visit with My Brother • <i>Abigail Diaz</i>	95
13. Book Review: <i>A Practical Guide to Museum Ethics</i> • <i>Danielle Kuijten</i>	107
14. Digital Life as Sanctuary: An Interview with Artist Francesca Mallows • <i>Joelle Te Paske</i>	111
15. Permanent Temporary	131
16. Welcome Writer: I, Too, Have a History • <i>Aniyah Fisher</i>	135
17. Learning to Unlearn in the Museum: Deconstructing Neutrality • <i>Megan Moran</i>	139

Table of Contents

18. Book Review: Cruising the Library • <i>Anjanette Schussler</i>	149
19. Imagining Other: The Whitney Museum's "An Incomplete History of Protest" • <i>Emily Rogers</i>	155
20. Blurring Boundaries: A Day in the Life of a Museum Educator • <i>Susan Fohr</i>	167
21. Welcome Writer: Alien (X3) and the Creation of the Haitian 13. American Museum of Chicago • <i>Elise Hector Hernandez</i>	173
22. Museum Review: Verla—An Industrial Heritage Site in Finland • <i>Sonja Laukkanen</i>	177
23. Socially Engaged Aesthetics: A Discussion among Daniel Tucker, Candice Smith, Rachel Wallis, and Christianna Fail	185
24. Book Review: Envisioning Another Art World in Gregory Sholette's <i>Delirium and Resistance</i> • <i>Kathryn Dawson</i>	191
25. Post-colonial Language Performance Score • <i>Hiba Ali</i>	197
26. Author Notes	203
27. Call for Submissions 2019: Death to Museums	213
28. Editor Bios	217

Loving the Alien Spaceship

León De la Rosa-Carrillo

The art museum in Ciudad Juárez is an alien spaceship. I know this because I'm a natural born Juarensa and I've never seen anything else like it in my desert town; my sparse border city; my sun-drenched, one-time-murder-capital-of-the-world home.



Collage 1: Several views of *El Museo de Arte de Ciudad Juárez*, ca. 1964 when the museum was about to open its doors for the first time.¹

Sure, history books will tell you that the museum was built in the early 60's by famed Mexican architect Pedro Ramirez Vasquez, but I know better: spaceships land fully constructed and full of constructs. This one landed on March 7th, 1964, packed to the brim with missions to accomplish under the PRONAF² umbrella, a mysterious federal directive that still casts a thick shadow over the spaceship and its surroundings even though it was defunded long ago.



Collage 2: Clockwise from bottom: Museum for the renovation of Mexico's border profile | History of Juárez City | The replica of an Olmec head, once the centerpiece of the museum's permanent exhibit | Saturday March 7th, 1964 | Giner Duran, the state's governor at the time, is announced to be at the museum's inauguration.³

It is meant to resemble a Mayan hut, which only an alien would consider significant in the México-US border, far from any Mayan influence or remembrance. It is meant to be perpetually surrounded by nearly 160 thousand gallons of water in the middle of an arid land known for overwhelming thirst and sponge-like cacti. Yes, just like a castle of old, another misplaced reference, this spaceship boasts a moat of its own. One can only wonder, who are the barbarians are it is meant to keep away?



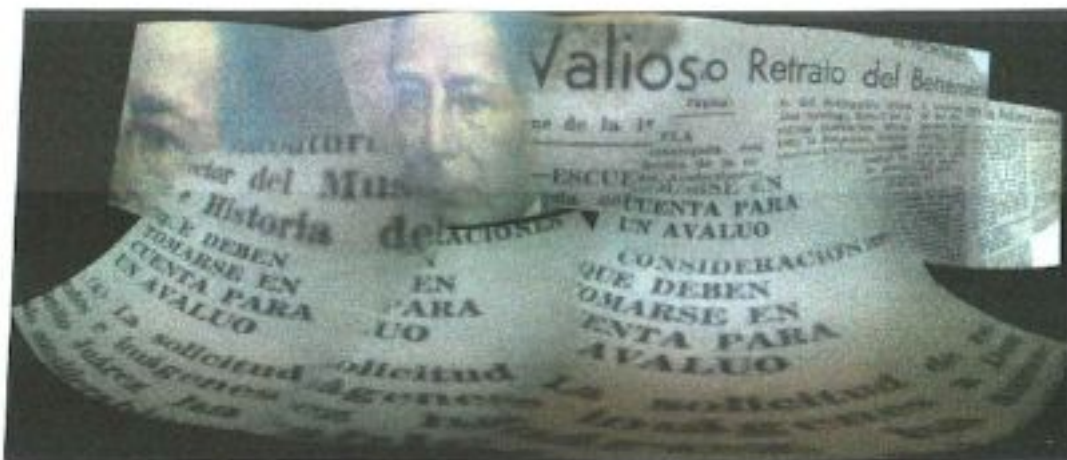
Collage 3: A drawing of the museum and its surrounding areas blossoming from an ocean of words about aesthetics by Lacouture-Fornelli.⁴

There is, however, no need to wonder who the barbarians were that the spaceship was meant to refine: "It was the unruly desert people, whose identity had more to do with the border and extreme weather than the colonial buildings and prehispanic traditions of old Mexico."



Collage 4: The headline refers to *Arte del Virreinato en el Estado de Chihuahua* [Colonial Art in Chihuahua], one of the first art exhibitions that the museum hosted.⁵

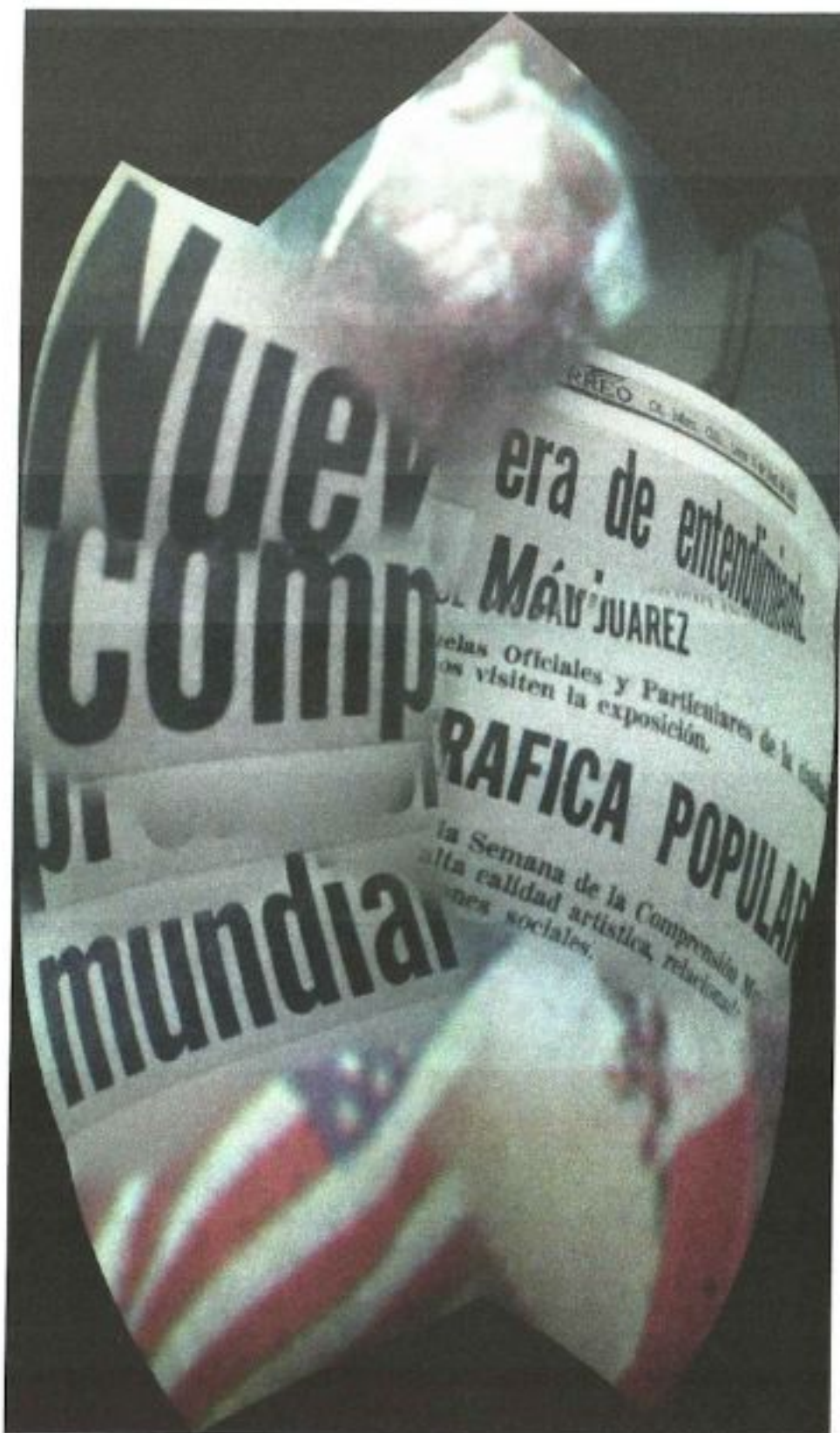
Its inaugural director—should we call him Captain Lacouture?—was known to flaunt his French heritage and the local media was known to celebrate it. His cultural refinement was on full display everywhere he set foot and every time he set word to page, even when appraising the portrait of the country's foremost advocate for laic values and the purveyor of the city's name.



Collage 5: On the right, a portrait of Felipe Lacouture. On the left, details about a newly found portrait of Benito Juárez that Lacouture was asked to appraise.⁶

But refining barbarians was not the alien spaceship's only mission. It was also meant to be the facelift that a city never-developed-enough-to-be-run-down didn't quite understand it needed. It was to put a modernist face and concrete limbs on binational embraces.







Collage 6: On the left, L-R & T-B: New worldwide commitment | An era of understanding | Popular Printmaking [announcement for a show]. On the right, no translation needed.⁷

But eventually the locals, as barbarians often do, pressed their way past the moat and found room to plant a flag of their own. It was a flag made of mosaic that celebrated the shapes and traditions of a pre-colonial history that was still foreign to the desert.



Collage 7: The picture is of artist Judith Angeles handing her mosaic to Lacouture as a donation to the museum's collection. The headline reads, *A hall in the museum for local artists*, and it's dated in blue ink, 8/13/64. Towards the bottom, a quote from Angeles: *If the museum is for Juárez, then it is only fair that Juárez artists show their work there.*⁸

Five years later, in 1969, Architect Lizarraga—let's call him Lieutenant for alliteration sake—took over the command center and announced a bold new route for the spaceship. It would now explore popular culture and celebrate its most significant expressions.



Collage 8: Architect José Lizarraga is the new museum director | The museum will house the people's culture.⁹

But Lizarraga wasn't thinking of the desert dwellers, whose culture was always more Halloween than Day of the Dead and more Easter Bunny than Resurrection Sunday. His focus, rather, was on expressions emanating from the bottom half of the country, the half typically celebrated as traditional Mexico.



Collage 9: *Day of the Three Wisemen is a tradition that must be rescued: Lizarraga | The messiah complex in politics: a column by Lizarraga denouncing local politicians for their lack of commitment to cultural matters.*¹⁰

However, with the PRONAF directive running on empty, the spaceship stalled and its shell began cracking under the weight of its age. Nevertheless, it persevered.



Collage 10: *Left to right & top to bottom: The museum of art and history is restored | The art and history museum will feature local talent | The museum is in appalling conditions | The maintenance bill was 1.8 million.*¹¹

Luckily, INBA¹²—yet another federal tentacle—embraced the spaceship with a promise of stability and smooth sailing.



Collage 11: *The Art and History Museum and the PRONAF Convention Center are transferred to INBA.*¹³

But even under the tutelage of INBA, desert authorities were constantly looking to evict the spaceship and, as only true barbarians do, make a buck off the landing site.



Collage 12: L-R: *Expropriation: Misbegotten* | *Slowly, what once was an important tourist attraction is dying* | *Complete eviction from PRONAF is looming* | On the top, a political cartoonist took aim at the gutting of the PRONAF area.¹⁴

At that point, the alien spaceship had been fully adopted by the no-longer-barbarian desert dwellers who stood in defense. The clubs, guilds, and assorted creatives that felt at home in the spaceship's halls refused to let it soar away.



Collage 13: Top: More than 18 clubs protest the project to demolish the INBA Museum | Bottom from left to right: PRONAF: a community triumph | The PRONAF sale is cancelled: Macias [Then the Mayor of the city] | Artists feel like they own the INBA; they're already thinking how to divvy up the booty.¹⁵

Still, a rift between the spaceship's commanding officers and a tribe of local *artists* developed. The tribe had taken over the vessel next door, another legacy of the PRONAF directive, and under the threat of eminent domain as well, and turned it into a venue for local painters, graffiti artists and theater makers to occupy. The occupiers' methods seemed barbaric to Lizarraga.



Collage 14: On the top, a profile piece on Willivaldo Delgadillo, stating the occupiers' case. On the bottom, a Lizarraga quote: *The occupation of INBA has become tarnished*. In the middle, clashing portraits of both.¹⁶

Such discrepancies were not necessarily new. Rather, despite isolated instances of local artists being featured, desert dwellers had been demanding to see more of their own in the spaceship's halls since the craft first landed—remember Judith Angeles's unexpected and ultimately unrequited donation in 1964.



Collage 15: From left to right Art: A weapon against obscurantism | Minimal furtherance of border culture | There is a divorce between artists and the official institutions in charge of developing it | Manifesto-Call to arms about the need for new venues that feature local art | On the top, a drawing of the Benito Juárez monument, a local landmark.¹⁷

In 1992, the spaceship celebrated 28 years since landing in the desert by hosting its inaugural captain, who came back with a show of his own. Meanwhile, the natives began wondering if instead of invading the alien craft, maybe they should focus on devising alternative spaces to house cultural artifacts and expressions of their own.



Collage 16: *It's the Art Museum's Birthday | INBA celebrates its 28 years with an exhibition by Felipe Lacouture | And the excerpt in the middle: Today the gallery spaces are used to show films or give talks, which speaks to the urgent need for alternative cultural spaces.*¹⁸

By the mid 90's, Enrique Cortazar—Commander Cortazar—had successfully permeated the spaceship with a new zeitgeist. He was well known for his personal connections to the federation and its elite intellectuals, connections that shifted the mission of the alien spaceship yet again as it became a house of worship, where cultural celebrities of the time came to be celebrated.



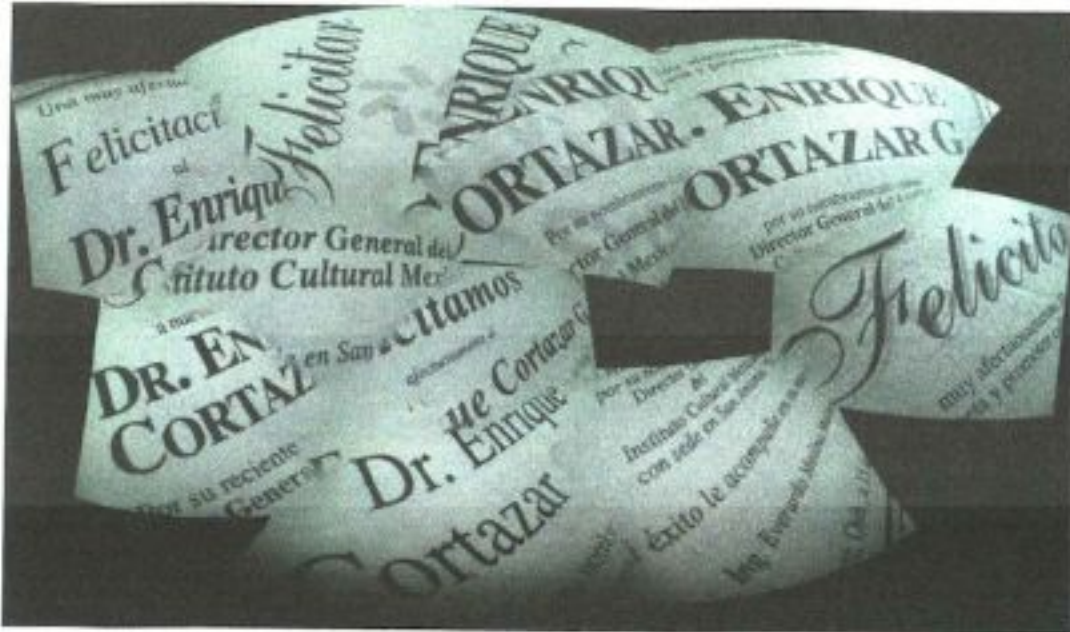
Collage 17: On the left, the headline: *Great writers and good cinema | Internationally renowned artists visited the Art Museum in 1994 | Writers, painters, sculptors, musicians and large audiences at the three city museums | For all tastes*. On the right, a portrait of Enrique Cortazar with the headline, *Tireless cultural promoter*.¹⁹

Among many worship sessions with such luminaries as famed painter Jose Luis Cuevas, prominent scribe Carlos Monsiváis, and monumental sculptor Sebastian, it was a visit by Carlos Fuentes—perhaps the federation's favorite writer, public intellectual, and diplomat—that proved paradigmatic of Commander Cortazar's main directive. During a conference, the Panama native but life-long Mexico City resident was resolute in explaining the border to the life-long *fronterizos*²⁰ of the desert.



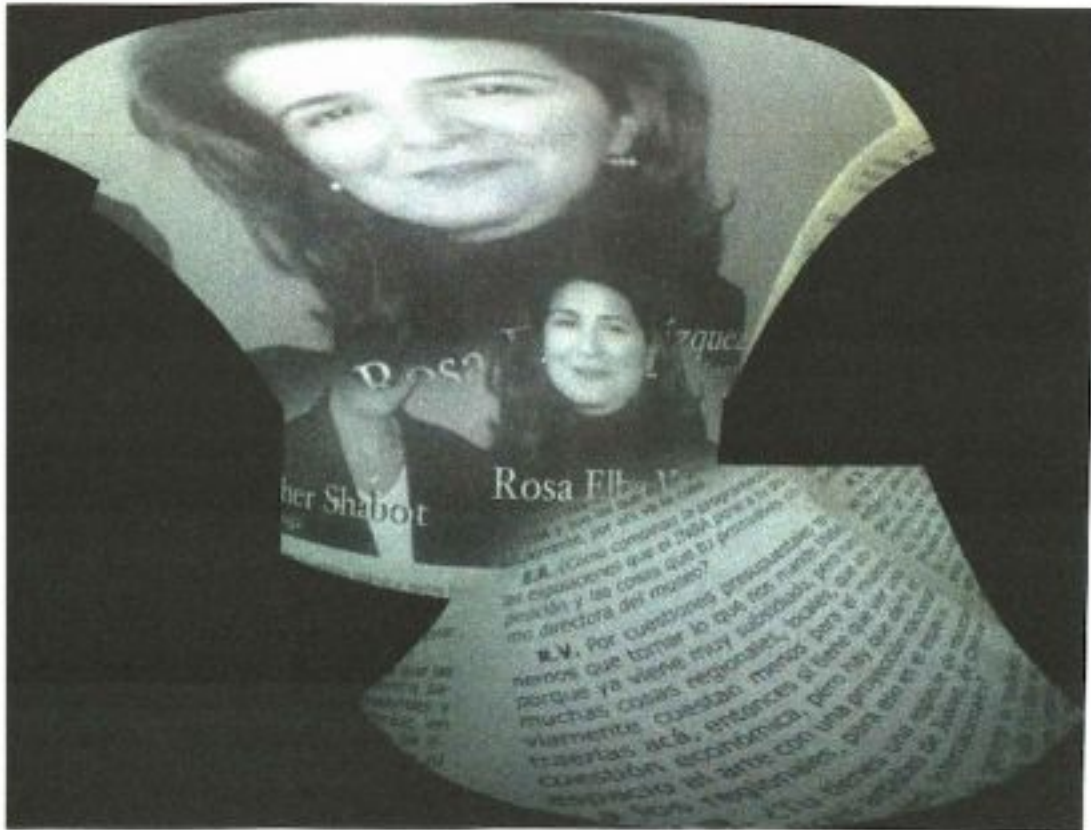
Collage 18: The headline reads, *The border world*, and above it, *Carlos Fuentes shares selections from his new book, which is made up of twelve short stories about the future of the border*. On the right, a portrait of the author.²¹

Cortazar's command was short-lived, as he soon undertook a new mission. He was to export the federation's culture up north. The desert *fronterizos* were gracious and wished him the best in his new endeavor.



Collage 19: On the top, a paid advertisement in a local newspaper congratulating Cortazar for his new appointment. On the bottom, from left to right: *He will foster Mexican culture* | *He will bring culture to San Antonio* | The portraits surrounding the headlines show Cortazar posing with some of the luminaries that visited the museum during his tenure as director.²²

In his place came in Rosa Elba Vázquez—the Viceroy—who to this day remains at the helm of the spaceship now fully recognized as an INBA vessel—before, it was merely subsidized by the federal body—but still struggling to strike a balance in the native-alien tension that has characterized its history. Of course, regardless of said balance, the craft must always fly within its allotted budget.



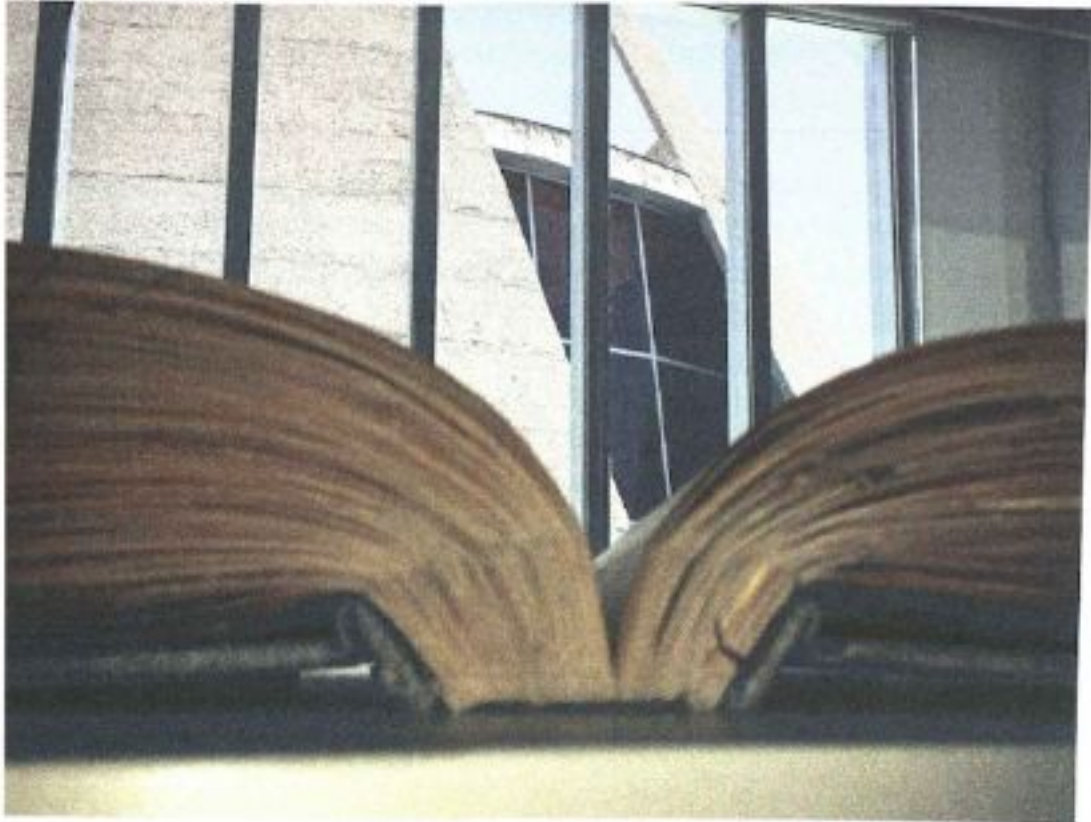
Collage 20: From an interview with Vázquez: *Q. How do you mix the exhibitions that INBA provides and what you foster as the museum's director? A. For budget reasons, we must take what INBA sends since it all comes largely subsidized, but there is a lot of regional and local stuff that obviously cost less, so it is a question of money, but the space must be given to the art as a tool of national projection to regional [artists], that is what the space is for.*²⁵

I report this as a desert dweller who was recently given complete access to the alien spaceship's archive room that collects both its history and the history of the culture that emanated in the city since it first landed in 1964 and all the way up to the early 2000s. The abrupt stop signals a significant shift of focus from the local press, as culture is now mainly covered through the entertainment prism that is very seldom directed towards the realm of art. I spent a year interpreting the collected yearbooks and when it came time to offer an account of my experience I decided to do so through 400 digital collages generated in situ by fooling a digital device into thinking it was capturing a

landscape when it was just taking snapshots of newspaper clippings I held in front of the lens while walking around the archive room. I figured that since the aliens that designed the spaceship were obviously infatuated by odd curvatures and irregular shapes, I should honor their taste through the 200 or so panoramic collages exhibited in various forms during the show that resulted from the arts-based research. Even through cynical detachment and a definite intolerance of all things nostalgic, I truly wished to honor these aliens and their spaceship as well as every crew member and commanding officer on board. It was my complicated love letter to a complicated space.



Collage 21: Installation views of Museo: Conversaciones de Archivo [Museum: Archival Conversations]



On the foreground, one of the yearbooks re-interpreted into panoramic collages, in the background the spaceship's main cabin. Photo by Ivone Rodríguez, commissioned by the author. Used with permission.

Notes

1. *Novedades*, "Museo para la renovación del perfil fronterizo de México," May 31, 1964.
2. *PRONAF: Programa Nacional Fronterizo* [National Border Program] was the Mexican Government's attempt at incentivizing tourism and investment from the US by reshaping the border into a celebration of Mexican traditions and culture.
3. Adela Sierra, "Una visita al museo regional," *El Fronterizo*, May 17, 1964; Paid advertisement, "Giner Durán hará la apertura oficial del museo," March 7, 1964; *Novedades*, "Museo para la renovación del perfil fronterizo de México," May 31, 1964.
4. Felipe Lacouture, "Jardin de arte," *El Fronterizo*, October 30, 1970.
5. William Wilson, "Mexico's Colonial Heritage Mirrored in Exhibition," *Los Angeles Times*, July 13, 1969; *El Fronterizo*, September 8, 1969.
6. *El Fronterizo*, "Valioso retrato del benemérito rescatado en la aduana juarense," March 20, 1970.
7. Norman Nadel, "Juárez puts on new face for tourists," *El Paso Herald Post*, N.D. ca. 1969.
8. *El Fronterizo*, "Una sala del museo será para los artistas locales," August 13, 1964.
9. *El Fronterizo*, "El arquitecto José Lizarraga, es nuevo director del museo," January 16, 1971; *El Mexicano*, "Muy elogiable...," September 10, 1971; *El Fronterizo*, "Casa de la cultura del pueblo será el museo," February 3, 1971.
10. Leticia Solares, "Día de Reyes, una tradición que debe rescatarse: Lizárraga," *Norte de Ciudad Juárez*, January 7, 1992; Jose Diego Lizárraga, "El mesianismo en poética," *El Diario de Juárez*, February 2, 1992.
11. *El Fronterizo*, "Dará impulso a valores locales el Museo de Arte

e Historia en su programa 1980," January 3, 1980; *El Fronterizo*, "En pesimas condiciones se encuentra el museo," January 25, 1980; *El Fronterizo*, "Aprobaron 1.8 millones para remeozar el museo y la sala de convenciones," February 1, 1980.

12. INBA: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes [National Institute of the Fine Arts], akin to the National Endowment for the Arts in the US.

13. *El Fronterizo*, "Ceden al INBA El Museo de Arte e Historia y la Sala de Convenciones del PRONAF," May 11, 1980.

14. *El Diario de Juárez*, "Poco a poco va muriendo el PRONAF otrora importante atractivo turístico," September 18, 1988; *El Diario de Juárez*, "La expropiación: Una acción descabellada," October 7, 1988; *Mahoma*, "Entre Juarenses," October 9, 1988; Barabara Vazquez, "Temen desalojo total del PRONAF," October 9, 1988.

15. *Norte de Ciudad Juárez*, "Damas de 18 clubes impugnan el proyecto de derribar museo del INBA," September 27, 1990; Javier Padrón, "Cancelada la venta del PRONAF: Macias," *Diario de Juárez*, December 29, 1990; Fabiola De la Torre, "Artistas ya se sienten dueños del INBA," *El Fronterizo*, December 30, 1990; *Norte de Ciudad Juárez*, "PRONAF: Triunfo indudable de la comunidad juarense," December 31, 1990.

16. *El Fronterizo*, "Willivaldo Delgadillo habla sobre la toma del INBA," October 20, 1990; Catalina Lucero, "Se desvirtúa el movimiento de toma del INBA: Lizárraga," *Norte de Ciudad Juárez*, October 24, 1990.

17. *El Diario de Juárez*, "Mínima promoción de la cultura fronteriza," April 10, 1988; *El Diario de Juárez*, April 15, 1988; *El Fronterizo*, "Manifiesto-Convocatoria," April 15, 1988; Paloma San Juan, "El arte: Arma contra el oscurantismo," *El Fronterizo*, April 15, 1988.

18. Evangelina Mercado, "Cumpleaño el Museo de Arte," *Norte de Ciudad Juárez*, March 6, 2002; José Ruiz, "Museo del INBA: 28 años de ires y venires en a cultura fronteriza," *Diario de Juárez*, March 8, 1992.

19. Rosario Reyes, "Grandes escritores y buen cine," *Diario de Juárez*, January 1, 1995; *Diario de Juárez*, "Arte para todo gusto," January 8, 1995; Cecilia Ester Castañeda, "Incansable promotor de la cultura," *Diario de Juárez*, May 6, 1996.
20. Border people.
21. Silvia Pulido, "El mundo de la frontera," *Diario de Juárez*, April 10, 1995.
22. Paid advertisements, April 15, 2001; Alicia Pérez-López, "Promoverá la cultura mexicana," *El Diario*, April 14, 2001; Cecilia Ester Castañeda, "Llevará cultura a San Antonio," *El Diario*, March 21, 2001.
23. Interview with Esther Shabot and Rosa Elva Vázquez, *El Reto*, December 14, 2001.