

María Ochoa  
*Tinker Grant Research Report*

### **Mexican Border Art: A feminine perspective**



The US-Mexico Border Wall  
Photograph by María Ochoa

My research proposal consisted of analyzing Mexican women's engagement with the US-Mexico border through art. In this quest, I visited multiple border cities along the US-Mexico border, cultural centers, and held conversations with several border women, whose experience with the US-Mexico border varied and were unique and transforming.

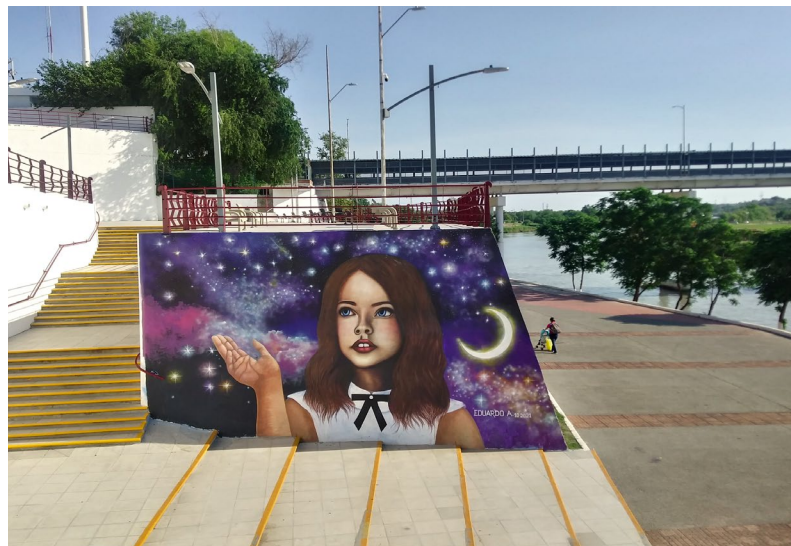


Estudiantes de la clase de pintura  
Casa de las Arte Piedras Negras  
Photograph by María Ochoa

Piedras Negras, Coahuila was one of the places I visited was. Piedras Negras is a bordering city with Eagle Pass, Texas. There, I had the opportunity to explore different cultural and recreation centers, where women actively participated, and used their creativity and imagination to offer a different outlook of life between borders. La Casa de las Artes was one of the cultural centers I visited in Piedras Negras. There, I met with the coordinator, who spoke to me about the importance of the arts in a bordering town. La Casa de las Artes, strives to provide a safe space for women where they can explore their multilayered identities while fully developing their artistic potential.

In Casa de las Artes, I also met one of the art teachers, who invited me to participate in her painting class and meet some of her students. The class was composed of 99% females, who came from different social and economic backgrounds. The art teacher expressed her excitement about the growing interest in the arts. It was

indeed fascinating to learn that women from both sides of the border participated in her class. Some of these women would cross the border to learn how to paint from Mexican art instructors for many different reasons. For some of them, it was a way to reconnect with their roots, for others, it was an opportunity to engage with their Mexican counterparts and create a community. Many of the female students found in the art class a welcoming and safe atmosphere where they could openly express themselves. For most of these women who live along the US-mexico border, borders do not exist. Physical borders are imposed on men, but ,even then, they can be overcome with art.



Paseo del Río, Piedras Negras  
“Women and child strolling at Paseo del Río”  
Photograph by María Ochoa

One other place that I explored in Piedras Negras was Paseo del Río. Paseo del Río is a trail that oversees the Rio Grande. It is constantly patrolled by the Mexican and the United States Border Patrol. Here, visitors constantly observe the full display of the U.S. Border Patrol equipment to protect their border. Helicopters, Patrol V-hull Safe Boats, Cameras, etc. are constantly on the watch for illegal crossings. Yet, Paseo del

Rio is also a recreational area where art is also in full display. Here art becomes part of the landscape. Both monumental and small-scale murals stand as an act of resistance against seclusion and violence. In Paseo del Rio, male and female artists from diverse art collectives worked together to embellish an area that otherwise would be a symbol of division. Through their art, they attempt to bring down the borders that stand against humanity, and create a more inclusive world, where both men and women, young and old, and people from diverse backgrounds can harmoniously coexist. In Paseo del Rio the hope for a better future is revitalized through art.



Puente Internacional I, Piedras Negras  
Photograph by María Ochoa

The US-Mexico border is a region that offers ample opportunities for studying. This research sought to analyze women's intervention through art in bordering towns. The findings revealed that for most bordering cities, art is understood as a medium that can be used to transform the lives of its inhabitants and that of the newcomers as well as a mechanism to fight against oppression. Border women experience the US-Mexico

border differently. For some, it reminded them of the obstacles set in place to deter people, for others, it stood as a reminder that borders do not exist and it is only humans that impose them on others. Yet, through art, these women fight back against any symbols of oppression whether they are literal or metaphorical.