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Citizen Artist

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Visual Arts

by

Andrew M. Sturm

Committee in charge:

Professor Teddy Cruz, Chair
Professor Brian Cross
Professor Fonna Forman
Professor Isaac Martin
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2018

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The Thesis of Andrew M. Sturm is approved, and it is acceptable
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Chair

University of California San Diego

2018

EPIGRAPH

“...you are not a profession that has distinguished itself by your social and civic contributions to the cause of civil rights, and I am sure this has not come to you as any shock. You are most distinguished by your thunderous silence and your complete irrelevance.”

Whitney M. Young, Jr.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Citizen Artist

by

Andrew M. Sturm

Master of Fine Arts in Visual Arts

University of California San Diego, 2018

Professor Teddy Cruz, Chair

This thesis lays out an argument for a model of socially engaged, public art practice that seeks to radicalize and amplify the voices of youth around the critical issues in their communities. A case study of this model is presented and qualitative findings from the experience are shared. The case study was situated in the San Ysidro neighborhood of San Diego, California and the critical issue facing that community is air pollution created by idling vehicles waiting to cross the US / México border.

Background + Introduction

My education as a cultural producer began in Detroit as an architecture student. While there I was introduced to the rigor of architectural practice, the material and social challenges of the post-industrial city, and the practice of socially engaged design. Having come from a very small farm town in Illinois, the urban and social contexts of Detroit were new and rich. The leadership of the architecture school placed a large emphasis on the city of Detroit as a valuable context for our education and most of our theoretical projects were situated in the city. While I was there, a community design center was created inside the school with the purpose of getting students out of the academy. With their projects, the design center worked collaboratively with non-profits and neighborhood groups on realizable projects in their communities. The notion that architecture should be working beyond the aesthetic, in dialog with the social and cultural, became very powerful for me and has shaped my practice ever since.

Shortly after graduating I joined that community design center as a design and research fellow. There I was able to work in and with communities, acting as a facilitator of knowledge exchange and design. At that time the center was primarily focused on typical but needed urban projects like affordable housing, neighborhood master plans, and non-profit office spaces. For many reasons, at that time in Detroit, (circa 2000) there was sufficient funding for planning and designing these projects, but implementation dollars were few. Most projects we designed in my five years there were not realized, but one of the main things I took away from that time was a thorough understanding of how to work meaningfully with communities in design. The design center practiced a very rigorous workshop process that took the time to deeply engage with the clients and their surrounding stakeholders. This was not

“design by committee” as most people fear when the subject of participatory design is raised. It was a more rich and nuanced approach, based in engagement, ethnography and true knowledge exchange. There was recognition and respect of the multiple expertise at the table. The janitor was respected for her knowledge of maintaining a building. The elderly couple next door was heard about what it is like to live next to a school they cannot access. The teacher, who was confined to a wheel chair, talked about the experience of living with a disability and the unique perspective his community had. The architectural team was challenged to understand each perspective and trusted to bring together a thoughtful solution. The broader team set the intentions for the project and helped prioritize the building program when their desire for ten classrooms collided with the limitations of their small budget.

In parallel to these straight forward projects, we also began to look for speculative opportunities, where we could act quickly and directly in service of critical issues in Detroit's neighborhoods. One of the first projects of this type was called *Fire-Break*.



figure 1. Hay House installation detail

In Fire-Break we created simple, large scale installations on and in burned houses on the east side of Detroit inspired by conversations with the local revolutionary activist Grace Lee Boggs. At the time, Grace and several other community members were working on a large scale, radical community plan being forwarded by artist Kyong Park and his students. The residents were excited by the vision but were also frustrated by what seemed like an impossibly long timeline to realize the project. At a meeting about the work, Grace said, "This is all great, but what can we do *NOW?*". Challenged by that question, we came up with the concept for Fire-Break and presented it to Grace. With her blessing we identified two initial burned houses to operate on and we hosted a cookout for the community to come and experience them. At the cookout, some of the neighbors began naming the structures *Hay House* and *Sound House* rather than just referring to them as "that burned house" or "this burned house". At that time Detroit had thousands of burned structures, so the notion that our simple installations could transform the psychogeography of neighborhoods was very powerful for me. I saw that art seemed to have an inherent ability to reframe social, political and spatial issues allowing others to experience them in novel ways. There was clearly something embedded in the material of the burned houses that we had tapped into. This showed me a certain type of immediacy and agency that artistic practices have in the built environment and how by physically intervening in the everyday to perform our criticism, it can be transformative. I had not found this type of critical and visceral impact in architecture, so this realization shaped my practice going forward.

After more than fifteen years of working in multiple forms of architectural practice and design education, across the US and abroad, I made the decision to enter grad school in visual arts. I sought a graduate degree in visual arts rather than architecture because of what I had learned in Detroit and elsewhere, and because

UCSD's program was known for its conceptual roots and openness to non-traditional art practices. I was also interested in exploring sociology and ethnographic methods which I had been exposed to, but did not know the histories behind. I wanted to use the time here to reflect on what I had learned through practicing, to deepen my theoretical understanding, and figure out how to create a new type of practice that merged the best of my experiences with the appropriate critical lenses.

I felt that typical planning methods and tools often fell short of capturing the imagination and participation of the people they affect. I also saw how art can often render itself irrelevant to communities in the rarified atmosphere of the gallery, but I felt that did not have to be the case.

What I knew very clearly was that I wanted to build a public art practice which merged artistic and architectural ways of working with a desire to engage every day people in meaningful and respectful ways. I wanted this practice to be centered in communities and address the critical issues that affected them. I saw that the aim of this model was to reshape our cities and public institutions into more just, equitable and interesting forms.

Critical Framework

Early on in my research I was introduced to the writings of multiple theorists that my advisors and critics felt resonated with the practice I was trying to create. From cultural theorist Chantal Mouffe I read, "...critical artistic practices can disrupt the smooth image that corporate capitalism is trying to spread, bringing to the fore its repressive character."¹ From the writings of designer and theorist James Corner, I saw that others also felt current planning tools and methods fell short; "Instead of mapping as a means of appropriation, we might begin to see it as a means of emancipation and enablement..."². In David Harvey's *Social Justice and the City*, I connected with his argument that geography (*and architecture, and art*) cannot remain objective in the face of urban social crises³.

Brazilian philosopher and educator, Paulo Freire, and his seminal text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,⁴ became very important as I started to critique past engagement processes and think through how I might modify and apply them within the context of a public art practice. I found the work of Augusto Boal, who was also inspired by Freire, particularly useful for this. In the documentary *Theatre of the Oppressed in Actions*⁵, Augusto Boal speaks with an interviewer about his work and makes a distinction between one of his earlier projects, *Theatre Popular*, and what would become his life's work, *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Boal tells the interviewer that with *Theatre Popular* he and other actors would go into poorer neighborhoods and

¹ Mouffe

² Corner

³ Harvey

⁴ Freire

⁵ Boal

perform plays in the street about the oppressive forces that were taking hold in Brazil, circa 1964, with the beginning of the Dictadura. They originally imagined that these performances would incite the people to act on their situation but later came to realize that they were simply creating alternative subjectivities. Rather than liberating the people from their oppression, as they hoped, they were effectively adding to it by using their theatre to tell people what to do.

Inspired by Freire, Boal began to create alternative models of theatre that were more participatory and pedagogical. Actors and every day people were intermixed and would play out scenarios that drew attention to their oppression and helped them work out ways to resist or resolve it⁶. Over time Boal and his collaborators developed several different forms including, *Invisible Theatre*, *Forum Theatre* and *Legislative Theatre*, which are referred to collectively as *Theatre of the Oppressed*.

In one performance of *Invisible Theatre* an actor at the checkout of a grocery store posed as a shopper⁷ and initiated a scenario where he gave the clerk the items he wanted to buy and then tried to negotiate the number of hours he would need to work to pay for them. The clerk was confused and told him that if he had no money he would have to get out of line. The shopper explained that he lost his job and had no unemployment benefits and that the groceries were for his family. He suggested that if the clerk could bag up the groceries and give him a total, he would talk with the manager about the number of hours he needed to work so that his family would not go hungry. The line behind the shopper grew and eventually the manager came over. As the manager refused him, the people in line behind him begin to ask questions about the situation and make suggestions about how to resolve it. Eventually it was decided that everyone could chip in a little money and buy his

⁶ Boal

⁷ Ibid

groceries for him so that he would have something for his family. A collection was taken and as he was leaving with the groceries, paid for by the other shoppers, the police arrived and began to harass him. Now invested, some of the other shoppers tried to intercede with the police.

What Boal reflected to the interviewer in the documentary⁸ was that previously, with *Theatre Popular*, they were simply giving the people a theatre *product*. With the various forms of Theatre of the Oppressed, they were giving people *the means of production* to make their own theatre. Through that process both the people and actors were better able to understand the forces at work on them and how they could work to counter them.

The theoretical framework that began to emerge for me from all of this was centered on the agency of community members as social and political actors who could be radicalized through art making to more fully participate, autonomously, as citizens in their own communities.

In my professional life as an architect, one focus has been the design of learning spaces for emerging education models like Project Based Learning⁹ which draw on Constructivist and Situated Learning theories and practices. These education models ultimately trace their lineage to pedagogical and political theorists such as Paulo Freire and John Dewey in the US. Through the network of educators that I have built over the years, I met Keisa Davis, whose own research as an educator has focused on these models and how they have been applied in contemporary urban education. Her yet unpublished article *Cross-Cultural Media Arts and Education*¹⁰, dives very deeply into the work of Freire, Dewey and contemporary education

⁸ Boal

⁹ Krajcik and Blumenfeld

¹⁰ Davis

theorists and practitioners such as Kathleen Tyner, David Buckingham, Steven Goodman and Gina Lamb of *Reach LA*. In one passage, Davis summarizes how Goodman's work with the *Educational Video Center (EVC)* in New York draws on Dewey's notions of "education as a process of engagement, connecting students with the world and creating public spaces for democracy."¹¹ Of Goodman's programs, Davis writes, "the curricula developed in his program aims to enable marginalized teenagers to arrive into adulthood fully able to speak, represent and demand recognition for themselves and their community."¹²

In the section *Practical Youth Produced Media: Cognitive Apprenticeships*¹³, Davis discusses Kathleen Tyner's *Literacy in a Digital World*, and how she defines "cognitive apprenticeships". Davis writes that Tyner sees these cognitive apprenticeships as a structure that encourages learning to take place in "culturally meaningful contexts" and has seen that they can foster self-expression, creativity and voice; ultimately serving as a strategy for participatory democratic citizenship¹⁴.

All of this has led me to develop the idea for a model of socially engaged, public art practice that radicalizes and amplifies the voices of youth around the critical issues in their communities. I imagined a structure where we would work together, where they live, in a paid apprenticeship model to investigate the issues that affect their neighborhood and use art making to understand and interrogate those issues. Through this process we would also engage their friends, relatives and neighbors, opening spaces for dialogue, debate and ultimately action. The intention is to show this is an effective way for artists (+ architects and others) to engage and

¹¹ Davis, 15.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Davis, 16.

¹⁴ Ibid.

work with local communities. Through the process we can also better understand the communities we work in, our own positionality and how we as practitioners can act as the accomplices of communities who are wrestling with complex social, political and environmental issues. The result is a form of socially engaged art practice that is embedded and invested in the public interest.

Case Study

To test this model, I needed to identify a neighborhood to work in and a group of youth to work with. It was important to me that the youth who participate as apprentices be paid for their time and that the work we did together addressed critical issues in their neighborhood that had been identified by the community. As I was formulating this model and thinking about where I should focus my work, I had a conversation with David Flores, the Community Development Director for Casa Familiar (Casa), a prominent social services and cultural agency that has been working in the San Ysidro neighborhood of San Diego for over thirty years. Through that conversation, and subsequent conversations with Executive Director, Lisa Cuestas, I learned about Casa's *Art Docent* program. Youth who live in San Ysidro's 92173 zip code are hired by Casa and given training and employment in Casa's neighborhood gallery, *The Front*. Casa Familiar was already a strategic partner of the Center on Global Justice at UC San Diego and works with Professors Fonna Forman and Teddy Cruz on several neighborhood issues as a key site for their Cross-Border Initiative¹⁵. These linkages, and my history of working with Flores, Cuestas and Casa Familiar in an architectural capacity for several years prior, helped to establish the trust necessary to allow Casa to partner with me on my Citizen Artist project.

¹⁵ The Cross-Border Initiative is a project of the Center on Global Justice that brings University of California undergrads from multiple disciplines and campuses across the UC system to work with key social services agencies in neighborhoods on both sides of the Tijuana / San Diego border. More information at <http://blum.ucsd.edu/>

Docents as Apprentices

Artist and educator Francisco Morales directs the activities at Casa Familiar's *The Front Arte Cultura* gallery and leads the Art Docent program, which is based there, along with Estela Flores, the Youth Programs Supervisor. The Art Docent program is funded through a combination of grants that have changed over the years but typically come from some combination of Community Development Block Grants and partner institutions like the San Diego Art Institute. The group of Docents I worked with was the fourth cohort that Casa has hired and included eleven young people, ages 16 to 24. Per the program's requirements, all the Docents lived in the 92173-zip code and were expected to work between four and seven hours per week during the ten to twelve-week program, while also keeping up with their high school or college classes. Over the course of their ten to twelve weeks the docents are expected to complete about sixty hours at The Front. Their sixty hours cover a range of activities including: training in gallery management, structured art education classes, financial literacy classes, resume workshops and gallery management / docent labor. Some of Casa's main goals for the Docent program historically have been to provide jobs for the youth in San Ysidro and to provide the Docents with the soft skills and resumes they need to succeed and advance as young people in San Diego.

In late January 2018 Lisa Cuestas saw an opportunity to integrate the Citizen Artist model that I had described to her into the Docent program. She charged Francisco and I with figuring out the details and by mid-February we had begun the first sessions with the new Docent cohort. Francisco and I negotiated that I would come to all the Docent sessions (two to three per week) and that we would allocate their time roughly into thirds (about 20 hours). The split included: one third gallery training and labor, a second of instruction and production of photography / video

projects with Francisco, and the final third dedicated to the Citizen Artist apprenticeship with me. Francisco continued to lead the program overall. We shared and collaborated on instruction, production and management of the Docents. Francisco has spent many years leading photography and video programs with youth in San Ysidro, Ciudad México and elsewhere, so it is important to point out that I learned quite a lot from him as we went about how to work with the Docents. Francisco and I have complimentary and overlapping skill sets so the time with him and the Docents was not only instructive, but also enjoyable, and I hope to work with him and Casa again in the future.

As with Francisco's photography and video projects, any work that I asked the Docents to take on had to begin with instruction. Most of them had little to no formal art training or experience using cameras. Of the eleven Docents, four reported that they thought of themselves as artists before we started working together¹⁶. The same four were the only ones who reported having been to an art gallery prior to working at The Front. Only three Docents reported ever having used the camera on their phone for something other than a selfie photo. Just one Docent reported that they felt they had a say in what happens in their neighborhood and only two reported having spoken with their parents or friends about issues that affect their neighborhood.

Over the course of their apprenticeship with me, the main things that we worked on were note-taking, question asking, map making, interviewing, transcribing, sense-making and ultimately the production of their final projects, the *Pollution Paintings*.

¹⁶ Field notes from initial discussions with Apprentices

Air Pollution

Through conversations with David Flores and prior work with Elizabeth Chaney, the San Ysidro site leader for the Cross-Border Initiative's summer field internship in 2017, I learned that one of the most critical issues for San Ysidro is poor air quality. San Ysidro is the edge, the scrap of San Diego that pushes up against the US/México border wall. It is also the busiest land border crossing in the Western Hemisphere¹⁷ and has historically been one of the first stops for many traveling north in search of a better life.

The residents of San Ysidro are constantly violated by the border crossing in myriad ways, not least of which is the severe air pollution from the 70,000¹⁸ cars that sit idling for hours¹⁹ on any given day as they wait to cross north into the US. In recent years, as traffic at the border has increased, San Ysidro residents have noticed a multitude of health concerns in their neighborhood related to the poor air quality. Issues range from difficulty breathing to COPD to asthma rates that are 18 percent greater²⁰ than the larger San Diego region that San Ysidro is situated in.

Typical environmental monitoring mechanisms common to other parts of California and San Diego have historically excluded San Ysidro. However, over the last two years Casa Familiar has been working with a team from the Schools of Public Health at the University of Washington and San Diego State University (SDSU) to install

¹⁷ from GSA San Ysidro Port of Entry fact sheet

¹⁸ *ibid*

¹⁹ Srikrishnan

²⁰ SANDAG, 58.

and collect data from their own air monitors. This team, led locally by Dr Jenny Quintana of SDSU, recently published their initial findings which suggest the poor air quality is indeed linked to the Port of Entry²¹. This is important because the historical lack of air monitoring in San Ysidro has made it difficult for social service agencies like Casa to acquire federal funding for programs that could help mitigate resident health concerns. It is also important because there is a multi-million-dollar modernization and expansion of the San Ysidro Port of Entry currently under way. When complete, the idling cars and long wait times will be duplicated on the southbound side of the Port of Entry as cars leaving the US will be subjected to the same intensive screening methods that northbound vehicles currently face. This will very likely create a significant increase in the amount of air pollution in San Ysidro and surrounding communities. Unfortunately, as with the current northbound pollution, the US government has cited the need for tougher border security as their imperative to proceed and has not yet worked with local communities to mitigate the pollution generated by their security activities.

All this information was shared with the Apprentices via presentations from David Flores, Dr Quintana and local resident / environmental activist Señor Guillermo Cornejo. At this session the Apprentices were provided with notebooks and instructed to keep a record of what they learned and be prepared to ask questions of the presenters. They kept these notebooks for the course of the apprenticeship and most seemed to use them on a regular basis. Like most 16 to 24-year olds around adults, they struggled with question-asking initially, but over the course of the apprenticeship they became more and more comfortable with this skill, particularly in one on one moments.

²¹ Srikrishnan

Señor Cornejo brought with him a grapefruit from one of the 52 fruit trees in his yard. It was covered with an oily black substance and he proceeded to pass it around to all the Apprentices and tell them about how and where he found it and what he believed about it. He shared that he is a retired engineer and has lived in the area since the mid-1980s. He purchased that land for his home because he would have room to plant trees and have a large garden. Growing food for his family has always been important to Señor Cornejo and has been a part of his life since he was a child in El Salvador. He went on to explain that when he first moved to the area there was very little traffic on the freeway coming to and from México, but in recent years that traffic has increased considerably and is now almost constant. As the traffic has increased, Señor Cornejo found that his grapefruits and lemons had more and more of the oily soot; more air pollution from the tens of thousands of cars that pass by his house and idle for hours at border security.



figure 2. In Señor Cornejo's garden

The Apprentices overall were quite taken aback by what they heard from Dr Quintero and what they saw on Señor Cornejo's fruit. Nine of eleven Apprentices later reported that they were not aware of the air pollution issue in San Ysidro before that day, even though many of them were aware of family and friends who suffered from breathing issues, including some of the Apprentices themselves.²²

One Apprentice's reflection on the issue poignantly summed up the task we now had in front of us:

"I think this is a very important problem because it is something that affects everyone, and it is something that we breathe every day. And if we do not know about the problem, how are we going to find out about what is affecting us? And how are we going to provide solutions?"²³

From that point forward our directives were clear. How can we make the invisible, visible? How can we make pollution material? How can we maximize the time we have to engage the Apprentices, their families and friends? How can we work in a way that gives the Apprentices ownership and agency in this process and the work that will come after, if they are willing to continue?

Given the time we had left, I designed an uncomplicated process and we executed it together as efficiently as we could. First, we took the notes from everything we learned at the pollution presentation and we made a shared script of all the things we felt people in San Ysidro should know about the air pollution and how it would likely get worse with the coming Port of Entry expansion. Then we held a class on how to conduct interviews including a brief primer on interviewing methodology and the mobile apps they could use for recording. Then we practiced on each other and developed sets of questions that they could ask along with strategies for how to

²² From field notes and Apprentice to Apprentice interviews

²³ a project Apprentice; specific names withheld herein to maintain anonymity

follow up on answers to understand them. Each Apprentice was then asked to interview at least two people, preferably a family member and a friend or neighbor. It was up to the Apprentice as to whether the interviews should be conducted in English or Spanish.

The Apprentices returned the following week with their recorded interviews and then we learned how to transcribe them; which is every ethnographer least favorite part of their practice. They leaned into it and they even tried to innovate using speech-to-text apps on their phone, only to realize that they created as much work as they alleviated. Once the interviews were transcribed I instructed them to go through them and identify three to five themes. The themes were then boiled down to words and the words were placed on notecards that covered the gallery wall. (Here again it was the Apprentice's choice as to whether the words should be in English or Spanish.) We sorted the words into natural groups making sure to clarify what the word represented and we ultimately winnowed the words down so that each Apprentice had unique words that represented the themes they found most powerful. I curated the final selections from the two that each Apprentice identified:

invisible agency reduce pulmones preparar familiar exposure
invest alergia comunicar la flora monitor profit

There was one word that was not selected but stuck out because it was surprisingly the only word that appeared multiple times, *soluciones*. The word also stuck out because we all remembered Señor Cornejo passionately sharing multiple solutions to how the air pollution issues could be addressed. His favorite solución seemed to be projecting droplets of water over the freeway and border security area to grab the fine pollution particulates and drag them down to the road surface. From there the water would be funneled and cleaned before returning to the system. We decided that *soluciones* belonged to Señor Cornejo.

The next and last step was to make the pollution visible and call attention to it. I cut stencils for each word and then adhered them to 12-inch x 12-inch hardboard canvases. I kept this part somewhat of a secret and did not really tell the Apprentices what they had chosen words for, so that they could be surprised, and so I could hear their reactions to what we were making. I had visited Señor Cornejo's grove of trees a few weeks earlier and with him I collected as many soiled fruits as I could. The rainy season had begun in San Diego and Señor Cornejo had let me know the heaviest pollution would wash off the fruit and into the soil during heavy rains. Luckily his trees are very well cared for and had sections where the fruits were completely protected by thick stands of leaves.

The day came for the Apprentices to make their pollution paintings, so we set up each canvas one by one and made the process into a performance. As each Apprentice tapped and rolled their polluted grapefruit on adhesive shaped by the stencil, the other ten looked on.



figure 3. Detail of Apprentice painting with pollution

They were amazed by how the pollution was sucked off the grapefruit in the process, leaving it as clean as it was before the accumulation. In interviews later one of the Apprentices recounted how they felt as they were making their pollution painting:

*"I noticed how air pollution is really affecting the community and I saw that it is something that we may not think about because when I saw all the particles from the grapefruit, it made me feel it more... Made me think more about how air pollution is affecting us."*²⁴

Señor Cornejo had wanted to see the making of the pollution paintings, but he was not able to come to The Front that day. Instead, the Apprentices decided that he should make his own Pollution Painting and that we should tell him we want his word to be *soluciones*, if he agrees.

He did.



figure 4. Apprentices removing their stencils

²⁴ a project Apprentice

Findings + Un-Conclusion

By scientific standards this is a pitifully small case study. There are only eleven Apprentices and there are dozens of flaws with this experiment. Even if there were no flaws, it is only one test. We also do not know yet what the lasting impact might be on the agency or citizenship (as Dewey and Freire define it) of these Apprentices and will not know that for many years. Taking all of that as a given, there are some findings that are arguably interesting and relate to the ideas that we set out to test. After we completed the pollution paintings, we extended the Apprentice's interviewing training and asked them to interview each other about their experience of being Docents and Apprentices. What we found out was:

1) All eleven Apprentices shared what they were doing with their family and friends and most of them talked about the pollution painting process specifically. When asked about the reactions they received, most reported being told it was interesting and new and made them think a lot about the air pollution.

One Apprentice reported that:

"They couldn't believe it, but after I told them about the situation they started thinking more about our environment and they really want to fix it and they really want to help."²⁵

2) Regarding what they imagined others in San Ysidro might take away from seeing the Pollution Paintings, responses included:

"I think that it is going to let others know about how serious it is and... when you think about air pollution it is not something that can actually be seen,

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*but when you can see it in a painting, you know what you are breathing and that it is a real problem."*²⁶

*"...they are going to find it interesting because nowadays teenagers are not very interested in this topic and well teenagers, like us that work here, we are taking a new journey to care about pollution and to also care for what is happening around us."*²⁷

3) When asked what they thought about art before the program and how they think about it now, Apprentices reported:

*"Now art, I see it more like something we can relate with community problems. I have learned art is not only a way of expressionism, but also a way to let us know about what is happening in our community."*²⁸

*"Now I think, [art] is a way to communicate and to ask for help and to raise our voice as individuals."*²⁹

*"Now I think that the purpose of art is to not only express yourself but to also to make other people think about all the issues that may be happening around them and they may not even know about it."*³⁰

²⁶ a project Apprentice

²⁷ a project Apprentice

²⁸ a project Apprentice

²⁹ a project Apprentice

³⁰ a project Apprentice

4) When asked, "Once this time is over do you want to continue to bring attention to / fight this air pollution issue? Why / Why not?" All eleven answered "Yes", and one Apprentice summed up the response of many by saying:

*"I do want to fight this issue because it is very important to bring attention to it, because as I said before many people have breathing problems, like I do. have a breathing problem and I didn't have it before when I was living in Mexico. Just when I started living here in San Diego I started developing a kind of asthma and I sometimes have to use my inhaler."*³¹

5) When asked if they would like to work on this issue more if there were opportunities to do so, ten of eleven answered "Yes" with one stating specifically that "Yes, I would take an opportunity that has to do with air pollution issues to not only educate myself but educate others on the matter of pollution."

6) When asked if there were enough people in San Ysidro that were aware of this issue, ten of eleven answered "No".

7) Finally, when asked if they want to live in San Ysidro in the future, responses were split between those that had thought about leaving and those that had not, with one particularly interesting response:

*"Well... in fact I would like to move to a different place of San Diego but now, learning about all these issues, maybe it would be a good idea to stay and to try to help the community to get better instead of leaving."*³²

At a minimum, these results make me feel that there might be some positive correlation between the type of public art practice I have proposed and a change in

³¹ a project Apprentice

³² a project Apprentice

the desire of some individuals to participate more intensely to counter the critical issues that their communities face. I believe this merits further study and development. I also believe that these eleven individuals have identified themselves as potential future actors in Casa Familiar's ongoing work to raise awareness and fight San Ysidro's air pollution issues and I would like to find a way to be part of that myself.

Going forward I plan to share this thesis, and the detailed findings, with Casa Familiar and work towards ways to continue this work. I also feel I have identified a methodology and critical framework for place-based, participatory urban pedagogy that should be explored and developed further as I continue in my practice.

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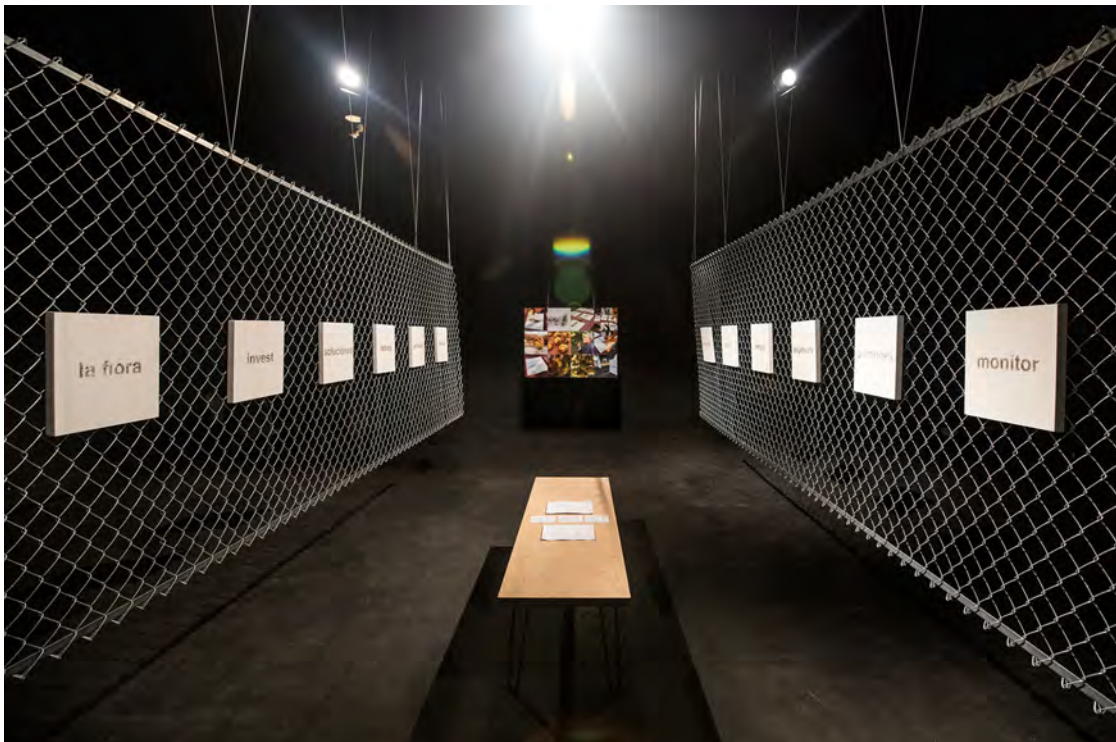
Srikrishnan, Maya. *San Ysidro Is Getting a Clearer Look at Just How Polluted it Is.* Voice of San Diego, 2018. Internet Resource.

Appendix: Installation Photos, Pulmones Reports + Agenda of Activities

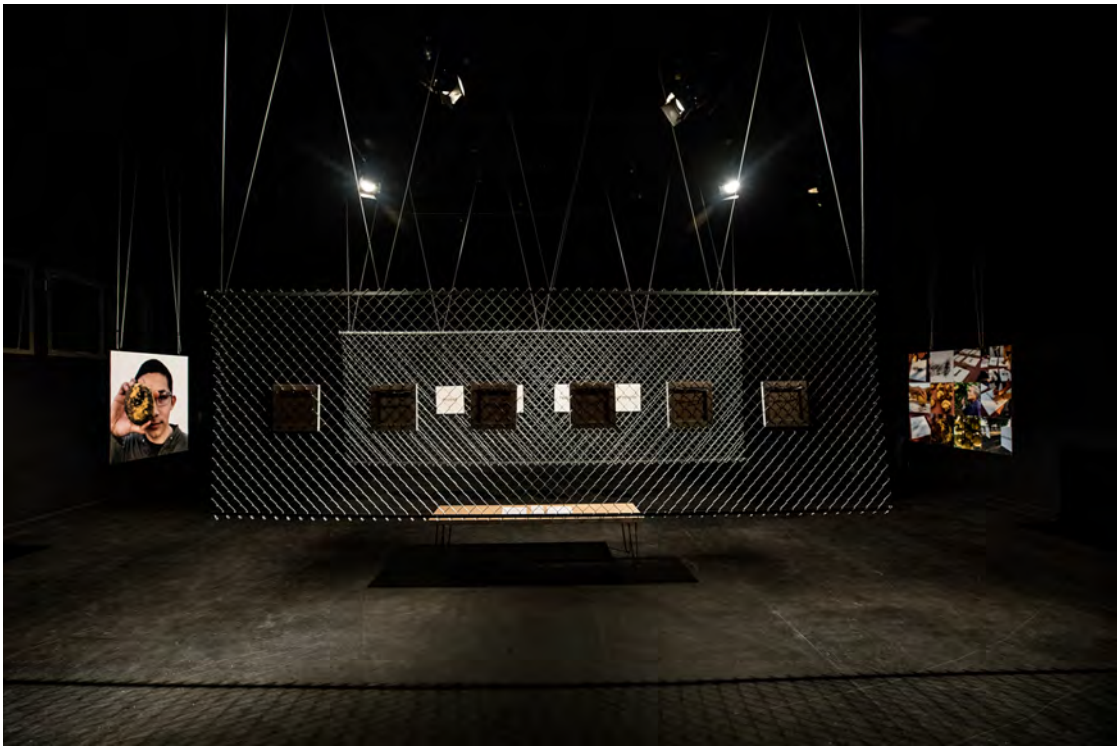
As a supplement to the written Thesis I am including the following:

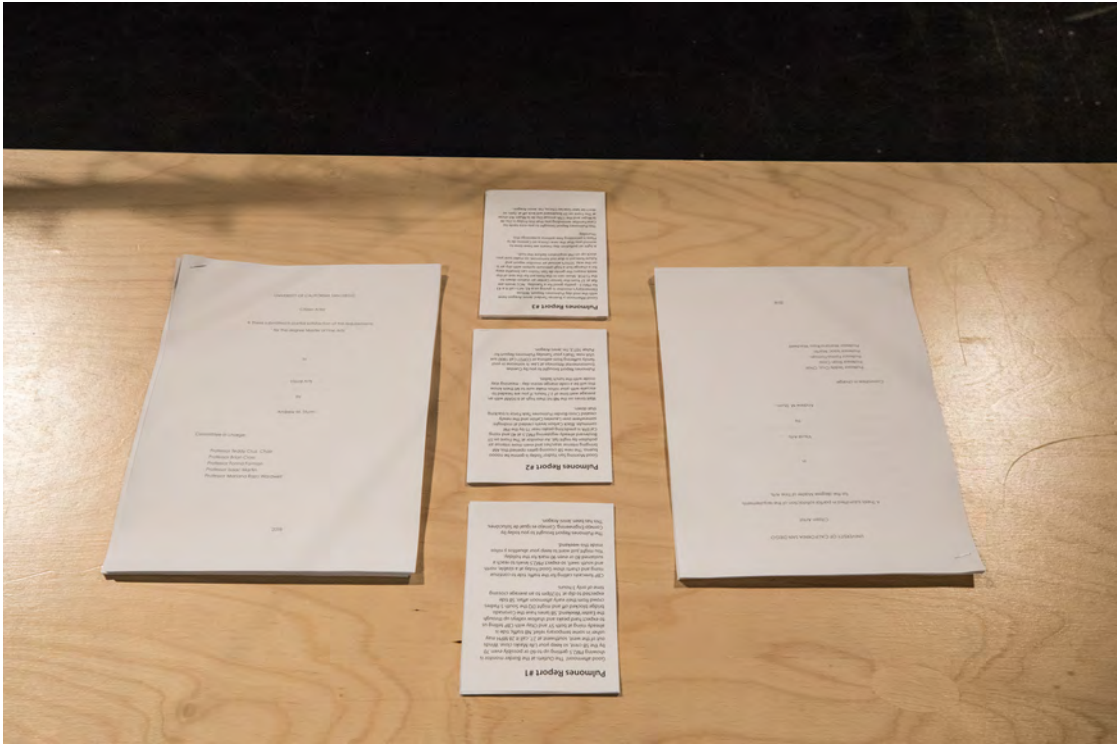
- I. Documentation of the Thesis Show Installation and Opening
- II. Pulmones Reports - speculative scripts of future community radio broadcasts for San Ysidro as a form of mutual aid and resilience in the face of government absence.
- III. Agenda of Activities - my attempt at roughly documenting the activities of the Apprenticeship so that future readers and researchers could use it as a starting point if so desired.

I. Installation Photos:







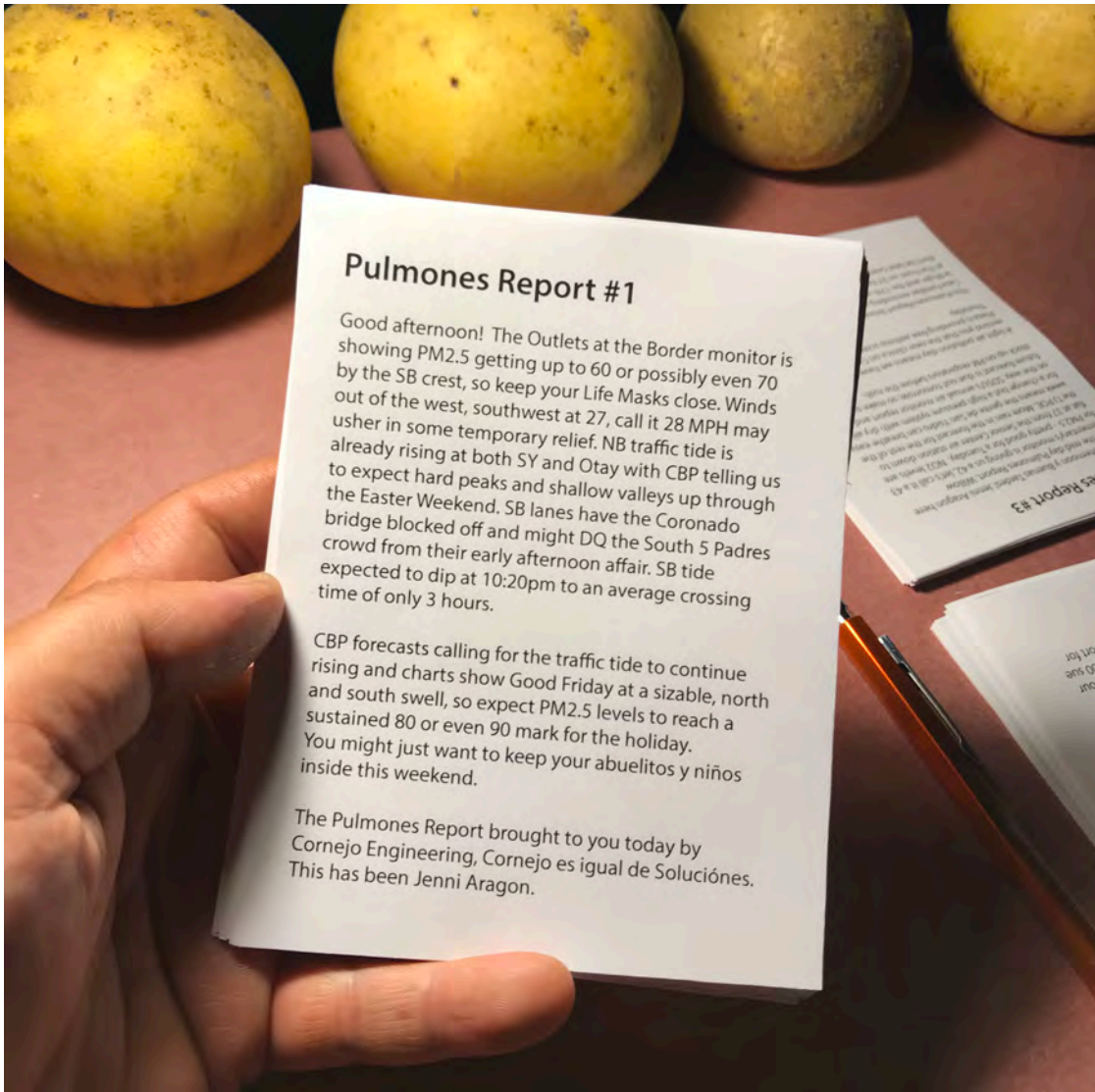


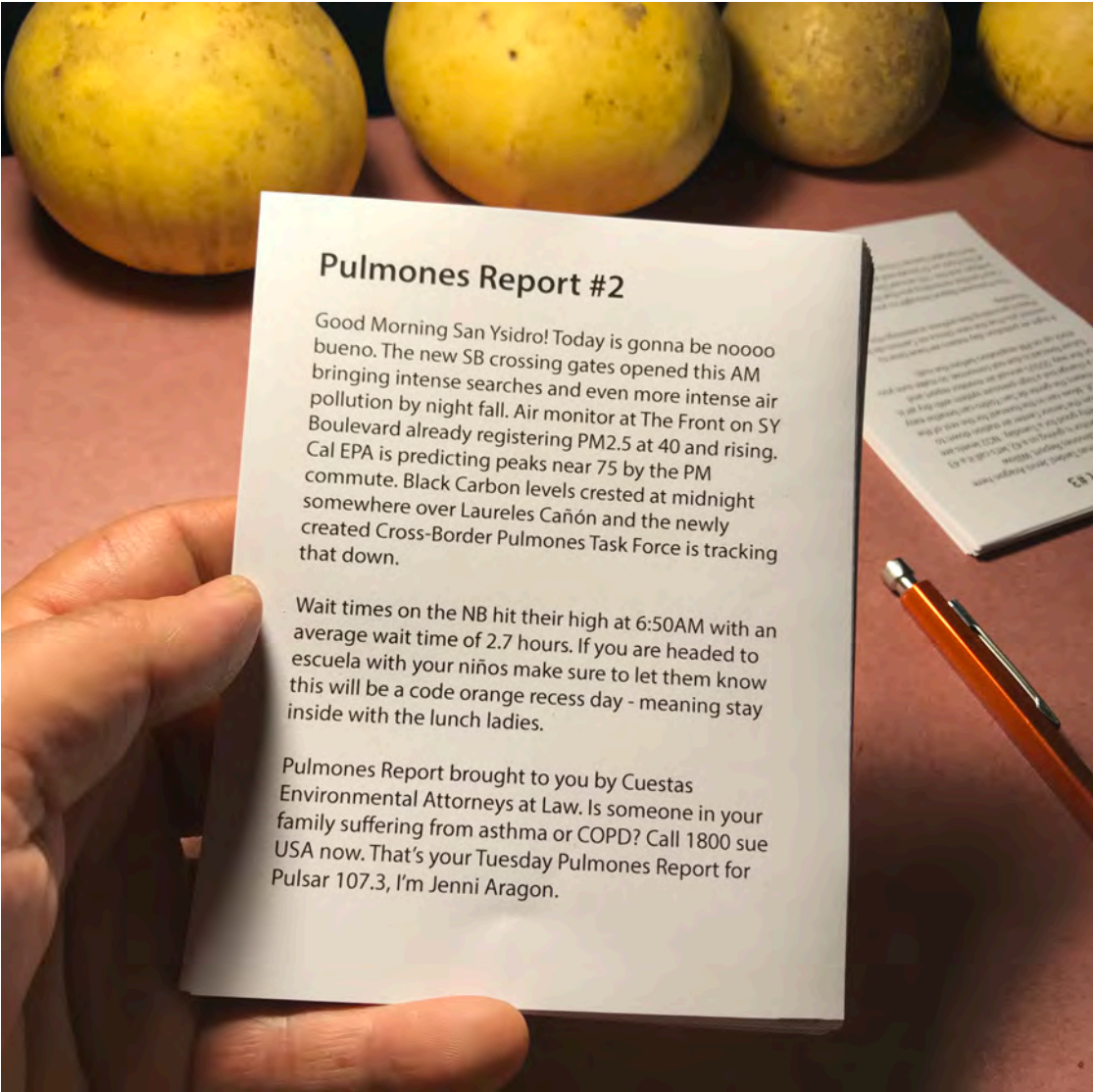




II. Pulmones Reports:

The Pulmones Reports are, as previously mentioned, three speculative scripts of future community radio broadcasts, for and by San Ysidro residents. These broadcasts take the form of a hyper-local air quality report, and are imagined as a form of mutual aid and resilience in the face of government absence. This is one small example of how San Ysidro residents could push back and help each other to navigate the ever-more toxic environment that increased border security is creating.





Pulmones Report #2

Good Morning San Ysidro! Today is gonna be noooo bueno. The new SB crossing gates opened this AM bringing intense searches and even more intense air pollution by night fall. Air monitor at The Front on SY Boulevard already registering PM2.5 at 40 and rising. Cal EPA is predicting peaks near 75 by the PM commute. Black Carbon levels crested at midnight somewhere over Laureles Cañón and the newly created Cross-Border Pulmones Task Force is tracking that down.

Wait times on the NB hit their high at 6:50AM with an average wait time of 2.7 hours. If you are headed to escuela with your niños make sure to let them know this will be a code orange recess day - meaning stay inside with the lunch ladies.

Pulmones Report brought to you by Cuestas Environmental Attorneys at Law. Is someone in your family suffering from asthma or COPD? Call 1800 sue USA now. That's your Tuesday Pulmones Report for Pulsar 107.3, I'm Jenni Aragon.

Pulmones Report #3

Good Afternoon y Buenas Tardes! Jenni Aragon here with the mid day Pulmones Report. Willow Elementary's monitor is giving us a 42, let's call it a 43 for PM2.5 - pretty good for a Tuesday. NO2 levels are flat at 37 from the Senior Center air station down to the TJ POE. More rain in the forecast for the rest of the week means the gente de San Ysidro can breathe easy for a change but a high pressure system with dry air is on the way. SDSU's annual air monitor report and future forecast is due out tomorrow, so make sure you stock up on PM respirators before the rush.

A light air pollution day means we have time to remind you that the new clinica on Camino de la Plaza is providing free asthma screenings this Thursday.

This Pulmones Report brought to you esta tarde by Casa Familiar reminding you that this Friday is Dia de la Mujer and the 17th annual Dia de la Mujer Art show at The Front on SY boulevard will kick off at 7pm, so don't be late! Gracias Chicos, I'm Jenni Aragon.

III. Agenda of Activities:

Below is a loose schedule of activities for the Art Docent Program / Citizen Artist Apprenticeship. This is meant to serve as a very rough reference for future research but it is by no means communicates all of the activities and nuances of the process. If any future reader would like to learn more I would be happy to discuss what went on, lessons learned and anything else I could share to encourage more work in a similar vein.

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Agenda

Week 0:

(February 6, 2018) Orientation + Introduction to Art Docent Program

Week 1:

This was the first real meeting with the Apprentices. Francisco gave them a tour of the Front gallery, the current exhibit on view, and an overview of the Docent Program. I gave them a short introduction to my role and the kinds of things we would do together, but I was still very much figuring that out at the time, so my introduction was very high level. We usually met twice per week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, so the second day Francisco lectured on photography and did some instruction on technique as well. We also set up and shared the Docent Google Drive and assigned the first homework; a series of five photographs in a theme of their choosing.

Week 2:

This week we reviewed the first homework and I lectured to them about the importance and history of map making. I then asked them to do an in-class exercise of making a ten minute cognitive map of San Diego. Homework number 2 asked the Apprentices to make a map of their neighborhood. On Thursday Dr Quintana, David Flores and Señor Guillermo Cornejo came in and talked with the Apprentices about air pollution. Afterwards Francisco assigned Homework 3, a photo series on pollution. On Saturday we went on a Docent Field Trip to San Diego Art Institute at Balboa Park to see the space and the current exhibit there. (SDAI was one of the Docent Program funders)

Week 3:

On Tuesday we visited the Air Monitor on the roof of The Front, we reviewed Homework 3 and we worked together at The Front in preparation for the Día de la Mujer show. On Thursday we collected Homework 2 and explained Homework 4, the pollution interviews. For the pollution interviews we first worked together to make a script about what we learned from the pollution presentations and then I trained the Apprentices on how to interview someone. We practiced that and also tried out different mobile apps for making the recordings.

Week 4:

(March 6) I do not have notes for what we did on Tuesday, but on Thursday we all worked the opening event for the Día de la Mujer show.

Week 5:

On Tuesday we reviewed the pollution interviews and I taught the Apprentices how to transcribe a recorded interview. The rest of the time that day was spent transcribing their interviews. On Thursday, Francisco gave his first class on how to make videos and gave Homework 5, a one minute video. On Saturday there was a contemporary dance event at The Front that we all worked at.

Week 6:

On Tuesday we reviewed the first video homework and Francisco gave his second lecture on video making. On Thursday I lectured on techniques for remediation and mitigation of air pollution and asked the Apprentices to make sketches or short stories about the ways we could apply those techniques to help San Ysidro. Similarly to the map making exercise, none of this work ended up making it into the thesis or show, because it really needed more time to develop, but it would be great to expand on in a future project. I also feel it contributed to the overall understanding of the issues at play and the potential for agency as some of the Apprentices picked up themes of mitigating and remediation in their final videos and their interview responses.

Week 7:

This was Spring Break week at the Apprentice's school and many of their families were traveling for Easter so we took a break. There were still two activities that week but they were optional for the Apprentices: 1) A Sin Limites community event put on by Casa Familiar where the results of the initial air monitoring was shared. I was the only one who attended that event. 2) A Zine Fest put on at The Front, which some of the Docents elected to come to and work at.

Week 8:

(April 3) Starting Week 8 I had to TA on campus Tuesday nights so I only attended the Thursday night sessions. When I was not there Francisco concentrated on the Docent's video projects and helping him with gallery duties. On Thursday that week we began the Pollution Paintings. We got through about half of them, because it took longer than expected to go through the whole process one by one, but it helped for all of them to see it and participate as spectators. We also worked a little bit to prepare for making the mural in Casa Familiar's future Cultural Corridor along Cypress Drive.

Week 9:

This Thursday we completed the second half of the Pollution Paintings and about half of the Apprentices were interviewed (by one of the other Apprentices) using the questions that I prepared. We also worked a bit more on the preparation for the mural.

Week 10:

This week the mural was finalized and the remaining interviews were recorded.

Week 11:

This week the videos were finalized and the culminating event was held as an outdoor gallery show in the future Cultural Corridor of Cypress Drive.

Follow Up:

In the weeks that followed I hired Apprentice Jennifer Aragón to assist me by transcribing and translating all of the Apprentice interviews. She also worked with me on the Pulmones Reports. We attempted to record them but it did not quite come together in time for the show so I left them as written reports. The rest of the time was spent fabricating the show install.

End of Agenda.