TASA ENVISION

The newsletter of the Texas Association of Schools of Art

The recap of Caminos Del Valle, the 2018 TASA conference in McAllen, TX.

A Special Thank You goes to South Texas College and the University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley for hosting the 2018 TASA Conference.

TASA Mission Statement

Texas Association of Schools of Art (TASA) welcomes all artists/educators and students to be part of an organization created at the request of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in 1970. Since its origin, TASA has been a forum for art department faculty members at two-year and four-year public and private higher education institutions to discuss trends and issues in art and academia. TASA takes an active role in advocating for improvement and discussing issues facing educators in art. As a community it offers members a chance to network on many levels, ranging from exhibition and employment opportunities, and professional collaborations.
2019 Conference Highlights

**Keynote Speaker: Jill Holslin.** Holslin has a background in literature and critical theory and has studied photography in the Program of Contemporary Photography with Javier Ramírez Limón in northern Mexico. She has had individual shows in Tijuana, San Diego and San Francisco, and group shows in Mexico City, Guatemala, El Salvador, Argentina, Chicago and Minneapolis. Her images have been published in books and cultural journals in Mexico and the United States. As an essayist, her work has been published in both English and Spanish in anthologies and exhibition catalogs, including an essay in the exhibition catalog for *Where is Diana?* (Madrid, 2017). In 2016 she was selected in the 10th Biennial of Photography of Baja California. Holslin teaches courses on visual rhetoric at San Diego State University, and has lived in Tijuana since 2011.

**Guest Speaker: Nancy Moyer**  Nancy Moyer, best known for her studio jewelry work, expresses ideas and concepts in a variety of media. Although primarily a metalsmith, she often shifts into larger formats in order to accomodate more aggressive visual solutions to social and intellectual perceptions. In addition to her jewelry and drawing output, she has recently moved into a broader media range including graphics expression and photography. An autobiographical theme has been apparent since 2000. Her directions of interest over the last few years have involved incorporating computer assisted ideas and imagery into both her 2-D and 3-D work. Two exhibitions have resulted from this: Interactions: An Ideational Self Portrait, and The Bicameral Face. Both of these exhibits reflect her interest in alternative portraiture. Moyer is Professor Emerita of Art, University of Texas-Pan American.

**2018 One Foot Show Juror: Mark Clark.** Clark is an artist and the director of *Galeria 409* in Brownsville, Tx as well as the gallery *Mi Vida Loca* in Corpus Christi, TX. Originally from Corpus Christi, Clark majored in Art History and operated his own gallery and studio while serving as a curator at the *National Museum of the American Indian* in Washington, D.C. for twenty-two years.
2018 Paul Hannah Lecturer: Raheleh Filsoofi
Raheleh Filsoofi is a multi-disciplinary artist based in Texas, South Florida and Iran. Her work synthesizes socio-political statements as a point of departure and further challenges these fundamental arguments by incorporating ancient and contemporary media such as ceramics, poetry, ambient sound, and video; aiming for a holistic sensory experience. Her interdisciplinary practices act as an interplay between the literal and figurative contexts of the border, immigration, and inter-cultural communications. She is an active participant in juried art exhibitions both in Iran and the United States, including the recent solo exhibition ‘Imagined Boundaries’- a multimedia digital installation on border issues, consisting of two separate exhibitions debuted concurrently at Florida Cultural Consortium and Abad art gallery in Tehran (2017); ‘Dual Frequency’ group exhibition at The Art and Culture Center of Hollywood, Florida (2017) and a Group Exhibition ‘Fragile’ at The Contemporary Art Museum of Isfahan, Iran (2016). Her most recent multifaceted, self-curated art exhibition ‘Fold: Art, Metaphor and Practice’- which engaged over 20 artists, scholars, and educators - has proved to be the highlight of her professional artistic career. She has been the recipient of various grants and awards such as the prestigious South Florida Cultural Consortium Fellowship for Visual and Media Artists funded in part by the National Endowment for the Art and The Dave Bown Project Award (2016). She is an assistant professor of ceramics at University of Texas Rio Grande Valley at the Department of Art. She holds an M.F.A. in Fine Arts from Florida Atlantic University and a B.F.A. in Ceramics from Al-Zahra University in Tehran, Iran.

Creative Workshops

Attendees were invited to participate in the following creative workshops:

Collagraph Printing: Ed Garcia, Professor of Art at South Texas College

Creative Wellness: Rachael Brown, Professor of Art at South Texas College

Encaustic Painting: Phyllis Leverich and Scott Nicol, Professors of Art at South Texas College
MUSEUM EVENTS AND EXHIBITION TOURS

As part of Dia De los Muertos, visiting guests were treated to the creative activity of Sugar Skull painting, a taco stand dinner by Taquiza, and a tour of the exhibition “Truth and Rumors” by guest lecturer Nancy Moyer at the International Museum of Art and Science.
Synopsis of Conference Events

As submitted by the Board of Directors and Staff of TASA

Frontera Feminine

North American Art Gallery: Owner David M. Freeman, McAllen, TX,
Friday October 26, 2018
by M.C. FARRIS, Associate Professor of Design Art, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Frontera Feminine is an exhibition by four women artists and professors who reside in the Rio Grande Valley. The artworks on view range from collage and jewelry to 3D printing, photography, and performance. Donna Sweigart presents a series of 3D printed lace brooches. Based on 17th century Italian damaged lace that was later repaired, Sweigart invited women artists from across the nation respond to her printed brooches. Nancy Moyer’s paintings of mass produced Ropas (discarded clothing warehouses) transform into cloud-like formations. Moyer’s jewelry work functions as motifs in body ornamentation and challenges a viewer’s sense of perception. Phyllis Leverich’s figurative collages depict her experience with bipolar disorder. Leverich’s anatomical shapes present mental illness as physiological in origin similar to physical diseases. Standing at a table in front of photos of boldly colored tortillas, Christen Sperry García invited reception attendees to make hybrid corn tortillas with her. In the act of making tortillas, the interrelationship between border, food, and bodies form an ambiguous and hybridized space. Frontera Feminine is curated by David Freeman and organized by Donna Sweigart.

This exhibition by local Rio Grande Valley artist was hosted by David M. Freeman owner of N.A.A.G : North American Art Gallery. This exhibition explores the work of Donna Sweigart, Nancy Moyer, Phyllis Leverich, and Christen Sperry Garcia. This exhibition Is a strong example of the female artist and talent we have in the RGV.
STUDY ABROAD SESSION, Friday, Oct. 26, 2018, McAllen, TX.
by Linda Fawcett, Professor of Art, Hardin-Simmons University and TASA Executive Assistant and Registrar

Panelist: William Forber (Santa Reparata International School of Art), Linda Fawcett (Hardin-Simmons University), Patricia Ballinger, South Texas College

Linda Fawcett of Hardin-Simmons University opened the morning session with a PowerPoint presentation, mostly about her past biennial art history and studio tours based in Florence, Italy, which since 2013 have been based in one city (Florence), partnered with a local school of higher education (Santa Reparata, see below) that provided optional classes taught by local professors, educational infrastructure, housing and important emergency backup services. Fawcett would typically teach art history and painting (watercolor) with the vast majority of classroom instruction on-site, whether lecturing in the Uffizi, or Santa Maria Novella, or walking through the ruins of Herculaneum; painting in the Boboli gardens or from the hills of Fiesole overlooking Florence, etc. Side trips to other cities and sites throughout Italy augmented the itineraries, past trips including Rome, Naples and Herculaneum, Urbino, Ravenna, Venice, Siena, Pisa, San Gimignano, and Portovenere.

Then William Forber of the Santa Reparata International School of Art, based in Florence, Italy with a U.S. office also in San Antonio, gave a digital presentation about his school’s services. He also presented many ideas on how other American universities across the United States combined their programs with Santa Reparata. For example, Santa Reparata is very busy indeed during the summer sessions, offering course work in studio art and art history, fashion design, Italian language and social studies, but for many programs simply providing classroom and specialized lab facilities to professors from other schools who led their own custom tours. Then there are the long sessions, fall and spring, with the additional benefits of long-term cultural immersion, far less crowds and more time to spend in most Italian sites.

Patricia Ballinger of South Texas College finished out the session, presenting images while reporting on the success of cultural trips in recent years to Spain, particularly after developing programs for public school teachers and other targeted professionals who desired a fruitful way to obtain career certifications. Ballinger also talked about her trips with college students.

All three presenters offered various solutions to the eternal issues of how to organize trips, when to start, how to recruit, benefits for the faculty involved, how to work with and get your administration on-board (i.e. recruiting benefits for your college/university), funding and financial aid strategies. Plus a question and answer period ended the session.
Raheleh Filsoofi, Assistant Professor of Ceramics at UTRGV, presented an intriguing discussion on her upbringing, travels, studio practice, and recent Multi-disciplinary projects. As her website states, her work “synthesizes socio-political statements as a point of departure and further challenges these fundamental arguments by incorporating ancient and contemporary media such as ceramics, poetry, ambient sound, and video; aiming for a holistic sensory experience.” Of those she displayed, The Inh(a/i)bited Space, Imagined Boundaries, Fragile, Please Handle with Care, and Only Sound Remains (all of which can be viewed on her website (www.rahelehfilsoofi.com) were specifically captivating due to their audience engagement, but really all of her work is impressive. I thoroughly enjoyed her conversations on the complexities of being an artist based in Texas, Florida, and Iran, as well as her unique take on the similarities (and differences) between those regions and cultures. The Rio Grande Valley as a whole is lucky to have a presence such as Raheleh Fisoofi in their area and I particularly hope the student body is actively seeking her as a resource.

Keynote Speaker Jill Holstein, Friday, Oct. 26, 2018, McAllen, TX.

By Linda Ehrich, Interim Co-Dean,School of the Arts, Physical Education, Nutrition and Kinesiology, Brookhaven College

Jill Holslin of San Diego State University presented the keynote address for the 2018 Annual Conference that was very timely given the caravan of immigrants currently walking to the U.S. border seeking asylum from Central America. As a visual rhetoric faculty member and artist Jill became interested in our nation’s border wall issues in 2008. This topic impacted
her artistic practice and process and continues to motivate and shape her work. Her interest in border issues developed simultaneously with her photography practice and she began visually documenting the border walls built in the early 90’s as a response to the war on drugs.

From the perspective of an activist, writer, and artist, Jill felt compelled to research and document significant locations along the border wall between the U.S. and Mexico. Given the vacuum of information from the government, Jill spent years filling her studio walls with maps and photographs of the walls that divide and transverse the landscape. She explained that as the research and work progressed, so did her attitude and concepts. Her daily commute through the strongly controlled border crossing from her home in Tijuana to San Diego also contributed to her understanding of the seriousness of the political situation.

She noted the influence of artist Edward Tinksky, who photographs the destruction of the landscape, and Susan Sontag, who writes about how “beautiful” photos of border walls play into the consumerism and competition among photographers to get the prime photo ops. Jill began to understand better the complexity of how her “beautiful” images as well as others potentially contributed to aestheticizing and normalizing the border walls. These concerns took her work in a more intentional political direction to protest and counter the divisive abstraction of the wall as a symbol of American nationalism.

In a more recent project Jill moved away from the image of the poetic endless wall creating the contour line of the landscape. Instead, she presented images of her collaboration with a light projectionist using the site of the newest prototype walls constructed by the U.S. government. She used these very expensive prototype walls as large screens to project 7 light projected images and phrases to express her objections to the villainization of refugees and the erosion of American values.

My opinion: As Jill closed her presentation with these powerful images, I felt my understanding of the destructive and wasteful nature of the border wall deepen and my internal temperature rise.
TASA Member Visit to the Old Hidalgo Pumphouse near the Rio Grande
Saturday, October 27, 2018
By Mark Greenwalt, Professor of Art, College of the Mainland, and President of TASA

The *Old Hidalgo Pumphouse* is south of McAllen near the Rio Grande. The pump lifted irrigation waters from a parallel canal to the thirsty crops above until the river wandered, as rivers often do, and silted up the canal. The great old pump remains nested deep in the bowels of a rustic wood-frame structure, now only a symbol of creative engineering, defeated by the unpredictability of nature. Everywhere families enjoy the lovely park adjacent to the levee, beyond which a lush floodplain rightly enjoys the status of a protected natural habitat, a living jewel attesting to decades of wise multi-use management partnerships.

On this section of the levee, one sees a monumental and towering steel fence complete with a monumental rusted gate. One also sees that the steel columns of the fence are embedded in a massive concrete wall that slices the levee all the way down to the floodplain. Below, a well-used dirt road, the densely vegetated alluvial plain, and half the distant unseen river are part of Texas. Treaties agree to protect the stability and health of the Rio Grande, specifying consistent levee heights on both sides of the river, protecting the forested banks needed to slow the erosive current in floods, and maintain ancient habitat for species rare to the rest of Texas and Mexico.

From the gate, we walked downstream on the road topping the wall until the great steel fence suddenly ended. Here was easy access to the jungle below if only one can navigate an advance request for permission to enter. Roving vehicles and mobile camera towers were the obvious means of securing entry both in and out, but of course drones or other means could also have been in play.

A small collection of confiscated home-made ladders lay at the end of the wall. For the people crossing unlawfully through Mexico to the northern frontier, most are poor Central Americans compelled by the long bureaucratic delays at designated port-of-entries to keep moving. Desperate and trapped between lands foreign to them, they risk crossing the Rio Bravo (the Dangerous River) and turn themselves over to the U.S. Border Patrol in order to request asylum.

From the point of view of functional design, a physical wall is only one method to control human entry to the country. Of course, the concept of a continuous border wall also carries tremendous symbolic meaning ambiguously split among citizens, communities, and nations. Given the huge expense of border management, one hopes
that rational choices will always prevail. Walls are static structures that must be integrated with flexible systems operating in support of evolving border policies. All along the Rio Grande, the USA and Mexico have proven that collaboration works to efficiently manage a common natural resource. Why not similarly embrace our partnerships to more effectively manage the human element?

Hopefully wisdom will prevail. Will the proposal by some for a vast monolithic border wall truly satisfy functional design or become merely a symbol of functionality like the Old Pumphouse or the Maginot Line?

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