

SESSION THREE

Border Studios

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A boundary is not that at which something stops . . . the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing.

—Martin Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*

The identity of the US/Mexico border shifts dramatically, according to one's point of view. For some, the border is just a painted line, at the bottom of a channelized concrete river in Tijuana. For others, it is rusting core-ten steel panels, borrowed from Operation Desert Storm, in place end to end to form a paramilitary landscape. The economic territory of maquiladoras implemented through NAFTA dot the 14 bi-cultural cities at the border, making the boundary virtually illegible . . . except for the poverty found on only one side. On the other hand, one could argue that camps of undocumented farmworkers extend the border into California's Great Central Valley and as far north as the apple orchards of Washington state. All the while, Los Angeles, considered by many to be the northernmost barrio of Mexico City, constantly challenges the cultural notion of exactly where the border begins and ends.

This paper explores an ongoing series of highly collaborative design studio investigations conducted over the past five years in the broad territory of the US/Mexico border between Mexico City and Merced, California. These studios are born out of a social and pedagogical commitment to promote greater awareness among architecture students of the often striking conditions developing within this large, merging boundary. As these studios often involve the joint participation of US and Mexican architecture students and faculty, they also become a crucible for critical cultural exchange. In each instance, a salient studio topic establishes a discussion of the many territories and cultural boundaries associated with the border presented through perceptions and projects produced by architecture students on *both* sides. The challenges encountered in these studios often transcend architectural practices and are intended to force a confrontation with social and cultural issues of the "other". As such, amidst the schizophrenic relationships surrounding NAFTA, these stu-

dios reveal the need for *cultural negotiation* both in design and in the interpretation of the ephemeral boundary of the border.

SOWING SEEDS FOR CHANGE: THE GREAT CENTRAL VALLEY DESIGN/BUILD STUDIO, 1998

The color of our skins, the languages of our cultural and native origins, the lack of formal education, the exclusion from the democratic process, the numbers of our slain in recent wars - all these burdens generation after generation have sought to demoralize us, to break our human spirit. But God knows we are not beasts of burden, we are not agricultural implements or rented slaves brought across the border. We are men, locked in a death struggle against man's inhumanity to man in the industry that you represent.

—Cesar Chavez *An Open Letter to the Grape Industry*

Located an hour's drive from San Francisco, the California Central Valley is the largest manmade project in all of history. Originally a desert, with a climate which could be compared to that of Egypt's, the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys were transformed into one of the most fertile lands in the world through an ironic act of extravagance in the height of the Great Depression. The federally-funded Central Valley Project during the 1930's and the California Water Project in the 1960's collectively delivered two-thirds of California's treasured water supply to the Valley. Today, the Central Valley is a landscape fundamentally altered for human use.

Though a marvel of infrastructure, the Central Valley has also been the site of great sorrow, as famously illustrated in John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, an account of the squalid "migrant camps" which sheltered the dispossessed farmworkers of the 1930's. Currently, the infrastructure of the Central Valley includes a less than sanguine melding of agribusiness, food processing, the university extension system, cheap imported labor and cheap publically subsidized water to create this state's largest economic juggernaut. This messy business has transformed the Central Valley, an area twice that of the State of Massachusetts, into a virtual *factory of fields*.

Each year, an estimated 750,000 imported laborers till and harvest fields here for a period of roughly 5 months and yet often, a

place for these workers to stay just doesn't exist. Growers, state regulators, labor unions and politicians agree on one thing: none can recall a time when it was more difficult for a migrant worker just to find a spot to build a campfire and roll out his blankets - much less have a permanent structure with running water and toilets.

A joint Graduate Architecture and Landscape Architecture design studio conducted at the University of California, Berkeley, co-taught with Visiting Friedman Professor Sambo Mockbee, spent a semester traversing the socio-economic boundaries in the Central Valley's landscape of imported labor. Over the course of this investigation, The studio was exposed to the hardscrabble conditions which exist for those who seasonally live here while it designed and then built a "monument" for the farmworkers in a small, remote Central Valley town.

The studio actually engaged two concurrent design projects in the Central Valley migrant farmworker town of Planada. The first project addressed the provision of humane housing for the seasonal migrant work force. A more open-ended, community defined design problem called for the construction of a structure which might provide a place of respite for workers during the sweltering hours of the harvest season. In both cases, through intense interactions with townspeople, religious groups, service providers, politicians and migrant farmworkers, students were asked to come to terms with a complex set of multi-cultural exigencies in this small American town, whose population at times comprises more than 86% Mexican nationals.

Working first with the Director of the State's Office of Migrant Services (OMS), students critically re-examined existing state code standards for "migrant camps". The studio then visited and analyzed three generations of existing "camps" in Planada and met often with migrant groups that lived there. Finally, the studio was asked by the Housing Authority of the County of Merced to prepare Master Plans and investigate alternative, affordable building types and technologies for the site of a 40-year-old "temporary" camp which they intended to replace in Planada. It was emphasized that the studio's work should first constitute research into the social patterning of the current migrant populations' shelter needs and then, address affordable building technologies related to *both* this region's traditional forms and innovative, climate-responsive strategies.

The migrant families who seasonally settle in Planada's OMS camps have been coming from the same small valley in Sinaloa, Mexico for over three generations and they return for five months each year. This remarkable consistency, here and in towns throughout the Central Valley has introduced a very familiar Mexican culture 1,000 miles from home. Although the mostly Anglo students from Berkeley investigated everything from catalog-ordered manufactured

modular homes to trailers, RVs, the requisite rammed earth construction, hay bale, rastra and tent structures, a poll of migrants indicated that they would have preferred the image of a suburban stucco tract house, like the ones they have seen so often outside of Merced, Modesto or now Hermosillo for that matter.

In this vast and clearly intertwined *cultural exchange* called the Central Valley, it should not have been surprising to learn that Mexican migrants aspired to what the Americans already had - suburban sprawl. And, as the Berkeley students continued to extoll the virtues of experimentation in design, their planning efforts probably would have been best served had they spent time in a small agricultural plaza town in Sinaloa, which is what Planada most closely resembles. Mexican migrants have imported their highly familial, Catholic and agricultural way of life into California's Central Valley, complete with the plaza-town form with outside boxing rings for Summer evenings entertainment. Similarly, the US has effectively exported the type-forms of our consumer culture to Mexico. Shopping malls, strip malls, office parks and suburban land patterns are found flourishing in Mexican border cities and in the outskirts of Mexico City. This highly fluid phenomenon confuses the designers, as it begs them to answer the question: which culture or what values does one design for in this border territory? It would have been easy to dismiss the results of this housing investigation as a failure, as simply two cultures passing in the night, had not one of the studio's brightest participants, an Hispanic woman, gone to work in Sacramento at the Office of Migrant Services, Housing Division upon her graduation.

On weekends toward the end of the semester, the students in this studio began camping in farmer's fields or at a nearby State Park. They did this to avoid the two hour drive from Berkeley to Planada, to get an early start on their construction project and to save money. As their second project, the studio was challenged to program, design and then build a multi-functional structure which might facilitate the provision of basic services to farmworkers in the fields. Merced County Supervisor and Planada's guardian angel, Gloria Cortez Keene, was instrumental in our collaboration. A native who oversees Planada in her District, she convened two town meetings to get input for the studio from this community. In the end, Gloria convinced the community of what they needed and also knew how to procure funds from the County, land from the Housing Authority and the right-of-way from the California Department of Transportation. The result was a new shelter at the entrance to town.

Within the intersection of State Highway 140 and Plainsburg Road are contained most of the iconic elements of a small Central Valley town, including the railroad tracks. The feed and seed store, a small gas stop and market which sold most of the town's cold take-out beer, the best taco truck in the county where migrants milled day

and night, one vacant billboard and a State Highway Department sign indicated that you were passing through Planada. The site for the bus shelter would be on the empty northeast corner of this intersection in the dusty roadside parking lot of a 40-family OMS camp. However, every morning this corner served as the center of town, the place where migrant workers waited and queued for the labor contractors who would drive by to fill-up their trucks with manpower. Additionally, throughout the day this was the site where women and children would wait for their buses to Merced ten miles away, where they could work, receive social services or go to school. And every year, hundreds of thousands of Northern California tourists speed past this intersection on their way to Yosemite's eastern entrance just 30 miles away, never knowing that this is also the entrance to a proud migrant town struggling to survive only two blocks away.

The studio's project became known as the *Planada Farmworker Monument*, so named by Supervisor Cortez Keene. The completed shelter provides for both protection and collection and is expressive of the frugality found in agricultural architecture. The structure's expansive metal roof canopy formally gestures toward the distant Sierras and acts as a water collector when it rains. Elegant scissor beams made from massive Redwood planks were scavenged from a discarded camp in Yosemite known only to the local migrants who helped with the construction of the shelter. Rising up like the geologic underpinnings of the Sierra, a 30-foot sloped concrete wall catches and channels water runoff from the shelter's roof, celebrating the control of water upon which the Central Valley depends. At waters end is a White Fig tree, a variety grown solely in Planada. And in the finest local tradition, the wall is adorned with an exuberant mural painted by Planada's school children recounting themes from their homes both in Planada and Sinaloa, Mexico.

Working both with Graduate Architecture and Landscape Architecture students, the pedagogy of the studio was originally dedicated to an exploration of the Central Valley's geology and agricultural infrastructure through the project of migrant farmworker housing. However, working with Sambo Mockbee, the students mutinied on the first day of class and demanded that we add a design/build component. Therefore, as is typical with a design/build studio, one starts with an undefined problem but the best of intentions. As the studio progressed and we began meeting with people in Planada, it became clear that in this landscape, we could not avoid dealing with many of the issues associated with the border for although Planada is physically 400 miles north of Mexico, we were essentially working at the border. In the end, the studio did little to expose the inequities of an abusive labor system, the INS or unacceptable living conditions to anyone other than ourselves. Yet the studio did leave behind a humble but well crafted mark at the corner of State Highway 140

and Plainsburg Road for all to see on behalf of the marginalized farmworkers of Planada.

**PLAZA & BORDER: THE PLAZA SANTO DOMINGO/
BORDER STATION STUDIO, 1999**

Over the entrance hovers an enormous specimen of the American eagle, with outspread wings, a shield before her breast, and, if I recollect, a bunch of intermingled thunderbolts and barbed arrows in each claw. With the customary infirmity of temper that characterizes this unhappy fowl, she appears, by the fierceness of her beak and eye and general truculency of her attitude, to threaten mischief to the inoffensive community; and especially to warn all citizens, careful of their safety, against intruding on the premises she overshadows with her wings. Nevertheless, vixenly as she looks, many people are seeking, at this very moment, to shelter themselves under the wing of the federal eagle; Imagining, I presume, that her bosom has all the softness and snugness of an eider-down pillow. But she has no great tenderness, even in her best of moods, and, sooner or later, oftener soon that late, is apt to fling off her nestlings with the scratch of her claw, a dab of her beak, or a rankling wound from her barbed arrows.

—Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Custom-House*

A space and a line. These were the formal topics investigated in a Visiting Critic graduate architecture studio conducted with Mexico City architect Fernando Vasconcelos at the University of New Mexico.

The contained urban space of a Mexican plaza at the center of the country was contrasted with the line which separates at the border. As the studio headed north, a Catholic sense of assimilation and inclusion might have met with the Protestant will to segregate and divide. However, the studio challenged many preconceptions about Mexico and particularly the border, encouraging work that questioned how things might be otherwise.

For US students, the prospect of designing the public space of a Mexican plaza is as foreign as working on the moon. Most of these students had suburban upbringings removed from any experiences in a traditional urban space. Their natural orientation toward the objects and forms of a sub-urban environment stands in the way of a more subtle appreciation of the space of the plaza as an end in itself. Similarly, their training in the effects of the highly zoned North American city does not prepare them to trust the casual events and mixed-uses which unfold in the space of the Mexican plaza as part of the daily ritual of urban life. Given no directives but simply challenged to critique then intervene, almost all of the studio participants initially flooded the space of the Mexican plaza with countless pavilions, sculp-

ture and programmed activities for they could not imagine what anyone might want to do there.

The first studio site was the Plaza Santo Domingo, the second oldest Spanish space in Mexico City, located two blocks north of the Zocalo. Originally, most of the second tier functions of the Spanish Viceroyalty were situated around this plaza: the customs house, the post, the university and the principal church of the Dominican Order. Additionally, the Arcade of the Scribes, which holds down the western edge of the plaza, historically was the place to hire writing and printing services for legal documents, invitations, or letters for the non-writing population in the city. Today, the customs house serves as the Ministry of Education, though the Arcade of the Scribes and the Santo Domingo church remain in operation. Daily, the plaza functions as an important neighborhood center in the economically declining downtown district of Mexico City.

Every culture has a specific conception of time and this becomes rooted in the design and use of their urban spaces. An understanding of the Latin notion of the urban spectacle, a significant religious feast day celebration, the fiesta or often a political protest, makes one appreciate the cultural significance of available and flexible space in the city. Aldo Rossi suggested that the main purpose for an empty plaza space in a city is to provide a daily memory of that single time each year when it is filled, at festival. As the US students began to "get religion" and truly understand the space of the Mexican plaza, they started to remove all of the important *things* from their plaza designs.

Mexico and the United States share one of the longest borders on earth, a 2,000-mile line which is becoming an increasingly ragged, disorderly and dangerous transit zone. The U.S. Border Patrol, America's second-largest law enforcement agency after the FBI, attempts to control this line. However, in recent years the Border Patrol has transformed itself into a lifesaving rescue unit as an alarming number of immigrants are dying during their desert passage, at a rate of about one per day. Each year, a greater awareness on the part of both US and Mexican officials of the desperate conditions at the border has sparked an encouraging negotiation about the fundamental nature of this line and how it might be managed.

The second studio design problem challenged the students to develop their own attitudes toward the US/Mexico border as expressed through the program of a border station. The project was set at the border where Columbus, New Mexico meets Palomas, Chihuahua. These two small, dusty towns with no more than 10,000 folks total are isolated 75 miles west of El Paso in the high Chihuahua desert. Culturally these two towns have very little in common although significantly, they do share a common underground aquifer, a grade school

in Columbus, a USDA approved cattle crossing and an infamous piece of history. In 1916, Pancho Villa crossed the border and attacked Columbus in an epic midnight raid, the only foreign assault on US soil in the 20th-century. From here was born the modern US Air Force and possibly, the Border Patrol, as Columbus served as the staging point for General Pershing's air pursuit of Villa into Mexico.

Four fundamental questions guided the studio's investigation of the border and border station program. First, students inquired into the physical manifestations and nature of the line; how was this abstract political boundary made known? Next, the studio was interested in the literal act of crossing from one culture to another. What was the experience of crossing this line, and particularly in light of NAFTA, were there other possible program opportunities which might be explored at this exchange? Subsequently, how does one make a mark or establish a presence in this vast, desert landscape? Finally, what is the relevant character or expression for an "outpost" architecture representing these nations?

Students were assigned the task to design either the Mexican station or the US station. In either case, students were paired with a fellow classmate working on the other side of the border. Though they were not required to work together, at a minimum, the two stations would need to work in unison to provide border passage of people, cars, truck commerce and livestock. As these border partners engaged in architectural negotiations, almost all began to conceive of strategies which took advantage of moments or events of common interest at the border. It appeared to them that it was a far richer problem if they developed a dialogue with their neighbor rather than simply reinforced the line. As one student pointed out, in the true spirit of NAFTA, before Pershing and Villa, the native Mogollon peoples had been crossing freely at this site for over 1,500 years.

HOUSE OF BARRAGAN: THE MEXICO CITY SUMMER URBAN DESIGN STUDIOS, 1999-PRESENT

Americans never remember; Mexicans never forget.

—Guillermo Gomez-Pena, Recounting a popular Mexican saying

Mexico possesses two historical memories which coexist richly. One native, the other colonial, it is a civilization which has not exterminated its past. In Mexico City, the past is exhibited in a physical and complex socio-political realm which struggles with some of the most challenging modern urban conditions imaginable. Like many deeply held societal structures in the Mexican unconscious, an inventive syncretic form of urbanism has evolved which merges the traditional with the contemporary. This hybrid urban condition, an overlay of the ancient with the megalopolitan, serves as the subject in an inves-

tigation of the boundaries between tradition and modernity in a series of studios conducted in Mexico City over the past three summers.

The Mexico Summer Urban Design Studio is a collaboration between the University of Arkansas, the University of New Mexico and the Universidad de Anahuac in Mexico City. Founded seven years ago by Professor Marlon Blackwell of Arkansas and Director Manuel Aguirre of Anahuac, the 10 week summer program deeply immerses US 4th-year architecture students in an extraordinary range of cultural and urban architectural experiences. A significant component of the summer program is five weeks of travel to pre-columbian and colonial archaeological sites and cities where each student generates up to 100 drawings of observed urban spaces and forms. The students are finally based for five weeks in the newly renovated house and studio offices of famed Mexican architect Luis Barragan. At this point, Mexico City becomes the laboratory for a focused urban design studio investigation. Mexican students and faculty from Anahuac join the studio at the Casa Barragan and work jointly in design teams with the US group. It is here, precisely through the dialogue between US and Mexican design students, that the terms of a debate on the modern City emerges as they develop their urban design projects.

Over the past three years, the design studio has focused its work in Mexico City's downtown Centro Historico, roughly 25 square blocks of UNESCO World Patrimony historic urban fabric. Centered on the Zocalo and the Aztec remains of the Templo Mayor, this district resonates with the two historical memories of Mexico. However, 19th and 20th century physical and social alterations to the buildings and streets has transformed this historic zone into a modern shopping bazaar and place of illicit exchange. In fact, it is these streets, overrun with ambulatory street vendors amidst a backdrop of 16th and 17th century architecture that inspired Director Ridley Scott's image of futuristic Los Angeles for the film *Blade Runner*. Nowhere is the juxtaposition between Mexico's ceremonial past and the socio-economic imperatives of this megalopolitan city more evident. In this place, the contradictions of a culture oriented toward the past coexist with the globalizing market forces of modernity.

It is within this context that the Mexican and US students are asked to develop urban design strategies for mixed-use market rate housing as a means to "re-colonize" this deteriorating district. Throughout the course of three studios, eight sites have been investigated, each chosen with some historic trace still present on the site and with a direct connection to a plaza. These project areas require that the student does not conceive of architecture independently from the public urban space of the plaza. Additionally, these projects demand that the student posits a critical attitude toward the reconstitution of the historic City.

The duality of the traditional versus the modern City set-up through the studio's urban design problem has yielded some culturally interesting results. The US students, most of whom admittedly have never known an historic city, cannot seem to get out from underneath the weight of history experienced in Mexico and have difficulty avoiding an operative nostalgia in their design projects. The Mexican students, secure in their memory of at least 2,000 years of Indo-Hispano history, do not feel in any jeopardy of losing their connection to the past and thus, consistently pursue the most experimental and challenging work. These varying perceptions stimulate the cultural exchange in the studio and significantly elevates the depth of each student teams' investigation. The overall work produced in this joint US/Mexican urban design studio will be featured in *ARQUINE*, Latin America's leading design magazine, in December 2001.

Dwelling at his house and working in his private garden, the studio might benefit most from the enduring example of Luis Barragan. His projects, at every scale, are a meditation on the Mexican city, its streets, protective walls, social plazas and its gardens. The work of the studio invariably reflects upon Barragan and the students' own experience of Mexico, old and new. It is Barragan's model which suggests a path toward a fertile middle ground, a place encompassing both tradition and modern intelligence. As Octavio Paz has observed, the art of Barragan is modern but not modernist, for to be truly modern, one must first come to terms with tradition.

THE " UNREGULATED " COLONIA: THE ANAPRA, CIUDAD JUAREZ HOUSING STUDIO, 2002

We're all here because the Americans wanted us here.

—Conrada Valles, 58, *Matriarch of a large Anapra family*

The 14 bi-cultural cities at the border have expanded rapidly in the past decade due to the economic growth fueled by maquiladora programs implemented through NAFTA. As a result of this developmental shift, there has been a mass migration of Mexicans in search of work into the border region. It is estimated that 300,000 illegal immigrants enter the USA each year, recruited during this recent economic boom by US employers desperate for workers, regardless of their legal status. This maquiladora migration phenomenon has made Juarez-El Paso, with a population of over 2-million, the largest border community in the world, growing at a rate of 5% a year. Time Magazine's June 11, 2001 cover feature on the border describes Ciudad Juarez as "the migration story that most Americans don't hear about: the one that stops just short of the border and grows and grows." Environmentally, this unchecked growth in Juarez-El Paso has wreaked havoc on air quality, increased the spread of disease

and imperiled the shared desert aquifer which is scheduled to be depleted in just 15 years.

New arrivals to the border most often land in unregulated colonias, on either side of the border. These squatter shanty towns have sprung up without paved roads, water or sewer service. Ad hoc homes are put together in every imaginable fashion using discarded cardboard, wood pallets, tin and eventually, purchased cinder block. Electricity is pirated from overhead power lines as the local government looks the other way. The problems associated with the unregulated colonia neighborhoods in Mexico are diverse in nature, involving a lack of infrastructure leading to enormous housing shortages, as well as social, health and environmental problems.

World renowned photographer Miguel Gandert has been documenting the growth of Ranchos de Anapra, an unregulated colonia of 5,000 families on the ragged outskirts of Juarez, for over 10 years. He is attracted to the irrepressible Indo-Hispano spirit of a dignified people who maintain their rich cultural traditions in the face of tremendous poverty. Miguel photographs feast days, especially the Virgin's feast day of December 12, when colorful dancers of all descriptions fill the plaza in this colonia slum. Like their houses, the dancers' costumes are made from whatever materials can be found. The residents of Anapra are remarkably resilient, they celebrate survival through their rituals.

Anapra literally crashes into the line of the border and is met by an INS fence. A few hundred yards to the north is the town center of Sunland Park, New Mexico. Last year, a bi-national agreement was reached to establish a pedestrian border crossing at Anapra-Sunland Park in an effort to spur economic growth on both sides. To some, this action may signal yet another break in the dam at the border, though it is being looked upon by Mexican authorities as a real opportunity to improve the living conditions in Anapra.

Funding from the J. B. Jackson Endowment at the University of New Mexico will be supporting an international planning and design collaboration at Anapra-Sunland Park to be conducted in the Spring semester of 2002. As a studio investigation, the hard issues facing these communities demand an interdisciplinary approach which includes urban, economic and environmental planning, landscape architecture and housing architecture. The intent of this studio is to engage a cross-section of students from several Graduate programs, through travel and collaborative participation, in the human communities at the border. Participants in this endeavor will include Urban Design students from the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, Mexico City, led by Miquel Adria and Isaac Broid; Architecture students from the University of Texas, Austin, led by Coleman Coker; Landscape Architecture students from Auburn University led by Jack Williams; and Environmental Planning and Architecture students from

the University of New Mexico with Planning Director David Henkel. The studio will work directly with the Instituto de Arquitectura, Diseño e Arte, the planning arm for Ciudad Juarez, private developers on both sides of the border and the City of Sunland Park. Though the studio has been directed to focus on the provision of housing and community services, it will also comprehensively address issues of border passage, infrastructure, industry and the commercial marketplace.

The unregulated colonia is always in a state of becoming. Therefore, the challenge for the studio will be to NOT create a static Master Plan, for this would be obsolete as soon as it was completed. Instead, the studio must pursue a *retro-fitted urbanism* and develop dynamic design strategies, principles or tactics which can be applied to an urban entity which is haphazard, in motion and evolving at a visibly rapid pace. For students to work successfully here, both the mode of their operations and the manner in which decisions are made will be challenged. A new developmental framework must be implemented which considers the impact of design and human resource decisions collectively at this intertwined site. Designers working in border communities face an additional responsibility to develop appropriate practices which improve the physical environment without compromising the cultural desires of their bi-national inhabitants. Set in the larger socio-economic context of exploitation surrounding most border issues, the Anapra studio work will deliver hard lessons and hopefully, principled learning.

OPEN BORDERS

To conquer its enemies, the United States must first conquer itself - return to its origins. Not to repeat them but to rectify them: the "others" - the minorities inside as well as the marginal countries and nations outside - do exist. If the United States is to recover fortitude and lucidity, it must recover itself, and to recover itself it must recover the "others" - the outcasts of the Western World.

—Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*

What has always been unified both ecologically and culturally was divided with an abstract line running east and west in 1848 after the Mexican-American War. Yet the cultural network between Mexico and, at least, the American Southwest has never been stronger, as culture knows no borders. We are entering an interesting time in post-PRI Mexico with new President Vicente Fox calling for open borders while many in Washington, for the first time, are listening. They have to, for the maturing effects of the NAFTA treaty has resulted in some of mankind's worst living, working and environmental conditions which the United States is largely responsible for creating. In many places at the border, alleged progress seems to have gone can-

cerous. With over 24-million people now populating the US/Mexico boundary region, it appears that our two nations can no longer ignore the mounting problems at the border and must work together to solve them.

The Border Studio investigations have served to create a dialogue with others working and living in the border region and in

Mexico. In doing so, they have attempted to counter a xenophobic American design practice which for too long, has overlooked the extraordinary architectural and urban cultures south of the border. As we plunge headlong toward a borderless future, these studios call for greater engagement on the part of design and environment professionals in this deeply contested territory.