

# Border Cantos

## Evaluation Report



CRYSTAL BRIDGES®  
MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Border Cantos*, a collaboration between photographer Richard Misrach and sculptor-composer Guillermo Galindo, featured large-scale photographs and sound sculptures constructed from objects found at the border between the U.S. and Mexico. This exhibition was presented at Crystal Bridges from February 18 through April 24, 2017.

This report shares the summative evaluation findings which focused on exhibition attendees' responses to *Border Cantos*. These individual interviews, collected from 42 guests as they left the exhibition area, provide the following findings.

## FINDINGS

### How did exhibition attendees react to the *Border Cantos* exhibition, both intellectually and emotionally?

- 1 Guests responded positively to *Border Cantos* and understood that the exhibition intended to humanize the border.
- 2 The majority of guests reported learning new information in the exhibition, including what the border and terrain look like and some practices of the border patrol.
- 3 Although the majority did not use the Spanish, individuals responded positively to the translations and felt they were an important part of the exhibition.
- 4 Those who engaged with the reflection area enjoyed the activities and felt that they added to the exhibition experience.
- 5 Negative feedback, while limited to a few individuals, was given and focused on the political nature of the exhibition and confusion or dislike of some of the objects.

### What opinions did exhibition attendees have regarding how *Border Cantos* fits into the Crystal Bridges experience?

- 6 The topic of the U.S./Mexico border and the fact that the exhibition was free were primary drivers for *Border Cantos* attendance.
- 7 Guests felt that this exhibition compared favorably to other temporary exhibitions they have seen at Crystal Bridges in that all have been high quality.



# INTRODUCTION

*Border Cantos*, a collaboration between photographer Richard Misrach and sculptor-composer Guillermo Galindo, featured large-scale photographs and sound sculptures constructed from objects found at the border between the U.S. and Mexico. This exhibition was presented at Crystal Bridges from February 18 through April 24, 2017. While this report focuses on the findings from the summative evaluation, evaluation was also integrated into the development of this exhibition as described below.

## FRONT-END EVALUATION<sup>1</sup>

Front-end evaluation was conducted in August 2016 to inform the development and interpretation of *Border Cantos* at Crystal Bridges. While objects were already determined, the team was most interested in knowing how guests would react to and connect with these images and content. In order to understand potential reactions and connections, three focus groups were held with a total of 31 participants from the Northwest Arkansas region. The first focus group consisted of the exhibition advisory committee, made up of Hispanic/Latino community leaders who met monthly following this initial meeting to advise the exhibition team. The second group was Hispanic/Latino individuals and the third group was randomly recruited Crystal Bridges members who were not Hispanic. Each focus group experienced a simulated gallery with one-third of the exhibition's images and a facilitated discussion which focused on reactions to images, a sound sculpture video, and a possible reflection area activity.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to this brief overview, a complete report of the front-end evaluation is available.

## Three overall recommendations were highlighted in the front-end evaluation report:

- **Help visitors think about the role of art in political discourse.**  
When participants looked at the images of the border, politics and the political climate came to mind. It was clear that some individuals would need help thinking about the role of art in this political conversation.
- **Expect and support a range of emotions.**  
Even as small, printed images, the emotional quality of the artworks came through. It was even more likely that guests would respond emotionally when face-to-face with the larger, real objects.
- **Consider including stories about people connected with the border.**  
Some Hispanic/Latino focus group participants felt that these images did not accurately portray the vibrant border culture or explain why someone would immigrate. Respondents yearned for a more personal connection.

## These recommendations and reactions to images were used to develop the exhibition's interpretation. Specific steps taken included:

- **Instrument references**  
So that visitors could better understand the artistic background of the sound sculptures, the interpretation referenced the instruments on which the artist drew inspiration.
- **Training**  
Training was conducted across the museum in order to prepare staff members for supporting a range of emotions.
- **Local Perspective**  
To provide a personal quality, members of the exhibition advisory committee contributed labels to selected works. In addition, to share a local perspective of the in-gallery experience, four individuals from Northwest Arkansas were included in reflection area iPad videos, sharing their experiences with border crossing or growing up in the region as an undocumented individual.

## SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

Because this was the first time for the museum to present a show focused on the U.S./Mexico border, Crystal Bridges was especially interested in knowing the final response to the exhibition.

### A summative evaluation was conducted and guided by the following questions:

- 1 How did exhibition attendees react to the *Border Cantos* exhibition, both intellectually and emotionally?
- 2 What opinions did exhibition attendees have regarding how *Border Cantos* fits into the Crystal Bridges experience?

### Data Collection Methods

In order to answer these evaluation questions, exit interviews were collected from 42 *Border Cantos* attendees from March 15 to April 13. Data collection occurred during a range of times (days/nights/weekdays/weekends) and bilingual (English/Spanish) data collectors collected two-thirds of the interviews. Data collectors used a purposeful sampling method, with the intent of including Hispanic/Latino individuals in the dataset.<sup>2</sup> The final sample included 42 interviews, 10 of which (24%) were with someone who identified as Hispanic/Latino. Two interviews were conducted in Spanish, a decision made based on the preference of the participant.

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<sup>2</sup> The primary aim of purposeful sampling is to ensure that data are collected from specific types of individuals, in this case Hispanic/Latino exhibition attendees. This decision was made because of the likelihood and assumption that Hispanic/Latino individuals would have a personal connection to the exhibition's content, imagery, or themes, and also might have used the Spanish translations. This ensured that the dataset represented a range of racial/ethnic identities, though not necessarily in the same proportion of actual exhibition attendees.

A semi-structured interview protocol was developed and asked visitors about their overall satisfaction, what they perceived to be the main idea of the show and what they learned, their emotions in the exhibition, and their usage of the Spanish translations, gallery iPads and reflection area activities. At the close of the interview, respondents were asked how they would describe the exhibition to a friend and how they felt it compared to other exhibitions at Crystal Bridges. The data collection ended with the respondent completing a brief demographic questionnaire (available in English and Spanish). All respondents received a \$5 museum giftcard as a small token of appreciation. Each interview was audio recorded if permission was given by the respondent and data were organized using Evernote via iPad and later transcribed. All but one participant agreed to audio recording and interviews lasted an average of seven minutes. Data were analyzed for common themes using qualitative analysis software.

### Limitations

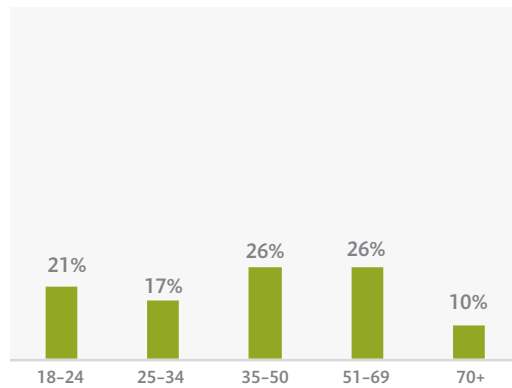
It is important to note that the primary purpose of these data is to describe. The results of this investigation provide the museum with a deeper understanding of how visitors reacted to the exhibition. These data do not identify causal relationships between the exhibition and any change in understanding. The decision not to collect a comparison group of individuals who were interested, but had not yet visited the exhibition, was made because of the high likelihood that visitors would self-select whether to visit *Border Cantos*. Attendees were likely to be pre-disposed to higher levels of empathy that the exhibition aimed to encourage and a very large sample would have been needed in order to detect any possible difference.



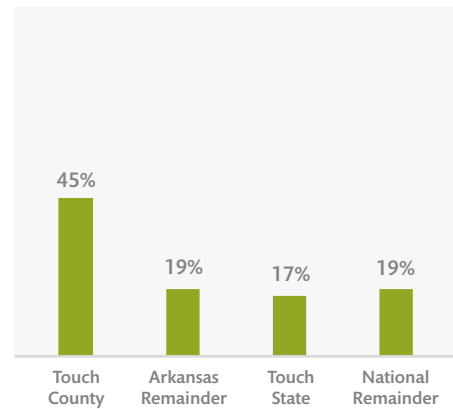
# DEMOGRAPHICS OF STUDY

Demographics of the Sample (N=42)

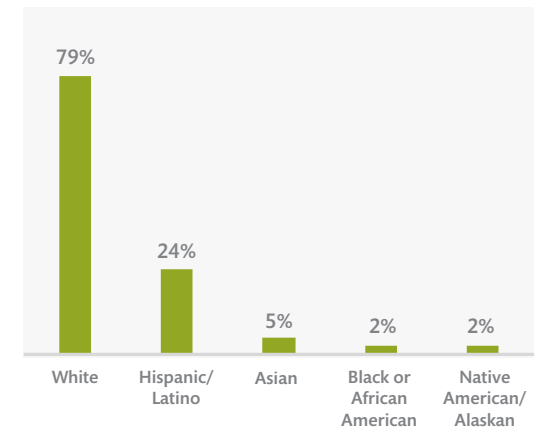
## AGE



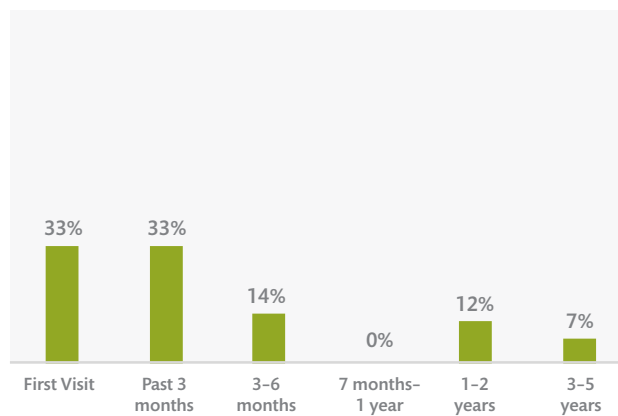
## REGION



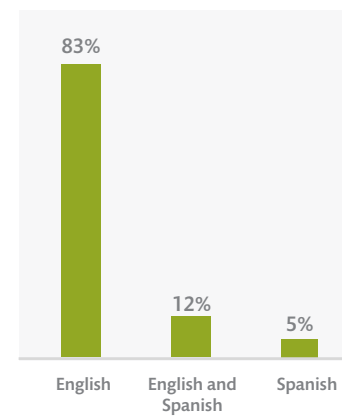
## RACE/ETHNICITY



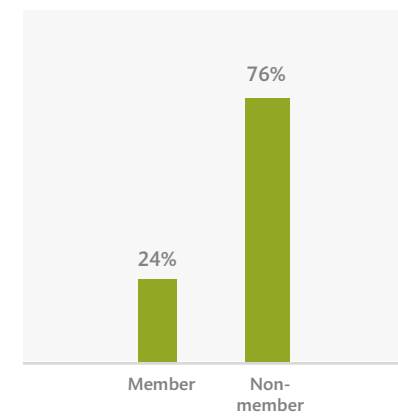
## LAST VISIT



## LANGUAGE



## MEMBERSHIP



# FINDINGS

## How did exhibition attendees react to the *Border Cantos* exhibition, both intellectually and emotionally?

- 1 Guests responded positively to *Border Cantos* and understood that the exhibition intended to humanize the border.
- 2 The majority of guests reported learning new information in the exhibition, including what the border and terrain look like and some practices of the border patrol.
- 3 Although the majority did not use the Spanish, individuals responded positively to the translations and felt they were an important part of the exhibition.
- 4 Those who engaged with the reflection area enjoyed the activities and felt that they added to the exhibition experience.
- 5 Negative feedback, while limited to a few individuals, was given and focused on the political nature of the exhibition and confusion or dislike of some of the objects.

## What opinions did exhibition attendees have regarding how *Border Cantos* fits into the Crystal Bridges experience?

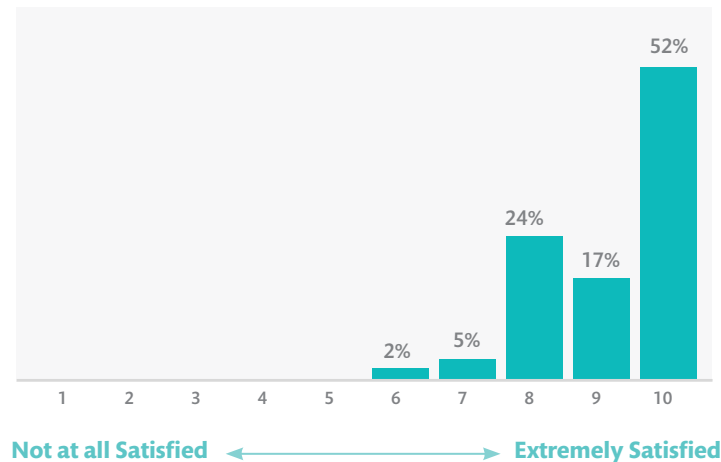
- 6 The topic of the U.S./Mexico border and the fact that the exhibition was free were primary drivers for *Border Cantos* attendance.
- 7 Guests felt that this exhibition compared favorably to other temporary exhibitions they have seen at Crystal Bridges in that all have been high quality.



## FINDING 1

Guests responded positively to *Border Cantos* and understood that the exhibition intended to humanize the border.

At the beginning of the interview, respondents were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with *Border Cantos* on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being “extremely satisfied” and 1 being “not at all satisfied.” All interviewees rated the exhibition at least a 6, and more than half of respondents selected “10” or “extremely satisfied.” The average of these scores was 9.1 and responses are shown in the chart below. When asked to explain this first impression, visitors often used the words “moving” or “powerful” and many spoke of how real the exhibition seemed.



**Not only was overall satisfaction high, but guests also understood that the exhibition intended to humanize the border. When asked what they felt the exhibit was trying to show, over half of respondents mentioned the struggles of immigrants.**

- “To me, the point of the exhibition was to enlighten people, to give you both sides. You read about this, you read about that. But to get a feel for who the people actually are—that they’re actually people, and that they’re going through all this ordeal. So that’s what I got from it, a better understanding of the people that are involved.”
- “Pues yo creo que tengan conciencia de lo que todos los emigrantes estamos... Esto es lo que yo creo, que todos queremos una vida mejor para nosotros y nuestra familia, y yo así eso es lo que miro. (Well I believe to be conscious that all the immigrants, we’re...This is what I believe, that we all want a better life, for ourselves and our family and that is what I see.)”
- “I feel like it’s trying to build awareness on what it’s like for these people trying to cross the border.”
- “It humanizes a problem that is often, the human element is taken out of it. It makes something real to us that is easy to just look at statistics or arguments. And it makes things concrete that many of us never experience or witness.”

## FINDING 1, cont.

Guests responded positively to *Border Cantos* and understood that the exhibition intended to humanize the border.

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Guests mentioned the artifacts especially when talking about how the exhibition made them think of the people involved. These artifacts, shown both through the photographs and sculptures, made the border crossing experience more personal and individualized, and also contributed to feelings of sadness. Half of those interviewed mentioned that they felt sad in the exhibition, and almost as many individuals mentioned feeling empathy.

“ I felt sadness because you see what people go through. So sadness was a real big one, really, sadness. And you kind of get a feeling for how bad things must be someplace for them to go through those types of hardships to get here.”

“ I felt a lot of empathy with people who have gone through the situation, but also some sorrow for people who have been lost in that situation and how we’re handling it now.”

“ Well, it’s sad to see, and reading about the barrels of water that they put out. And seeing the shoes for small kids in the photos and stuff like that. And to think about how hard that journey must be for them.”

“ The one piece that struck me the most was the backpack with the personal items that was found and put on display. It makes you wonder. There’s a story behind that backpack that we’ll all never know. But again it’s a universal story that goes along with anybody, again trying to make it from one world to another world to improve themselves.”



“ I felt a lot of empathy with people who have gone through the situation, but also some sorrow for people who have been lost in that situation and how we’re handling it now.”



## FINDING 2

The majority of guests reported learning new information in the exhibition, including what the border and terrain look like and some practices of the border patrol.

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When asked if they learned anything new in the exhibition, the most frequent theme was learning what the border looks like, including the type of terrain and types of border walls (mentioned by over one-third of respondents). These messages were most often associated with the photographs and respondents sometimes even quoted specific material from the objects' labels.

“The closeness of actual habitation to where the parts of the wall are now, like being in someone's backyard or dividing a beach or things like that, so those were things that I learned that I didn't really realize. I think my concept of it was arid land, wall, desert-like, but it wasn't this, not always the case.”

“I didn't know that there were already 700 miles of fence built. I knew there was some around Arizona, but I didn't know it was 700 miles.”

“I did not know that there were already large sections of wall that were in place that are in existence today. Listening to current politicians, you would think there was no wall at all, but there's quite a bit of wall in existence, number one. Number two, that a lot of sections where there is no wall or so remote and so hostile that you'll wonder if building a wall would be a waste of money and time anyways.”

“Well, I didn't know how ineffective the border fences are at some places and how much money they cost. There's that one photo of the section of the fence that said it was estimated to cost like half a million dollars that wasn't effective at all, so it was just things that I don't know about the fences that I've learned from this.”

“I didn't know that there were, I think they said there were 12 different types of borders. I just kind of imagined in my head to be kind of all the same.”

Content related to the border patrol was also new information for many people (mentioned by almost one-third of respondents). Guests reported learning about the drag tire method of surveillance and becoming more aware of the extensive target shooting training that occurs. While a couple of individuals mentioned empathy for border patrol agents, guests' responses to this content were overwhelmingly negative, using words like “disgusted” or “crazy.”

“The tire tracks and dragging it. And I didn't realize that the border patrol practice shooting in targets and stuff like that. I thought they just stood at the entrance and watched that way, but they're really like hands on and going out there.”

“Some of the measures that the US is doing to try to keep immigrants out, and a lot of them feel harsh. Shooting holes in the barrels that supply their water. Doing target practice out there. You hope that's not target practice for people. And trying to break their bikes and just doing these things to try to minimize it. Which I understand they're paid to do that and that's part of it but still, it's just, the humanity aspect of it. It seems pretty harsh.”

“Mostly I was uneasy. Most particularly I felt disgust when you saw that one where they're practicing—the shooting practice on the silhouette of a man. And there wasn't even—that they just fired enough bullets so there wasn't even a full silhouette left.”

“I had no idea that they would actually try to kill people for trying to cross a border. Seems more like a traffic violation to me than a capital crime. We were stunned by that.”

“The border patrol who are just following their responsibility. Trying to do their job. And the emotional kind of experience that they must have. I saw that there were some examples of empathy with the border patrol that I hadn't expected to know. And that tells me something about the experience that they must have on a day to day basis in making decisions that affect people's lives.”

## FINDING 3

Although the majority did not use the Spanish, individuals responded positively to the translations and felt they were an important part of the exhibition.

Interview participants were asked whether they used or noticed the Spanish translations and how, if at all, the translations affected their exhibition experience. The majority of individuals interviewed (35 of 42) did not use the Spanish, one of whom also reported not noticing it at all. The remaining individuals (7 of 42) used the Spanish as a part of their exhibition experience.

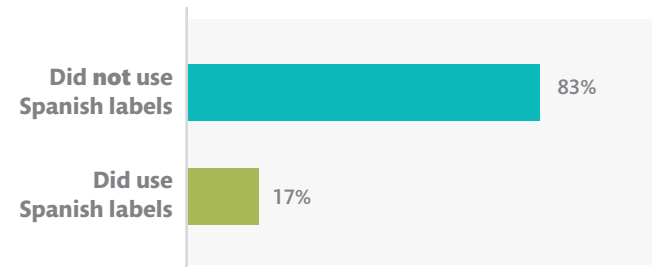
Of those who did not use the Spanish, most felt positively about having Spanish presented. For example, participants mentioned that they were glad that those who read Spanish could access the exhibition and that the bilingual presentation seemed necessary for this exhibition topic. Some even noticed and remarked positively about the fact that English and Spanish were presented side by side. A few simply stated that the translations did not affect them one way or another, and no one reported negative reactions.

“I’m glad they were there and they should have been there. That’s kind of the purpose of the entire exhibit. It wasn’t really surprising.”

“Well, I thought it was appropriate, and for a couple of reasons. One, because there are going to be people of Mexican descent in here looking at it because of Northwest Arkansas and the makeup of the population. And the other was that it seemed like it needed to be there. It needed to be there as much as the English needed to be there.”

“I did notice them. I can’t read them, but they are really interesting to see and I think it’s really cool that they have those there because they are important to represent what the exhibition means.”

“I was very pleased and happy to see the two translations side by side, equally.”



## FINDING 3, cont.

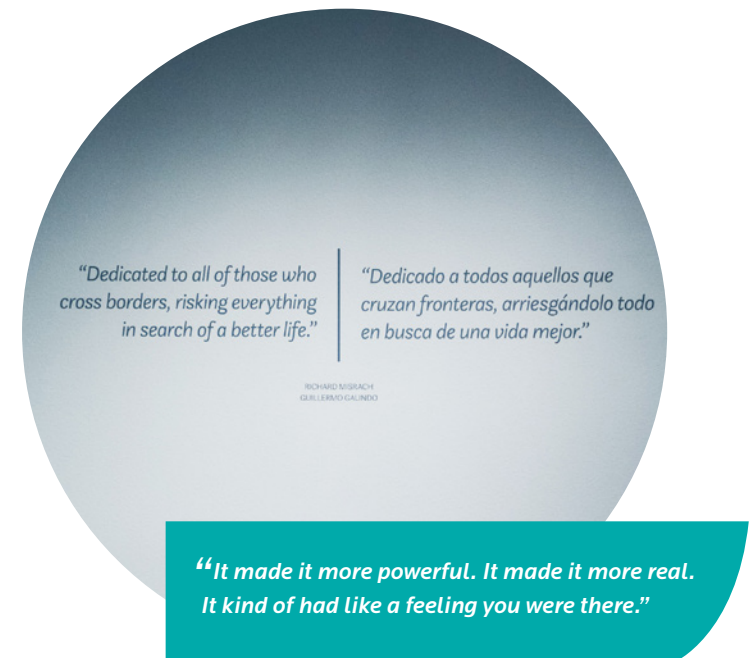
Although the majority did not use the Spanish, individuals responded positively to the translations and felt they were an important part of the exhibition.

A small subset of those interviewed used the Spanish translations as a part of their exhibition experience. For some, these translations were the main way they engaged with the content. For those who used both the Spanish and English labels, they mentioned that having the Spanish made the experience more “real.”

- “Pues me siento más cómoda leyendo esto, como quien dice, mejor.” (Well I felt more comfortable reading it, like some would say, better.)
- “Sí ayuda, porque entiende más uno.” (Yes, it helps because one understands more.)
- “It made it more powerful. It made it more real. It kind of had like a feeling you were there.”
- “I think it made me more sad because it was in Spanish, in the native language of the people traveling here. It’s like I could almost hear them, the actual people. So it made it more real.”

For two individuals, seeing the exhibition in Spanish made them think about bringing back a family member who would use the translated content.

- “Yeah, it’s kind of giving me the idea to bring my mother here who only speaks Spanish and maybe have her come check out the exhibit.”
- “I love this exhibit the most because it was in English and Spanish and I could bring—I came a long time ago when my abuelita [grandmother] was still alive and it was really hard for her to walk around the permanent galleries and even the temporary ones that we’ve come to because she didn’t understand and I had to translate. And so that kind of took away from just being in the moment by yourself. So this was great. I’m bringing my stepdad here.”



## FINDING 4

Those who engaged with the reflection area enjoyed the activities and felt that they added to the exhibition experience.<sup>3</sup>

Guests were approached as they exited the reflection area, giving them the opportunity to read or share a post-it on the Migration Share activity or listen to any of the four videos before being approached for an interview. Half of the interviewed individuals engaged with one or both of the reflection area activities. Additional interview questions prompted guests to share why they did or did not engage with the activities and, if so, what they thought about the area.

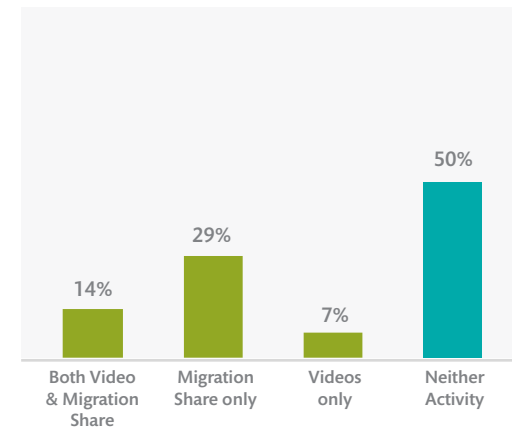
Guests decided not to engage with the activities because they were tired and just wanted to look around or because they did not like technology or germs. The most frequent reason given for not participating in the Migration Share activity was that the individual did not feel like it was applicable.

“ I have no idea what this is. It says share your migration story so I just assumed it was people that had migrated here and they posted. I didn't really think that it applied to me.”

“ I come from a family of immigrants but not very recent. And my mom's family emigrated from England because they had a shipping business and they wanted their shipping business to be better. It's not like they were escaping anything. Or like my grandpa's family moved from Poland just simply because they wanted to move to America but it wasn't to escape something at the time. So I don't feel like I have a moving immigration story to tell and I feel like there's other people's immigration stories who are far more important to tell than mine and I would rather leave the post-its for them.”

“ I saw the share your migration story and I don't have a migration story to share, so that's pretty much why I walked past it.”

### USE OF REFLECTION AREA



<sup>3</sup> 3,226 responses were left on the Migration Share activity, representing 18 different languages. These were analyzed by the Exhibition Interpretation intern, who found that 20% shared a detailed migration story or experience moving, 58% were somewhat pertinent sharing a less detailed post or a politically motivated statement unrelated to migration, and 19% were not pertinent and included a statement or drawing that did not answer the prompt, often a doodle or someone's name. 3% were written in a language other than English.



## FINDING 4, cont.

Those who engaged with the reflection area enjoyed the activities and felt that they added to the exhibition experience.

Guests who watched one or more of the videos liked them and described them as emotional and humanizing.

“It was very very interesting. Because the way it displays them, and they tell their story and they show emotion, so it creates emotion in you. It was very interesting. It has a big impact. Especially with it being at the very end of it all. You’re walking out and you see all this stuff and you see all their faces and you actually get to see some of the faces.

“I thought they were also very powerful. Very humanizing the experience of people who made the crossing.

“It’s a very heartfelt story. And we think of it as the big issue, but it just made me think again of the people piece that’s affected by it.

“I thought it was a nice—since I was sort of already primed to hear some of these stories and hear the voices of some of the people that were being represented visually in there, it was a nice way to finish up, to hear some of the human voices that had been represented.

Most of the guests who engaged with the Migration Share activity did so by reading others’ responses. Only three of those interviewed wrote a response for the wall. Guests who engaged with the Migration Share activity really appreciated reading others’ responses and liked that the activity was at the end of the exhibition.

“The post-its, yeah, because I really loved that. It was a neat idea. It was just like everybody has come through and now they’re thinking about their heritage. And there’s really neat stories about second generation, ‘I’m getting my college degree,’ and all that type of thing. So I like that. I thought it was really neat.

“I did go through and read the sticky notes, the stories on the sticky notes. I think it’s awesome. I was reading stories, not even from Mexico to the US, but there was someone there from Italy and Germany, and then seeing the sticky notes on the other different countries, from their ancestors that had come over, and how they’re living life because of that.



“There were some interesting perspectives. Some of them got a little political, which I understand. Especially the timing of this, it’s like it couldn’t be better to get people to think about it.”

## FINDING 5

Negative feedback, while limited to a few individuals, was given and focused on the political nature of the exhibition and confusion or dislike of some of the objects.

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As highlighted in the previous findings, response to *Border Cantos* was overwhelmingly positive. However, a few individuals expressed dissatisfaction with some objects (5 of 42) or disagreed with the artists' intent of humanizing the border (3 of 42).

Dissatisfaction with the objects was more often related to the sound and sculptures, but also present for the photos.

- “ The music was hard for me to grasp or grasp the concept of the instruments that were made from the things that were found. The souls of that type of thing. That was hard for me to grasp.
- “ It wasn't that I didn't understand the sculptures or the sound sculptures but I wasn't entirely convinced with the methodology of using artifacts to produce sounds. I mean it's interesting but just I wasn't entirely convinced.
- “ It was a lot of pictures of garbage, which I thought was, I guess, evocative but at the end of the day, it was kind of pictures of garbage. ...Toward the end—just discarded clothing and bottles and you know, litter.

Three individuals provided negative feedback saying that they felt that the artists' political viewpoints conflicted with their own. These respondents all referenced how the exhibition highlighted the struggles of border crossing, and how they didn't understand why someone would cross without documentation.

- “ The photographer is very political. He has a point, and his point is “We're not doing the right thing about immigration.”...They should come in under the law, that's it. But his opinion is different than that. I mean, that's what I glean from it, that he has an opinion that they should travel freely, come when they want to, stay as long as they want to, and so forth. That's what I feel. Whether it's true or not, I don't know. [later in the interview] Well I felt some pity for people who are trying that hard to get in without going the right route and I don't understand why they do it that way. That's it.
- “ I would say this is one of those exhibits that's trying to show you life from the other side of the fence. Trying to get you in the other person's shoes and see some of the struggles they have to overcome in doing stuff. It allows you to give them some empathy, which you can. I mean, you feel for these folks as they try to come over, but at the same time it makes you wonder why you don't just do the process correctly. And when you do your due process, it works out. It does take time, but it works out. It's a lot better that way. And that's really all it is, is just do it correctly.
- “ It's kind of a controversial subject. I would expect art to be a little more non-political. ...I would say it's probably trying to take a more personal look at immigration. ...It doesn't bother me to have the exhibition because I think it's fair to see all sides of things but where's the other side to it, too? Showing some of the crime and things that have happened. I know some people personally that get affected by a lot of people that come across the border illegally and put their family at harm ...destroying farms and things like that that are on the border. ... There's a lot of subtleties into it, but again we didn't show all the people that are very successful in those countries that have done it the right--the legal way to do things. So that's where I struggle with it.

## FINDING 6

The topic of the U.S./Mexico border and the fact that the exhibition was free were primary drivers for *Border Cantos* attendance.

In order to understand how visiting *Border Cantos* fit into respondents' overall visit, individuals were asked why they decided to visit *Border Cantos*, when they learned about the exhibition, and whether *Border Cantos* was the main reason driving their museum visit. Responses are listed below and show that whether individuals learned about the exhibition before arriving or after, the primary reasons they decided to attend were because the topic of the U.S./Mexico border was personally relevant or related to current events and that the exhibition was free.

### *I knew about Border Cantos...*

*BEFORE* arriving  
at the Museum

### REASONS GIVEN TO VISIT BORDER CANTOS

- I come to every temporary exhibition

Both *Before and After*  
arriving at the Museum

- Personally Relevant Topic
- Related to Current Events
- It's Free

*AFTER* arriving  
at the Museum

- I was told about it at check-in

### REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES FOR EACH REASON INCLUDE

#### Personally Relevant Topic

“ Well, we actually come here from Little Rock. And my sister's actually a big museum fan so we came. We didn't know that the exhibition was here but it caught our eyes since we're from the Mexican culture. And we just wanted to see how it was portrayed through other people's eyes. And that's what caught my eye about it. That's the reason we went in, just to see how other people saw it.

“ We just happened to come across it and I wanted to see what it was, see how realistic it was actually being there. Living in Arizona I've pretty much experienced the whole border itself, actually working down in Nogales.

#### Related to Current Events

“ Because I had family in town and just wanted to take them to Crystal Bridges. Then when the guy said that there was an exhibit, he told us a little bit about it and it sounded interesting. Especially with what's going on with border stuff today, there's a lot of talk about that.

“ Actually, we read about it in the paper. We have a second home over here in Bentonville. We live in Harrison. We saw it in the paper and thought, hey, that'll be great. We need to go see that. And we can get a better understanding of what's actually happening now.

#### It's Free

“ Well, I got a free ticket. That's number one. And the other thing was that I had read about it on the internet and we were coming here primarily to see the house to start with. So this was just an extra added thing.

“ We walked in and we weren't planning on going to it but it was free. And I didn't even know what it was, so we just walked in. So yeah, we were just coming to visit and we didn't even know what was here.

## FINDING 6

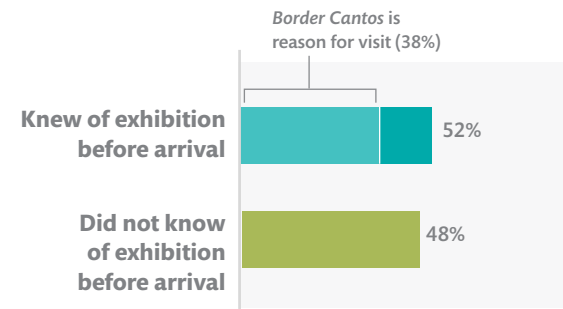
The topic of the U.S./Mexico border and the fact that the exhibition was free were primary drivers for *Border Cantos* attendance.

A little more than half of respondents (22 of 42) knew about the exhibition before they arrived and for most of these (16), it was the main reason driving their visit. The majority of these individuals had heard about *Border Cantos* through Crystal Bridges marketing methods and mentioned various sources including Facebook, the newspaper, NPR, and other Crystal Bridges events. There was also evidence of repeat attendance as two people mentioned they or someone in their group had already seen the exhibition.

“ I follow Crystal Bridges on Facebook, and so that's how I found out about the exhibit.

“ Actually, there's a family tour going on at 1 o'clock, so we were planning to come to that, but then we haven't been to *Border Cantos* yet and I've heard a lot about it just on NPR and different places and wanted to come check it out.

“ Well, I see a lot of the visiting exhibitions that come here, probably two-thirds of them. But I'd actually heard some word on the street that this was a pretty good one, a couple of friends of mine had recommended it, so I wanted to catch it before it ended.





## FINDING 7

Guests felt that this exhibition compared favorably to other temporary exhibitions they have seen at Crystal Bridges in that all have been high quality.

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**When asked how *Border Cantos* compared to other temporary exhibitions at Crystal Bridges, the most prevalent response was favorable. Many commented on the overall high quality of the exhibition. Guests also recognized general differences such as the fact that this was more contemporary or how this exhibition included a sound component.**

- “ Yes, we’ve seen many different shows from different persons of history and different slices of human experience. And I think this is as high a quality or as pertinent as any of those shows.
- “ I would say that it’s on a level with all of them. Every one that we’ve come to, we’ve learned. And it’s been great. I would say it’s just a continuation of really, really good programs. Well worth it.
- “ Extremely well done. It’s a really different subject matter so I don’t know if you can compare it. But as far as how you walk through, conveying the story, inviting the viewer to read and look and learn. It’s on par with everything else we’ve seen.

Almost half of respondents (18 of 42) could not answer how *Border Cantos* compared to prior temporary exhibitions because it was their first time visiting the museum (14) or they had never attended a temporary exhibition (4).

A few individuals (4) commented that *Border Cantos* seemed different than prior Crystal Bridges temporary exhibitions because it was more educational than art-related. For example, when asked how this compares to other temporary exhibitions, one visitor said, “I think it’s apples and oranges because we come for the art of the other and this is just the story.” Comments like these, though few, can be problematic because they conflict with the exhibition team’s goal to highlight art-related content such as the artists’ processes and decisions. However, upon further analysis, the majority of respondents (two-thirds) referenced and recognized the artistic quality of the objects during their interviews.

# DISCUSSION

*Border Cantos* provided many firsts for Crystal Bridges. As seen in the front-end evaluation, we worked hard to include our visitors' voices and perspectives in our own exhibition development processes. This final report reminds us of the value of that work given that attendees' responses to the exhibition were overwhelmingly positive. Now, across the museum, we must think about how we will build on these efforts and not let the good work fade.

In order to move forward, these evaluation findings have been discussed with both the Exhibition Core Team and the Strategy team.

There were three areas in which we especially pushed our own organizational boundaries and discussion focused on the following:

- how we presented a controversial topic;
- our amount of community involvement;
- and our bilingual processes and engagement.

Notes from these discussions are included for internal use.

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Thanks go to all of the museum guests who took time out of their day to share their feedback in both the front-end and summative evaluations, Elizabeth Roman and Connie Hernandez-Moreno for assisting with data collection, and the museum staff members for contributing to discussion of these data and reviewing the report.

## CREDITS

**Cover:** Richard Misrach, *Wall, Jacumba, California*, 2009, pigment print, 80 x 106 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

**Page 4:** Richard Misrach, *Agua #1, near Calexico, California*, 2004 printed 2017, pigment print, 60 x 72 inches. Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas, 2017.10.

**Page 6, 11, 13:** Photography by Stephen Ironside

**Page 8:** Guillermo Galindo, *Micro Orchestra* [detail], 2013–2015, collection of children's items found along the US/Mexico Border, Courtesy of the artist.

**Page 10:** Guillermo Galindo, *Servants and Ladders*, 2015, aluminum ladder with various border artifacts, 120 x 18 inches. Courtesy of the artist.