

Vecinos Distantes / Distant Neighbors documents the migration of Mexicans and Central Americans from Mexico (between Ticati and Nogales) to Arizona USA. Wood spent 5 months in 2008 in these areas collecting and documenting migrant material through photography, film and found objects. Working independently with two charities Humane Borders and No More Deaths.

The US-Mexico border which has a length of 3.169 km is the most frequently crossed international border in the world, with about half a million illegal entries every year. Due to the extensive border patrol around the big border cities the flow of illegal immigrants is diverted into rural mountainous and desert areas, leading to several hundred migrant deaths along the Mexico-US border each year.

This exhibition explores the migrants journey of an uncharted territory between two politically opposite landscapes. Psychological boundaries and survival in no man's land. The migrants are trapped economically at home but also are still often trapped on route and in their circumstances in their final destination. Wood questions the idea of the audience own identity if switched into this environment themselves.

Central in the show is the installation of barbed-wire that Wood placed in the middle of the gallery, like the US border fence but than plated in 24 caret gold referencing the economic dependency between the US and Mexico. Wood's border fence is littered with found objects and mementoes that the migrants left behind in the canyons and washes that build the landscape. These often cherished and essential possessions of ID cards and discarded clothing represent old life whilst the water containers, rucksacks, shoes, playing cards and medication represent a more transitional life.

Wood casted some of these objects in bronze bringing these lost and often discarded objects into a value through the objects form and historical content to become precious mementoes to another group.

On the walls of the gallery Wood shows her new 'Deerskin paintings'. The hides of the Native American Whitetail deers that live along the border of Mexico and USA were historically used by native Indians to paint daily events on from ceremonies to life and death. Wood has used this method to topographically map the border area in gold ink onto a number of skins to document the migrant trails and migrant deaths of the last year

(migrants historically die from dehydration whilst trying to walk the four-day crossing).

Further on the walls Wood shows a serie of photos titled *Mex 2*. Mex 2 is considered an extremely dangerous stretch of road that runs directly along the US/Mexican border between Mexicali and Sonoyta in Mexico.

Extremely Dangerous, not just because of the landscape, but because of the battles that occur along it.

Drug runners from Mexico to the USA and gun-runners from the USA to Mexico notoriously use this road. Many fatal accidents occur over these mountains, where the crashed cars become part of the boulder landscape making it difficult to differentiate between the two. Trapped hundreds of meters below the road the passengers in the cars just perish, as it is impossible to reach them trapped totally by the extreme conditions.

In a documentary film Wood shows her interviews with several migrants, in the border town of Nogales Mexico, who were about to set off to the USA. The interviews question the migrants' intentions of where they are heading to and what they want to find. The film gives an insight into how the migrants just look forward despite the questions of what could happen on the way. Many without maps or compasses in 110 degrees heat.

Wood interviews just a handful of thousands of people making the journey each week.

For more information or for image material please contact:
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Pressrelease

Lucy Wood
'Vecinos Distantes / Distant Neighbors'
22 November 2008 – 17 January 2009