

## Like Soil, We Drift

Visual Project by Devin Kasparian

I created this photo series to communicate an exploration of the current everyday state of the US/Mexico border, in the form of a multimedia photo series. The question I ask, is why we cannot exist like the soil, drifting across manmade borders, and drifting back whenever the wind chooses to bring us there. My photo series explores exactly those boundaries, technologies, and forces which enforce the separation of these two countries, and the people who live amongst it every day. After spending time in Tucson Arizona, as well as Nogales, Mexico, interacting with people and perspectives from various sides of the current migration crisis, I couldn't help but think about the unnatural complexities that have developed within a very broken, very unjust immigration system. As US citizens visiting this area, we were able to drift over the border with ease, in the same way that this soil has since the beginning of time. For migrants from Mexico, it is not so easy – this artificial border splitting what was once one singular land has been the cause of war, murder, endless suffering, and extreme polarized political conflict.

My series explores these subjects, commenting on surveillance, the militarized and highly surveilled state of the border, the people who live amongst the border wall every day, and the idea that walls and boundaries cannot stop the travel of soil, and like ever changing natural land, cannot stop the travel of the people.

My goal is to display a personal perspective on a part of the nation that is often only seen through media and news imagery. This imagery can be exaggerated, manipulated, and can become propaganda to persuade or dissuade audiences in many cases. There are many incredible artists making work revolving around the border, such as street artist JR, Tae Hwang and MR Barnadas, and Ana Teresa Fernández. My work will exist in conversation with these artists' work, in a more observational of the mundane surrounding the US/Mexico border wall, rather than the active installation and public messaging style of artwork.

In this multimedia visual series, I have incorporated soil which has constantly drifted back and forth between the porous fences and walls of the US/Mexico border for centuries into the series as a visual framing device for photos I shot on 35 millimeter film, and as a messaging device regarding the simplicity of soil traveling across the border as opposed to the complexity of humans crossing the border. While spending time in Tucson, Arizona, and Nogales, Mexico, I photographed my surroundings on 35 millimeter film, developed the photos in a lab, and scanned them by hand, printed the photos, rescanned them with the incorporation of this soil from the US and Mexico border, and curated this series.

I hope to serve my audience an unusual perspective on this extremely politically charged area in a visually different format than what we are used to seeing from media outlets, in the form of informed and deliberated artwork. The significance of this project on the field of photography and in the conversation regarding immigration comes from its use of multimedia materials to create striking, unconventional visuals, while employing meaning, specifically emphasizing the comparison between soil's ease of travel across border, and humans' strife of travel across the US/Mexico border.

## Works Cited

<https://medium.com/@cvonhassett/art-at-the-crossroads-artists-addressing-the-u-s-mexico-border-8c708e1659cc>