JEFFREY AARONSON BORDERLAND

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Borderland

The border between the United States and Mexico is a construct beginning at the Pacific, snaking through the southwest desert and ending in the Gulf of Mexico. The borderland, the zone existing near the frontier, is an area of messy vitality by virtue of the collision of cultures living within its boundaries. To live in the borderland is to live at the end of the country, the last place before another place starts.

I created this body of work on the northern side of the border where the human tide has flowed and what is most prevalent is the diversity of people. A great fence is being built to stop the flow, but fences are full of doors when dreams move people. Tribes move freely and recognize no boundary.

I set out to deconstruct the borderland and reveal the hybrid world within. I traveled the border of the United States and Mexico in search of cultural phenomena and found that the border is but an idea, a negotiation between people taking sides. I moved from town to town as an anonymous visitor and met people who wanted to escape, to disappear, managing to find comfort in the harshness of the desert. As I wandered about these small towns I always had a sixth sense of Mexico. Down south, the line is vague with families and traditions straddling both worlds. I rode with the Border Patrol, many of Mexican descent, whom often live conflicted lives as they apprehend the multitudes day in and day out. They have an impossible job in a country based on laws, not on men.

In this work, I pursued the vernacular, the original, creating visual folktales that mirror a collective longing for a home and cultural identity. My intent was to photograph the manifestations of those within and those without.

Jeffrey Aaronson

The Unseen Border

The border has many faces, depending on who is looking at it. To Jeffrey Aaronson, "The border is but an idea ... Separation doesn't work along the frontier when one side has more than the other." Writers have seen it as a scar, as a set of complex interactions, as "an emergent socio-cultural galaxy in its own right," among other descriptions. [|] Certainly it is more multi-faceted than a mere dividing line or even a fence can express. Cooperation, trade, social exchange, daily commutes to work across the border have a long history. In certain communities, only a street divides the two nations. In the 1920s, the fire departments of Calexico and Mexicali responded to calls in either town.² The border is one of the few actual examples of that dubious stereotype of the States, a melting pot – home to intermarriage, cross-border family and social connections, shared festivals and celebrations, and pockets of Native Americans, Mexican Indians, and migrants from across the globe. Yet at the same time it makes room for plenty of communities where either no Latino ever ventures or no Caucasian walks the street, and the constant reminders of social inequality and marginalization are inescapable, as is the continuous presence of government and volunteer forces on the lookout for illegal immigrants and smugglers. Somewhere in the mix – on the fringes and in the middle too – are the illegals and smugglers who risk their lives and freedom trying to come in anyway.

Because the United States, on one side of a line drawn by victories in wars and by treaties, is one of the world's richest countries and Mexico continues to confront a serious problem with poverty and immense disparities between the poor and the rich, and because the Mexican pattern is mirrored in a number of other Latin American countries, immigration has largely flowed northward. After 9/11, this long term immigration flow was re-characterized as a terrorist issue, without any evidence to speak of, and placed under the auspices of the Homeland Security Department – at least when it was not in the hands of vigilantes. A fence was built, made of welded sections of recycled Gulf War landing strips.³ After that, desperate immigrants tried to cross through less well guarded desert areas, and hundreds died in the attempt.

Aaronson traveled along the northern side of the border to see what the anger and hate were about and what was to be seen along the way, in search, he says, "for the vernacular, the original, visual folktales that inform." He found a harsh land that was

home to outsiders who wanted to be invisible. He saw cultures that predated the border and mixed cultures that had sprouted willy-nilly. He moved through a landscape dotted with churches that give comfort and support to the living, who are on intimate terms with hardship, and cemeteries that offer them rest at the end of it all. In his travels Aaronson recorded sad ironies, bright celebrations, off-beat beauties, and the unsettling visual pleasures of menace.

Everywhere he found – or noticed where others might not – some person, decoration, or quixotic situation, some nook or cranny peculiar to that place alone. His photographs dwell in regions that are piquant or sad or tragic, that dress for gaiety or lapse into disuse, that harbor quiet surprises for those of us who only know the border from the headlines and the uproar. He bears witness to the expected vigilantes and security fences, and to flounced dresses, sparkling sequins, hand-painted signs and run-down houses, saints that are not recognized by the church, a bus that crossed the States advertising "Salvation", "Deliverance", and "Religion or Reality". He saw something individual that has outlasted all the legislation, outsmarted some of the border guards and outwitted the odds to make a life.

Borderland is not a crusade, not an invective against racial and cultural prejudice or our government's grim crackdown on the border; but the diary of an explorer armed with camera, curiosity, an unimpeachable sense of aesthetics, and an eye for small moments that tell large stories. What Aaronson found is alternately tough and touching, a mix of poverty and flamboyance, razor wire, shotguns, and ceremony. He was drawn to unpredictable details and anomalies spawned by the border's convoluted makeup. What also caught his attention was a local vernacular; a particular; home-made, hand-made, folk-art riff on a grand tradition or the more omnipresent tradition of advertisements. It may be that the pressure put on these people and their communities by the dominant and repressive culture has produced in response a need to create an identity, to present a token of selfhood, to say, "Look, I am here, here's my personal sign; my group is on this very spot, pay attention to our signifying emblems." It would not be the first time that oppression and privation had been answered by creativity, whether in the great writers in the Soviet Union or the weavers and basket makers in subsistence cultures in South America.

Between the ethnic celebrations, the shared Mexican-Caucasian festivals, and the evidence that people of small means still decorate their lives are images that confirm the broad reach of government and citizen hostility to would-be immigrants. In *Border Patrol, All Terrain Vehicles, Laredo, Texas*, four border guards wearing Darth Vader helmets are poised on ATVs, in a phalanx as rigid as a rank of machines, to capture aliens in a strange orange and green universe. Only a narrow river separates these robotic defenders of the nation from the invaders who presumably lurk somewhere beyond. Still as the figures glued to their vehicles are, their pointed helmets and extended arms imply a roar and rush to come. Around them, the landscape is wispy, speckled, curly, or pliable and softened by light; only the border guards are solid, impenetrable and dark. Trees form a perfect arch above them, gracefully framing their precision vigilance, and dark track marks in the foreground indicate that wheels were driven here before. Directly in their line of sight, riverine grasses have been trampled down; people must have slid down to the river there not long ago, which brought the watchers to their present perch. As if to comment on the mission of these man-machines, the

river and the far side glow an unmechanical green, suggesting that life still exists over there. Farther south in alien land, a church with lighted windows raises its spire into the night.

Then there is a trashed trailer (*Mr.Wagner's Trailer, Naco, Arizona*), an utter shambles made both beautiful and incandescent by Aaronson's deft composition and transfiguring light. A scene of destruction, of cutting and hacking and mayhem, broken lath and torn insulation, presents itself as a study in juxtaposed geometry and jumbled forms, limned in a gleaming spectrum of apricots and tans and bathed in radiance. Once this must have been a fairly classy trailer with built in cabinets and shelves, a choice avocado-colored refrigerator, and a paneled door. Now the bright apricot insulation that once shielded the ceiling leaps down like flames, while brown insulation spills down as if trying to reach the floor, all trying to join the mess savagely scattered below. A pinched rectangle of light that opened up when the door was torn off its hinges leads the way to three thin, vertical rectangles of white light that march across the picture. Seldom has vandalism been so richly aesthetic or trash so seductive, even in this era of trash sculpture. The back story is less beautiful. Some illegals hid in the trailer for a while, and the son of the owner then shredded the place to make it uninhabitable, destroying his family property to keep it all in the family.

When Aaronson trained his camera on the bleak border land, he detected on its face wry frowns or quizzical grins. His framing exactly encapsulates his message, and colors cooperate by sending one too. In a photograph of an abandoned construction site (*Housing Development, Calexico, California*) where only a single wiry bramble has survived and the sky shades off to dreary washes, a little tale of deserted expectations has been left behind. The elements of the composition are precisely spaced out. A radio tower rises in the exact center of the picture, anchoring the composition; a careful read of the photograph suggests this might also be read as a comment on communication. Repetitive verticals of smoke and trees and a phone pole mark the horizon. Closer to us, three incongruous visual images recede on a diagonal at measured distances. One is a truncated romance, no doubt part of an ad; one the construction crew's water truck; and one a billboard that shouts *iEspectacular!* But surely spectacular is out of the question anywhere near this bare field. And the water truck that says "Support Our Troops" cannot support itself, for one tire has gone flat. Nor is romance likely to blossom here, and besides, this one has been split in two and now leans at a precarious angle. Yet in the midst of this field of contradictions, patriotism staunchly raises its head. No one builds or enlists or casts a vote here, but the water truck is a red, white and blue call to the nation; the romance is red, white and blue as well; and the *iEspectacular!* despite its foreign language, carries on the theme in red and white, echoed by the radio tower in a more decorous manner.

Such scenes were new to Aaronson, who makes them new for us with an unusual mix of outsized interest in the significance of small moments, a penchant for paradox, and an underlying affection for the people who make lives along this shaky border and decorate those lives with untutored creativity. Many of his photographs are not merely document, elegy or quiet amusement, observation or exploration, but also tone poems sung by light. A cheap motel is as showered in gold as ever Danae was by Jupiter. A hand-painted food stand glows in the dusk while right next to it the transformers and high-voltage towers of an electric substation glower blackly. A tiny checkpoint in a vast black nowhere shines one brilliant spotlight to counter a sky growing purple. Natural and artificial light, even natural darkness are caught in poetic or dramatic or elegiac moments when the whole world seems momentarily transformed. These are the kinds of minor miracles that photography can perform in the hands of someone who has seen the light – in an uncommon manner and an unexpected way.

The borderland in these photographs is not solely the threat to jobs and lives and nationalism that dominates the headlines and spawns vigilantes, although there is cold confirmation of the enormous risks run for a better life and the harsh response to supposed terrorism. The border Aaronson saw is a place where people have set down stakes. They live, breath, work, make do, pray, mingle, celebrate whenever they can, give up when they cannot do more, die when they must. If that is not the map of the area currently in our minds, these images suggest our GPS has not been functioning up to snuff.

Vicki Goldberg

- "It's not a border, it's a scar": Carlos Fuentes, *The Buried Mirror: Reflections on Spain and the New World* (Boston: Houghton Miflin, 1992), p. 342, quoted by Arthur Ollman, "A Nation of Strangers," in A *Nation of Strangers* (San Diego: Museum of Photographic Arts, 1995) p. 16. "Borders simultaneously divide and unite, repel and attract, separate and integrate": Oscar J. Martinez, *Border People: Life and Society in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1994), p. 25; quoted in Joseph Nevins, *Operation Gatekeeper: The Rise of the "Illegal Alien" and the Making of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 44. "An emergent ... galaxy"" Mike Davis, foreword to Nevins, p. x.
- ² Information from Robert Buffington, "Prohibition in the Borderlands: National Government-Border Community Relations," *Pacific Historical Review* 63, no. 1, 1994, pp.28-31, in Nevins, Operation Gatekeeper, p. 45.
- ³ Justin Akers Chacón, Mike Davis, *No One Is Illegal: Fighting Racism and State Violence on the U.S.-Mexico Border* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2006), p. 2004.

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Borderland: Border Picture Fragments

Night, a street or rather lanes, illuminated by floodlights, in the middle of the desert. Is Jeffrey Aaronson showing us the American-Mexican border in this picture, as the series title *Borderland* would suggest, or is this merely no-man's land? Are the floodlights shining so that a camera can take pictures that will then flicker on a screen on a wall of surveillance monitors, images that Aaronson shows us in another of his photographs?

Nowhere is the abstract, almost arbitrary nature of the border more apparent than in the desert, where neither water nor topography bestows on this international legal fiction a semblance of a natural logic. Nowhere is it more porous and difficult to guard than in the vastness of this no-man's land. The border, supposed guarantor of stability, becomes threateningly unstable here, a source of constant upheaval. This is even more so when two spheres of culture meet at the border, as they do at the American-Mexican border.

Here, Hispanic-Catholic Latin America clashes with Anglo-Protestant North America – or rather the would-be Anglo-Protestant North America, since the demographic development in the states along the border shows a different future on the horizon, an appreciably Hispanic culture. The heated debates of the past years over Spanish as a second national language and the legalization of thousands of illegal immigrants from Mexico show the explosive force of this development. Cheap populist propaganda against illegal immigrants is evidently becoming a political factor, even if states like California, Texas, and New Mexico would become economically dysfunctional without the shadow army of illegal Mexican workers. An expression of this unease is the fence being built along the Mexican border that is supposed to put a stop to illegal immigration as well as to drug smuggling. These upheavals are the background against which Jeffrey Aaronson's series *Borderland* has to be understood, a long-term study of the American side of the American-Mexican border area.

Jeffrey Aaronson approaches this conflict-laden region with a calm and composed view. He eschews the sensational and melodramatic pictures all too familiar from photojournalism, which reduce the unknown to the supposedly familiar through the use of well-known formulas of photography and pathos, which always tell the same story and stir the same emotions, and which circumscribe reality through effect and readability. Often the photojournalist is merely a *terrible simplificateur*, catering to the needs of a media industry that is ever faster, larger, but also shallower, a producer of mere "content," to use an illustrative English expression.

Aaronson assumes a contrary position. He rejects large emotions and grand stories. He does not attempt to convey reality through a single picture. Instead, he moves carefully step by step towards the implications of the photographs, in a manner both accurate and gingerly tentative. He displays an array of exact fragments of daily life, often inconspicuous details that take on meaning and consequence in the context of the photograph and that become charged with meaning in their reciprocal interaction. Rather than instructing the viewer or treating him as a compliant, passive consumer of information, the artist demands that the viewer look at these fragments in an active and thoughtful manner.

A brown, leathery hand rests upon a sequin-covered lapel, a finger sports a ring with an enamel portrait, on the wrist hangs a heavy golden bracelet. The contrast between the hand, revealing a life of hard labor, and the spangle-finery of the costume and the lavish jewelry – undisturbed by pretentions to "good taste" – shows the close juxtaposition of austere living conditions and a deeply Catholic longing for sumptuousness and splendor that characterizes the culture of Mexican immigrants.

An old woman in a skirt, flowery blouse, red cardigan and hat stands in front of an old red bus covered with the words *Jesus Christ, Holy Ghost, Salvation, Deliverance* – a classic example of fundamentalist Protestantism that combines sales hype with the promise of deliverance. Could one imagine a greater contrast to the little Hispanic girl in her Sunday best in front of a richly adorned altar of the Virgin Mary? By comparing such exact observations of the inconspicuous, Aaronson makes palpable the depth of the gulf between the white and Hispanic populations in the border area.

A battered children's swing set, a dilapidated house – in front of it a decorated cross – shredded ceilings and mattresses. Again and again Aaronson shows us photos that tell of desolation, destruction and neglect, to suggest how precarious life is in the borderland. They hint that everything here could be abandoned tomorrow; the towns are merely temporary, like the shabby trailer park with the catchy name "Bit-O-Heaven." The picture of a sad strip of wasteland with a vehicle marked "Support our Troops," in the foreground a broken billboard with an embracing couple still visible, is like an allegory of contemporary America riven by the Iraq war.

Jeffrey Aaronson's photographs play out the contrast between nature and civilization above all in their confident use of color. The brown and red tones of the desert, the blue of the sky, the meager green stand in marked contrast to the glaring colors of civilization, whose artificiality is brought out against the foil of the desert. But the Hispanic-Catholic culture also distinguishes itself significantly from the Anglo-Protestant culture in its masterly and sensuous use of color; in color a substantial cultural difference manifests itself. In Aaronson's photographs, sensory evidence points to analytical differences and renders the world's surface legible. The attraction of these pictures lies in their combination of visual immediacy and intellectual penetration, guaranteeing freshness even in repeated viewing.

Martin Jäggi

Translation from German by Dr. David L. Goldblatt



Miguel's Malverde Ring, Mecca, California | 2007 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7



Robert "L'il Dog" and Freckles, Campo, California | 2007 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7



First Street, Calexico, California | 2007 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7



First Baptist Church, St. David, Arizona | 2007 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7



Lent Crucifix, Elsa, Texas | 2007 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7



Housing Development, Calexico, California | 2007 | archival giclée print | 102 x 135 cm | edition of 7



Don Juan Motel, Calexico, California | 2007 | archival giclée print | 102 x 135 cm | edition of 7



Telephone Booth, El Paso, Texas | 2007 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7



Cow #185, Licon Diary, San Elizario, Texas | 2008 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7


Elotes La Rosita #2, San Elizario, Texas | 2008 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7





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Transmission Tower, Imperial, California | 2007 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7



Parque de los Ninos, San Elizario, Texas | 2008 | archival giclée print | 102 x 135 cm | edition of 7



Minutemen October Muster, Three Points, Arizona | 2007 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7





Border Fence Construction, Douglas, Arizona | 2007 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7





Border Patrol, All Terrain Vehicles, Laredo, Texas | 2008 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7



Control Room, Nogales, Arizona | 2007 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7



Detention Cell, El Paso, Texas | 2008 | archival giclée print | 102 x 135 cm | edition of 7



Welcoming Ceremony Minutemen October Muster, Three Points, Arizona | 2007 | archival giclée print | 135 × 102 cm | edition of 7



Lay-up Site, Three Points, Arizona | 2007 | archival giclée print | 135 × 102 cm | edition of 7





Trailer to Mexico, Nogales, Arizona | 2007 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7



View from Hamburger Hill, Nogales, Arizona | 2007 | archival giclée print | 135 × 102 cm | edition of 7



Borderfest, Hildago, Texas | 2008 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7



L.I.F.E. Queen Runners-Up, Laredo, Texas | 2008 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7


Chelsea's Quinceanos, Los Indios, Texas | 2008 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7



Feast of Guadalupe, Mecca, California | 2007 | archival giclée print | 135 × 102 cm | edition of 7



Green House, Douglas, Arizona | 2007 | archival giclée print | 135 x 102 cm | edition of 7



Saguaro Cactus, Aio Highway, Arizona | 2007 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7



Garage, San Elizario, Texas | 2008 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7



Thomas Carnival, Laredo, Texas | 2007 | archival giclée print | 102 x 135 cm | edition of 7



Bit-o-Heaven Trailer Park, Donna, Texas | 2008 | archival giclée print | 102 x 135 cm | edition of 7





Mr. Wagner's Trailer, Naco, Arizona | 2007 | archival giclée print | 102 x 135 cm | edition of 7



Family Cemetery Old Military Highway, Brownsville, Texas | 2008 | archival giclée print | 135 × 102 cm | edition of 7



Holding Cell, Nogales, Arizona | 2007 | archival giclée print | 102 × 135 cm | edition of 7



Interview with Jolaine Frizzel

- JF: Borders between nations conjure a wide range of connotations and feelings. Can you explain the foundation of your specific idea for the *Borderland* exhibition?
- JA: My borderland is the territory existing directly north of the US-Mexican border; a region of low-rise towns and deserts dotted with saguaro cacti and aluminum trailers. I set out to deconstruct the notion of the border region as merely a barrier between countries. Post-9/11, America's consciousness has been underpinned by fear, a fear that leads to simple answers. In this work I identify small details, vignettes that challenge the viewer to imagine larger truths.

This series reflects my very personal expression of what I call the borderland. The border is an indicator of separation, of differences, of sides, the end of a country, the edge of a place, and knowing the "others" are across the line. These photographs represent the world of the borderland. There are all sorts of ideas about enforcement; culture, hope, identity, fear, and I bring all of these things together to create my borderland, which is a very deliberate way of juxtaposing ideas.

- JF: When I think about the idea of a borderland, I think about the area on both sides of the border, but you chose to focus on the American side. Why did you choose to concentrate your attention in this way?
- JA: While borders by definition divide, creating North and South, them and us, my borderland is examined on the Northern side of the US-Mexican border because the flow has always been north. I sought complexity, a multi-layered, multi-cultural world where cultures collide. My borderland, even though it may imply the borderlands on each side, is asymmetrical. Within my borderland, there are hybrids resulting from the proximity to Mexico and the inevitable influence of the movement of people from the south.

JF: Many of your photos include several interesting individuals. How did you meet these people that you photographed?

JA: The way I met people was determined, but unpredictable. Rather than travel the border for a year without anything more than a map, I selected cultural, social and political occasions. I set out during Easter, Christmas, *Día de los Muertos*, the Feast of Guadalupe, the Minutemen Militia's October Muster, etc ... so that I had a narrative to follow rather than simply the border. When people are involved with an event they are more immersed in the moment and less conscious of outsiders.

One example of a chance meeting, however, was when I met Sister Maria. I had an appointment to visit a ranch that had a home invasion by migrants searching for food and shelter. I thought that I might make a still life of the rancher's house to show this domestic reality of living in the borderland and some of the consequences. As I drove to the ranch, which was located off Bethlehem road, I saw this fantastic bus with the words "Religion or Reality." I stopped, parked and made a little sketch of it. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the curtain move – there appeared to be someone living in the bus. I thought it was abandoned. Sister Maria came to the door and we started talking. My reason for being on Bethlehem road was the rancher; but the photograph became Sister Maria and her "Bus of Joy."

- JF: This project has a documentary feeling. While this is obviously an art project, can you discuss the differences between your work and photojournalism?
- JA: I had an idea and pursued it for more than a year and have taken a very personal, subjective view. There is no such place as the borderland except as I have defined it in this narrative. I am not looking for answers, but assembling artifacts that create an allegory about this time and place.
- JF: Color and light clearly play an important role in your technique and composition. Can you comment on the way you use each in these photos?
- JA: I work in color. My thought is that, if you work in color, color should not be an artifact, but rather, add to the dialogue of a photograph. Specifically with this project, within the borderland there are secondary boundaries, community divisions revealed in the saturated hues of Hispanic culture, contrasted by the muted tones of the Anglo world. With *Elotes La Rosita #2, San Elizario, Texas,* I could see the potential that color would add to the image. When I first passed this little stand, I stopped and made a little sketch in the daytime. But I knew that I could use the palette of dusk and the lights of the food stand to create a kind of stature as well as isolation.

Light is extremely important to me for the kind of pictures that I am making. Many of these photographs are made at dusk as night approaches. That was important. Like the border, it's the edge of things. Twilight is on the edge. To be in an unfamiliar place at dusk as darkness sets in has an uncertainty, which is more intriguing to me.

- JF: Who are your most immediate influences regarding the form and content of your work?
- JA: Among my influences, I would definitely include Robert Frank for his irony, William Eggleston for his use of lush color, and Jeff Wall for his constructed realities. For the cinematic element, I find the themes and ideas in Wim Wenders' films, like *Paris Texas*, a source of inspiration.
- JF: Over the course of your travels to the borderland, what surprised you most?
- JA: I think that one of the most interesting contradictions is the comfort people find in the remote and desolate world of the desert. Many of these people are outsiders, people who don't fit into the urban mainstream. The desert is a place that can soothe their souls, perhaps by birth or the necessity to be away from others.
- JF: You capture many striking objects and people, and you tell a number of stories in your photographs. Which ones would you list among your favorites?
- JA: I love them all. If I had to choose a few, I would probably begin with Sister Maria, Palomas, Arizona, and Robert "Lil Dog" and Freckles, Campo, California because they are very different people that are both part of this place. They are a tribe of sorts, living within the borderland, but of very different perspectives. My borderland is brimming with guns and bibles. Religion, or belief, and intense fear are such counterpoints to each other. Elotes La Rosita #2, San Elizario, Texas is wonderful because of its cultural sensibility and the idea that anything is possible in America. You can start small with a food stand and become something big. The strength of America is that there has always been this hope, and the owner of this café still believes in it and demonstrates this idea, you can find it in the pride written on her sign Elotes La Rosita #2, her second café, her success. I also love Mr. Wagner's Trailer, Naco, Arizona. I love it pictorially. I love the color and the fact that this is this manifestation of fear, misunderstanding and isolation of being "them" and "us" and "us" and "them." On its own, it is pictorially lush and has chaos and structure at the same time. The story behind the photograph is that the trailer was intentionally destroyed so that migrants would not have a refuge. The hate, the misunderstanding, the fear and alienation result in such beauty. It is an installation piece of intended consequences that reveals a lot about my borderland.

Finally, I would have to mention *Holding Cell, Nogales, Arizona*. I was very deliberate with this composition. This is a U.S. Border Patrol enclosure where people are held if they have been captured while illegally crossing the border. When I entered the cell I didn't see a photograph at ground level because the barbed wire filled the frame far above the flag. It didn't work. I climbed on top of a bench so I could frame it with the barbed wire below the edge of the flag, which created a horizon line, a space of opportunity. I felt it needed an opening to say there is hope, that although it might be a contradiction to have this icon of democracy and freedom topped with razor wire, there is still a chance for the idea the flag represents.

September 1,2008

United States-Mexico Border Region



JEFFREY AARONSON

Born in Hollywood, California in 1955 Lives and works in Santa Barbara, USA

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2008	Borderland, Galerie Kashya Hildebrand, Zurich, Switzerland
2007	New Subconscious City, Leonhard Ruethmueller Contemporary Art, Basel, Switzerland
	Maybe It's You, SUNY, Ammerman Campus, New York, USA
	Maybe It's You, SUNY, Riverhaed Campus, New York, USA
2006	Maybe It's You, Gallery Kashya Hildebrand, New York, USA
2005	New Subconscious City, Kashya Hildebrand Gallery, New York, USA
2004	New Subconscious City, Galerie Kashya Hildebrand, Geneva, Switzerland
	Subconscious City, Galerie Kashya Hildebrand, Zurich, Switzerland
2003	Subconscious City, Galerie Kashya Hildebrand, Geneva, Switzerland
	Subconscious City, Gallery Kashya Hildebrand, New York, USA
2002	David Floria Gallery, Aspen, Colorado, USA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2007	Bridge Art Fair, New York, USA
	Art Miami 07, Galerie Kashya Hildebrand, Zurich, Switzerland
2005	Galerie Kashya Hildebrand, Gstaad, Switzerland
	New Subconscious City, Galerie Michael W. Schmalfuss, Marburg, Germany
2004	Galerie Kashya Hildebrand, Geneva, Switzerland
	Galerie Kashya Hildebrand, Zurich, Switzerland
2002	Grand Central Station, New York, USA
1998	Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, USA
1991	10,000 Eyes, International Center of Photography

1986 The Aspen Annual Juried Show, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, USA

AWARDS

- 2002 Graphis; American Photography
- 1997 Graphis
- 1996 Communication Arts
- 1993 Communication Arts

PRESS

Hart, Russell. "Up Close and Personal", American Photo, January/February 2007.
Mathews-Berenson, Margaret. "Jeffrey Aaronson". Subconscious City, Gallery Kashya Hildebrand, New York, 2003.
Cohen, David Elliot and Rick Smolan. America 24/7, Dorling Kindersley, 2003.
Tejada-Flores, Lito. "Aspen All at Once", Aspen Magazine, Holiday 2002-2003.
Okenshorn, Stewart. "Reflections on New York and Aspen", Aspen Times Weekly, November 30 & December 1, 2002.

More articles have appeared in the following magazines and newspapers: Photo District News, Denver Post, Vis à Vis, Sojourner, Aspen Magazine, Aspen Times, NBC Television, CBS Television

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