

The Things They Leave Behind: Placed-and-Found Objects, Poetics, and Cultural Memory in the U.S.–Mexico Borderlands



Residents of the region just north of the U.S.–Mexico border experience migration and smuggling activities through constantly changing ‘found objects’ on the landscape where they live and work—a pair of shoes neatly arranged on a trail; a cross hung from a tree; a can of food balanced on a rock. Consideration of some found objects as *placed objects*, set down with care by travelers unseen and unmet, illuminates how the objects uniquely inform the perceptions of the residents who find them. The effects of these findings confound simple associations of found items with trash, of migrants with threats, and of a border wall with hopelessness. Residents instead forge a sophisticated cultural memory of place in a region inhabited differently by day than by night, where tragedy, beauty, danger, grace and hope fuse in unexpected ways.



*A presentation and community discussion led by cultural anthropologist David Seibert [Ph.D. University of Arizona 2013]

Patagonia Public Library
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