

apexart

2013-14 Franchise Proposal by
crystal am nelson
Franchise location: Marfa, Texas

SUBMISSION:

Marfa, a city whose allure in the art world extends far beyond those who have actually visited, stands alone, geographically and culturally. Located in the Chihuahuan Desert/Big Bend region of Texas, it is a six-hour drive from Austin and three hours from the nearest international airport, in El Paso. The town's biggest employers are national law enforcement agencies, including the Drug Enforcement Agency and the U.S. Border Patrol, and more than twenty of the best paying jobs in Marfa are with the U.S. Air Force's aerostat surveillance program. Marfa's next biggest revenue stream is art tourism, which is serious business despite its remote location and scarce amenities. However, in the public imagination, Marfa is the city Donald Judd built with the backing of the Dia Foundation and a vision of anarchist minimalist utopia.

Certainly this image of the lone artist-cum-pioneer, taming the Wild West with aesthetics is a striking and romantic one, aligned with the aura and history of Far West Texas. But, long before Judd arrived, long before the town was named Marfa, people from diverse backgrounds—Apache, Comanche, Spaniards, Mexicans, Tejanos, and Anglo-American pioneering cowboys—built communities on the arid landscape and laid the foundation for Marfa's unique cultural enchantments. Unfortunately, in spite of its importance, Judd's legacy has obscured much of this history and what makes Marfa such a compelling cultural capital. How does one begin to reconcile these seemingly disparate and diametrically opposed community elements that are simultaneously autonomous from and interdependent on each other? What happens when contact turns to conflict? Or when divergence transforms into convergence?

Heterotopia attempts to respond to these concerns by redrawing Marfa's cultural map by illuminating its pre-Judd history, highlighting under-recognized subjectivities, and bringing to the fore the unsung contemporary cultural production happening on the periphery of the city's blue-chip art scene. The strategy is to exhibit the region's traditional and vernacular arts alongside global-conceptual artwork in order to underscore their proximities. At Heterotopia's core is the traditional art of the surviving Jumano-Apache Indians, traditional Chicano art, and cowboy art, a genre that celebrates the traditional arts and lifestyle in cowboy culture of the American West. The work of more academic artists will address issues related to the exhibition's meta-concept of contact zones and their ever-accumulating pasts. Since the Chinati Foundation has centralized the art scene to its gated property, this exhibition will decentralize the viewing experience by using multiple venues throughout the city, and employing a semi-guided walking tour that leverages Marfa's smallness to introduce visitors to less-trafficked locations. A commissioned audio file will be provided to assist them in physically and conceptually navigating the sites. Additionally we will program screenings and lectures about Marfa's unseen scenes and the myths circulating its mainstream identity.

Invited participants will include Anna Jaquez, Mattie Matthieu, Enrique Madrid, Maria Almeida Natividad, Guillermo Gomez-Peña, Wayne Baize, Jason Kolker, Lineaus Lorette, C.M. Mayo, the Jumano-Apache quilters, Lonn Taylor, Travis Dehart, Mark Glover, the Marfa Public Library, David Beebe, the Crowley shade structure; El Cosmico; and Marfa Book Company.