

**MIGRANT SOUNDS. SONIC GHOSTS ON THE  
MIGRATORY ROUTE OF LA BESTIA.**



Alvaro Díaz-Rodríguez  
Sound artist

"What is a ghost?

A terrible event destined to repeat itself again  
and again,  
a moment of pain, perhaps something dead that  
sometimes still feels alive,  
a feeling suspended in time,  
like a blurry photograph, like an insect trapped in  
amber.  
A ghost, that's me."

El espinazo del diablo (2001)

Guillermo Del Toro

# Exhibition proposal

The sound installation exhibition will consist of ten artworks that will be created using the collected audio and visual material from journeys along the route of the La Bestia train. These sound installations, or sculptures, seek to present the viewer with a superficially known reality in a more immersive and intimate way. They immerse the viewer in a fluctuation of sound and visual stimuli, confronting them with themselves.

Through these series, you will see and hear the future of the ghosts that accompany migrants during their journey, as well as the different soundscapes that emerge at various points along their path. Within these sound installations, we will be able to listen to a chorus of voices derived from testimonials, voices with diverse accents, aspirations, and fears. These voices will be diffused through multiple speakers, evoking our own ghosts and creating empathy through the ambient sound environment thus created.

These installations will also serve as a sound and visual map through the ten presented propositions, which bear witness to the different facets and conditions that a migrant encounters throughout their journey.

**Exhibition works**

# Ghost Postcards (2023)

**Seleccionada en la BienalSur 2025**

## Technical Specifications:

- Size: 9.84 x 9.84 x 37.87 inches

## Installation:

The exhibition proposes using one display pedestal to set up the postcard stand (29 x 10 x 10 inches).

## Description:

Series of six postcards integrated into the soundscape of the place where the image was taken (accessible via a QR code). The messages on the postcards are full of hope; they are fictitious texts similar to those they send to their family to tell them that all is well on their journey and that they should not worry.

The Ghost Postcards exhibition invites visitors to explore the hidden stories and forgotten memories captured in a collection of ethereal postcards. These postcards, filled with nostalgia and mystery, serve as windows into the past, evoking a sense of spectral presence and intrigue.

Each postcard unveils a different location or moment in time, presenting a glimpse into the lives and experiences of individuals who once inhabited these spaces. Through faded images, cryptic messages, and fragments of personal stories, the postcards create a haunting narrative that transcends time.

Visitors will journey through a series of postcard displays, each carefully curated to evoke a specific atmosphere and era. The exhibition encourages contemplation and reflection, inviting viewers to piece together the fragmented narratives and imagine the ghosts of the past who may still wander these places.

Ghost Postcards offer a unique and immersive experience, blurring the boundaries between reality and imagination and inviting visitors to connect with the spectral essence of forgotten lives.



# Ghost Postcards

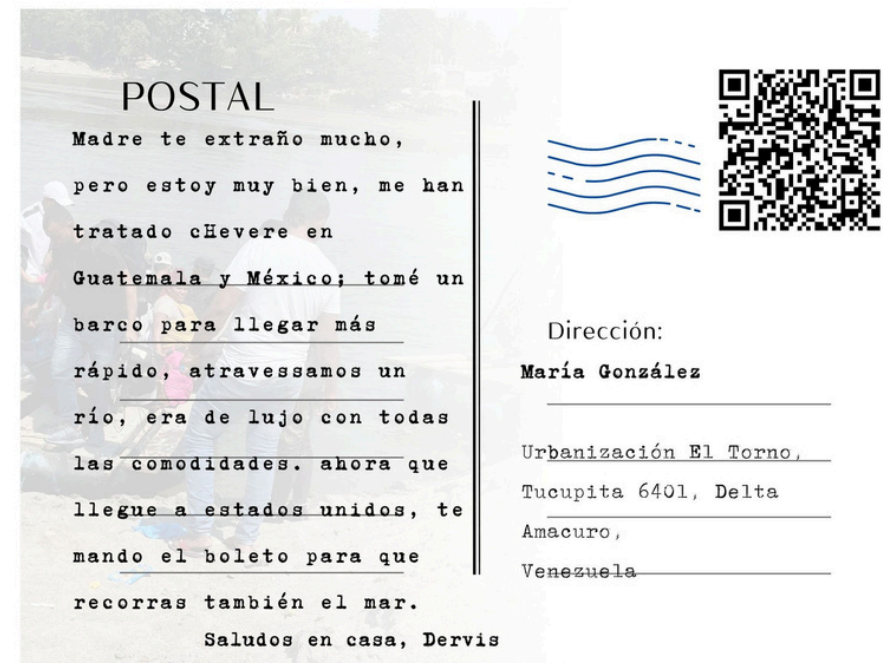


R Í O S U C H I A T E , C H I A P A S

Mom, I miss you so much, but don't worry, I'm doing well. I've been treated kindly in Guatemala and Mexico. I took a boat to speed up the journey, and we crossed a river. It was really comfortable and luxurious. Now that I'm arriving in the United States, I'm sending you the ticket so that you can also travel by sea.

Greetings to everyone,  
Dervis

[https://soundcloud.com/diazalvaro/postalriosuchiate?in=diazalvaro/sets/postales-fantasmas&si=55e57928704944ad94c02c9bc9f3ed23&utm\\_source=clipboard&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=social\\_sharing](https://soundcloud.com/diazalvaro/postalriosuchiate?in=diazalvaro/sets/postales-fantasmas&si=55e57928704944ad94c02c9bc9f3ed23&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)





## TAPACHULA, CHIAPAS

Sister,

today I was granted permission to travel throughout Mexico, it was easy. The immigration officers are very kind and efficient; they quickly gave me permission. They provided free water and food there to make the wait easier. Now I'll be heading to Arriaga to catch the train.

Greetings to everyone at home, Dervis.

[https://soundcloud.com/diazalvaro/postal-tapachula1?in=diazalvaro/sets/postales-fantasmas&si=220055b29f424bed9382571dbb4a702b&utm\\_source=clipboard&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=social\\_sharing](https://soundcloud.com/diazalvaro/postal-tapachula1?in=diazalvaro/sets/postales-fantasmas&si=220055b29f424bed9382571dbb4a702b&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)

## POSTAL

HErmana, hoy me dieron el  
permiso para viajar por  
todo México, fue fácil. Los  
de migración son muy  
amables, y eficientes, me  
dieron el permiso muy  
rápido, ahí tenían agua y  
comida gratis, para que  
fuera ligera la espera.  
ahora me moveré para  
Arriaga a tomar el tren.  
Saludos en casa, Dervis



Dirección:

AnGie Rodríguez González  
Urbanización El Torno,  
Tucupita 6401, Delta Amacuro,  
Venezuela



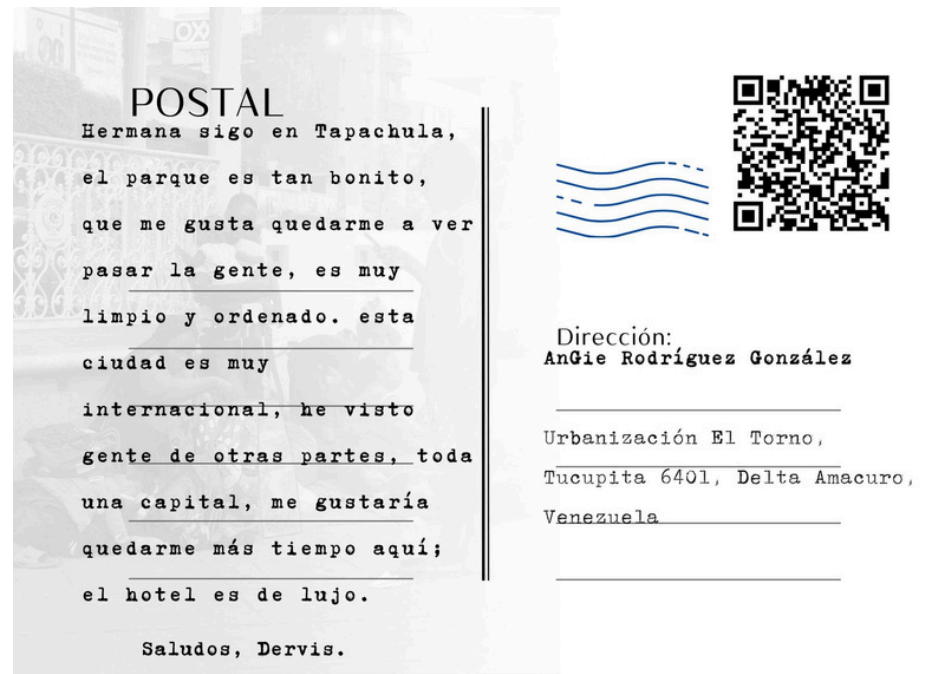
## TAPACHULA, CHIAPAS

Sister,

I'm still in Tapachula. The park here is so beautiful that I enjoy watching people pass by. It's very clean and organized. This city is quite international; I've seen people from other places, it's like a mini capital. I would like to stay here longer; the hotel is luxurious.

Greetings, Dervis

[https://soundcloud.com/diazalvaro/postaltapachula2?in=diazalvaro/sets/postales-fantasmas&si=78Od78b1381b4bcaa7b8614f8475453c&utm\\_source=clipboard&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=social\\_sharing](https://soundcloud.com/diazalvaro/postaltapachula2?in=diazalvaro/sets/postales-fantasmas&si=78Od78b1381b4bcaa7b8614f8475453c&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)





## ARRIAGA, CHIAPAS

Dear sister,

Today, I arrived in a beautiful city called Arriaga, located in the state of Chiapas. I have made many friends, and we will be traveling together.

Everything is going wonderfully well, and I wish you were here with me. Today, the train was not running, so I will be heading to Coatzacoalcos. I will write to you from there.

Give my warm regards to our mother.

With affection,  
Dervis

[https://soundcloud.com/diazalvaro/postalarriaga?in=diazalvaro/sets/postales-fantasmas&si=a28f877cee624dfa89abbb1984927c1f&utm\\_source=clipboard&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=social\\_sharing](https://soundcloud.com/diazalvaro/postalarriaga?in=diazalvaro/sets/postales-fantasmas&si=a28f877cee624dfa89abbb1984927c1f&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)

## POSTAL

Hermana, hoy llegué a una  
ciudad hermosa, se llama  
Arriaga, está en Chiapas.  
Conocí a muchos amigos, y  
~~nos iremos juntos. todo va~~  
~~de maravilla, ojalá~~  
estuvieras aquí. hoy no  
trabajó el tren, así que me  
~~iré a Coatzacoalcos, de ahí~~  
te escribo.  
Saludos a mi madre, con cariño,  
Dervis



Dirección:

AnGie Rodríguez González

Urbanización El Torno,

Tucupita 6401, Delta

Amacuro,

Venezuela



## COATZACOALCOS, VERACRUZ

Mother,

I'm at the train station; it's very large, comfortable, and beautiful. The train is delayed, but from where I'm seated, I can see the sky.

Greetings, your son Dervis

[https://soundcloud.com/diazalvaro/postal-coatzacoalcos-estacion?  
in=diazalvaro/sets/postales-](https://soundcloud.com/diazalvaro/postal-coatzacoalcos-estacion?in=diazalvaro/sets/postales-fantasmas&si=281d01cc084e4c98ad5f2c7b1eba3bc0&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)

[fantasmas&si=281d01cc084e4c98ad5f2c7b1eba3bc0&utm\\_source=clipboard&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=social\\_sharing](https://soundcloud.com/diazalvaro/postal-coatzacoalcos-estacion?in=diazalvaro/sets/postales-fantasmas&si=281d01cc084e4c98ad5f2c7b1eba3bc0&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)

## POSTAL

Madre, estoy en la estación  
del tren; la estación es  
muy grande, cómoda y  
bonita, el tren viene  
retrasado, pero desde donde  
estoy sentado se puede ver  
el cielo.

Saludos ,tu hijo Dervis.



Dirección:  
María González

Urbanización El Torno,  
Tucupita 6401, Delta Amacuro,  
Venezuela



COATZACOALCOS, VERACRUZ

Dear Mother,

the train has finally departed; it's very comfortable and safe. It will take me straight to the north. I'm sharing a cabin with three friendly people. I'll write to you when I'm in the United States.

Greetings to everyone, your son Dervis

[https://soundcloud.com/diazalvaro/postalcoatzacoalcos2?](https://soundcloud.com/diazalvaro/postalcoatzacoalcos2?in=diazalvaro/sets/postales-fantasmas&si=144924173b004f5c8efcb54e5df9ff45&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)

[in=diazalvaro/sets/postales-](https://soundcloud.com/diazalvaro/postalcoatzacoalcos2?in=diazalvaro/sets/postales-fantasmas&si=144924173b004f5c8efcb54e5df9ff45&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)

[fantasmas&si=144924173b004f5c8efcb54e5df9ff45&utm\\_source=clipboard&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=social\\_sharing](https://soundcloud.com/diazalvaro/postalcoatzacoalcos2?in=diazalvaro/sets/postales-fantasmas&si=144924173b004f5c8efcb54e5df9ff45&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)

## POSTAL

Querida Madre, finalmente  
ha salido el tren, es muy  
cómodo y seguro, me  
llevará directo al norte;  
comparto camarote con tres  
amables personas. te  
escribo en cuanto esté en  
estados unidos.

Saludos atodos, tu hijo DeRvis.



Dirección:

**María González**

Urbanización El Terno,

Tucupita 6401, Delta

Amacuro,

Venezuela



UCSD: Park and market, San Diego, Ca. USA



# Summer afternoon in a migrant camp in Tijuana (2022)

The sound installation recreates an afternoon inside the migrant refugee camp in Tijuana, where over 500 South American refugees have established a small town just meters away from the US border, waiting day by day for it to open. The sound installation consists of six to eight small camping tents, each housing a speaker that plays recordings compiled over the course of a year from the refugee camp. Through these recordings, visitors can hear the sounds of children playing, food being sold, migrants receiving clothing and toys, creating a polyphony of hopeful, sad, and realistic sounds.

## Technical Specifications:

- Six camping tents: 2.19 meters x 1.49 meters each.
- Electrical connection: Ensure access to a power source for the speakers.
- Six to eight active speakers.
- Outdoor installation: The installation can be set up outdoors, so consider weatherproofing the equipment and ensuring stability.

Sound Installation Space: 8 meters x 6 meters.



Centro Cultural Los Pinos. Ciudad de México, Mexico., October 2022



Camp de migrants à Tijuana

<https://open.spotify.com/intl-es/track/5B8hJvn1ILOXwn1HsVwVB3?si=15191a1f13d04599>



Gnracion Cultural Center. Braga, Portugal. June 2022

# Trapped voices (2024)

Five-channel sound installation where we can hear the testimonies of migrants in 360° sound, telling us in counterpoint why they are fleeing their country. These voices are trapped in the sound of the train. The spectator will be able to enter inside the five suspended panels and listen to the voices from their interior.

Technical specifications:

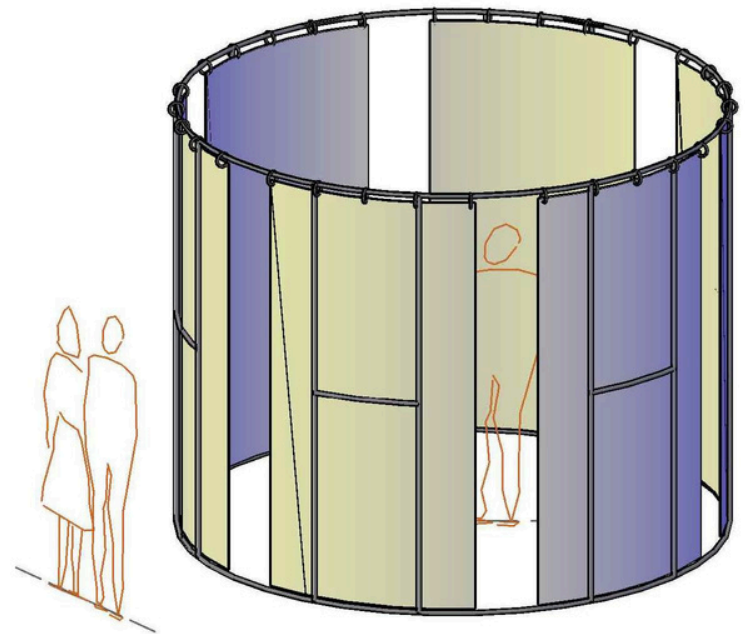
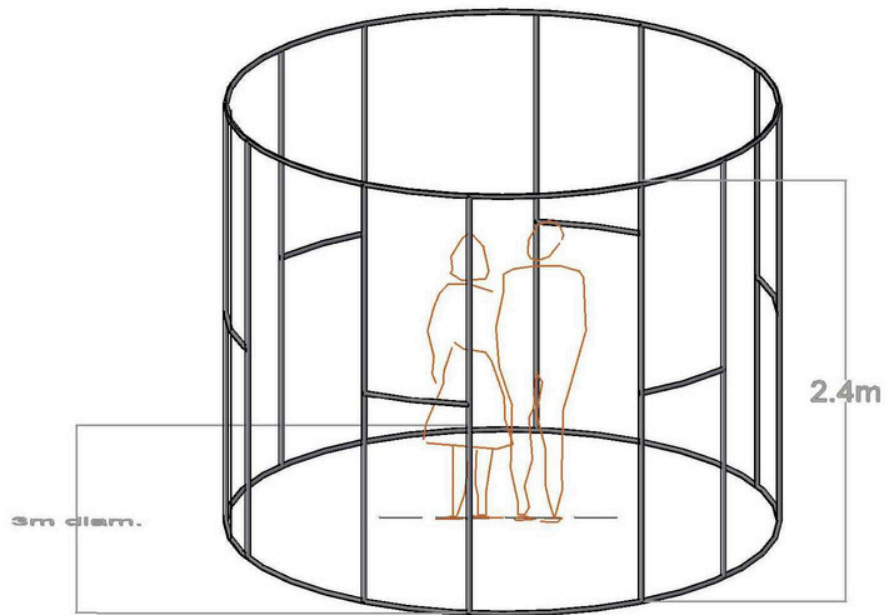
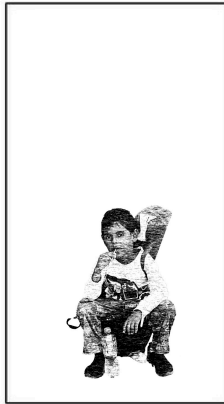
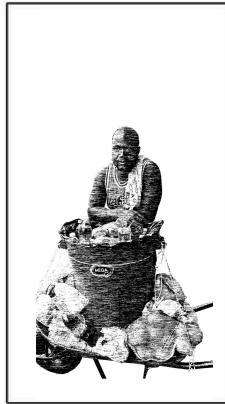
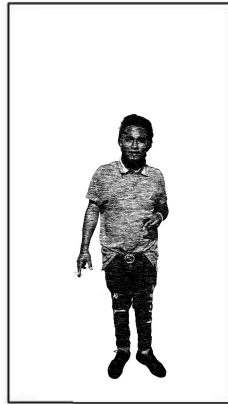
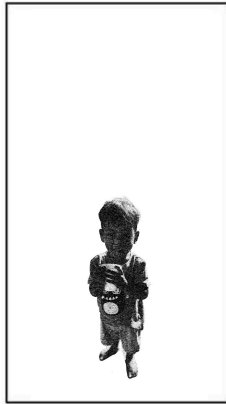
- Dimensions of the work: 3 meters in height with a circumference of 3 meters in diameter.
- Two 110V electrical outlets.











[https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/u69mgp2w1g8eqwr6c1tua/voces-atrapadas-moviles.mp4?  
rlkey=54sh62r6ftappfjuh8e042iy&st=pjdu0ddy&dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/u69mgp2w1g8eqwr6c1tua/voces-atrapadas-moviles.mp4?rlkey=54sh62r6ftappfjuh8e042iy&st=pjdu0ddy&dl=0)

**Video recorded during the presentation at ENVZN24, San Diego, Ca. USA.**

# Las patronas (2024)

Las Patronas are a group of women who provide food and water to migrants mounted on the train by throwing them while La Bestia is in motion. This sound installation pays tribute to their selfless work that they have been doing day after day for more than twenty-five years. The sound installation consists of 25 loudspeakers placed inside supermarket plastic bags. Each speaker broadcasts the sound of the train passing, the testimonies of Las Patronas members, and the act of throwing food at them while the train is running. These bags are suspended from the ceiling and in front is projected a video showing them in action. The installation also includes plastic water bottles with small blue lights inside.

Technical specifications :

- video projector
  - Video player
  - Rack for hanging bags and water bottles from the ceiling
  - Electrical outlets for lighting.
- 
- A 6 x 4 meter darkroom.



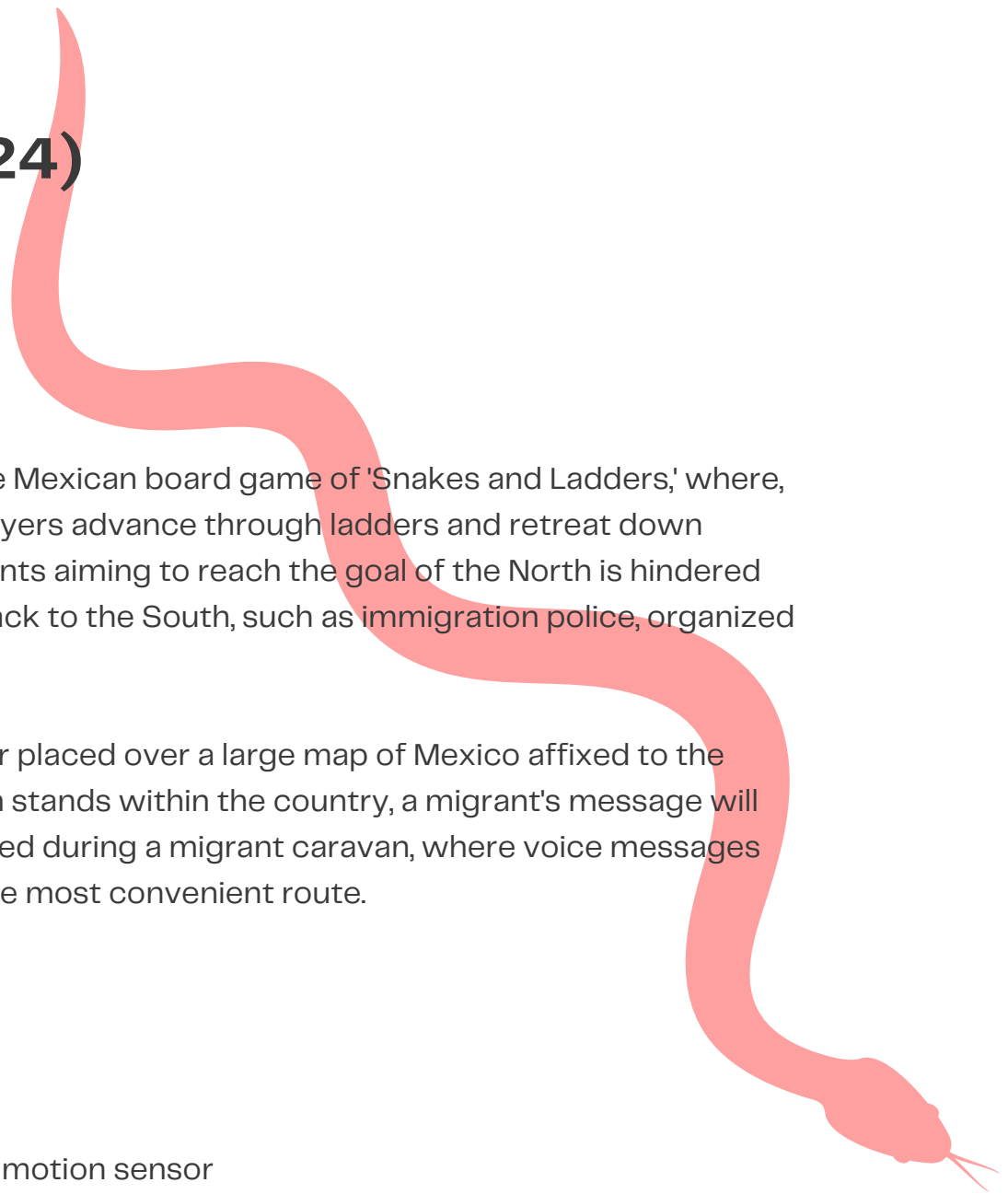
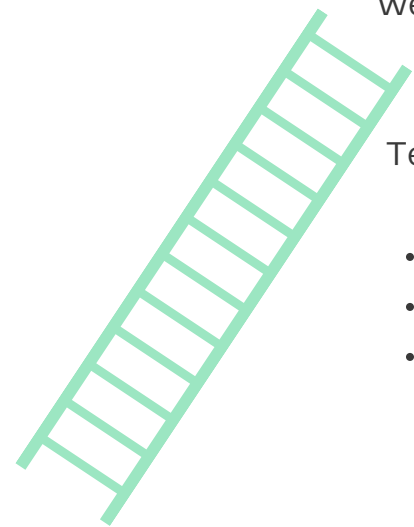
# Snakes and Ladders (2024)

This sound installation is based on the Mexican board game of 'Snakes and Ladders,' where, based on the result of rolling a die, players advance through ladders and retreat down snakes. Similarly, the journey of migrants aiming to reach the goal of the North is hindered by various 'snakes' that force them back to the South, such as immigration police, organized crime, lack of maps, etc.

The artwork contains a motion sensor placed over a large map of Mexico affixed to the floor. Depending on where the person stands within the country, a migrant's message will be played. All recordings were gathered during a migrant caravan, where voice messages were sent to provide directions for the most convenient route.

Technical specifications :

- Electrical outlets for lighting.
- A base on the ceiling to install the motion sensor
- A 6 x 4 meter space.



Many of them haven't passed migration yet, keep it up

I'm sending you information from a friend who is surrendering in Mexicali. Pay attention to the taxis because they're delivering people to Mexican immigration. Don't trust easily. Make sure it's a legal taxi. Be vigilant so that you can reach the destination you desire. Taxis are delivering people, and they're being returned

I'm leaving the stone path, going down the mountain. I've already gone through the immigration checkpoint; I'm down below

On the right side, where everything is burned, the little trees...

Good evening, Dad, I'm already at the park.

Up to the checkpoint in Arriaga because she's already heading there. Right now, we're passing through immigration. We're about to take a van to try to get to Tonalá.

If they catch you, say you're Peruvian.

Be careful with those who are coming, be careful. If you see immigration, don't go into the woods. They are robbing; they just robbed our companions

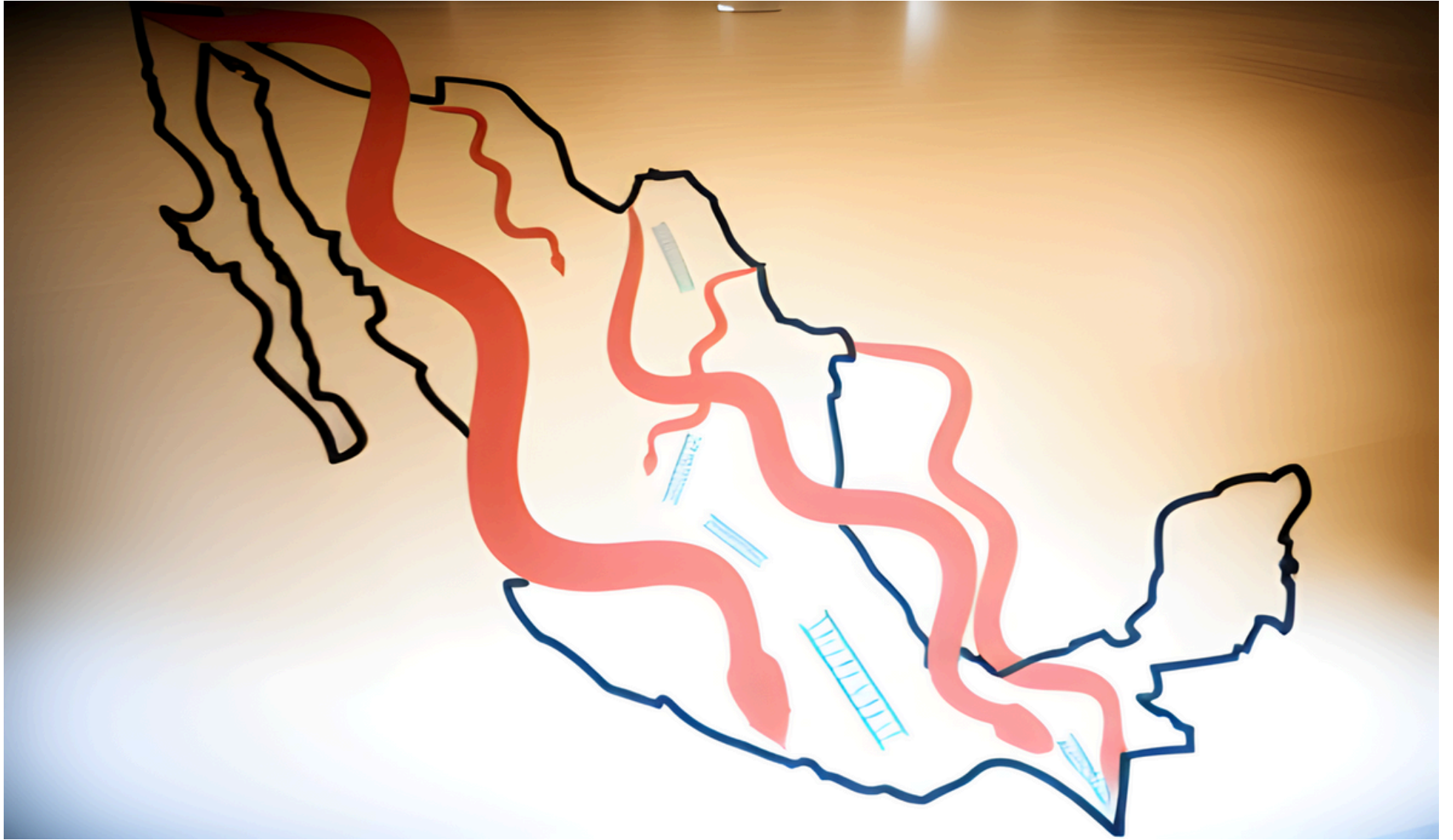
I'm right by a sign that says Oaxaca, Tuxtla Gutierrez, past the gas station.

Tell me clearly, to the right or to the left?

Strength, strength, my son. I am worried about you. Stay strong, with faith you must get out of there. Keep going, keep going. I'm heading to the park, son. My battery is low, and I have nowhere to charge. I'll try to find a migrant, because I'm alone. I'll figure out what to do. I'm worried about you. Pray to God for strength. Move forward, move forward. Have faith along with everyone there

I'm running from one side to another; I almost got caught by immigration. It's tough here too





AUDIO

# Ghosts under a bridge (2024)

One of the departure points for the La Bestia train is in Irapuato. Under a bridge, people can wait for the northbound train. In August 2023, the train took several days to arrive. Between 150 to 200 people would arrive daily, and by the end of the week, there were more than a thousand migrants waiting for the train.

This sound installation consists of 24 speakers hanging from the ceiling within an empty room. The daily soundscape under the bridge gradually fills the room, creating an auditory saturation effect.

Technical specifications:

- An empty room.
- Weight: 20 kg.
- The possibility of hanging a lightweight structure; it must be suspended from the ceiling.
- Four 110V electrical outlets.

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# Migrant Nature (2024)

At one of the final points of the migrant route on "La Bestia" is Ciudad Juárez. There, each traveler tries to cross the border in the presence of the U.S. National Guard. The mix of sounds and landscape is contrasting: while the birds, wind, and river can be heard, the cry of a little girl facing the guard can also be heard, with her father beside her, his back bloodied from crossing the barbed wire fence. On the other side, a family with several children tries to negotiate with the U.S. officer to let them pass.

In this installation, three videos and images are projected, showing nature and migrants interacting with the U.S. National Guard. Surrounding the viewer are four speakers that create the soundscape of the moment.

Technical specifications:

- 3 video projectors
- 4 active speakers





Chamber version  
Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Alemania.  
1 de octubre de 2024



[https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/zv2l8cy6mzpzk8ew4jzxx/Naturaleza-migrante-web.mp4?  
rlkey=t9iqblbqnjfq3bk28ny98kgig&st=ovwofowz&dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/zv2l8cy6mzpzk8ew4jzxx/Naturaleza-migrante-web.mp4?rlkey=t9iqblbqnjfq3bk28ny98kgig&st=ovwofowz&dl=0)

**Video recorded during the presentation at Akademie der Künste,  
Berlin, Germany.**

# Phantom Childhood (2024)

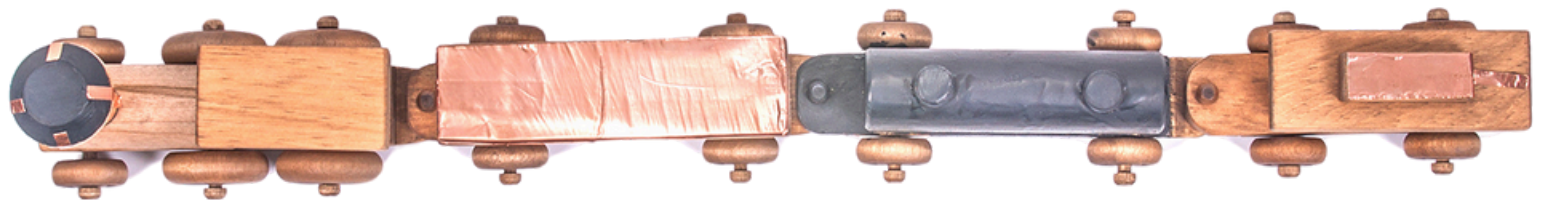
The most vulnerable and fragile individuals on this journey are the children, who travel thousands of kilometers—some accompanied by their parents, while others complete the journey entirely alone. Their gaze holds a blend of tenderness and innocence, gradually fading with every mile traveled.

This sound installation is interactive, featuring an interactive toy train connected to a touch-sensitive conductor board. Touching each of the train cars plays back the voices of these children, capturing the journey they undertake in search of a better life.

Technical specifications:

- Small table or exhibition cube.
- Electric outlet





**the artist**



# Alvaro Díaz –Rodriguez

<https://diazalvaro.art/>

Musicologist, sound recorder, and sound artist. They work as a full-time researcher and professor at the Autonomous University of Baja California (UABC) in Mexico. Their research and artistic works focus on sound studies, borders and migration, interdisciplinary art, and technology-supported soundscapes. They obtained a Ph.D. in Musicology from the Argentine Catholic University. In addition to their scholarly work, they also create sound installations and serve as the musical director of the UABC Contemporary Music Ensemble.

He has received several awards and grants, including the Sound of the Year Awards 2021 from the British Library, the Ecos Sonoros 2021 Prize from the Ministry of Culture (Government of Mexico), selection at the Latin American Art Triennial in New York in 2022, and a Special Mention in the international 60 Second Radio 2021 competition (Canada). They have also been awarded the National Fund for Culture and the Arts (FONCA) grant, the distinction of Meritorious Citizen of the city of Ensenada, and the Academic Merit from UABC. They are a member of the National Research System, Level I of CONACYT, and the National System of Art Creators 2023–2025.

He has presented his work in Mexico, the United States, the Netherlands, France, Spain, Belgium, Austria, England, Italy, China, Portugal, Switzerland, Canada, Cuba, and Argentina. He has also published several articles in specialized journals and book chapters on art, music, and contemporary aesthetics. His recordings of Gray Whale sounds are part of the exhibition "Gray Whale; Marine Migrants" at the Cultural Center of Tijuana and are the sounds accompanying augmented reality on the 500-peso banknotes issued by the Bank of Mexico.

As a sound artist, he has focused on the connection between the soundscape and the social contexts of its inhabitants in order to create a portrait of society through sound.



sculpture sonore:  
Maija Awi (2021)  
Triennale d'art latino-américain de New York 2022.



<https://diazalvaro.art/2021/10/14/maija-awi-la-creacion/>

# Awards

2020-2023

National System of Art Creators 2023–2025, Secretaría de Cultura (National System of Art Creators, 2023–2025, Ministry of Culture)

Sound of the Year Award, Disappearing Sound category in partnership with the British Library, 2022

Selected for the Latin American Art Triennial in New York, 2022

Ecos Sonoros Prize, Secretaría de Cultura, Centro Nacional de las Artes (Sonorous Echoes Prize, Ministry of Culture, National Center for the Arts), 2021

Special Mention in the International 60 Second Radio Competition, 2021

Grant for Projects for Children and Youth (2019) from the System of Support for Creation and Cultural Projects (FONCA), Secretaría de Cultura · FONCA (Ministry of Culture, FONCA), 2020

Selected for O SILÊNCIO É UM OCEANO DE SONS (Silence is an Ocean of Sounds) by ARTE ESTRANHA (Brazil), 2020

Selected for the Festival "La Escucha Errante" organized by KLEM Laboratorio in Bilbao, 2020



Radio art:  
Espejos fronterizos / Border Mirrors (2021).  
Mention Spéciale · Special Mention en Le concours international 60  
Secondes Radio 2021.

<https://diazalvaro.art/2021/06/11/espejos-fronterizos-border-mirrors/>



This project is supported by the  
National System of Art Creators,  
Ministry of Culture of Mexico



**CULTURA**  
SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA



SISTEMA DE APOYOS  
A LA CREACIÓN Y  
PROYECTOS CULTURALES



**ALVARO DIAZ-RODRIGUEZ**

Mexico, 2024