

MASS MoCA

Welcome to
the exhibition!

ERRE

THEM AND US /
ELLOS Y NOSOTROS

Virtual Tour Slideshow: Grades 7–12



How to use this presentation:

- Everything that is **pink** is interactive.
- To type your responses, stay in “Edit” mode — don’t press “Present.”
- If your answer is too long and doesn’t fit in the answer box, feel free to change the text size by clicking:



- Important shortcuts:
 - Undo: Edit → Undo
(or hold down command and Z)
 - Zoom In/Out: View → Zoom
(or hold down command, option, + or -)

Introduction: What is this?

- This slideshow is meant to help you experience the artwork of artist ERRE. His work is currently on view in Building 6 at MASS MoCA. Click [here](#) to purchase advance, timed tickets to MASS MoCA!
- As you experience these images, videos, and activities, remember that **there are *no wrong answers*: it's all about your own thinking, feeling, and questions!**

There are three essential questions you'll encounter here:



How does art help us find common ground with one another across our differences?



What can I learn about art, U.S. and Mexican history, or other people when I look closely from another point of view?



How can visual art give us information about social injustices?

But first, who is ERRE?

Marcos Ramirez, known as **ERRE** (a nod to the rolled 'r' in Spanish), is an artist who splits his time between Tijuana, Mexico, and San Diego, California. His work is greatly influenced by border culture, the sometimes tumultuous relationship between Mexico and the U.S., and the two countries' individual and intertwined histories and cultures.



What does his exhibition look like?

Click [here](#) to explore the THEM AND US exhibition virtually!



All eyes are turned toward the U.S.-Mexico border in response to the recent immigration crisis and President Trump's controversial initiative to build a wall along the 2,000-mile boundary. Yet the border is a political abstraction for many Americans, as are the millions of people who must navigate it — from those who call the border region home (many who have family members in both countries, or who work on one side and live on the other) to the hopeful, and sometimes desperate, immigrants looking for economic opportunity or political asylum in the States.

Based between Tijuana and San Diego, the artist known as ERRE has been making work about the social, political, and economic realities of the border — and the complex relationship between the U.S. and Mexico — for over two decades. With his monumental work *Of Fence*, a sculptural replica of the rusty border that is part of daily life in Tijuana, the artist makes the physical obstruction that runs along the border and the human repercussions of its inescapable presence more palpable to those of us who live hundreds of miles away. Pairing the barrier with the words of Harlem Renaissance writer Langston Hughes, whose 1916 poem "Let America Be America Again" rallies a land of liberty and equality for all, ERRE examines his work about the border as part of a larger examination of the divisions — and inequities — between people more broadly.

Todos los ojos están puestos en la frontera entre EE. UU. y México en respuesta a la reciente crisis de inmigración y a la polémica iniciativa del presidente Trump de construir un muro a lo largo de los 2,000 millas de lindero. Sin embargo, para muchos estadounidenses la frontera sigue siendo una abstracción política, así como lo son también los millones de personas que deben navegarla, desde aquellos que consideran que la región fronteriza es su hogar (muchos de ellos con familiares en ambos países, o que trabajan en un lado y residen en el otro), hasta los inmigrantes desesperados, y en ocasiones desesperados, que buscan oportunidades económicas o asilo político en los Estados Unidos.

Desde más de dos décadas el artista conocido como ERRE, con base en Tijuana y San Diego, ha realizado trabajo sobre la complejidad social, política y económica de la frontera, y la compleja relación entre los países de Estados Unidos y México. Con su monumental obra *Of Fence*, una réplica escultórica de la oxidada barrera de metal que es parte de la vida cotidiana en Tijuana, el artista hace tangible, para quienes vivimos a cientos de millas de distancia, la obstrucción física que corre a lo largo de la frontera, así como las repercusiones humanas de su ineludible presencia. ERRE articula su trabajo sobre la frontera como parte de un examen más amplio de las divisiones — y las inequidades — entre la gente al construir la barrera física. Poniendo las palabras del escritor Langston Hughes (del Harlem Renaissance), con los problemas del poema "Let America Be America Again" (que llama a un país de libertad e igualdad para todos).

Part 1

❓ How does art help us find common ground with one another across our differences?

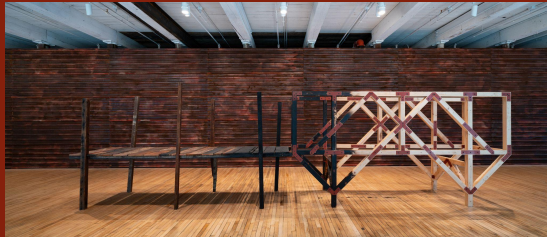


Burned Bridges (for Pablo & Efrén), 2019



Look closely at the images on the previous slides — feel free to go back and forth between this slide with close-up images.

Then, answer the following questions in the text boxes.
(Remember: there are no wrong answers!)



What do you see?

Type your answer here

What do you think about what you see?

Type your answer here

Which bridge would you prefer to use and why?

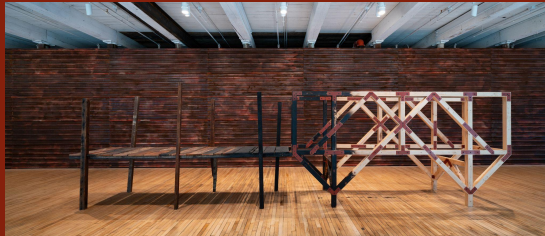
Type your answer here

ERRE identifies the left half of the bridge with Mexico and the right half with the United States. How do these associations influence the way you understand this piece?

Type your answer here

**Why do you think he used a bridge to compare both countries?
What is significant about bridges?**

Type your answer here



Two Horse Heads / Dos Cabezas, 2019



Look closely at the images on the previous slides — feel free to go back and forth between this slide with close-up images.

Then, answer the following questions in the text boxes.
(Remember: there are no wrong answers!)



What do you see?

Type your answer here

What do you think about what you see?

Type your answer here

What do you wonder about?

Type your answer here

Toy-an Horse, 1997

ERRE's **Toy-an Horse** was a 33-foot wooden horse with two heads placed at the U.S.-Mexico border line, with one head facing Tijuana in Mexico and the other facing San Diego in the U.S.

The title of this piece is a play on words, referring to the Trojan Horse, used in the Trojan War in ancient Greece. According to legend, the warrior Odysseus constructed the Trojan Horse as a gift of surrender from the Greeks to the Trojans—but it instead was a trap, and Greek soldiers hid inside the horse's belly and opened the gates for the rest of the army to attack the sleeping city of Troy, thereby winning the war. Take a moment to read a little bit about the Trojan War [here](#)



Why do you think ERRE chose Toy-an Horse to title his sculpture?

Type your answer here

What does this sculpture have in common with the original Trojan Horse? What is different about it? Why do you think ERRE made it this way?

Type your answer here

ERRE used the heads from *Toy-an Horse* to make this *Two Horse Heads* piece.



What are some of the changes you notice that ERRE made to the *Toy-an Horse* to make *Two Horse Heads*?

Type your answer here

What does the way ERRE positioned the heads say about the relationship between Mexico and the U.S., if anything?

Type your answer here

Sing-Sing, 1999



Look closely at the images on the previous slides — feel free to go back and forth between this slide with close-up images.

Then, answer the following questions in the text boxes.
(Remember: there are no wrong answers!)



What do you see? What do you see that makes you say that?

Type your answer here

ERRE intended for this piece to resemble an anatomical heart. What does that symbolism mean to you? Does the sculpture remind you of anything else?

Type your answer here

Sing-Sing was originally paired with another sculpture by ERRE, *Acorazado*, though only *Sing-Sing* is currently on view at MASS MoCA.



How are the shapes of the sculptures different? How are they the same?

Type your answer here

In person, these pieces are huge and tower over most humans! How does this influence the way you perceive them? If you're looking at this image on a screen, what does it feel like to be larger than the image?



Type your answer here

Sing-Sing & Acorazado: Love as First Language

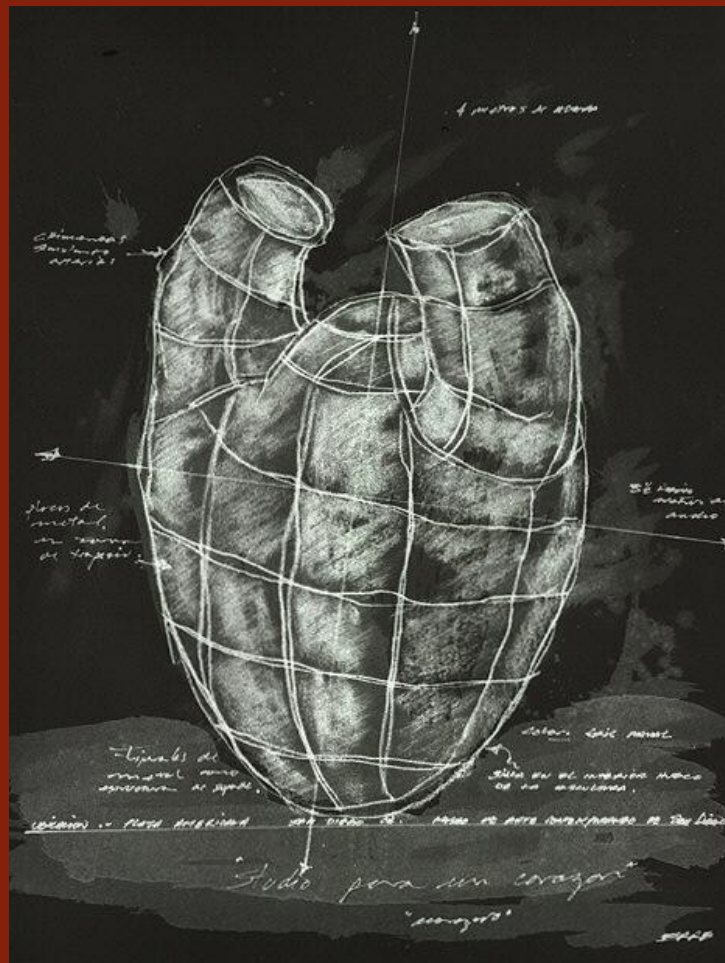
Take a look at ERRE's study of *Acorazado*! Artists often use sketches to plan their work.

Sing-Sing and *Acorazado* are physical representations of characters in a children's story ERRE wrote.

He tells the story of two hearts who did not use language to communicate but instead understood each other without words. When an angry god gave them the spoken word as punishment, however, they became divided.

Sing-Sing is open, and their intentions are understood easily. On the other hand, *Acorazado* can be guarded, and has a more difficult time expressing how it feels.

The hearts learn that while words can be used to divide, love has the power to overcome these divisions to bring us together.



Does language make it easier or more difficult for you to show how you feel?
Why or why not?

Type your answer here



What present-day issues do these sculptures and the story bring to mind?

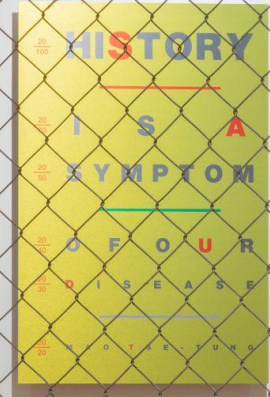
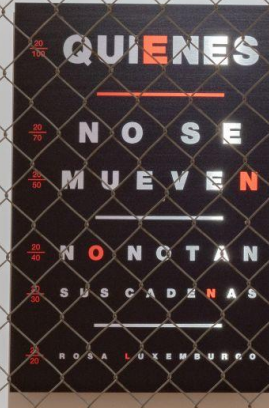
Type your answer here



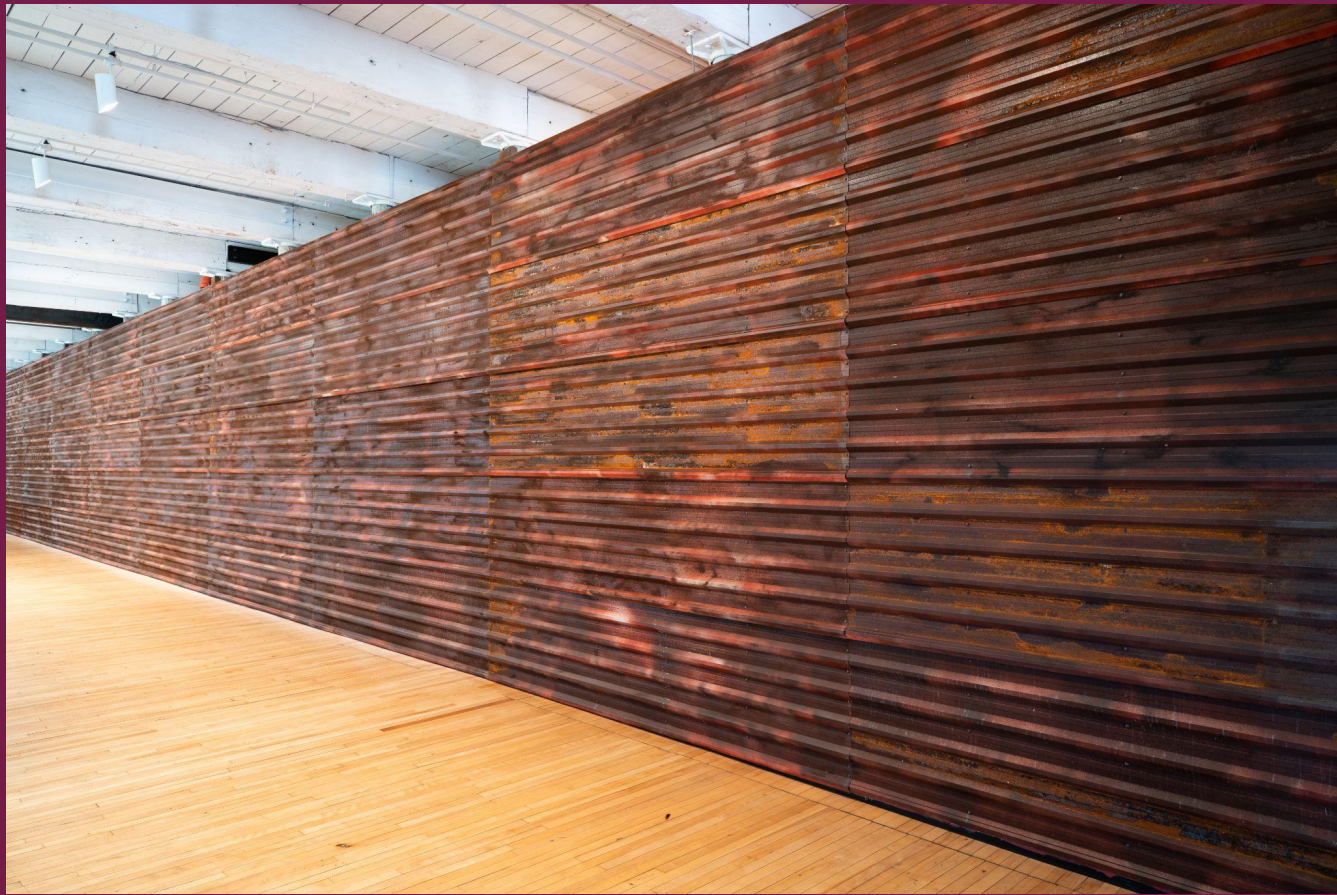
Part 2



What can I learn about art, U.S. and Mexican history, or other people when I look closely from another point of view?



Of Fence, 2017



Look closely at the images on the previous slides — feel free to go back and forth between this slide with close-up images.

Then, answer the following questions in the text boxes.
(Remember: there are no wrong answers!)



What do you see?

Type your answer here

What do you think about what you see?

Type your answer here

What do you wonder about?

Type your answer here

Of Fence is a sculptural recreation of the barricade along the San Diego/Tijuana border. It reaches nearly up to the ceiling and stretches 120 feet horizontally!

ERRE wants viewers to be able to feel the physical presence of the border in a similar way that border communities in Mexico do.



How does ERRE's recreation compare with the way you thought the border wall might look like? Does anything surprise you? If so, what? (Remember that you can go back and forth between slides if you need a larger image!)

Type your answer here

Do walls protect or divide? Who is being protected and who is being divided?

Type your answer here

What are other examples that you can think of, of ways in which groups or communities protect and/or divide themselves?

Type your answer here

“[I don’t] believe in borders, especially on a land that used to belong to that people. Like, ‘I’m going to take half of your house and then I’ll build a wall so you can’t even look at it.’”
—ERRE

Click [here](#) to learn more about ERRE’s *Of Fence*!



Take a minute to reflect on this quote. Does the comparison between a border wall to a wall in a private home surprise you? Why or why not?

Type your answer here

Stripes and Fence Forever, Model #2 (homage to Jasper Johns), 2014



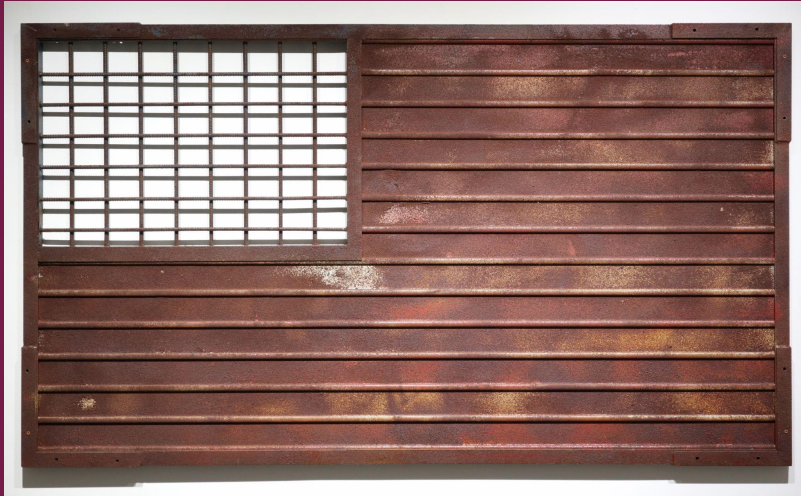
This piece mixes the iconography of the American flag with the rusty red metal of *Of Fence* to suggest that we take a second look at what we consider “American.”

Democracy 2000, 2000



ERRE created his own versions of the Mexican and the U.S. flags. Take a moment to compare and contrast his interpretation of the Mexican flag with his interpretation of the U.S. flag.

Stripes and Fence Forever, Model #2 (homage to Jasper Johns), 2014



Democracy 2000, 2000



Look closely at the images on the previous slides — feel free to go back and forth between this slide with close-up images.



What did the artist keep the same in his version of the Mexican flag?

Type your answer here

What is different about the flags? (Hint: Zoom in on the central icon!)

Type your answer here

What do the changes mean to you?

Type your answer here

Exhibition view of *THEM AND US / ELLOS Y NOSOTROS*



If you were to visit this exhibition in person, you would have to make a choice when entering the space: you could choose to enter the side labeled “THEM” or the side labeled “US.”

Place the sticky note below onto the path you would walk through and explain why you would choose that specific one.

Click [here](#) to revisit the 3D scan of the exhibition space to experience “walking” down either of these entrances!

Type your answer here



Eye Charts, 2019



Click [here](#) to learn more about ERRE's *Eye Charts*!

This series of “Eye Charts” includes quotes in which the letters get smaller as they progress down the panel. Why do you think the artist presented the quotes in that way? (You can switch to the next slide to look at the “Eye Charts” more closely if you need to!)

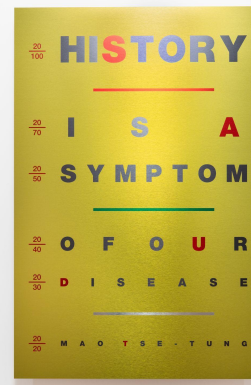
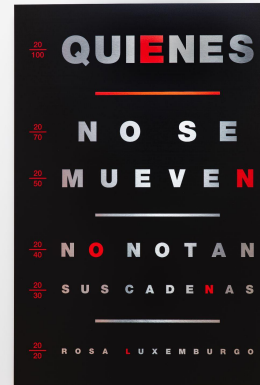
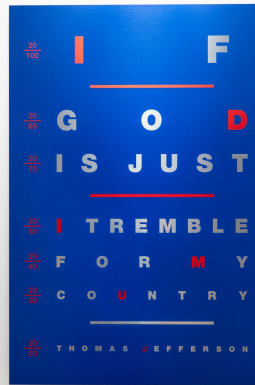
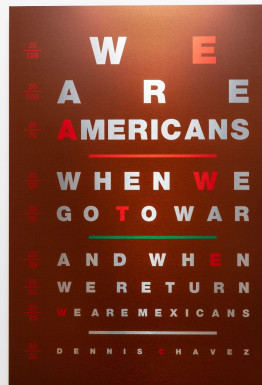
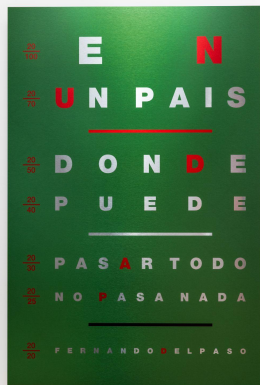
Type your answer here

ERRE presents some works in English and some in Spanish. Can you read both? What tools can you find to help you understand them, if you can't read them yourself? Why do you think he decided to make some in Spanish?

Type your answer here



Move the pink arrow below an eye chart that resonates with you the most and reflect on it in the space below.
Why were you drawn to it?



Type your answer here

Part 3

? How can visual art help address injustices?



Friendly Fire / Fuego Amigo, 2017

Staten Island	2763 miles	2014
Ferguson	1818 miles	2014
Chicago	2077 miles	2014
North Charleston	2442 miles	2015
Baltimore	2629 miles	2015
Prairie View	1414 miles	2015
Baton Rouge	1741 miles	2016
Falcon Heights	1994 miles	2016
El Cajon	16 miles	2016

Cananea	889 km.	1906
Río Blanco	3057 km.	1907
Tlatelolco	2810 km.	1968
Aguas Blancas	3188 km.	1995
Acteal	3710 km.	1997
Iguala	2891 km.	2014
Tlatlaya	2882 km.	2014
Nochistlán	3253 km.	2016

In this piece, ERRE shows the locations and dates of murders of Mexican citizens by Mexican law enforcement.

Cananea	889 km.	1906
Río Blanco	3057 km.	1907
Tlatelolco	2810 km.	1968
Aguas Blancas	3188 km.	1995
Acteal	3710 km.	1997
Iguala	2891 km.	2014
Tlatlaya	2882 km.	2014
Nochixtlán	3253 km.	2016



Location of the violence



Distance between the
locations and the San
Diego/Tijuana border



Year the incident
took place

In this piece, ERRE aims to show the locations and dates of murders of African-Americans by U.S. law enforcement.

Staten Island	2763 miles	2014
Ferguson	1818 miles	2014
Chicago	2077 miles	2014
North Charleston	2442 miles	2015
Baltimore	2629 miles	2015
Prairie View	1414 miles	2015
Baton Rouge	1741 miles	2016
Falcon Heights	1994 miles	2016
El Cajon	16 miles	2016



Location of the violence



Distance between the
locations and the San
Diego/Tijuana border



Year the incident
took place

In these two pieces, ERRE aims to show a problem that both countries share: violence against their citizens by their governments.

Fuego Amigo, the Spanish version of the title, translates to “*Friendly Fire*.” What does the term “friendly fire” mean in the context of war? Why would ERRE choose this name for these pieces?

Type your answer here

Cananea	889 km.	1906
Río Blanco	3057 km.	1907
Tlatelolco	2810 km.	1968
Aguas Blancas	3188 km.	1995
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Baton Rouge	1741 miles	2016
Falcon Heights	1994 miles	2016
El Cajon	16 miles	2016

ERRE meant for these pieces to look like highway signs. Take a moment to do the following:

Choose an incident listed from the green or the black billboards and use Google Maps to calculate the distance from the place it happened to where you live.

How does knowing the distance affect your understanding of what happened?

Cananea	889 km.	1906
Río Blanco	3057 km.	1907
Tlatelolco	2810 km.	1968
Aguas Blancas	3188 km.	1995
Acteal	3710 km.	1997
Iguala	2891 km.	2014
Tlatlaya	2882 km.	2014
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Falcon Heights	1994 miles	2016
El Cajon	16 miles	2016

Type your answer here

How do we use physical distance to separate ourselves from incidents? Why?

Type your answer here

Cananea	889 km.	1906
Río Blanco	3057 km.	1907
Tlatelolco	2810 km.	1968
Aguas Blancas	3188 km.	1995
Acteal	3710 km.	1997
Iguala	2891 km.	2014
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Baton Rouge	1741 miles	2016
Falcon Heights	1994 miles	2016
El Cajon	16 miles	2016

Orange Country, 2019



Look closely at the images on the previous slides — feel free to go back and forth between this slide with close-up images.

Then, answer the following questions in the text boxes.
(Remember: there are no wrong answers!)

Note: Infant-sized prison uniforms are not readily available for purchase. ERRE had to commission his sister to create this piece.



What do you see?

Type your answer here

What do you think about what you see?

Type your answer here

What do you wonder about?

Type your answer here

In this piece ERRE looks at how the prison industrial system affects whole families (particularly black and brown people). The work also reminds viewers of the criminalization of families at the border.

Read more about detention ([here](#)) where families looking to immigrate and make a better life are held.

Teachers can also follow up with these

[activities](#)



What do you feel when seeing these uniforms? Do you feel more strongly about one or the other? Why?

Type your answer here

Why do you think ERRE used different sizes of jumpsuits in this piece?

Type your answer here



Activist Art-making

Create an activist artwork based on an issue of your choosing. It can be related to immigration and the border, or something else entirely.

- 1 Identify a question you want to ask regarding that topic (such as “What are the causes?” “What are people doing about this?” and so on).
- 2 Conduct research (looking at statistics, historical context, etc.) to help you find answers to that question.
- 3 Identify your target audience and conduct research on that group in order to build empathy—being able to see the topic from their audience’s point of view will help you design a better means of communicating your message. Consider such questions as what medium(s) would speak to that group? What imagery and materials best communicate your message? Where would you choose to show your artwork?
- 4 Finally, create your work! Share your creations with MASS MoCA by tagging @kidspacemm on Instagram.

Final Stop: Reflection!

Write one thing that you learned about ERRE from this Virtual Tour Slideshow:

Write your response here

What is one thing that you learned about yourself from this Virtual Tour Slideshow?

Write your response here

Write one thing that surprised you during the Virtual Tour Slideshow (it can be positive, negative, or neutral):

Write your response here

Thanks for visiting!

MASS Mo