

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 13, 2000

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Alfredo Jaar's *The Cloud* for inSITE2000: An Ephemeral Monument and Moment of Mourning For Those Who Have Died Trying to Cross the Border

TIJUANA – For inSITE2000, artist Alfredo Jaar, whose provocative work focuses on injustices around the world, especially poverty, exploitation and genocide, is addressing one of the most distressing issues facing the border region – the thousands of Mexicans who have died trying to cross the border into the United States.

To bring attention to this ongoing tragedy, Jaar has created *The Cloud*, a ceremonial event at 10 a.m., Saturday, October 14, in Tijuana's Goat Canyon, located adjacent to the border fence. The site is a quarter mile before the entrance to Playas de Tijuana on Avenida International. Relatives of the victims and the public are invited to attend.

The ceremony will involve poetry reading, music, a time of silence and a "cloud" composed of more than 2,000 white helium-filled balloons suspended over the border. At the conclusion of the ceremony there will be a ceremonial release of the 75-foot-long cloud.

"Through my project for inSITE2000, I am offering a moment, a space, a situation where people can gather to honor those who have perished and to express their solidarity with the relatives of the victims," says Jaar. "I also want to give homage to those organizations that work with Mexican immigrants on both sides of the border."

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He says his objective is to "create a space of mourning against the banalization of death."

Jaar's project for inSITE2000 is in keeping with his concerns for the displacement of people who are escaping tragedy and searching for a better life. In more than 50 projects created in the past 15 years, Jaar has systematically addressed what he sees as a widening gap between the so-called industrialized nations and the so-called developing world. His installation *The Rwanda Project 1994-1998*, which is currently being exhibited at the Museum of the Red Cross in Geneva, documents his encounter with some sites and a survivor of the recent genocide in Rwanda.

Writing for artnet.com, Alan Moore, critic and art historian, praises the project, saying, "Alfredo Jaar responds to a special artistic problem of this last half century – how to image mass death." He notes, "This grave political event of incomprehensible dimensions has been humanized by Jaar, whose work insists upon it as one million instances of the kind of personal grief he encountered. He does this by combining quantity and sameness in a single miniaturized image. One million deaths, one million absences, one million survivors' memories."

This year Jaar was honored with a prestigious MacArthur Fellowship from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Fellows are chosen for their exceptional creativity, record of significant accomplishment and potential for still greater achievement. The foundation says of Jaar, "Few artists possess Jaar's ability to make us feel such urgency, to see our own histories within images so dissimilar to our own existence. His photographs and installations are complicated and multilayered, and they depict subjects – who include laborers, miners, boat people, refugees, and massacre victims – as strong, proud, and dignified despite circumstances that are exploitative, desperate, dangerous and even deadly."

Born in Santiago, Chile, Jaar has lived and worked in New York City since 1982. His work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in museums throughout the world. The first retrospective of his work was organized in 1990 by the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego. In addition to his project for inSITE2000, he is currently working on public projects in Sweden, Spain, Portugal, The Netherlands and Japan.

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Organizations invited to participate in *The Cloud* include:

American Friends, US/Mexico Border Program, San Diego
Casa de la Madre Assunta, Tijuana
Casa del Migrante, Tijuana
Casa YMCA de Menores Migrantes, Tijuana
Centro de Apoyo al Migrante, Tijuana
California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, San Diego