

Ana-Teresa Fernández

**Fox News**

# **Vanishing border: Trump wants to build a wall, artist wants to blend it into landscape**

By [Rebekah Sager](#) , | [Fox News](#)



At a time when the conversation about building more border walls swirls, a U.S. artist dreams of erasing the looming steel barrier.

With a few buckets of paint, Ana Teresa Fernandez headed to the Tijuana shore a couple of years ago and started her very own project of painting the 18-foot high wall in such a way that it appears to vanish into the landscape.

“I wanted to do something subtle, without shouting at people, but still bringing a light to my frustrations,” she told Fox News Latino.

The U.S.-Mexico border fence at the Playas neighborhood of Tijuana extends 300 feet, somewhat poetically, out into the Pacific Ocean.

Initially, Fernandez said, she would go to the border fence at the beach and simply sweep or sometimes vacuum the sand in a kind of performance art project.

But the idea to make a piece of the border disappear struck her like a bolt of lightning – and she turned home for reinforcements.

“I called my mom [an anthropologist, archeologist and photographer], I told her what I wanted to do, and she was like, ‘let’s do it,’” Fernandez, 35, said.

In 2012, the San Francisco artist flew down to San Diego, where her parents live. From there she drove with her mother across the border with 10 gallons of sky-blue paint, a generator, a spray gun and a ladder, setting out to make a section of the border fence virtually disappear.

Her mom, Maria Teresa Fernandez, photographed the hours-long event and cinematographer Greg Rainoff, known for his work in visual effects on shows such as “Star-Trek: Deep Space Nine,” filmed it.

All of Fernandez’s work operates on multiple levels. She’ll start with a performance piece, then someone films or photographs it, then she’ll paint a picture of herself doing the performance piece – all to demonstrate the multiple levels of cultural, political and gender issues.

The artist recalled that almost immediately after putting up the ladder and beginning her painting process in Tijuana, she was confronted by local police.

“As it turned out we talked to them for about 45 minutes, and I swear it’s only because I was wearing a dress and heels that they allowed me to finish,” she told FNL.

The result, a few hours later, was “Borrando La Frontera” (“Erasing the Border”), a one-of-a-kind work that challenges the notions of how people and spaces can so easily be eliminated or ignored – this is the core foundation of Fernandez’s work.

When you stand on the beach on the Mexico side of the border and look north through the fence, facing Imperial Beach, California, it’s astounding how such a simple paint job can make such a powerful statement.

Fernandez was 10 years old when she crossed the Mexican border into the U.S. for the first time, moving with her family from the tropical port city of Tampico, Mexico to San Diego, California.

She said she can still remember the taste of dirt in her mouth, between the dry Southern California and Baja terrain, mixed with the polluted Tijuana air, while cars sat for hours waiting in line to cross.

For the next decade, crossing the Tijuana–San Diego border would come to symbolize fun and chaos on one side, and the return to order on the other.

The path of her artistic career started to take shape soon after college, she said, once she settled in San Francisco.

“I was working in cafes, talking to people who’d crossed into the U.S. to do menial jobs, many women that my paradigm shifted. My work began to be about illuminating people and spaces that society ignores,” Fernandez said.

Then, on a trip south to Tijuana one weekend, she began to look at the border in its natural environment as a “long sleeping monster,” extending up into the Hills of Tijuana and down into the ocean.

“My impulse was to hit it. But I ended up asking myself what I could do,” she said.

Her latest work, “Erasure,” is a film of a performance she enacted where she painted her body completely black until only her eyes could be seen -- there are paintings as well that accompanied the show.

The work that comprises "Erasure" originates from the 2014 disappearance of 43 students from Ayotzinapa, Mexico, who were presumably killed for staging protests that disrupted their small town.

"I remember pain my stomach. How easily people can be wiped out in a blatant act of violence against those who used their voices. Similarly to my erasing the border, I wanted to ask if I could erase myself, my identity. Who is worth being seen and heard," she said.

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