

# Accordions at the Border

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This text examines three accordion books all of which are linked by a subject matter that is concerned with a range of historical and contemporary issues connected to the idea of the ,border‘, in both the literal and metaphorical senses of this word.<sup>1</sup> The three books are *Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Control* (2000/2002) by the writer and performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña, visual artist Enrique Chagoya and book artist Felicia Rice,<sup>2</sup> *Migrant* (2002) by the writer José Manuel Mateo and artist Javier Martínez Pedro,<sup>3</sup> and *Detained* (2011) by illustrator and graphic-novelist Eroyn Franklin.<sup>4</sup>

Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Enrique Chagoya and Felicia Rice:  
*Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Control* (2014)

I shall discuss *Codex Espangliensis* first, as its themes resonate across the other two books as well.<sup>5</sup> The initial limited edition printing of 50 copies of

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<sup>1</sup> Accordion books are also known by the following terms ,leporello‘, ,concertina‘, ,zig-zag fold‘ and ,screenfold‘. The term ,leporello‘ has more currency in Europe than the United States, whereas ,accordion‘ is the most widely used term for these publications.

<sup>2</sup> Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Enrique Chagoya, Felicia Rice: *Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol*. San Francisco 2000/2002 (1<sup>st</sup> printing 2000).

<sup>3</sup> José Manuel Mateo, Javier Martínez Pedro: *Migrant*. New York 2014. This slightly unusual vertically orientated accordion was originally published in Spanish under the title *Migrar* by San Miguel Chapultepec. Mexico, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Eroyn Franklin: *Detained*. Seattle 2011 (self published).

<sup>5</sup> This version of the book I am using for this text is the trade version of the original limited-edition artists’ book. It represents a collaboration between Gómez-Peña and Chagoya with Rice serving as the typographer, designer and printer for her Moving Parts Press. The book was originally published in 1998 under the same title in a limited edition of 50 copies with 5 of these serving as a deluxe edition with painterly additions by Gómez-Peña and Rice. The dimensions of the accordion in the trade version (not including introductory section) is 30 folded segments, 17.7 x 22.86 cm and when fully opened it is 6.85 m long.

*Codex Espangliensis* were printed on the traditional ‚amate‘ paper which was made from bark and was being manufactured in Mexico long before contact with the conquistadors, and this immediately grounds the book in the tradition of pre-Columbian Mesoamerican codices that used the same paper and were all but destroyed during the Spanish conquest. The other key formal feature of the book is its utilization of the accordion format, and this once again engages the book in a dialogue with the pre-Columbian codices in which the same folding format was utilized.

The trade edition, which I shall be examining here, is comprised of two separate accordions bound within the book’s covers. The first and smaller accordion is a 14-segments introduction to the book with statements by all three participants as well as an essay by art historian Jennifer González. The second accordion is the real heart of the book and is comprised of 28 segments of texts by Gómez-Peña and images by Chagoya<sup>6</sup> that have been masterfully interwoven into a riveting 6.85 meters long accordion panorama by Felicia Rice (fig. 1). Gómez-Peña explains the genesis of the book:

Felicia’s challenge to us was immense: we were to produce a ‚post-columbian‘ codex in response to the great Mexican crisis in California. Throughout the early ’90s, a series of legislative propositions attacking migrants and the Spanish language were being placed before voters of the state, while federal immigration policies were being changed in sinister, draconian ways. Mexicanos living in California and the U.S. lived in a state of siege.<sup>7</sup>

The authors, in another formal feature that mirrors that of the pre-Hispanic codices, have constructed the book so that it reads from right to left, with the book beginning at what ordinarily would be the end of the traditional book, while the individual texts are read in the traditional occidental manner from left to right within each two-segment spread.<sup>8</sup> In her introductory text Jen-

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<sup>6</sup> Enrique Chagoya notes in his introductory statement to the book: „Today only twenty-two pre-Hispanic books remain, along with fifty-four others written right after the conquest war by indigenous book artists who were witness to the destruction of their world. The twenty-two surviving books are Mixtec-Zapotec (Oaxaca area), Mayan (Yucatan peninsula/Central America) and Nahuatl, some of these of Aztec origin (the Aztecs are on among many Nahuatl groups in Central Mexico).“

<sup>7</sup> From Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s introductory statement in: *Codex Espangliensis*, n. pag.

<sup>8</sup> This was not the first collaboration between these two artists, in 1996 Artspace Books in San Francisco published their book *Friendly Cannibals*. However, while this book is indeed a collaboration both artists’ works are presented separately, and as a result the publication does

nifer González remarks upon the position of the viewer/reader with regard to this different kind of reading experience when she notes: „Caught between two worlds, between familiar and unfamiliar modes, the viewer begins to experience the dissonance of bi-cultural literacy as a concrete material practice of reading in two paradigms.“<sup>9</sup> While González is here referencing the viewer, the idea of the ‚dissonance‘ of the ‚bi-cultural‘ experience springs directly from the very similar autobiographical experiences of both Gómez-Peña and Chagoya. Born in Mexico City within two years of each other (Chagoya was born in 1953 and Gómez-Peña in 1955) they both attended the National Autonomous University of Mexico and then in the late 1970’s both left Mexico for the USA and ended up living in California. Both artists also married American citizens which enabled them to live legally in the States. These shared biographies have also led both artists to develop very similar aesthetic sensibilities that have resulted from their experiences of moving and living in two different cultures and countries. Addressing these strong connections between both artists, Chagoya in his statement in the book’s introduction describes their fundamentally similar approaches:

I do not know of any other artist’s work that I identify with as much as the work of Guillermo Gómez-Peña. In very general terms, what I do in visual art, he does in performance and/or writing. We mirror each other’s work in different artistic languages. [...] The differences in our work are only in form, not in content. For Guillermo, the word, the voice, the music, the sound and the performance are some essential raw materials in his world of cultural hybrids and political collisions. In my work, the visual, non-verbal symbolism precedes text. I am most interested in non-alphabetic writing, as is demonstrated in pre-Columbian books.<sup>10</sup>

Rice’s challenge to both artists and the nature of this charge would have been clear to them both as they would have been familiar with the codices (singular ‚codex‘) of the pre-Columbus period. An examination of the approximately 22 pre-Columbian codices that did survive,<sup>11</sup> revealed how these

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not have the same kind of vitality that Felicia Rice managed to create with her artful combination of both artists’ works in *Codex Espangliensis* into a seamless 6,70 m accordion frieze.

<sup>9</sup> From Jennifer González’s introductory statement in: *Codex Espangliensis*, n. pag.

<sup>10</sup> From Enrique Chagoya’s introductory statement in: *Codex Espangliensis*, n. pag.

<sup>11</sup> One reason for the destruction of the codices is illustrated here: „The many manuscripts treating religious subjects that must have existed before the sixteenth century were particularly sought out for destruction by zealous Spanish priests and friars who were charged with

codices were key in documenting and preserving a wide range of cultural practices and history, including calendars for feasts, religious and ritual matters, and medicine and astronomy amongst a host of other subjects central to the beliefs of the peoples living in Mesoamerica (Maya, Aztec and Mixtec). With regard to the manner in which this information was conveyed on the page we see in these books a ‚writing‘ style that is pictographic/phonetic and in the surviving Mayan codices an elaborate abstract/hieroglyphic visual style. Writing about the visual nature of these books Chagoya notes that they „[...] were actually meant to be performed not read by either the priests or kings or whoever was going to be reading it to a group of people.“<sup>12</sup>

Both artists would also have been aware of this rich printed history of the cultures of ancient Mexico, and as Chagoya makes clear in the following quote he grew up in a bifurcated cultural world in which on one hand he was a keen follower of rock & roll and jazz from the North, while at the same time he was deeply entwined in the country’s venerable past:

I grew up with Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin. I love them. The interesting thing was that at the same time, I was having these parallel experiences with just going to the ancient ruins in Mexico. We used to go for picnics to the pyramids of Teotihuacan. Actually, my dad’s family is from Teotihuacan. And we used to visit uncles who lived there, and that’s where my dad used to love to drink pulque and he used to play guitar. [...] I had this kind of closeness to the pre-Columbian culture that to me, I felt, that’s where I’m coming from. There was no question about it for me as a kid.<sup>13</sup>

For both artists moving across the border to the US was a critical moment in their lives and it would form the foundation for both artists’ creative activi-

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ending idolatrous practices.“ In: Gisele Díaz, Alan Rodgers: *The Codex Borgia. A Full-Color Restoration of the Ancient Mexican Manuscript*. Mineola, NY 1993/2015, p. xiv. It should be noted that there were around 50–60 codices created after the conquest but their styles show the influence of Renaissance aesthetics.

<sup>12</sup> Oral history interview with Enrique Chagoya, 2001 July 25–August 6, Archives of American Art, n. pag. The *Archives of American Art* is the largest collection of primary resources documenting the history of the visual arts in the United States. Chagoya’s oral history interview is available online at their web site: <[www.aaa.si.edu/](http://www.aaa.si.edu/)>.

<sup>13</sup> Oral history interview with Enrique Chagoya, 2001, July 25–August 6, Archives of American Art, n. pag. Pulque is an alcoholic beverage made from the fermented sap of the maguey plant. It is traditional to central Mexico, where it has been produced for millennia. It has the color of milk, a somewhat viscous consistency and a sour yeast-like taste.

ties as they moved forward. Reflecting on the consequences of this move Chagoya states:

I think anybody who leaves their own country of origin creates a mental distance from it. I created a distance of myself with my own history and in a way, not too different than what some scientists have to do to distance themselves from what they see. Hopefully, I'm not trying to idealize certain things of my own culture. On the other hand, I also feel a distance to this country, so you become a citizen of both countries, or of no country. Sort of like a citizen of a borderless country, in which you find fellow citizens of borderless countries, everywhere.<sup>14</sup>

For Gómez-Peña the move across the border would be accompanied by some quite profound insights regarding the nature of borders:

But for me, the border is no longer located at any fixed geopolitical site. I carry the border with me, and I find new borders wherever I go. [...] My America is a continent (not a country) that is not described by the outlines of any of the standard maps.<sup>15</sup>

Reflecting on his collaboration with Chagoya he lays out the often hidden processes that occur once someone migrates to a new country, and it is this process that forms the armature of the work of both artists in this book as he makes clear in his introduction to *Codex Espangliensis*:

We both draw from pop culture (Mexican cinema, comic books, Mexican wrestling and *rock en español*) and radical politics. We both utilize our art to research and reveal the multiple processes of acculturation and hybridization that the Mexican psyche undergoes when crossing the border.<sup>16</sup>

Chagoya, in his introduction to the book, affirms a similar trajectory in his visual contributions to the *Codex Espangliensis*:

In my codex book concept, I have decided that I am entitled to my own ideological construction. I tell the stories of cultural hybrids, of political colli-

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., n. pag.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., n. pag.

<sup>16</sup> From Guillermo Gómez-Peña's introductory statement in: *Codex Espangliensis*, n. pag.

sions of universal consequences, just like Guillermo, but in my case with little or no use of text.<sup>17</sup>

This idea of ‚cultural hybridity‘ lies at the heart of both artists’ works. For Gómez-Peña who worked for many years creating border art in San Diego and whose work takes the form of performances, installations and writings, this idea is foundational.<sup>18</sup> For Chagoya, located further up the coast in San Francisco, the concept of hybridity was to form the working framework for his visual work, and this book is grounded in his earlier experiments using the codex format in his print works and his experimentation with creating visual language(s) that were in dialogue with the pre-Columbian codices.

To clarify my understanding of hybridity in this cultural sense, and to illustrate how this process works in practice the following definition by Nikos Papastergiadis presents a good guide to making sense of the strategy that is being deployed across the pages of *Codex Espangliensis*:

By taking matter out of one place and putting it in another, there is both the disruption and reordering of conventional codes and structures. Displacement can lead to either confusion or insight. Hybridity not only refers to the ambivalent consequences of mixture but also the shift in the mode of consciousness. By mixing things that were previously kept apart there is both a stimulus for the emergence of something new, and also a shift in position that can offer a perspective for seeing newness as it emerges.<sup>19</sup>

The astonishing 6.85 metres long panoramic accordion that Felicia Rice created from both artists’ contributions reveals a delicate interweaving of Chagoya’s visual images and Gómez-Peña’s texts. As Jennifer González mentions in her introduction, the reader has to go to the ‚end‘ of the book to start at the beginning in the style of many pre-Columbian codices and this

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<sup>17</sup> Enrique Chagoya in his introductory statement in: *Codex Espangliensis*, n. pag. Chagoya presented Felicia Rice with 15 double-page works which she then sequenced and used the correspondences between the visual and textual to structure the book.

<sup>18</sup> Guillermo Gómez-Peña: *The New World Border. Prophecies, Poems & Loqueras for the End of the Century*. San Francisco 1996, p. 5. Gómez-Peña in collaboration with Emily Hicks published the provocative artists’ periodical *La Línea Quebrada / The Broken Line*, which they described as „a border arts publication“. Its publishing history is unclear but the first issue came out in 1986 and the third in 1987, and I am unable to confirm at this time whether this was the last issue.

<sup>19</sup> Nikos Papastergiadis: *Hybridity and Ambivalence. Places and Flows in Contemporary Art and Culture*, in: *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 22(4) (2005), pp. 39–64.

immediately challenges the reader to orientate themselves to a new reading style. Couple this with the confusion that comes from trying to make sense of the non-linear structure of the accordion and then throw in a mixture of languages both real and invented, and one has either a very confused reader or one who is prepared to open themselves up to experiencing the strange profusion of both contemporary and historical imagery that animates this book. Rice, in her introduction to the book, makes note of the kind of experience the reader may encounter when ‚reading‘ the book stating „Progress through the work is a complex visual dance, forward and back, sometimes smooth, often jerky, not unlike the progress of history“<sup>20</sup>

Essentially a modern day codex the work itself is a wonderfully crazy hybrid of juxtaposed images from pre-Columbian codices, prints from various eras in Mexico’s history and contemporary popular imagery (Superman, Mickey & Minnie Mouse etc.) all spun together with Gómez-Peña’s performance texts that appear in a wide variety of typefaces and in assorted sizes, formats, and shapes throughout the accordion. Looking at the book one is immediately drawn in by the frenetic, strange, humorous and often violent situations that result from Chagoya’s ‚détournement‘ of ancient imagery and historical figures, and all overlaid with contemporary popular culture icons. The resulting clash and ‚frisson‘ resembles a kind of unbound graphic novel that is bursting at the seams all the while supported and reinforced by the multi-lingual and often deeply political performance texts of Gómez-Peña.

A key concept that animates Chagoya’s artistic practice is what he calls ‚reverse anthropology‘, and once this practice is recognized in his work it gives the reader more leverage to make sense of what is happening. Chagoya’s concept of ‚reverse anthropology‘ arose when he began to try and imagine what life was like in the pre-Columbian period, and then in a historical role reversal he started to imagine what would have happened if the Aztecs had conquered Europe. Chagoya illustrates this idea by describing how he took a reproduction of a German girl praying in front of a crucifix and painted over the crucifix an image of the main Aztec goddess, Coatlicue. By putting some feathers on the German girl he completed her transformation into a European devotee of an Aztec goddess. Chagoya takes up the narrative:

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<sup>20</sup> From Felicia Rice’s introductory statement in: *Codex Espangliensis*, n. pag.

So based on this idea, I began to develop the idea of some kind of reverse anthropology. It's kind of studying the Europeans as the subject, since anthropology, in its origins, came from England when England was trying to conquer. So anthropology was pretty much created by the English to understand their colonies better, somehow anthropology has this history of colonial control. I've been lately trying to even that up, by reversing it. I think some of my books, my codices are an attempt to do this kind of reverse anthropology, as if an Aztec scientist was studying European cultures.<sup>21</sup>

Guillermo Gómez-Peña's writings and performances explore very similar veins with his particular area of inquiry being centered on border politics and the experiences of immigrants from the South as they invent hybrid cultural forms and identities in the construction of their new lives in the North. With these cartological underpinnings to his work it is no surprise that maps and new ideas around territory and national borders are so central to his practice, indeed one of the themes in his work is his attempt to „[...] try to imagine more enlightened cartographies: a map of the Americas with no borders; a map turned upside down; or one in which the countries have borders that are organically drawn by geography, culture, and imagination and not by the capricious hands of economic domination and political bravado.“<sup>22</sup> As if to reinforce this perspective the first words in Jennifer González's introduction to *Codex Espangliensis* are about maps and how they are markers of national identity.

I want to briefly examine this association of *Codex Espangliensis* with maps and more importantly to look at the panoramic nature of accordions and their historical associations. Further into González's text she redefines the concept of map in relation to this book and writes that: „Instead of fixed borders that appear in printed ink, it is the thin, imaginary lines stretched taut against unequal relations of power between North and South that chart the longitude and latitude of this unique project.“<sup>23</sup> From this perspective *Codex Espangliensis* can be approached as a new kind of historical and conceptual map that in its unruly non-linear narrative and collisions of cultural artifacts and images from divergent time periods is charting not only what has been,

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<sup>21</sup> Oral history interview with Enrique Chagoya, 2001 July 25–August 6, Archives of American Art, n. pag.

<sup>22</sup> Gómez-Peña: *The New World Border*, p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> Jennifer González: Introduction, in: *Codex Espangliensis*, n. pag.



but in Gómez-Peña's words, stating in no uncertain terms that: „In this utopian cartography, hybridity is the dominant culture [...].“<sup>24</sup>

There is a power involved in creating maps of this kind and the strategy of historical recuperation that lies at the heart of this book, coupled with its success,<sup>25</sup> would seem to attest to its accuracy in illustrating the complex nature of cultural hybridity at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the United States, as it pertains to relations between the north and south of the border with Mexico. Thus, it should come as little surprise that the key feature that distinguishes accordions from all other books, their panoramic view, was also the very quality that in the development of early panoramic photography in the 19<sup>th</sup> century became of special interest to military planners and generals as they offered them invaluable „[...] panoramic views of terrain and fortifications“,<sup>26</sup> and within the non-military world „[...] the desire to show overviews of cities and landscapes prompted photographers to create panoramas.“<sup>27</sup> These associations of the panoramic view with various forms of territorial possession, coupled with the sheer materiality of, in this example, a 6.85 meters long swath of paper and one could reasonably argue that the accordion itself constitutes a discrete kind of printed matter territory. When this idea of territorial possession is applied to the chaotic clashes of culture that are so central a feature of *Codex Espangliensis*, and coupled with the importance of maps in the re-imagining of new cultural forms, we can now view *Codex Espangliensis* as a new kind of territorial map that is a psychic palimpsest of the cultural clashes that took place between the indigenous cultures and those from Spain and more recently from the North. *Codex Espangliensis*'s power derives from its critical repossession of this tortured history and its reterritorialization within an empowering and affirmative theory of hybridity that undergirds this post-post-Columbian codex.

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<sup>24</sup> Gómez-Peña, *The New World Border*, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> The trade version of *Codex Espangliensis* was reprinted by City Lights Books in 2002, two years after its initial publication.

<sup>26</sup> Unknown author: *A Brief History of Panoramic Photography*. Available on the website of the Library of Congress:

<<https://www.loc.gov/collections/panoramic-photographs/articles-and-essays/a-brief-history-of-panoramic-photography>>, (last accessed 1.6.17).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

José Manuel Mateo and Javier Martínez Pedro: *Migrant* (2014)

I want now to turn my attention to the second accordion, *Migrant* (2014) by José Manuel Mateo and Javier Martínez Pedro (fig. 2).<sup>28</sup> This book is once again rooted in a dialogue with its larger Mesoamerican history in both its accordion format and the *amate* paper used to create the original drawing by Javier Martínez Pedro that is reproduced as the book's key element. One rather unusual formal feature of the publication is that it's been published in the less common vertical accordion format, with the texts for all 9 of its segments running along the outer edges of each individual segment. Originally published in a Spanish edition in Mexico in 2011, this current bilingual and double-sided version (English/Spanish) was published by Abrams Books for its Younger Readers Books imprint.

The central visual image that runs the length of this 1.5 metre long book is a reproduction of an intricately detailed drawing by Javier Martínez Pedro that depicts the migration journey of a mother and her young son and daughter from their village in Mexico to the North, and the various situations they encounter along the way. The text accompanying the drawing is a first person account by the boy that describes the reasons they had to leave their village and the dangers of the journey that will ultimately take them to Los Angeles. Both the text and the drawing are also informed by Pedro's own experiences as he himself has also made the journey to the North. This attractively published and handsome accordion book serves both as a map and a warning about the increasing numbers of young and unaccompanied children from both Mexico and Central America who embark on this journey to the USA. The figures are startling: „In 2015, Mexico apprehended more than 35.704 children from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala – 55% more than in 2014 and a staggering 270% more than in 2013.“<sup>29</sup> With no end in sight to the violence in these Central American countries, and coupled with

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<sup>28</sup> This newer version is a double-sided accordion with English and Spanish versions on either side and was a collaboration between Mateo who provided the text and Pedro the book's central visual image. It consists of 10 folded segments, measuring 15.87 x 31.75 cm and fully extended its height is 1.5 meters long.

<sup>29</sup> Nina Lakhani: Mexico turning child immigrants back to face violence in Central America, in: The Guardian, 2 February 2017 (Americas section): <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/31/mexico-child-migrants-central-america-human-rights-watch>> (last accessed 2.2.2017).

their economic deprivation, this situation promises to remain and children will continue to be victimized and in some cases disappear during these long and dangerous journeys. Thus, it is no coincidence that this book was published by Abram's Young Readers Books imprint and that young children are its target audience, which both authors confirm in their introductory statement:

Using the codex form, we tell the story of those who do arrive, so as not to forget that there are women, men, and untold numbers of girls and boys who disappear or die along the way. We seek not only to raise awareness but, above all, to safeguard their memory. We wish to tell and to question this collective story that makes children defenseless and almost nonexistent to their own country and to the new one where they hope to find work. [...] For this reason we have created this book: to demand these children's right to exist.<sup>30</sup>

Attached to the tops of either side of the book is a ribbon that enables it to be fastened to a wall in order to display the entire work. This feature allows the book to fully realize its didactic function and was presumably intended to encourage it to be hung and viewed within educational settings for younger viewers. The vertical format has the one great advantage in that it's much more convenient to keep this type of accordion on permanent display rather than the traditional horizontal ones. Read from top to bottom, the story and the geography of the migration journey make it both compelling reading and viewing. In summary, the book functions both as a 'migration map', a memorial, and a warning to all those, young and old, who might be contemplating taking this perilous journey.

### Eroyn Franklin: *Detained* (2011)

The final publication that I want to examine is Eroyn Franklin's *Detained* (2011, fig. 3) which is a 8.12 meters long double-sided accordion comic that follows the stories of two detained immigrants slated for deportation and their stays at two immigration service sites in the Pacific Northwest, the Seattle Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) facility in operation between 1932–2004 as an entry point for immigrants to the Northwest, and

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<sup>30</sup> José Manuel Mateo, Javier Martínez Pedro: *Migrant. The Journey of a Mexican Worker*. New York 2014, n. pag.

the privately run detention facility, the Northwest Detention Center (NWDC) in Tacoma, Washington.<sup>31</sup> On each side of this book, which Franklin describes as a graphic novel, she documents the experiences of each individual and illustrates their stays in the centers and their interactions with fellow detainees. In a fashion similar to the other accordions I've examined here, this work is presented as one long continuous panoramic image which starts with the individuals' entry into the immigration building, follows them through their stay and ends with their exits from the building, in both cases to wait years to receive the final determination on their deportation orders. It seems appropriate to be examining this accordion last as it provides an example of the complicated fates of many immigrants who enter this country without the required papers, and additionally in this example, the story of a legal Cambodian refugee who got picked up after a new 1996 immigration law retroactively expanded the list of deportable crimes for immigrants without citizenship. The other important issue that this book raises concerns about is our web of immigration laws, and as has been illustrated most recently, the consequences that ensue when changes are too hastily made to them. This book advocates for more humane immigration laws and on the inside of the cover the artist has supplied a list of organizations that provide information for immigrants about their legal rights.

One rather interesting feature about this book, and it is something that I have never seen before, is that Franklin has also included in the inside of the cover a section entitled „Simple, but important reading instructions“, in which she explains the best ways to view the book. She states that accordions „[...] can be unwieldy if they are handled incorrectly“, and suggests putting it on a flat surface to turn the pages or „[...] stretch it out to see the whole thing“. <sup>32</sup> Accompanying this advice are some drawings that depict a woman looking at the book in the manner that Franklin suggests, coupled with a larger drawing of a woman holding up both ends of the book in which

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<sup>31</sup> Eroyon Franklin: *Detained*. Seattle 2011. This book was made with the generous support of Artist Trust's Grants for Artist Projects (GAP) and 4Culture's Artist Projects grant. It can be bought via the website [www.etsy.com](http://www.etsy.com):

<[https://www.etsy.com/listing/76900247/detained-graphic-novel?ref=shop\\_home\\_active\\_2](https://www.etsy.com/listing/76900247/detained-graphic-novel?ref=shop_home_active_2)> (last accessed 2.2.2017). Included with this book are 2 over-sized posters (45.72 x 124.4 cm) which reproduce drawings that depict the two protagonists after their releases, in conversation with their peer's while awaiting the final determination on their deportation status. Dimensions are: 80 folded segments, 16.5 cm x 20.32 cm and fully extended at 8.12 m.

<sup>32</sup> Eroyon Franklin: *Detained*, quoted from the front cover.

the body of the book has fallen to the ground in an ,unwieldy‘ mess of folds. All of this is useful information on how to handle this remarkably long accordion, especially since the book has been printed on a thin paper stock that increases the difficulty in handling it.

I want to explore a little further the key role that the ,fold‘ plays in accordion books. Quite obviously, the fold is the key element that distinguishes the accordion from the traditional book or scroll, and thus the accordion book can be defined as a book that consists of a series of parallel folds made equidistantly and that when folded in on themselves assume the same dimensions as a single page. The compactness and economy of a book that’s been folded in this manner belies its ability to burst out into its expanded state, and this pivotal feature of accordions questions our concept of a book as having an ,inside‘ or ,outside‘ and positions the accordion at a location somewhere between the book and the panoramic print. Furthermore, the fold is the activating element that not only determines the sizes of the book’s pages, it is also the transformative element that creates the necessary depth to change a flat piece of paper into a free-standing sculptural object. And additionally, in their expanded state accordions offer the reader not only the typical textual experience but also a uniquely visual one as well, and this blurring of the boundaries between reader and viewer is another of the intriguing features of this format.<sup>33</sup>

In conclusion to this brief survey of these three similarly themed, but quite different accordions, I hope I have revealed something of the complex nature of these compelling publications. Accordions are positioned at the border with books and a host of other printed matter forms, and yet they occupy a singularly individual place within this spectrum of printed matter. The features that set accordions apart from other publications, their compressed and expandable form, their panoramic nature, the centrality of the fold and the challenges accordions present to the reader/viewer to say nothing of the pure physicality required when handling them, would seem to confirm for me that accordion publications will continue to exert their special appeal to both artists and publishers alike well into the future.

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<sup>33</sup> This paragraph on the nature of the fold was informed by Gilles Deleuze: *The Fold*, in: *Yale French Studies: Baroque Topographies. Literature/History/Philosophy* 80 (1991), pp. 227–247.

Stephen Perkins

## Illustrations



Fig. 1: Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Enrique Chagoya and Felicia Rice:  
*Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Control* (2000/2002).

*Accordions at the border*



Fig. 2: José Manuel Mateo, Javier Martínez Pedro: *Migrant* (2014).

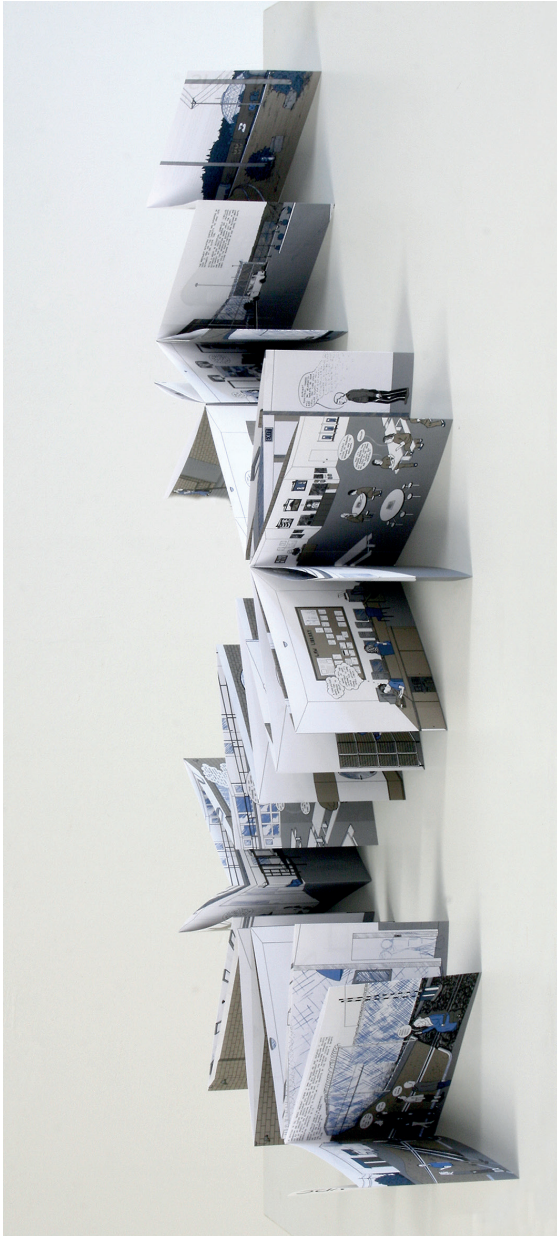


Fig. 3: Eroyn Franklin: *Detained* (2011).