

EXHIBITION

# These Thoughtful Wall Coverings Champion Latin American Heritage

An outing to Mexico Design Week and the proliferation of Latin American creatives in the international art and design world come together in El Muro, a new conceptual collection of fine art-turned-wall coverings by Wolf-Gordon.

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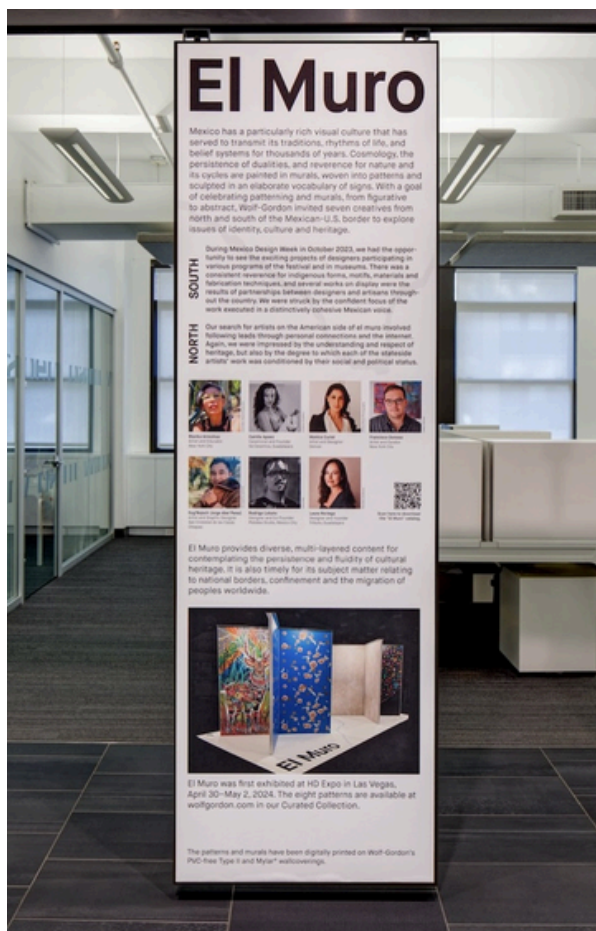


Installation photography of El Muro. Credit (all images): Courtesy of Wolf-Gordon.



Every spring, Wolf-Gordon unveils a conceptual collection of artist-driven wall coverings that respond to pressing issues of our time. Chief creative officer Marybeth Shaw curates each collection, which is unveiled to the world at one of the design industry's leading trade fairs (In 2023 the executive tackled the hot-button issue of AI "creativity.") This year's collection, El Muro, was a jubilant exploration of seven Latin American artists who are getting their due on the international design scene, and are addressing issues of heritage, identity, and belonging in the process.

El Muro, which translates to "wall" in Spanish and officially debuted at HD Expo in Las Vegas this past spring, brings together the wide-reaching work of seven Latin American artists. On a creative research trip to Mexico Design Week last year, Shaw found herself struck by the clarity of vision of the artists and designers participating in the fair's residencies and exhibitions. Throughlines of Indigenous traditions and future-facing optimism in the works on view left a lasting impression. So too did conversations with Shaw's good friend Raul de Lara, a fine artist who's also a DACA recipient and advocate. Before long, the groundwork was laid for El Muro: a collection that explores the way the U.S.-Mexico border and its politics factor into the practices and lives of Latin American creatives.



Right: Echoes of the Codex de la Cruz- Badiano: A Floating Tapestry of Indigenous Medicinal Wisdom by Blanka Amezkua.



Some of the talents behind El Muro include makers whose work Shaw saw at Mexico Design Week, such as ceramicist Camila Apaez, product and interior designer Laura Noriega, muralist Dyg'Nojoch, and industrial designer Rodrigo Lobato of Platalea Studio. While back in the States, de Lara introduced her to the work of interdisciplinary artist Blanka Amezkua and mixed-media artist Francisco Donoso. Online research led Shaw to Monica Curiel, whose poignant painted reliefs and functional artworks are all informed by her heritage and upbringing as the daughter of immigrants to the United States from Mexico.

Each of the seven artists' works began in their chosen mediums, which range from ceramics and painting to textiles, product design, conceptual art, and murals, which Wolf-Gordon translated to customizable wood veneer and Mylar wall coverings. One of the collection's most compelling aspects, though, is the sheer range of inspiration at play throughout. Each artwork-turned-wall covering is a deeply personal exploration of how its maker's country of residence exists in dialogue with the past, present, and future of their Latinx heritage. "I found the work to be very hopeful and positive," Shaw says, "and full of this forward momentum."



Left: Frontiers on the Land Are Bodily Frontiers by Camila Apaez; Right: Barro Blanco by Monica Curiel.



Take Donoso's *Boundless*. An artist of Ecuadorian heritage who lives in the U.S. as a DACA recipient, he uses acrylic, spray paint, ink, and colored pencil to render chain-link fences "as devices for dreaming of the other side," Shaw says, since his DACA status does not guarantee that he will be able to return to the U.S. if he were to leave. Even so, "it's very dreamlike, his imagining of the other side [of the border], and the color is hopeful," Shaw says of the mixed-media work that Wolf-Gordon digitized into the wall covering. Color also features prominently in the illustrated deer at the heart of Dyg'Nojoch's *Iconografía y Flora Animal* composition, which honors the vibrant palettes of Mexico's cultural festivals as well as the geometry of the textile arts from his home region of the Chiapas highlands. And Noriega's *Violet Spring*, with its abstraction of Guadalajara's Jacaranda blooms, is a "dream-like" ode to childhood idyll.

"It was so interesting to ask the artists to create something related to their Latin American heritage, regardless of whether they were North or South of the U.S.-Mexico border," Shaw says. "How that ended up being manifest was dramatically different, and that was the whole point of the exhibition."



Left: Fulgor/Glare by Rodrigo Lobato; Right: Violet Spring by Laura Noriega.



American-born sculptor Curiel pulls from childhood days spent accompanying her parents to their work on construction sites and cleaning houses to inform a Roman clay mural that “embodies the essence of my artistic journey and pays tribute to the skills passed down to me by my parents,” she says of her contribution, *Barro Blanco*. Apaez, a ceramicist whose sinuous clay forms in *Frontiers on the Land Are Bodily Frontiers* evoke the topography of her hometown of Guadalajara most directly addressed “the idea of crossing a frontier,” according to Shaw. Lobato’s *Fulgor/Glare* speaks to the dualistic significance of both Hispanic and pre-Hispanic religious iconography with its representations of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Coatlicue. Amezkua’s hand-drawn *Echoes of the Codex de la Cruz-Badiano* is the result of the five years the artist spent studying the 16th-century text of Aztec botanical medicine.

“There’s just so much strength and intensity there that I think it was just a matter of time before Latin American architecture, art, design, and heritage started to have just this outsized impact internationally,” Shaw concludes. “It’s time.”



Left: Boundless by Francisco Donoso; Right: Iconografía y Flora Animal by Dyg'Nojoch