

**JULIÁN CARDONA**  
Curated by Benjamin Alire Sáenz

October 20 – December 3, 2005  
(Opening Reception: Thursday, October 20, 6-8pm)

“His images of Juárez and the border made the familiar seem new—almost surreal, and yet precise.... This was a photographer trying to convey what his landscape was like. These were photographs of home.”  
—Benjamin Alire Sáenz

Sixteen years ago, Julián Cardona, a photojournalist from Juárez, Mexico, began documenting the devastating effects of globalization on the U.S.- Mexico border. The black and white photographs selected from a recent body of work called *Exodus* for this exhibition, create an intimate narrative that traces the artist’s reflections surrounding the violence, death, poverty, injustice, and despair that accompany life along the border. In the tradition of Manuel Alvarez Bravo and Nacho López, Cardona treats his subject concisely and clearly, while combining social commentary with artistic expression and creativity. Bearing witness to the desparate conditions taking place in Juárez and alongside the prosperity of its wealthy neighbor, Cardona chronicles the exodus of those trapped within this increasing disparaging socio-economic divide.



*Banished from Paradise*, 2004  
Gelatin silver print  
12 3/4" x 19 1/4"

As if mirroring the distinct realities of life in the U.S. vs. Mexico, Cardona’s work presents a study of contrasts. By framing his subjects in stark opposition to the land they inhabit, he simultaneously suggests absence and presence. In works such as *Banished from Paradise*, 2004, his subjects appear compositionally flattened by the proximity of his lens – silhouetted against the endless expanse of desert landscape which quietly recedes into the background. Layering both meaning and intent, the artist’s use of perspective and composition distorts the familiar through surreal-like acts of symbolism, and the biblical

fortitude of his image titles resonate with complex undertones of irony, humor, and rage.

While the power of Cardona’s work lies in imagery that both records and transcends moments of ordinary life, “the greatest virtue of Cardona’s images,” according to curator and poet Benjamin Alire Sáenz, “is that they convey not only the cruelty of a journey, but its many kindnesses without sentimentalizing or sensationalizing.”



*Guadalupe*, 2005  
Gelatin silver print  
12 3/4" x 19 1/4"

(over, please)

## RELATED PUBLIC PROGRAMS:

**Friday, October 21, 2005, 6:30-8:30pm at CUE**

**Two Readings: Benjamin Alire Sáenz & Zoë Heller**

**Benjamin Alire Sáenz**, poet and novelist, was born in Las Cruces, New Mexico in 1954. His first book of poems, *Calendar of Dust*, was awarded an American Book Award in 1991. He has subsequently published two other books of poetry, *Dark and Perfect Angels*, *Elegies in Blue* and the forthcoming *Dreaming the End of War*. His works of fiction include *Flowers for the Broken*, *Carry Me Like Water*, *The House of Forgetting*, and *Sammy and Juliana in Hollywood*. His most recent novel is entitled *In Perfect Light* published by Rayo/HarperCollins.

**Zoë Heller** was born in London. She is the author of two novels, *Everything You Know* and her Booker Prize nominated *What Was She Thinking: Notes on a Scandal*. Her work as a feature writer, critic, and columnist has appeared in *The Independent on Sunday* (London), *The Sunday Times* (London), *The New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, *Esquire*, *The New Republic*, *The London Review of Books*, and *The Times Literary Supplement*. Heller wrote a weekly column for London's *Daily Telegraph* from 1993 until 2004, for which she won the 2002 British Press Award for "Columnist of the Year." She has lived in New York since 1993.

## ARTIST'S BIO:

Born in Zacatecas, México in 1960, Julián Cardona migrated to the border city of Juárez with his family as a small child. He attended school in Juárez, received vocational training, and worked as a technician in the maquiladora industry. In 1991, Cardona returned to Zacatecas to teach basic photography at the Centro Cultural de Zacatecas; two years later, he started his photojournalism career at *El Fronterizo* and *El Diario de Juárez*. In 1995, Cardona organized the group exhibition, "Nada que ver-Nothing to See", in Juárez, featured in *Harper's Magazine* in December 1996. Photographs from this exhibition inspired the award-winning book, *Juárez: The Laboratory of Our Future* (*Aperture*, 1998). His photographs taken inside foreign-owned factories in Juárez were also featured in *Camera of Dirt* (*Aperture* 159, 2000).

Cardona's work has been exhibited at Houston FotoFest 98: "Stories About Us"; in "Borders and Beyond", an international group show organized by Pro Helvetia - Arts Council of Switzerland; in "Lines of Sight: Views of the U.S./Mexican Border", at galleries of the University of California at Riverside, Santa Cruz and Merced; and in "Photography Past/Forward: Aperture at 50", at Sotheby's New York in January, 2003 and in the Golden-Anniversary publication of the same title. In 2004, Cardona received the Cultural Freedom Fellowship Award from the Lannan Foundation of Santa Fe, NM.

*This exhibition received media support from the Mexican Cultural Institute in New York City. Opening reception sponsored by Corona.*

For additional information, please contact Beatrice Wolert-Weese, Gallery Assistant, CUE Art Foundation, 212 206-3583, or email [beatrice.wolert@cueartfoundation.org](mailto:beatrice.wolert@cueartfoundation.org).

*CUE Art Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit arts organization that is dedicated to supporting under-recognized artists via a multi-faceted mission spanning the realms of gallery exhibitions, professional development programs and arts-in-education.*

*CUE Art Foundation's operations and programs are made possible with the generous support of foundations, corporations, individuals, and its membership. Additional programming assistance is provided in part with public funds from The Experimental Television Center's Presentation Funds Program, supported by the New York State Council on the Arts.*