

JC Santistevan, MFA 2022

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Thanks again to my art history mentors for the invaluable support, knowledge, and inspiration provided during my time at Utah State University. They opened my eyes to art's historical and cultural significance. Their lessons augmented my academic skills, and their advice continues to inform my research and career goals. I carry forward the knowledge I received as I strive to make meaningful contributions to art education and photography.

Completing my MFA in Photography was a significant achievement for me, and I truly owe much of that to the support and guidance of Art History faculty. Their mentorship helped me hone my artistic vision for my MFA thesis exhibition, *Ni de aquí ni de allá*, which delved into the idea of belonging to two cultures—Mexican and American—while finding myself caught between them. By exploring themes of migratory patterns and everyday life, I aimed to present a metaphor for the Latinx experience in the U.S., one filled with complex tensions between individual and community and feelings of alienation and belonging.

Faculty mentorship went beyond the classroom; it greatly influenced my career trajectory. The guidance I received from Dr. Alvaro Ibarra helped focus my research interests and taught me how to navigate the often-complex academic landscape. I am incredibly thankful for his encouragement in my pursuit of a doctorate, including recommendations that helped earn my acceptance to Concordia University's Ph.D. Program in Art Education.

Diving into my research on exploring interactive art within the sphere of art education and focusing on how immersion can transform learning experiences in galleries and classrooms, I recognize that I would not be on this path without the solid foundation I built at Utah State, which emphasized the importance of critical thought at the intersection of art, history, and education.