

In an era characterised by ‘alternative facts’ and ‘fake news’, lies often masquerade as truth, while truths are swept aside as lies. Many art installations have addressed our collective manipulation by governments and corporations of ill intent, but few as compellingly as Stefan Brüggenmann’s ‘Truth / Lie’, unveiled in the Mexican border city of Tijuana on US Election Day.

The concept behind the artwork is simple: two neons in red, white and blue (according to Brüggenmann, it’s a palette that represents ‘turbo-capitalism’), placed back to back on a billboard site. The piece titled *Truth* spells out the word ‘Lie’, and conversely *Lie* spells the word ‘Truth’. This deliberate inversion reflects a world in which the distinction between fact and fiction has collapsed: ‘I feel I am at the traffic lights but all of the lights are shining’, comments the artist.

The piece was conceived without a specific location in mind. ‘I was looking for a public site anywhere in the world, from London, New York to Dubai. The sense of lack of certainty in truth is equally obscure in so many territories today, so I feel as though the piece would hold its own meaning to audiences in any number of locations,’ recalls Brüggenmann, who was born in Mexico City and now works between Mexico and London.

Still, when the present site – known as ‘the tunnel house’ – presented itself, Brüggenmann knew he had to look no further. The two-storey building has no

distinctive architectural features, and no existing billboard site, but its subterranean elements carry political significance – many years ago, this had been the entrance to a tunnel that connected Tijuana with its neighbouring San Diego, allowing illegal passage of goods and people alike. Its location on the Mexico/US border is also critical, allowing Brüggemann's installation to be seen from both countries, and pointing metaphorically to the semantic border created by the words 'truth' and 'lie'. Against a prosaic backdrop of metal fences, the installation shines brightly in the twilight sky, unmissable to anyone who is crossing the border.

The artist insists that 'the intention is not for the work to offer a conclusion, but to open up a question and place a doubt.' Still, given the choice of location and the extent to which immigration has been politicised in the US, it is difficult not to read this as an indictment of the Trump Administration. One can only hope that, by the time the installation is taken down – shortly after Inauguration Day in the US – our society will have begun to move on from the gaslighting that Brüggemann has so succinctly decried.

<https://www.wallpaper.com/art/stefan-bruggemann-truth-lie-installation-us-mexico-border-2020>