When the Los Angeles–based artist Nancy Baker Cahill created the augmented reality app 4th Wall in February, she wanted to share her art with a wider audience and give her works' viewers more agency. In its initial iteration, the app enabled people around the world to see Baker Cahill's works on paper and virtual reality drawings, which often focus on the human body as a site of struggle, as augmented reality—that is, transposed onto her viewers’ environment via their Androids, iPhones, and iPads.

“I’ve always been interested in imagining new models for public art,” she told ARTnews. “My long-term goal is that [4th Wall] will be a large-scale, public AR art exhibition that is ever-changing.”
On Friday, 4th Wall, which is available free of charge, launched a new feature, “Coordinates,” which allows users to activate site-specific pieces by Baker Cahill and five participating artists—Tanya Aguiñiga, Beatriz Cortez, Kenturah Davis (https://www.artnews.com/t/kenturah-davis/), Micol Hebron (https://www.artnews.com/t/micol-hebron/), and Debra Scacco (https://www.artnews.com/t/debra-scacco/)—through their smartphones and tablets. With the exception of Hebron’s and Scacco’s works, all of the AR projects on “Coordinates” are based on already existing artworks.

“I chose the artists based on the rigor, intentionality, and thoughtfulness that they bring to their work, and because they all tend to work topically,” Baker Cahill said. Many of the works, she explained, focus on immigration, liminality, and the idea that, like the artworks on “Coordinates” themselves, which exist both in reality and on the app, it is possible for someone or something to be “two places at once.”

The locations of the works are listed in a “news” section on 4th Wall, and Baker Cahill has also noted the best vantage points for the experience. While there are no real-world markers of their presence, arrows within the “Coordinates” feature direct viewers to the artwork nearest them. The pieces are locked to specific GPS coordinates, and each has its own visibility range. Any given work will appear on smartphone screens scaled to the user’s proximity to and distance from it.

Included in the project is Cortez’s sculpture Tzolk’in, a pyramidal work based on the Mayan agricultural calendar currently on view at the Hammer Museum’s Made in L.A. biennial and Los Angeles art space Bowtie Project. With “Coordinates,” the piece can be seen in AR-form in the Californian city’s Bowtie Park and by the Rio Grande in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, where the piece acts as a memorial Claudia Claudia Gómez González, who was shot and killed by a U.S. Border Patrol agent this past May in Texas.

Scacco’s work, The President Wilson, 1928, which the artist first conceived as a drawing, includes a segment of an interview with a woman who is to be reunited with her father after being separated during immigration proceedings. This audio component was pulled from the Ellis Island Oral History Project, and the work can be seen—and heard—from the Staten Island Ferry and New York’s Battery Park.

Aguiñiga’s Impotence Incarnate can be activated at the border wall in Playas de Tijuana, Mexico; Kenturah Davis’s Both at the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt; Hebron’s Eminent Domain at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles; and Baker Cahill’s Hurt Colors in Las Vegas, near the site of the October 2017 shooting.

“We are interested in stimulating discourse and doing it now, when we all acknowledge what a polarizing time we live in,” Baker Cahill said, adding that she plans to organize a
second batch of “Coordinates” projects with a new set of artists. The feature, she said, “offers a unique opportunity to do that in a thoughtful and intentional way. This is an opportunity for expanding dialogue, for taking up some space, and really asking people to consider what’s happening in these very specific locations.”

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