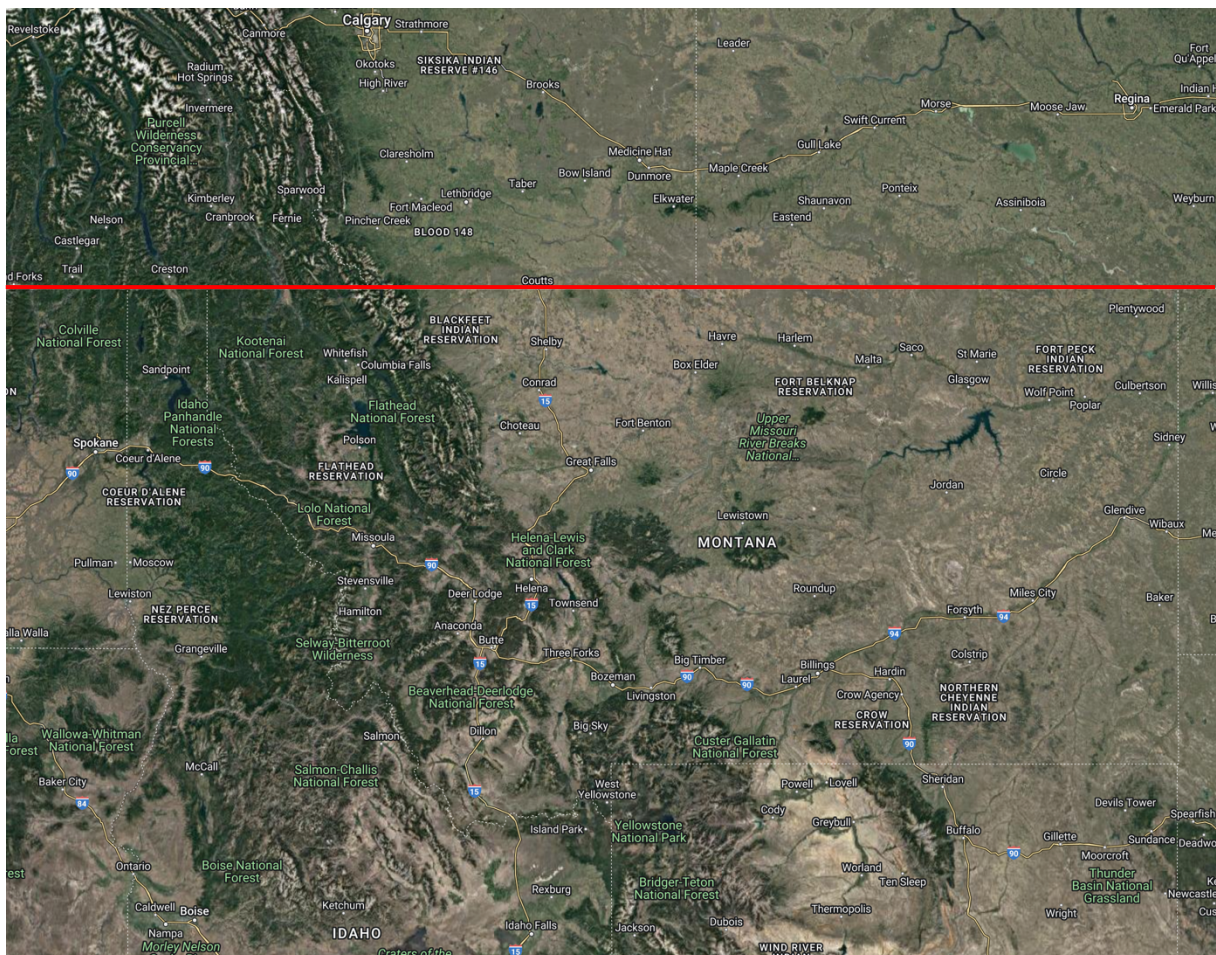


## The silent crisis

A crisis is quietly transpiring across the USA, where indigenous peoples and immigrants struggle with high rates of assault, abduction, and murder. Especially young women are disappearing or being found dead. Native American and Alaska Native community advocates describe the crisis as a legacy of generations of government policies of forced removal, land seizures and violence. Without sufficient involvement by law enforcement, far too many cases go unsolved, leaving grieving families to investigate on their own. The painter Brian Maguire reacts to this violence by memorializing victims in his works, and sharing their fates with the public as a way of representing the voices of marginalized groups whose stories are not widely disseminated.



**Image 1:** Overview of the state of Montana, showing the Flathead and Blackfoot Indian reservations, just south of the **Canadian border marked in red.**

The exhibition *law of the land* presents a selection of paintings from two of Brian Maguire's recent bodies of work: *Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (M&MIP)*, and *The Remains, Arizona*. The portrait series *Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (M&MIP)* was initiated during a residency at the Missoula Art Museum in 2021. The state of Montana is heavily affected by the ongoing crisis, where members of the many local indigenous tribes are missing in overwhelming numbers. After a series of meetings with organizations from the Blackfoot and the Salish tribes, Maguire agreed with some of the deprived families to produce a series of memorial portraits to express their tribulations. Acrylic paintings are rendered from photographs that family members have selected and given to him. Based on their stories, Maguire produces intimate renditions of the missing or deceased youth, aiming to capture their likeness and spirit.

While the paintings presented at Kunsthall 3,14 in themselves are telling of love and loss in their bold expressions, an important part of Maguire's artistic endeavor is to spread awareness of the silent crisis by sharing their stories:

**Selena Shelley Faye Not Afraid** disappeared on 01. January 2020, on the way home from a New Year's Eve party. Selena was driving with some friends when the car broke down at a rest stop between Billings and Harding in Montana. From that point on, it is uncertain exactly what happened, but allegedly Selena ran away from the rest stop on foot. While she was away, the others got the car going again, but only one of the other passengers remained at the rest stop. All we know is that after two weeks of searching organized by her aunt Cheryl Horn, Selena's body was found. Her aunt insists that the field where she was found had been searched thoroughly before, which means that someone must have moved Selena's dead body. Why or how remains a mystery, leaving the family with more questions than answers. To make it worse, this is not the first time a tragedy has hit this family: Selena's older sister Tristan Gray died in a hit and run accident in 2018, and one of her brothers was killed by a police shooting. At the young age of 11, Selena's twin sister died by suicide.

**Laurence "Lala" Kenmille** was brutally murdered by his cousin on 28. May 2013, at the Wild Horse Hot Springs, Montana. He was only 28 years old. In the police reports and local papers, the accounts of his death are presented as the result of a

heavily intoxicated night, emphasizing how Laurence himself was excessively intoxicated when last seen. During Brian's talks with the family, however, a different story emerges: the Kenmilles describe Laurence as a happy, funny guy.

**Miranda Rose "Rosie" Kenmille** was Laurence's older sister. After her brother's death, Rosie struggled with profound regret and guilt, as it was she who had introduced the murderous cousin to her brother. Seven years after her Laurence's killing, Rosie went missing from the Flathead Reservation mid-August 2020, at the age of 37. Her body was found three months later, on 25. November, close to where she went missing. For some reason, it took six months from her body was found until she was identified by DNA, deepening the family's sense of loss, as their beliefs require a speedy burial. It remains unknown why or how Rosie was killed. What we know is how her family and friends remember her. Rosie was a caring person, seeing to everyone's needs, taking particularly good care of her nephews and nieces.

**Ashley Heavrunner Loring** was 20 years old when she was last seen on 5. June 2017, on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. When Brian Maguire was introduced to Ashley's sister, she had been actively searching for the past two years. Ashley had been doing well in senior college when her mum moved to a small town some distance away from Browning, Montana. In the absence of a school bus, Ashley had to hitchhike to get to school and back, leaving her vulnerable to a group of adults who introduced and pushed her into narcotics. This young woman, who till this point had spent her days riding horses and singing, was pulled into a crowd whom the family sense to be responsible for her death. But what exactly happened is unknown, and Ashley's case is barely progressing. It took months before the FBI even looked at the case, and further months before the existing evidence was forensically examined.

**Leo James Wagner** went missing from the Blackfeet reservation on 27. April 2021, at the age of 26. Leo was the brother of the lead boxer in Montana, and up to puberty, he was also a successful boxer before he became a heavy drinker. Then, somewhere by a lake near Browning, Leo disappears. It remains unclear who and what affected his disappearance. To this date, a small cavalcade of cars and a tiny caravan can be seen leaving Browning most weekends to spend their spare time searching the lakeshore for Leo.

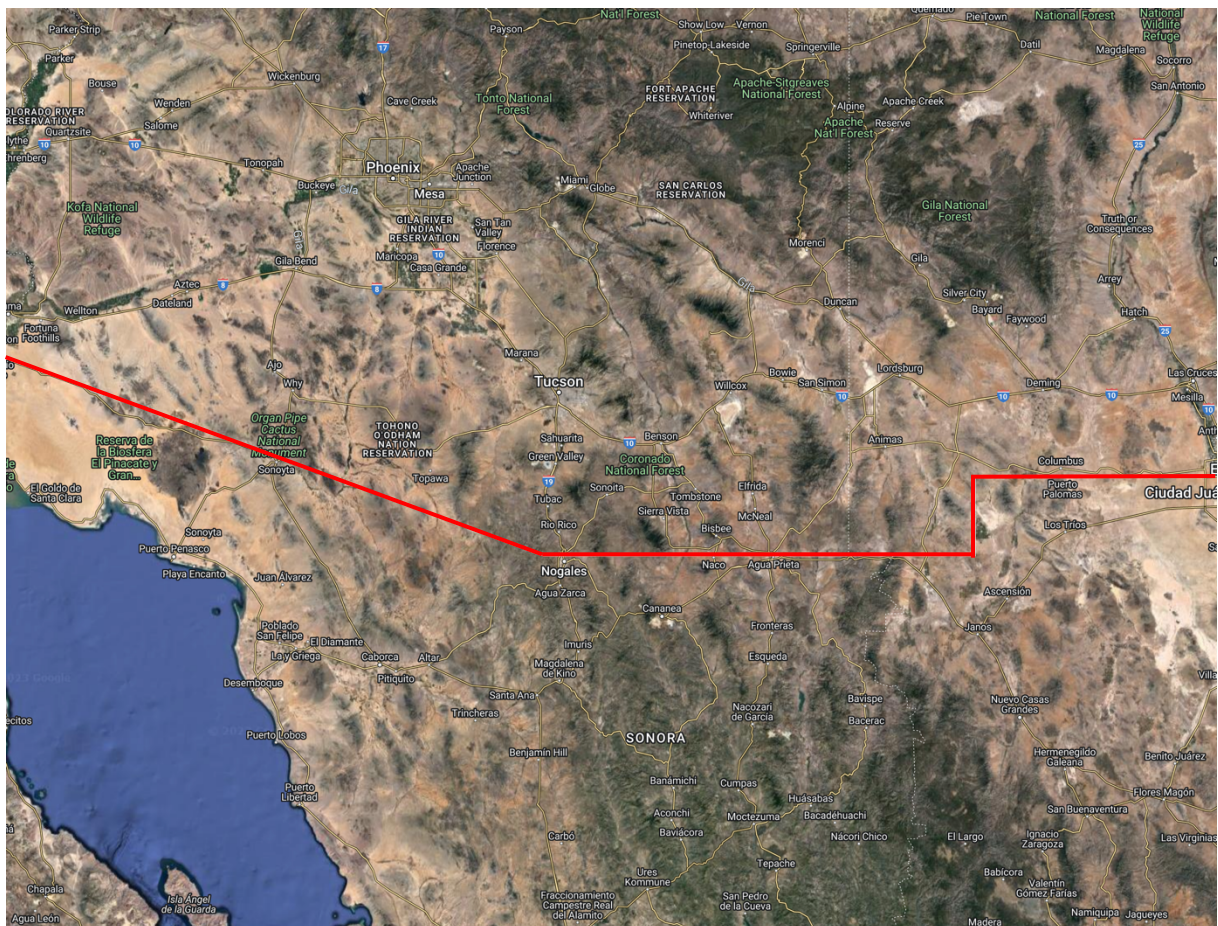
**Justin Lee Azure** was found shot dead on 18. May 2020, aged 22. His sister Justine tells the sad story of her brother's killing: one weekend, when the rest of the family left to visit relatives in another town, Justin decided to stay back with two of his friends. What happened next is not clear but when the family returned, Justin was lying shot through the back of his head under blankets and coats in his home. The police investigation concluded that Justin died by suicide, but to the family, this is clearly untrue.

**Arden "Ardie" Pepion** went missing on 22. April 2021, near Two Medicine River. The 3-year-old baby girl lived with her grandmother but was staying with her aunt and uncle at the time of disappearance. Footsteps leading to the river were found, but the girl remains missing. Family suspicions exist, but the slow speed of the investigation leaves evidence to be degraded. Her grandmother and friends remember Ardie as a smart and happy little girl, speaking of how she kept going until she could put her shoes on all by herself. The grandmother and three friends are still searching the area, looking for clues.

**Jermaine Charlo** went missing from Missoula, Montana 16. June 2018. The young mother of two was only 23 years old at the time of disappearance. Driving along the highway into Missoula, you will encounter Jermaine's image on a large billboard offering a reward for information leading to the arrest of those responsible for her disappearance. The family, however, does not expect her to be found alive. Their simple argument is that Jermaine loved her two little girls so much that she would never leave or stay away from them if she was alive.

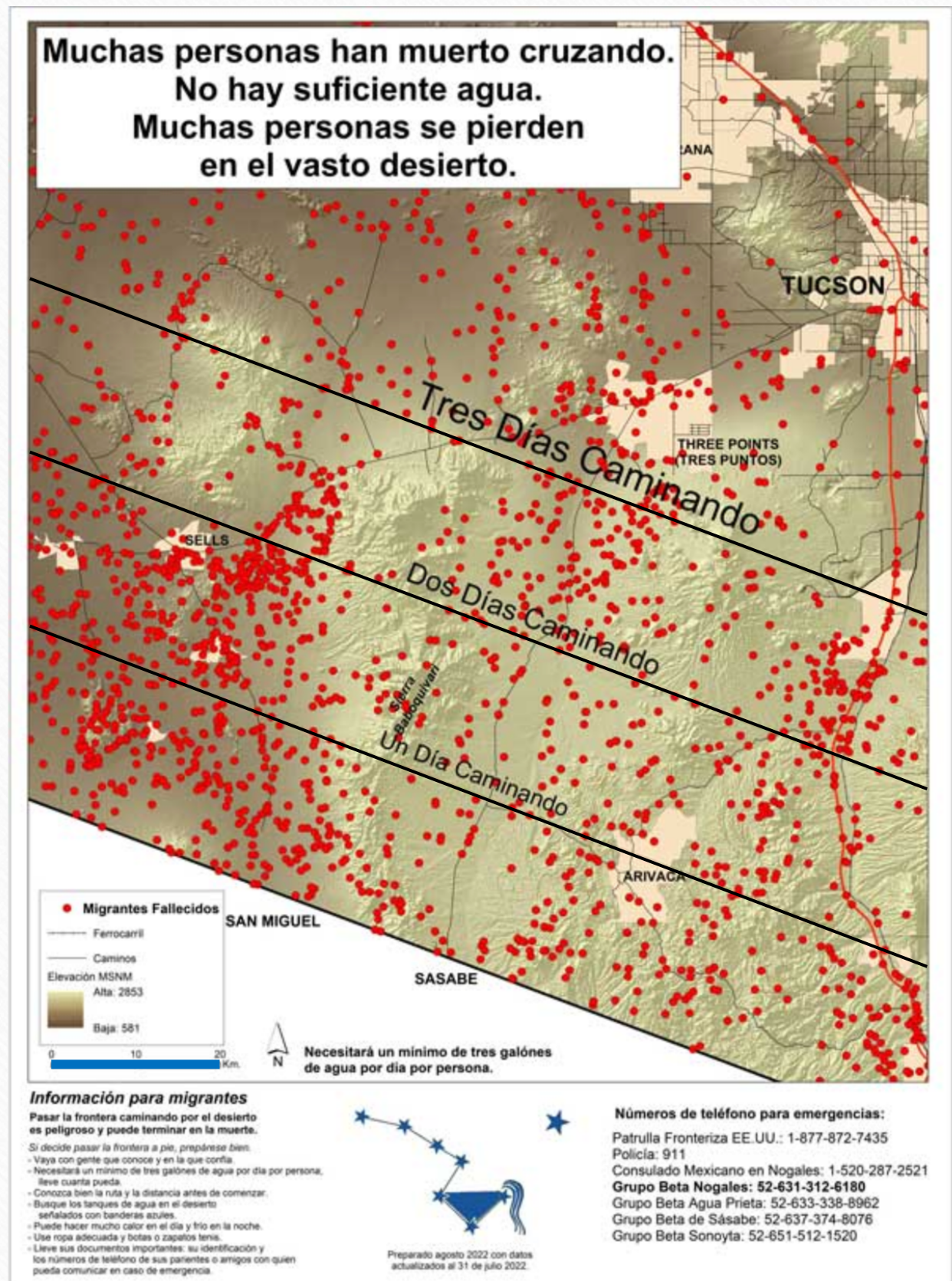


On the walls surrounding the portraits, you find a selection of largescale paintings from the series *The Remains, Arizona* (2021-). The landscapes are based on police cellphone photos of deceased people found in the border region between USA and Mexico, confronting issues of migration and the dangers facing people who risk their lives leaving their homelands for the USA. The boundless Sonoran Desert has a terrifying beauty in its infinite indifference to humans, its ever-changing light shifting from tangerine dawn, through pale afternoon, to indigo dusk. But death stalks this borderland, which is the hottest and driest place in all of USA and Mexico. This is no place for human beings without indigenous knowledge or protection against the heat. The numbers of unidentified bordercrossers that have been discovered are in the thousands, but no one knows the real number of bodies populating the desert sand.



**Image 2:** Overview of the border area between USA and Mexico where the vast Sonoran Desert stretches far into the state of Arizona. The red line marks the border between the two nations.





**Image 3:** Warning poster aimed at migrants on the south side of the US-Mexico border. The lines indicate the number of days it takes to cross the dry and hot land. It takes approximately three days to reach Three Points. The red dots indicate registered deaths of bordercrossers. Source: Humaneborders.org