

# 5 things you need to know about Alfredo Jaar's A Logo for America at the Vancouver Biennale

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Alfredo Jaar's A Logo For America 2018

Photo: roaming-the-planet

Look up, way up, at Robson and Granville Streets and you'll see a digital billboard that doesn't quite fit in with the logos and brand names that surround it.

In the first frame of the animated installation, the words "This Is Not America" are superimposed over a map of the United States. In the next frame, the text "This is Not America's Flag" runs over the stars and stripes; and then, in the last image, the single word "AMERICA" finds its "R" replaced by an image of the North and South American continents joined together.

The provocative question: What exactly is "America" today? The country that claims the term unilaterally? Or the wider continents that it spans?

Organized by American curator Jeffrey Uslip, it's the latest installation by the [Vancouver Biennale](#). It will be on view till August 26.

The biennale's theme this year is “re-IMAGE-n”, aimed at reimagining "a progressive social framework that supports free speech, reconciliation and the rights of First Nations, LGBTQ rights, artistic freedom, gender, racial and sexual equality, ecological awareness, religious freedom, and the ethics of biotechnology".

The biennale has already installed the chain-link mosque artwork [Paradise Has Many Gates](#) at Vanier Park.



Here are some facts you should know about *A Logo for America 2018* as you crane your neck to look at it while shopping downtown:

- *A Logo for America* was originally installed on a screen in Times Square in 1987, conceived as an electric billboard located among the sea of blaring advertising displays there at the time.
- When it debuted, the video caused a bit of a stir. Many viewers found it anti-patriotic; others took the words “This Is Not America” to be a slam on the then-seedy Times Square.
- As you’ve probably guessed, Jaar comes from one of the Americas, but not the one that calls itself America. He is a major figure in Chilean art, and has shown around the world, including two Venice Biennales.
- The 2018 video lasts 45 seconds and the new version uses high-def LED technology.
- Look closely at what Jaar’s creation is doing, and you’ll see him borrow directly from advertising strategies to rebrand the idea of what America is.

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