

Book Group Questions for *Art at Our Doorstep*

1. What is your general impression of the work found in this book? Based on your reaction, how would you describe San Antonio's cultural aesthetic? Does it seem to have identifiable subjects, tone, craft approach, effect? If so, explain, and if not, tell why. How do the literature and visual art being produced in San Antonio compare to work found elsewhere, say in Houston, New York, or Los Angeles?
2. Do you find repeated themes in the writing samples, such as the value of memory found in work by John Phillip Santos, Jan Jarboe Russell, Norma Cantu, and others?
3. Do you think editorial tastes affected the book's representation of the arts community? If so, how?
4. Pick your favorite piece of writing and tell why you like it. Why do you think you responded to it more than others?
5. Pick your favorite piece of artwork and tell why you like it.
6. Josefina Niggli, who went to high school in San Antonio and stayed to study playwriting, in 1945 published, among her poems and other plays, *Mexican Village*, a collection of ten novelettes later adapted into the popular movie, *Sombrero*. In 1970, Tomás Rivera, a migrant worker who became a vice president at the University of Texas at San Antonio, published *y no se lo tragó la tierra*, a novel that defined Chicano fiction. Rolando Hinojosa-Smith's and Marie Brenner's contributions are about experiences set during the 1960s. At the other extreme, five newer talents demonstrate contemporary concerns and styles: Evangelina Vigil-Piñon, Catherine Bowman, Jenny Browne, Oscar Casares, and Peter Streckfus. Do you notice any aesthetic changes over time in the city's literary output?
7. Besides widely recognized writers like Sandra Cisneros, Naomi Shihab Nye, Jacques Barzun, and Rick Riordan, contributors represent a range of professions: doctors, lawyers, professors, a high school teacher, radio/television personalities, journalists, screenwriters, cultural critics, publishers, a nonprofit director, and an academic administrator. Have these professional connections influenced the writing, say its content and/or perspective? If so, how, and if not, try to explain why.
8. Do you intuit a connection between each literary selection and its accompanying artwork? If so, pick one grouping and explain the synergy created between the pieces.
9. Why do you think this cover was chosen? How does it function as an introduction to the book's contents?
10. What do you think about the book's design: its size, format, typeface, reproduction of images? Does it effectively showcase the work?
11. Do you think a collection of a city's literary and visual art has any lasting value? If so, please explain your thinking.