

Intersections

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Exploiting exploitation: Yoshua Okon at the Carrillo Gil *



Mexico City artist Yoshua Okon opens a new solo show, Ventanilla única, at the Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil on Tuesday night. The show emphasizes recent video and photography previously not seen in Mexico, including his 2008 project White Russians, which focuses on a "family" living in the remote and desolate California high desert.

One of the most accomplished Mexican artists from the 90s generation, Yoshua's work consistently gets under your skin. On the surface it is humorous, bizarre or even abusive. But underneath it exposes uncomfortable barriers of class and culture, and in the lopsided relationship between subjects and documenters (where far too many artists, journalists, academics, and filmmakers lack a critical stance or approach).

"The excuse of the camera, the excuse of it 'being art,' offers you opportunities that everyday life does not allow you," the artist explains in this VBS documentary. In effect, Yoshua's practice is about exploiting exploitation, while directly implicating the viewer in the process. My favorite of his pieces, which I can return to over and over, are Lago Bolsena, Crabby, Presenta, Orillese a la Orilla, Rinoplastia, and Cockfight.

Okon and fellow artist Miguel Calderon were the original proprietors of La Panadería, the experimental arts space in the once tucked-away and forgotten Col. Condesa whose success eventually helped spawn ... the new Condesa. Among artists who belong to that period of Mexico City's avant-garde and have been covered previously in Intersections are Mariana Botey, Dr. Lakra, Ruben Ortiz-Torres, Teresa Margolles, Miguel Calderon and Eduardo Abaroa.

Ventanilla única is at the Carrillo Gil until early January 2010.

* Image above: White Russians, 2008. Performance. High Desert Test Sites. Joshua Tree, E.U. 8-9 Nov, 2008. 12-5pm.

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