

# Time Out New York

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## "Establishing Shot"

Artists Space, through May 1  
(see Soho).

**E**stablishing Shot" borrows its title from film, specifically the opening shot that creates the setting and tone for a scene. Here, the scene is the art world itself and, within it, the role of emerging artists vis-à-vis established ones. In other words, it's a pulse-taking show that puts a lot of pressure on the artists it has chosen to represent the trends it identifies. Fortunately, the work holds up pretty well.

Carlos Motta's wall of digitally manipulated photos of missing people downloaded from the Internet (they look like blurry Christian Boltanski images) connects conceptually to Dee Williams's photos of Berlin street signs, which are accompanied by texts describing the people for whom the streets were named. Gareth James's fragmentary sculptural portrait of his alter ego, Storm van Helsing, complements two films by a star-studded col-

Carlos Motta, installation view, *Pesca Milagrosa*, 2002-2004.

laborative that includes Douglas Gordon, Pierre Huyghe and Rirkrit Tiravanija. The films, *Vicinato* (1995) and *Vicinato 2* (1999), swap dialogue and characters until the possibility of a cogent narrative has been wiped out.

The show includes a disclaimer in the form of a statement by curator Christian Stettmeyer explaining that, in film, the establishing shot "is often marked by a failure to complete its task." Similarly, this group of works could have been linked just as effectively by another theme. Still, the show functions almost like a rebuttal to another, larger pulse-taking show uptown: the Whitney Biennial. While the latter, as many critics have pointed out, leans toward the decorative, retro-psychedelic and politically neutral, the works in this show offer up a smart *Cahiers du cinéma* conceptualism, invested in hidden histories.—Martha Schwendener

CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT: COURTESY 303 GALLERY; COURTESY BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART; COURTESY RONALD FELDMAN FINE ART; COURTESY ARTISTS SPACE.