

Art in Review

'Radical Localism'

'Art, Video and Culture From
Pueblo Nuevo's Mexicali Rose'

Artists Space
38 Greene Street
SoHo
Through Sunday

Mexicali Rose is an alternative art space in Pueblo Nuevo, a working-class neighborhood in Mexicali, a city on the Mexican side of the border with the United States. Established by the filmmaker Marco Vera in 2007, the space was designed as a community center, particularly for young people, whether born in Mexicali or relocated there in hopes of finding jobs. The space provides video instruction, workshops in a variety of arts and crafts, a film club and a gallery. The group show at Artists Space is a small but vigorous sampling of what is emerging from the project.

There is, for one thing, lots of inventive photography by Odette Barajas, Jose Miguel Salcido, Julio Torres and Rafael Veytia, all of whom approach portraiture in utterly different ways, while Pablo Castañeda's striking black-and-white paintings look photographically conceived. The show's selection of video is especially good: Iván Alejandro Martínez Zazueta's scenes from his parents' marriage; Alejandra

Ocampo's documentation of barrio swap meets; Paulo Aguayo's interview with a sage young Mexicali wrestler; and Alicia Carrillo's encounter with a transvestite named Manuel, who radiates a star-is-born magnetism in every frame.

A small selection of archival material — newspaper clips and so on — gives a sense of the poverty and political violence from which all this work has emerged. (A concurrently published book, "The Femicide Machine," by the journalist Sergio González Rodríguez, is an important complement to the show.) At the same time, a video called "Aquí Estamos," by Rubén Marrufo, suggests the binding and balancing power of community spirit as it records the effort that went into creating a huge mosaic, made from light-catching found materials, that is now a Pueblo Nuevo monument.

The show has been organized by Mr. Vera, along with the writer Chris Kraus and Richard Birkett. Mr. Birkett is a curator at Artists Space, which with this show again demonstrates that it is the most adventurous alternative gallery in Manhattan.

HOLLAND COTTER