

International Artist-In-Residence 09.3
Artpace San Antonio
Artlies 65, 2010



Mario Ybarra Jr., *S.A. to L.A.*, (detail) 2009, (No. 1–10); ink and acrylic paint on paper; photo by Todd Johnson; originally commissioned by Artpace San Antonio



Adriana Lara, still from *Artificial*, 2009; video; originally commissioned by Artpace San Antonio

What is this reality? Who are these people? What is an artist? These are the questions raised by the latest Artpace artists-in-residence, Adrian Esparza, Adriana Lara and Mario Ybarra Jr. Adrian Esparza tackles the perception of reality with a selection of works that emphasize the incomprehensible half of existence. Esparza employs a variety of media, which successfully activate each other: plastic meets steel, drawing becomes a huge print on vinyl, music inhabits the visual and craft enhances high art. A floor-to-ceiling curtain of bed sheets, sewn together to create a geometric patterned landscape, arcs across the center of the gallery demarcating reality and imagination while representing the U.S./Mexico border wall currently under construction. This wall will create a new reality, and depicting the barrier in cheap cotton points out the thinly veiled racism driving its construction. Echoing the scale of the curtain is a billboard-sized print on vinyl of a drawing manipulated to create some sort of analogue fractal. Smaller works including a spliced poster, felt letters and wind chimes are dispersed throughout the space. The combination of these diverse elements—isolated, pulled apart and reconstructed—nods to both the fragmented surreal and the totalizing monumental.

Mario Ybarra Jr. keeps it simple with a series of drawings in silver and black influenced by graffiti and early cartoon characters. Rows of figures are playful revisualizations and exaggerations of the stereotypical ways in which we present ourselves. We are all there somewhere, rearticulated through the wit of Ybarra. A murallike rendition painted on cardboard expands the smaller drawings into a larger-than-life collection of oddballs.

Adriana Lara's *Artificial* is a sparse collection of work with high conceptual gravity. Lara's installation questions the role of the artist and artistic creation and examines the logic of permanence, as well as the myths of genius and authenticity. She strips painting, readymades, video and print of their validity, exposing the faith we put in these objects and trivializing our expectations. Large-scale color-field paintings sit on the floor, leaning against the wall. They act like placeholders, surrogates or stand-ins—objects to represent "painting." Lara's two videos operate similarly. One is a compilation of footage of junkyards and clips of a woman with extremely long hair; the other, a montage of short clips of local artists working. The latter non-narrative compilation reveals the unglamorous inner workings of artistic production, reducing artmaking to the mundane and trivial tasks that comprise it.

A grouping of three bathroom fixtures sits in the center of the exhibition space; in Lara's video of artists, these were combined with other bathroom fixtures to spell out the word "Artificial" in a cornfield. Along with a suitcase elsewhere on the floor, this incongruent material satisfies the role of "sculpture." The inclusion of a large headshot of a man, a representation of "artist," completes her equation. Lara successfully demonstrates the fictive nature of the aura surrounding artmaking while furthering questions of artistic authorship. Perhaps for answers, we focus our critique on those who would wish to claim that role—the sycophantic celebrity curator.

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