

OFF FENCE.**Art on the Californian-Mexican Border**

Participating artists: Michelle Chong, Katya Gardea Browne, Ed Gomez, Luis G. Hernandez, Camilo Ontiveros

Opening: Fr, 23. April 2010, 8PM

Artist Talk: Michelle Chong from Los Angeles, 25 April, 4PM

Duration of exhibition: 24 April – 2. May, 2010 and by appointment

Open: Fri – Sun, 2-6PM

The exhibition project *OFF FENCE. Art on the Californian-Mexican Border* is an artistic platform with five positions, exploring the cultural overflow, overlap and tensions in the border region of Southern California and Northwest Mexico.

The artists from Los Angeles and Mexico City each deal with the theme of the border and its effects on Mexican and Mexican-American identity in uniquely different ways. **Michelle Chong** and **Luis G. Hernandez** produce prints and net.art works which investigate ethnic identity from a linguistic perspective. The video and photography work of **Ed Gomez** and **Camilo Ontiveros** artistically reflect the political and economic impact of cultural disruption and division. The video work of **Katya Gardea Browne** processes physical and geographic structures and reflects the formal aspects of borders as such.

The text and image collage *TRANS-Poster* (2010) by **Michelle Chong** uses found photo material that depicts the US and Mexico border in three different ways: policy making, human made structures and the natural geography of the region. The phrase "May I help you?" is looped in English and Spanish translations. The literal reading of the phrase changes through each translation. In her internet based work *Find Yourself Here* (2009), which was also shown in the 2009 Mexicali Biennale Chong investigates the fundamental aspects of migration and mobility.

The collage *LOS* (2009) by **Luis G. Hernandez** is part of his on-going project "NOW" (2004-present). He collages postcard announcements from Latino related exhibitions. From the colorful collaged bits and pieces the shapes spell out "LOS", a slang term for local gangs to refer to the city of Los Angeles. Here Hernandez is observing the phenomena that takes place in Los Angeles with presenting "Chicano shows." Many times the only requirement is that the artists are Latino, and not that their work is about anything related to Mexican-American issues.

Ed Gomez's work investigates the political implications of institutionalising the Chicano Art Movement of the 1960s and 70s. Using a didactic appropriated from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Gomez illustrates the American Second Amendment right to bear arms, by shooting bullets into and through the museum didactic using a machine gun, hand pistol and a submachine gun. The actions are documented and presented by digital video that is connotative of insurgent videos.

Camilo Ontiveros' work explores the economic implications of cultural rupture. He presents his work *CAUTION: the freeway interventions*, which took common freeway signs from the border zone with images of a running family on a bright yellow background, and by means of magentic strips added texts such as "WANTED" "CASH ONLY," and "NO BENEFITS." Ontiveros' symbolic signposts are pointed commentaries on the current political situation at the border.

The video *Tijuana Girl Crossing* (2009), by **Katya Gardea Brown**, an artist from Mexico City, explores the physical and geographic structures of the border region. Her video, filmed in 8mm film, documents a young woman who for a week wanders along the border between Mexico and the US. Her image is that of a constantly traveling figure in the landscape which we seldom see in full view. Through soft focus and zoom we are reminded of the aesthetic of observation cameras. Additionally, editing and the use of fragmentation refer to film as a medium and aim at a formal aesthetic category of borders as such.

Ed Gomez and Luis G. Hernandez are the founders and curators of the **Mexicali Biennale**, which interrogates the region between Mexico and California as an area of aesthetic production. Both artists, as well as Michelle Chong were participants in the second Mexicali Biennale (2009/10) which took place in Mexicali (Mexico), Tijuana (Mexico) and Los Angeles (USA).

OFF FENCE. Art on the Californian-Mexican Border was conceived and organised in cooperation with Michelle Chong and Ian Henderson from the Los Angeles based project space SHORT HOUSE.

Regine Rapp & Christian de Lutz (Art Laboratory Berlin)

In cooperation with:

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