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# Flash Art



*Katarzyna Kozyra*  
*"Pyramid of Animals"*  
*Sculpture*





## inSITE05

### VARIOUS SITES AROUND SAN DIEGO AND TIJUANA

InSITE05 is the latest edition of an event that, since 1992, has become a survey of art practices in the public domain. One feels tempted to call it a biennale which it tries very hard to demonstrate it is not. According to executive director Michael Krichman, what makes inSITE unique in its conception is the time invested in producing the works commissioned for the event. Several installations depended on residencies that began in late 2003. The site specificity of the work is indeed so overwhelming that it would take a couple of weeks for one to parade through San Diego and Tijuana — a good 50 miles of roads and criss-crossing of the international border — in order to grasp the whole event; definitely not a visitor-friendly exhibition. No other art show on the planet expands simultaneously in two cities located in such extremely different cultural environments. A result of migrant practices in Tijuana is shown in the video *Osmosis* by Aernout Mik. Installed

in a parking lot in downtown San Diego, it highlights the cultural practices of the border between Mexico and the US, where the exchange between first and third world takes particular twists, seldom reported in the media. The three million people sprawl is also a magnet for used cars, which are dumped in the suburban area, turning miles of desert landscape into junkyards, the outcome of an unregulated practice by foreigners who leave their cars behind and cash in on the insurance money back home, another sight in Mik's video as well. The event is also host to a two-part exhibition presented in Tijuana's Cultural Centre and the San Diego Museum of Art. Curated by Brazil's Adriano Pedrosa, "FarSites" displays the work of around 50 artists, ranging from Kendell Geers, Francis Alÿs, Melanie Smith, Jorge Macchi, Cao Guimarães, Thomas Struth and Joao Lauro, to name a few; all of whom demonstrate an acute vision

of the urban territories, and a lure for the decay in which the aesthetics and politics of the modern city have fallen. Pedrosa's proposed insight reveals the ways in which city dwellers transform their local turf into a personalized space through appropriation and intervention in the most subtle and ingenious ways.

InSITE has evolved into an ongoing program expanding twelve weeks, each month holding a special opening for a number of the interventions commissioned. The first of these inaugurations, held in August, presented the Mobile Transborder Archive, created by Ute Meta Bauer; Allora & Calzadilla's *Signs Facing the Sky*, a video installation at the San Diego International Airport, and Mark Bradford's project *Maleteros*, an intervention in the labor dynamic of porters at the Tijuana-San Diego border, among other projects whose common goal is to make visible the twists and

## N E W S



CAO GUIMARÃES, *Vitrola 2* from Gambiarra, 2002-04. Ongoing series. 18 photographs, Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.

turns of life in two cities, who are so close and yet so far away.

—Jose Springer

## Rainbow

### GALERIE SFEIR-SEMLER, BEIRUT

True to its title, "Rainbow," the latest exhibition to fill the vast space of Galerie Sfeir-Semler in Beirut, offers a full spectrum of work reflecting and refracting a multitude of genres, generations, and geographies. The show opens with large wall works by Sol LeWitt on one side, small geometric canvases by Robert Barry on the other. Using these two minimalist masters as brackets around the exhibition's entrance, reinforces the gallery's established aesthetic but also suggests that, after this point, anything goes. Indeed, the rest of "Rainbow" relishes in its own

aesthetic attention deficit disorder. Brilliant canvases by Tobias Lehner, Henning Kles, and Jonas Burgert illustrate why young German painting is so ascendant, mixing figuration and abstraction while lacing contemporary concerns into art historical conventions. A pair of paintings by Norbert Schwontkowski prove that less can definitely be more with a muted color palette and sense of humor about the human body. Like Galerie Sfeir-Semler's inaugural show "Flight 405," "Rainbow" endeavors to bring East and West closer together. Scattered throughout the show are works by Middle Eastern artists both young and established. One major achievement of "Rainbow" is that you'd never know the origins of the artists without consulting their bios. None of the works are rigidly rooted; all seem to celebrate global cosmopolitanism as the ability to sample everything freely and quirkily. Another major achievement of "Rainbow" is that, in introducing Middle Eastern painters, the show avoids all dominant schools of Middle Eastern painting — the

kind of popular work filling galleries in Beirut and Cairo, i.e. a highly decorative mishmash of 19th and 20th century art movements with a bit of local folklore thrown into the mix. The result is an exhibition full of surprises and discoveries, chief among them is a series by Egyptian Mona Marzouk called "The Morphologist and the Architect," with its candy colors and sinister, ambiguous forms.

Some are admittedly stronger than others. Lebanese painters Ziad Naccache and Yasmine Chatila are very young and it shows. Their work is weak and underdeveloped. At the same time, "Rainbow" marks the first appearance in Lebanon for Beirut-born, New York-based painter Nabil Nahas, a painter who has garnered a loyal following for his heavily textured canvases that are thick with colorful layers of tiny biomorphic forms. Represented in New York by Sperone Westwater, he's never been convinced that a Beirut show would be worth his while, in large part because no local gallery had the professional chops to mount his paintings. Galerie Sfeir-Semler seems to have rectified that.

The real revelation here, however, comes through the work of three

artists who aren't really painters at all — digital animations and drawings by Laleh Khorramian, computer-generated images by Setareh Shahbazi, and the astounding *Pursuit Curve* animation by Shahzia Sikander. Pulling painting upward and onward with new technologies, these works are, so to speak, "Rainbow's" pot of gold.

—Kaelen Wilson-Goldie

From left: NABIL NAHAS, *Sea Foam Green*, 1999. Acrylic and pumice on canvas, 60 x 90 cm. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Sfeir-Semler, Beirut. CHRISTINE STREULL, *Globe*, 2005. Acrylic and enamel on canvas, 150 x 140 cm. Courtesy Monica De Cardenas, Milan.

