



“TIJUANERIAS,” 2012

Hugo Crosthwaite

INSTALLATION VIEW

PHOTO: COURTESY LUIS DE JESUS LOS ANGELES

LOS ANGELES

Hugo Crosthwaite: “Tijuanderias” at Luis De Jesus Los Angeles

The ability to capture the strangely atavistic nuances of any counter-culture can be a daunting proposition at best, yet Hugo Crosthwaite approaches his subjects—all from the darkly mythic border town of Tijuana, including prostitutes, drug-addled adolescents, murderers or madmen—with wit, sensitivity and compassion. In his first solo exhibition at Luis de Jesus Los Angeles, titled “Tijuanderias,” Crosthwaite presents us with 102 ink drawings, small in scale and intensely realized in both content and form, as well as a large-scale installation in the back gallery comprised of an 80-foot-circumferential mural, divided into distinct sections and made of charcoal, graphite and ink on archival rag board. Crosthwaite’s intimate drawings, impeccably rendered in ink, present a fluid definition of an ever-expanding culture wherein Tijuana is seen as the complicated backdrop for a variety of distinct and riveting characters. Crosthwaite’s subjects range from a modern-day Madonna, feeding the city below with her breast milk to a rabid tattooed dog roaming an empty yard, to a naked woman being sucked literally into a small taco stand. This last image in particular exemplifies Crosthwaite’s larger intentions, suggesting that the city itself is perhaps its own living being, albeit sometimes sinister, yet roiling and fiercely alive.

The installation in the gallery’s back room further expands Crosthwaite’s nuanced sense of humor, as a young girl sits aghast and crying in a makeshift, drugstore rocket ship, a demented teddy bear at her side in one panel, while in another, a woman wrestler chokes a man in a death grip until he submits (throughout the work, the relationship between men and women is constantly shifting and complex.) The idea of leaving specific identifying marks on city walls is very much a part of Crosthwaite’s project, as seen in the white outlines of bodies, crudely drawn and often menacing; in one instance, a young girl stands flanked by the ghost image of a man’s hands over her ears, either shielding her from harm or preventing her from further knowledge of herself. Yet despite these often disturbing scenarios, it is clear that Crosthwaite has been seduced by the sheer living vibrancy of the culture, and this body of work is an attempt to deepen the familiar image of Tijuana as a darkly perverse and violent border town. Individuals live and die here, and one has the sense from looking at these images that there is tremendous dignity in that.

—EVE WOOD