



LUIS DE JESUS LOS ANGELES



By Angela Carone  
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## Hugo Crosthwaite's Work of Brutal Beauty



**DWANE BROWN:** The San Diego Museum of Art has an artist drawing on one of its walls, and you can watch a video of it! Joining us to talk about a new exhibit called Brutal Beauty is KPBS arts producer and Culture Lust blogger, Angela Carone. Angela, tell us about this artist that's drawing on a wall at SDMA.

Left: Hugo Crosthwaite at Boffo Projects in New York, in front of one of his wall drawings. The wall drawing shown here is in progress.

**ANGELA CARONE:** Hugo Crosthwaite is an artist from Tijuana. He lived there for many years, went to school here in San Diego and now lives in New York but he's back in town for this exhibit. Crosthwaite is a draftsman, he draws with pencil and charcoal. This show at the museum features 11 of his drawings and then the centerpiece, which is an 8x10 wall drawing that he's actually creating on site. So for the next three weeks, you can go to the museum and see him at work.

**ALAN RAY:** What's the drawing of?

**ANGELA CARONE:** Well he just started, so when I was there, there was only a man's face and shoulders. Where it will go from here, who knows. Crosthwaite actually makes it up as he goes along – his works are improvisational. He does know that the wall piece is going to be about the relationship between Tijuana and San Diego and it will likely have two figures, one metaphorically representing Tijuana and the other San Diego, and then something will happen between them, he doesn't know what – it could be a fight, it could be an embrace, he's not sure. Crosthwaite's often inspired by classical painting, both formally, and in subject matter, and I spoke with him earlier in the week and here he describes a painting that's inspiring the wall piece.

**HUGO CROSTHWAITE:** One of the images that stuck to me as I started drawing yesterday, I just did a face, it came into my head an image of Goya's black paintings – there's this painting of these two figures, these two brothers, clubbing each other to death and their sinking. And I thought that could be the image



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that I'm doing here, two figures having a narrative, there's this duality to them, they're either reconciling or in conflict.

DWANE BROWN: It's going to be interesting to not only watch him work but see where the story of the painting goes.

ANGELA CARONE: Definitely, there is this kind of suspense to it. And like you said, it's interesting to watch him work. You can do that in person at the museum or through [this live video feed](#) on the museum's website. There are actually video cameras on Crosthwaite, filming him all day as he works.

ALAN RAY: What happens to the wall piece once he's done with it.

ANGELA CARONE: This is where it gets even more interesting. After painstakingly drawing this piece for two weeks, 8-10 hours a day, Crosthwaite will spend a week destroying it or, as he says deconstructing it. What he'll do is paint white squares over different parts of the drawing. He started doing this in New York after he'd finish a big wall piece and I asked Crosthwaite why he does this and here's what he said:

HUGO CROSTHWAITE: There was always the notion that it would be white washed destroyed at the end. So then I didn't want, I was ashamed to think of somebody else just destroying the piece, so then I thought the destruction of the piece could be part of the drawing.

ANGELA CARONE: Crosthwaite goes on to say that because the drawing portion is unplanned, the deconstruction of it with the squares is the planned part. He goes in and consciously deconstructs the story he's created by putting these squares in and covering clues and details of the story. He said he also really likes the idea that he's pixelating the drawing out of existence, which is a nice way to describe it.

DWANE BROWN: Having grown up in Tijuana, does he often use the city as his subject matter?

ANGELA CARONE: Absolutely, in fact, let's have him tell us about that...

HUGO CROSTHWAITE: Of course, just living in Tijuana. It's a very baroque environment, the whole city is very chaotic visually it's a city that isn't planned and is a city that just organically grows pretty much like my drawing does.

ANGELA CARONE: Crosthwaite goes on to talk about how immediate drawing is, and how he'd go out with a small sketchbook and draw the characters and architecture of the city and then he would use bits and pieces of those to create his own narratives.

DWANE BROWN: The exhibit Brutal Beauty opens at the San Diego Museum of Art today. You can see images of Hugo Crosthwaite's work and learn more about him on Angela's Culture Lust blog on KPBS.