



LUIS DE JESUS LOS ANGELES

# Notes on Looking

Contemporary Art in Los Angeles

## Cruzando la frontera sin cruzar: Hugo Crosthwaite

Posted on [May 19, 2012](#), by [Carlyn Aguilar](#)



Crossing the U.S.-Mexico border is always exciting and adventurous, as I never can predict what is going to happen *en el otro lado*. [Luis De Jesus](#) in Culver City just made the drive to TJ a lot shorter for us Angelinos. Upon entering Tijuana-born artist [Hugo Crosthwaite](#)'s exhibition *Tijuanerias*, the viewer crosses this symbolic *frontera* into the border town. His 102 small ink drawings are aligned one after another, which reflect the lives of the people that inhabit this transitional, diverse place. Images of street dwellers, young couples, prostitutes, outcasts, children, workers, drug dealers, *narcos* and everyday people mingle with (and perhaps become) bizarre animals (let's not forget those striped donkeys, otherwise known as the Tijuana Zebra or zonkey), mermaids, *calacas y calaveras*, spirits and angels. The images depict the grotesque, referencing Goya's "Caprichos". Some are waiting, some are crossing; they are all inhabiting this in-between place that looks like *purgatorio* for that same moment in time.

They live amongst the buildings and cables with the ubiquitous border wall as the backdrop, sometimes covered in graffiti, sometimes touched by a *rotulista*. And for those of us who know (and love) this city, we recognize, romanticize and eventually grow nostalgic for it.

Each drawing is a page in the lives of these characters. Crosthwaite introduces the narrative but doesn't finish it for us. *Como en una telenovela*, we must face the drama but are always left hanging. Once you've passed *la frontera* of the first gallery space, you then enter the dreamy enlarged world of these same characters. The viewer is invited to share the space and delve deeper into *la vida de Tijuana*.