

For Immediate Release

Xandra Ibarra: Forever Sidepiece

August 29 - October 27, 2019

Opening Reception: Thursday, August 29, 6 - 9pm



Xandra Ibarra, *Ya Estuvo*, 2016. Two channel video with sculpture elements. Image courtesy the artist.

Knockdown Center is pleased to present ***Xandra Ibarra: Forever Sidepiece***, the first NYC solo exhibition of Oakland-based artist and performer Xandra Ibarra, who also works under the alias La Chica Boom, including works made between 2012 - 2019. Ibarra's practice is rooted in performance and extends to sculpture, video, and photography. Using charged signifiers like Tapatío bottles, nipple tassels, and cockroaches, she exposes how entangled notions of desire and respectability are bound to racialized and gendered schema. Embodying and exploiting states of abjection, exhaustion, pleasure, and excess, Ibarra explores the condition of the sidepiece.

A sidepiece is a woman on the side – her relationships privilege the physical and take place on the periphery. For Ibarra, however, the sidepiece's position in the margins enables her to sidestep grand narratives; she contains a multitude of parts that exceed a univocal reading. Ibarra describes her body and her work as “an unresolved split of juxtaposed meanings; a fleshy border encountering the interplay of humor, erotics, language, aesthetics, and time in halves.” Ibarra's vocabulary of sex acts, cruising, refusal, and withholding claim the sidepiece as not just a figure but a charged position from which to act.

Ibarra's first performance works were burlesque acts the artist calls “Spictacles,” which she performed as La Chica Boom between 2002 to 2012. These acts exploit and subvert stereotypes of Mexicanidad and femininity through spectacle, parody, and camp, and are represented in the exhibition by a suite of videos she made after retiring the La Chica Boom persona. Early sculpture and video works repurpose the Tapatío hot sauce bottle as a makeshift strap-on, in order to critically probe at the eroticization of race and essentialist fantasies that prop up stereotypes of the “spicy” Latina. In the video *Fuck My Life* (2012) and performance photographs such as *Molting Showgirl* (2014) and *Carcass* (2014), Ibarra aligns herself with the cockroach – an insect bound to associations with race, class, and immigration. She identifies with the cockroach's process of molting – when the insect sheds and regenerates its exoskeleton only to look exactly as it did before – to articulate how her body is rendered an empty signifier, embodying ongoing states of stuckness, failure, and exhaustion.

In later works, Ibarra removes her body from view, or controls the terms of its legibility. Employing her excess bodymatter, Ibarra produces an ongoing series of Rorschach prints titled *She's on the Rag* (2013 - ongoing), using her menstrual blood as medium in a mischievous take on abstract painting. New sculptures such as *Ass Tassels* (2018), *Strobelight Honey* (2018), and *Ellie Jante Demoniac Pleaser Reflections* (2018), combine materials and objects like mold, nipple tassels, stripper heels, and car parts in order to enliven the bodily attributes of inanimate matter, extending the thrust of her performance-based work to sculptural form. Her body reappears in video works *Ya Estuvo* (2017) and *Turn Around Side Piece* (2018), which capture Ibarra performing actions that are typically at work for an outside gaze – like the purposeful bouncing of a showgirl – extended into an endless loop.

Coursing through this multifaceted body of work is a nuanced conversation that employs humor to address race, sex, and gender. Ibarra's ongoing refusal of finality is a strategy that allows her to exhaust, undermine, and sometimes exceed representation, creating pathways for the radical and not-yet-known potentials that are waiting on the sidelines.

Organized by Alexis Wilkinson, Knockdown Center Director of Exhibitions and Live Art.

Xandra Ibarra, who sometimes works under the alias of La Chica Boom, is an Oakland-based performance artist from the US/Mexico border of El Paso/Juarez. Ibarra works across performance, video, and sculpture to explore abjection and joy and the borders between proper and improper racial, gender, and queer subject.

Ibarra's work has been featured at El Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (Bogotá, Colombia), Broad Museum (LA, USA), Popa Gallery (Buenos Aires, Argentina), Joe's Pub (NYC), PPOW Gallery (NYC), Anderson Collection (Stanford) and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (SF) to name a few. She has been awarded the Queer Art Prize for Recent Work, Art Matters Grant, NALAC Fund for the Arts, ReGen Artist Fund, and the Franklin Furnace Performance and Variable Media Award. Her work has been featured in *Artforum*, *Paper Magazine*, *Hyperallergic*, *Huffington Post*, *ArtNews* and in various academic journals nationally and internationally. Ibarra's work has also been featured in several recent and forthcoming books by Juana Maria Rodriguez, Amber Jamilla Musser, and Leticia Alvarado.

As a community organizer, Ibarra's work is located within feminist immigrant, anti-rape and prison abolitionist movements. Since 2003, she has actively participated in organizing with INCITE!, a national feminist of color organization dedicated to creating interventions at the intersection of state and interpersonal violence. As a lecturer, Ibarra has taught Ethnic Studies, Sexuality Studies, and History and Theory of Contemporary Art courses. Adjunct, full, and part-time teaching posts have included: San Francisco Art Institute, California College of the Arts and San Francisco State University.

About Knockdown Center

Knockdown Center gallery hours are Thursday and Friday from 4 PM to 8 PM, Saturday and Sunday from 2 PM to 7 PM. Knockdown Center is located at 52-19 Flushing Ave, Maspeth, NY 11378.

Featuring programming of diverse formats and media, Knockdown Center aims to create a radically cross-disciplinary environment. The particularity of our architectural environment and history leads us to gravitate toward projects that demonstrate a sensitive reactivity to site and environment.