

## 10 Others to Seek Out at the Whitney Biennial

Friday, March 7, 2008

Here, in alphabetical order, are 10 artists who made some of the most striking works in the 2008 Whitney Biennial.

*Natalia Almada's* "Al Otro Lado" ("To the Other Side") is a 66-minute film about a young Mexican composer of the folk ballads known as corridos. The film shows him as he prepares to cross illegally into the United States, while it also documents the way corridos have crossed the border first.

*Walead Beshty* presents photos of the old Iraqi regime's defunct embassy in East Germany. He shot them on color film damaged by airport X-rays. The images are about decline and decay.

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*Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn* (both women) present a quirky, low-rent video of a blonde in a viking outfit who trawls for "action" -- we never discover what kind -- on the streets of Los Angeles.

*Fritz Haeg's* "Animal Estates Regional Model Homes," placed on the Whitney's front stoop, provide potential housing for the animals that graced the site before man got there -- just in case those eagles and beavers should ever want to come back.

*William E. Jones* presents, very nearly without alteration, an hour's worth of secret footage shot in 1962 by cops camped out in a men's restroom in Ohio. As it successfully hunts for homosexual acts, the eye behind the lens feels lascivious. It also seems cruel.

*Spike Lee* contributed "When the Levees Broke," a four-hour film which is said to provide one of the most telling and subtle accounts of the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina.

*Sherrie Levine*, an art-world veteran and pioneer, continues with her well-known appropriation art. In a work called "After Stieglitz," she copies the great photographer's almost-abstract "Equivalent's" cloud photos -- though using so few pixels in the copying that the original soft forms become hard-edge abstractions.

*Daniel Joseph Martinez* contributes "Divine Violence," in which each of 92 golden panels bears the name of an organization that has sought to change the

world through violence. Among them: the Red Brigades, the Bader-Meinhof Gang, the CIA and MI6.

*Adam Putnam's* installation "Green Hallway (Magic Lantern)" is a kind of crude dollhouse made of cardboard, cellophane and a bare electric bulb. It works like a magic lantern, casting images of its interior onto the museum wall.

*Michael Smith* has created a sad-sack alter ego called Mike, who for years has been the focus of his performances and videos. At the Biennial, Mike is seen posed in a series of class pictures, surrounded by the real college students Smith teaches. Or this time are we seeing Smith himself?

**-- Blake Gopnik**

*The 2008 Whitney Biennial* runs through June 1 at the Whitney Museum of American Art, 945 Madison Ave., New York. A separate component, focused on performance and installation art, runs through March 23 at the historic Park Avenue Armory, eight blocks south of the museum. Call 800-WHITNEY or visit <http://www.whitney.org>.