

← Back to Original Article

## Review: Mario Ybarra Jr. deftly mixes reality and fiction

March 08, 2013 | By Holly Myers

In "Double Feature," his first exhibition with Honor Fraser, Mario Ybarra Jr. explores the probably universal impulse toward cinematic identification, playing with the ways in which we project ourselves into the roles we encounter on the silver screen — or the flickering pixels of late-night television, as the case may be.

The work is not especially subtle. In "Transformer," a short video projected in the back gallery, the artist offers a decidedly hammy performance combining elements of "An American Werewolf in London" with Michael Jackson's "Thriller." A series of large, occasionally garish self-portraits in the front room depicts Ybarra in the iconic roles of Dr. Jekyll, Mr. Hyde, the Invisible Man, and the Creature from the Black Lagoon.

Beneath the blunt surface, however, lies a more nuanced network of oddities, jokes and cultural insights. In one of the two Invisible Man portraits, for instance, Ybarra depicts himself in the hat, glasses and face mask typically employed to give visual form to that character, but with his own identifiably particular facial features — the features, not incidentally, of a young Latino man — clearly visible behind them.

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A gag on the one hand, implying an absurd misreading of the function of the props, the inclusion points more seriously as well to deeper and more complicated dimensions of the concept of invisibility as it pertains to race, gender, and the figure of the artist in society.

In the back room of the gallery, Ybarra re-creates the "Scarface Museum," an installation of memorabilia from the famous Al Pacino film that was the artist's contribution to the 2008 Whitney Biennial. A banal, if obsessive, collection at a glance — "Scarface" movie posters, "Scarface" action figures, "Scarface" key chains, "Scarface" tennis shoes — the array takes on a different meaning when you learn, as is noted in the press release, that it belongs to a childhood friend of Ybarra's who was himself imprisoned for dealing drugs and who looked to the Al Pacino's character as a hero.

It is this deceptively deft weaving of the collective and the personal, the fictive and the all too real, that resonates through the show, and through much of Ybarra's work as a whole.

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**Honor Fraser**, 2622 S. La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, (310) 837-0191, through March 16. Closed Sunday and Monday. [www.honorfraser.com](http://www.honorfraser.com)

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