

'LIBRES Y LOKAS'

Finding the punk in Monterrey's wrestlers and queens

Ivete Lucas and Otis Ike shepherd me around their home, through a maze of masked wrestlers and sequined drag queens, campaign banners in Spanish, gay porn mags, pictures of Pope John Paul II. It's quite dizzying, then the bigger picture comes into focus. It's a shrine to Monterrey, Mexico.

"Libres y Lokas," their new multimedia installation at Domy Books, culled from images and interviews the filmmakers/photographers shot in Monterrey during two trips, seeks to connect the dots between different generations of transsexual performers and small-time wrestlers they met in the impoverished city, where Catholicism still rules. On one stage, performers wait for a chance to drive a piece of glass into another man's skull; on another, they find catharsis and identity through song – another type of bloodletting.

Lucas, who grew up in Monterrey, plays a clip of Adriana, onstage in a black gown and wig at Muxets, one of the few gay bars in town. Lip-syncing to a regional hit, she efficiently changes into men's slacks and a button-down shirt, hastily wipes off her makeup, and rips off her wig. On another screen, two libres grapple intimately on a dirty floor, as children and beer-swilling grandmas scream at them. It's all performance, and the dots are not so far away.

– Audra Schroeder



Austin Chronicle: You mentioned these performances felt like punk to you.

Otis Ike: Growing up with punk music, there was something very inspiring in that, which I've lost touch with and which we've both found again. The frustration of not being understood by society. People building their own arenas, making costumes, working shit jobs so they can buy masks and uniforms, then just cutting the shit out of each other, for no money, so grandmothers can yell curse words at them.

Ivete Lucas: A release of emotion, of true emotion. With the wrestlers, it's anger. With the trannies, it's years of failed relationships and sexual frustration.

AC: And it comes out via performance.

Ike: The drag queens were more at peace with their lives, in love with music and performing, in love with having their picture taken. The wrestlers definitely have a more



problematic life. Still, there's this GG Allin craziness to the matches, which you don't find that often anymore. We were very into the performance. These are people with nothing, trying to find a way to express their frustration. In these tranny clubs, it's chaos. Then you've got clubs where wrestlers strip.

Lucas: They do it, and it's not filtered by the media there. It's raw. It's their own motivation. They have to do this, which was part of what drew us to them.

AC: How does religion figure in?

Lucas: The wrestlers pray to the Virgin before each match, and they have shrines in their houses. So do the drag queens, even though the church is against homosexuality. Adriana blesses the crowd before her performances, but there's a reason the clubs are so dark.

Ike: The wrestler really struggles, if he's Catholic, with going against what he believes. ... He'll wrestle once in an evening of match-

es, beat the shit out of someone for an hour, but the tranny, from 1am to 5am, will perform maybe eight times, and that's including change of makeup and character. With both, it's always just waiting for the call for the next gig.

AC: Back to punk rock.

Ike: Yeah, that feeling of, "When's it gonna happen?" Well, for the wrestlers. Mexico is about exploitation. The trannies have real peace. They're in this DIY scene. They have so much respect and love from the gay community and from women. There's a lot of machismo there, and women are often kind of tossed aside by their husbands. So they see the trannies as sensitive and effeminate, and they perform and love the same music. In a perfect world, they have a nice life.

"Libres y Lokas" runs Aug. 1-Sept. 3 at Domy Books, 913 E. Cesar Chavez. An opening reception on Saturday at 7pm will feature live transformations by local drag queens. For more information, visit www.domystore.com/austin.



In surveying this summer's surge in classical drama on local stages ("Classics Comeback," July 3), I asked playwright-director Will Hollis Snider what drew him to the ancient Greek tragedy of *Orestes* for his latest work. His full response wasn't included in that story, but with Cambiare Productions opening the show this weekend, it seemed an apt time to share it. – Robert Faires

Will Hollis Snider: What drew me to *Orestes* above all else are its themes, and one in particular hits me quite personally. This young man has been told his entire life that his destiny is to one

'ORESTES' Questioning destiny

day return home to kill his mother. He's commanded by Apollo to do this, and if he refuses, he will live a life in torment. He follows this command blindly, and when he commits the deed, he is tormented by furies for doing exactly what he was commanded to do. Afterward, he begins to question these commands.

I've always been fascinated by characters dealing with their faith. Two of my favorite plays are Peter Shaffer's *Equus* and Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*. Both are essentially about a man questioning his faith. This theme barely scratches the surface in Euripides' original – *Orestes* questions Apollo's commands but only sparingly – but it resonated so much with me that I wanted to explore and enhance it in my own production. And if this theme resonated so much with me, it has to resonate with a potential audience, too – at least I hope so. Ordinary people have been questioning their faith for millennia. *Orestes* commits a heinous act because God told him to, and acts much worse than [the one committed by] *Orestes* are carried out daily in the name of God. *Orestes* truly believes what he is doing is right and just, but as soon as he does so, he is immediately tormented by the furies. Are the furies manifestations of his

own guilt for what he did? Has he been brainwashed his entire life?

Instead of *Orestes* spouting through the entire play that his actions were just and sanctioned by Apollo, I wanted him to go on a journey to figure out what was causing his own torment. Is he crazy, are the gods just fucking with him, or does he truly feel tremendous guilt for killing his mother?

In the original text, *Orestes* questions Apollo's command a few times but never comes out and questions Apollo's existence, though this thought seems to bubble under the surface a few times in the play. However, at the end Apollo magically appears and fixes everything. I wanted this question to bubble underneath throughout the entire play but also never to state whether the gods truly exist or not, to let that question linger with the audience after the show has ended.

What shapes our belief and faith? What makes some people's faith so unwavering? And what makes us begin to question that faith? I think *Orestes*' character is a great one in which to explore this theme.

Orestes runs July 30-Aug. 15, Thursday-Saturday, 8pm, at the Off Center, 2211-A Hidalgo. For more information, call 524-3761 or visit www.cambiareproductions.com.