

Murray Guy

453 West 17 Street New York NY 10011 T: +1 212 463 7372 F: +1 212 463 7319 info@murrayguy.com



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"Patricia Esquivias"
Murray Guy
By Merrily Kerr



Patricia Esquivias, *Folklore I*, 2006

Patricia Esquivias's immediately likable narrator voice is the hook in her major new video, *Folklore III*, keeping us engaged through dull, repetitive images and the creeping suspicion that there is less to the historical connections she weaves between two lands—Galicia, Spain; and Nueva Galicia, Mexico—than her deadpan delivery suggests. Unsupported by video evidence, the details Esquivias describes—childlike decorations on the houses, a vast unfinished monument—gradually come to seem more fanciful than believable, and thus, wonderfully entertaining.

Old Galicia represents endings—we see scenes of the coastline and hear about the rituals enacted there—while new Galicia presumably offers a fresh start to immigrants. Yet it's the Old World that hosts a peculiar and inherently hopeful architectural custom, whereby homeowners build successively larger floors onto their buildings, creating edifices shaped like inverted Aztec pyramids. Such optimism in the future contrasts with the stasis of Nueva Galicia, where newcomers never really find their feet, subtly upending the assumption that newer is always better.

The show's second major piece, *Natures at the Hand*, (from 2006) reverses tactics by favoring visuals over story, though it continues to forge similarly tenuous historical or thematic connections—comparing topiary in European castles with that in Guadalajara's front yards, for example. Collaging disparate images together to create new narratives is a common strategy these days (Fischli and Weiss and Fia Backstrm come to mind), but Esquivias makes the approach her own by delighting in the simple absurdities of life, and evoking a cross-border culture in which the fluidity of facts meets the charms of quirkiness.