

CLIFTON BENEVENTO

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ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

New York

Wu Tsang

CLIFTON BENEVENTO 515 Broadway June 4–August 5



View of “Wu Tsang,” 2011.

The Silver Platter, a decades-old Los Angeles queer bar and safe space to Latina immigrant transgender women, provides pretext and content for LA-based Wu Tsang’s first New York solo exhibition. Site-specific video installation, sculpture, and photocollage evoke the MacArthur Park bar’s physical structure and internal culture while framing the intersectional concerns of gender, race, and class that shape Tsang’s constellation of event organizing and legal-advocacy pursuits.

A U-shaped bar with twelve stools bisects the gallery. Suspended before a wall of gold lamé curtain, a monitor screens *Damelo Todo* (Give Me Everything), 2010–11. Adapted from a story by Raquel Gutierrez, the elliptical twenty-minute narrative-documentary was shot primarily inside the

Silver Platter. The video—an overture to Tsang’s forthcoming feature film *Wildness*—has three perceivable acts: Teódulo Mejía, a fictionalized Salvadoran civil war refugee, arrives to Pico-Union a “young manboy” in 1985; jumping five years, Teódulo is Topacio, debuting among the community of trans performers on the Silver Platter stage; reality ultimately permeates fiction via Alexis Giraldo, whose stark prerecorded testimony plays in the bar to a gathering of visibly discomfited regulars. Giraldo, a transgender woman, is suing the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation for failing to protect her from rape and sexual assault while incarcerated in an all-male facility.

When the proscenium-screen goes dark (the video is not on a loop), *The Fist Is Still Up*, 2010, casts blue light across the scene. The acrylic on wood panel replica of the Silver Platter’s exterior sign—modified by its neon-lettered titular call to arms—presides over the gallery. In echoing ACT UP (Gran Fury’s) 1987 neon rendering of the AIDS activist movement slogan “Silence=Death,” it recapitulates transgender resistance as an ongoing fight in the war of representation.

— Corrine Fitzpatrick