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Arts

Arts Beat

Hot Off The Presses: A Pot Full Of Issues

By RACHEL BECKMAN
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Last week at Transformer Gallery, people were eating "newspaper soup," a boiled mixture of water, chicken bouillon and strips of newspaper. Artist Carolina Mayorga served the chunky, inky concoction to a few brave attendees, one of whom said it tasted like "dirty chicken."

Transformer's Executive Director Victoria Reis sipped the newspaper soup broth but "didn't go there with the



BY DAVE GUSTINE — TRANSFORMER GALLERY

Samples of Carolina Mayorga's "newspaper soup" are part of an exhibit at Transformer Gallery.

chunks," she says.

"I figure the alcohol kills the toxic stuff," Reis says, gesturing to her glass of white wine.

Mayorga was inspired to create the art installation, called "New Trends in South American Cuisine," after hearing about people eating newspaper soup in

See ARTS BEAT, C5, Col. 3



BY DAVE GUSTINE — TRANSFORMER GALLERY

Artist Carolina Mayorga stirs "newspaper soup" for her Transformer Gallery exhibition "New Trends in South American Cuisine," about poverty and consumerism.

ARTS BEAT, From C1

Colombia, where she is from.

"It's about poverty because people do that out of starvation," Mayorga says. "It's also playing with the idea of consumerism."

Her show included a video of a mock infomercial for the soup and packages of the ingredients, on sale for \$1.50. Mayorga would sell only one package per customer because "you only get what you need," she says. She sold about 45 packages at the opening reception.

The soup's list of ingredients takes a jab at the media: Each package says it contains two cups of advertisements, one cup of sports and only ½ teaspoon of art and culture (she used The Washington Post for all of her soup).

During the reception, Mayorga played merengue music and cooked under a picture of palm trees at sunset.

"I wanted to play with the stereotype of Latinos being dancers and always festive," she says.

Mayorga's installation kicked off a series of week-long exhibitions at Transformer called "E4: Station to Station." The series features the four participants in this year's Exercises for Emerging Artists program, which links artists with mentors for biweekly critiques.

Tonight, Arlington-based video artist Rob Parrish will present his new work, "Jack" (as in Bauer, Kiefer Sutherland's character in TV's "24"). Parrish combines footage from "24" with the Department of Homeland Security's color-coded threat advisory system. It's a video about lying, and it critiques both "24" and the advisory system as "absurd propaganda," Parrish says.

Rebecca C. Adams and Fereshteh Toosi will present their work in the coming weeks. Adams, a former figure skater, will explore the iconic figure eight through sound and drawing.

Inside the gallery she'll play recordings of the swish-swoosh of herself ice skating. Outside on P Street, she'll draw figure eights by attaching chalk to in-line skates. Adams plans to skate each day around 2 a.m. to avoid cars.

Toosi is setting up a faux accounting firm called H&R CABBAGE to calculate gallery visitors' personal carbon emissions. She'll be at Transformer full time from Aug. 1 to 4 for this performance piece, titled "You're Not as Green as You Are Cabbage-Looking."

Toosi says she's poking fun at the trendiness of environmentalism and also giving people a tangible idea of their carbon footprints.

"I'm usually interested in things that are in the spotlight because they come and go," she says. "In fact, it's a very long-lasting issue."

"E4: Station to Station" runs through Aug. 4 at Transformer Gallery, 1404 P St. NW. Wednesday-Saturday, 1-7 p.m. Free. 202-483-1102.