

# JAMES DRAKE

98

James Drake explores geographic and emotional borders, the blurred areas between affluent societies and developing countries, between hope and desperation, freedom and incarceration, male and female. A native Texan based in the border town of El Paso, Drake spends years patiently learning about and interacting with members of fringe communities, photographing their daily lives and small transformations. In a previous series of photographs, *Tongue-Cut Sparrows* (1998), he observed women gathered outside a local jail and disclosed the secret language of signs they used to communicate with incarcerated loved ones.

In this most recent series, *Que Linda La Brisa* (*How Lovely the Breeze*), Drake documents the world of a group of Mexican transvestites and transsexuals, whom he came to know through his involvement with an organization dedicated to improving the lives of “sexual professionals” through the prevention and treatment of disease and abuse. His aim is not voyeuristic, but rather to show people pressed by the tension of marginalized existences. To cross over into these subcultures, he first builds a relationship of trust with his subjects. The people photographed in *Que Linda La Brisa*, most of whom came to America from central Mexico, are shown at home getting ready for work (which takes place primarily at a bar called La Brisa, located in the border town of Juárez, Mexico). Their lives seem imprisoning, regulated by hard routines and dangerous business. An alarm clock and a picture of Christ stand over an unkempt bed in a squalid pink room.

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TOP: *Lorena's Bed*, from the series *Que Linda La Brisa* (*How Lovely the Breeze*), 1999. Chromogenic color print, 15 1/2 x 23 1/4 in. (39.4 x 59.1 cm). Pamela Auchincloss, Arts Management, New York;

Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago; Adair Margo Gallery, El Paso, Texas; and the artist

BOTTOM: *Lisa and Tanya*, from the series *Que Linda La Brisa* (*How Lovely the Breeze*), 1999.

Chromogenic color print, 15 1/2 x 23 1/4 in. (39.4 x 59.1 cm). Pamela Auchincloss, Arts Management, New York; Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago; Adair Margo Gallery, El Paso, Texas; and the artist

