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One for the CV: Mario Garcia Torres in New York

by [Brian Boucher](#)

The Kunsthalle Bern is looking for a new director, and young Mexican artist Mario Garcia Torres is interested in the position, according to the subtitles in *Cover Letter* (2011), one of two 35mm slideshow projections by the artist on view through May 8 in a temporary new space, Itinerant, on Manhattan's Lower East Side. The artist also sent the slides to Bern as an application.

By simply installing two slide projectors, partially blocking out the storefront windows and taping a press release to the door, Itinerant made a gallery out of a vacant storefront on a block occupied by young galleries like Lisa Cooley and Rachel Uffner. The temporary project space is an initiative of Marian Goodman Gallery director Rose Lord and 303 Gallery director Mari Spirito—the latter a veteran independent curator—both of whom are holding on to their day jobs.

STILL FROM COVER LETTER COURTESY THE ARTIST AND ITINERANT.

The project was partly a way of making the best of a sluggish economy. “Within months after Lehman collapsed in 2008,” Spirito told *A.i.A.*, “spaces were turning up vacant all over the city. And people have been doing interesting projects in them, mounting their own shows and so on.”

Despite the tiny space, a highly reflective metal ceiling and a tinted green glass storefront, Lord and Spirito gracefully installed two slide-projection works by Torres, an artist they had both seen in their travels in Europe. He fit the bill for who they wanted to show in their new project, said Spirito: “an artist who doesn't have a real New York presence—and should.”

Cover Letter is spare and understatedly funny. A series of images show a tabletop on which the artist arranges flowers in a vase. Subtitles spell out his letter to the search committee: “I have persistently thought about, and sometimes experienced, the meanings and political implications behind the ways art is produced and exhibited. I deem this the fundamental knowledge needed to run an institution like the Kunsthalle Bern.”

The other work on view, *What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger* (2007), also explores the potential of artists taking charge of institutions. It describes the Museum of Modern Art Syros, a 1993 initiative by Martin Kippenberger, who designated a museum an unfinished, abandoned abattoir on the Cycladic island of Syros. Torres traveled to Syros, which appears in lush, sunny images, and tried to revive the museum, partly by mounting his own show at the site. The invitation image for this exhibition shows Torres pointing out the erstwhile museum to some sunbathers on a nearby beach; subtitles explain that he interviewed locals about their memories of the project. When I asked him about his findings, he shrugged: “People don't remember shit.”

When asked what Itinerant's next venue would be, Lord smiled. “It's not so easy to just ‘pop up’ in New York City,” she admitted.