



Xandra Ibarra, Mexi Strap-On Harnesses, 2015

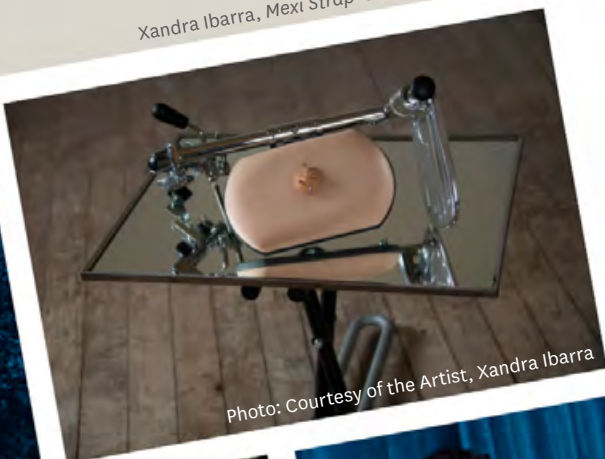


Photo: Courtesy of the Artist, Xandra Ibarra



Xandra Ibarra, Self-Portrait, 2020

# Nothing Lower Than I

A VIDEO PERFORMANCE BY  
**Xandra Ibarra**

Thursday, March 25, 2021, at 5 p.m. PT  
Presented Online  
University of Southern California

## WHAT TO KNOW

- This event explores themes of BDSM and body modification, and contains nudity and graphic imagery. Viewer discretion is always advised.
- Xandra Ibarra is an Oakland-based artist and organizer.
- *Nothing Lower Than I* is a video performance by Ibarra that is anchored in an artistic study of the Bob Flanagan and Sheree Rose Collection at ONE Archives at the USC Libraries.
- Following a presentation and video performance, Ibarra will be in conversation with UC Riverside professor Jennifer Doyle, author of *Hold It Against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art and Sex Objects: Art and the Dialectics of Desire*; writer, theorist, performance artist, and California College of the Arts professor Tina Takemoto; and California College of the Arts professor Tina Takemoto; and Jeanne Vaccaro, a postdoctoral fellow at the ONE Archives.

## XANDRA IBARRA

Xandra Ibarra, who sometimes works under the alias La Chica Boom, is an Oakland-based artist and community organizer from the U.S./Mexico border region of El Paso/Juárez. Ibarra works across performance, video, and sculpture to address abjection and joy and the borders between proper and improper racial, gender, and queer subjectivities.

Her art has been featured at El Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (Bogotá), The Broad (Los Angeles), ExTeresa Arte Actual (Mexico City), the Leslie-Lohman Museum (New York City), and the Anderson Collection (Stanford). Ibarra's work is located within feminist, immigrant, anti-rape, and prison abolitionist movements.

## BOB FLANAGAN AND SHEREE ROSE

Bob Flanagan (1952–1996) was a performance artist and writer whose work dealt with sadomasochism and cystic fibrosis. As a poet, he was involved with the literary arts center Beyond Baroque. Flanagan described himself as a “supermasochist.” He died from complications of cystic fibrosis at age 43.

Sheree Rose is a performance artist and a photographer known for documenting L.A. subcultures, especially subcultures around BDSM and body modification. She was for a time the primary photographer of Beyond Baroque, and has photographed artists including Exene Cervenka and John Doe of the iconic L.A. punk band X, Genesis P-Orridge, and Ron Athey. Rose has recently collaborated with the artist Martin O'Brien.

Flanagan and Rose were artistic collaborators and romantic partners. They worked in performance and video art, made installations, and did community education and organizing around BDSM. They were founding members of the L.A. chapter of the Society of Janus, a BDSM organization.

The ONE Archives holds the Bob Flanagan and Sheree Rose Collection, which contains diaries, performance ephemera and documentation, photographs and slides by Rose documenting L.A.'s BDSM and queer communities, and a twenty-foot-tall inflatable depiction of Flanagan.

## ONE ARCHIVES AT THE USC LIBRARIES

ONE Archives at the USC Libraries is the largest repository of LGBTQ materials in the world. Founded in 1952, ONE Archives currently houses over two million archival items including periodicals, books, film, video and audio recordings, photographs, artworks, organizational records, and personal papers. ONE Archives has been a part of the USC Libraries since 2010. The physical archives are located at 909 West Adams Boulevard in Los Angeles. There is also a ONE Gallery in West Hollywood.

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- What surprised you about this performance? Why do you think it was surprising to you?
- What do you think Ibarra means by “proper and improper racial, gender, and queer subjectivities”?
- What do you make of the fact that Ibarra, Flanagan, and Rose all were or are both artists and organizers? How do art and organizing intersect? How are they different?
- How is the context of today different from the context in which Flanagan and Rose lived and worked together? How might this affect art-making or the reception of art? Sex? Identities?

**“The nonprofit art industrial complex and foundation funding want to give racialized artists the big bucks to make legible work about identity, racial injury, and recuperation. The funder is the shepherd and the artists are the sheep in a state of subordination, confessing and making legible their identities through their work ... I'd rather be incoherent. I want to be incoherent so viciously.”**

—Xandra Ibarra in “Identity is a Bureaucratic Nothing Attempting to Be Vital,” [walkerart.org/magazine/soundboard-identifying-identity-xandra-ibarra](http://walkerart.org/magazine/soundboard-identifying-identity-xandra-ibarra)

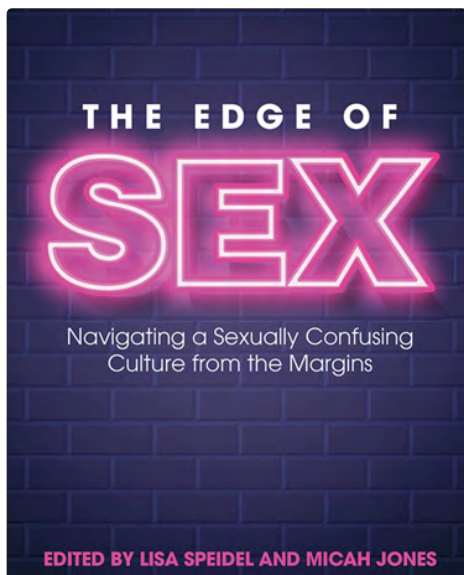
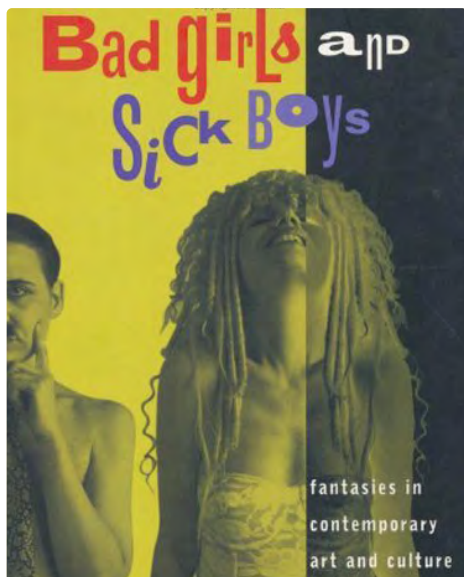


Sheree Rose and Bob Flanagan

**“Sheree Rose came out as a feminist in the 1970s—she had been married with children and realized that being a housewife wasn't for her. She divorced and began to counsel single mothers on education and economic independence. While getting a masters degree, she participated in feminist reading groups and found herself in dialogue with women who saw lesbianism as a sexual expression of a feminist politics. Some of the women she talked to saw men as ‘the enemy.’ Rose wondered, however, if there was a different way of practicing heterosexuality.**

**For 16 years she explored this question with Bob Flanagan. Their romantic and creative partnership is hard to classify—our vocabulary isn't nearly as elastic as it needs to be on this point ... Their history is worth knowing not for what they did to art, but for what they did to love and sex.”**

—from “Sheree Rose: A Legend of Los Angeles Performance Art” by Jennifer Doyle, KCET's *Artbound*



- How did the work that Flanagan and Rose did together shape or influence subsequent generations of artists? Of BDSM communities? Who or what else did they influence?

## IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- Xandra Ibarra online [xandraibarra.com](http://xandraibarra.com)
- The documentary *Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist* Streaming on Vudu and Sundance Now
- ONE Archives at the USC Libraries [one.usc.edu](http://one.usc.edu)
- Beyond Baroque [beyondbaroque.org](http://beyondbaroque.org)

## DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

Stacy Williams of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this evening's event. Electronic resources are accessible through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at [libraries.usc.edu](http://libraries.usc.edu) but may require the user to log in using their USC credentials.

### BOOKS

- Andrew Raymond Campbell, *Bound Together: Leather, Sex, Archives, and Contemporary Art* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2020).
- Linda S. Kauffman, *Bad Girls and Sick Boys: Fantasies in Contemporary Art and Culture* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1998).
- Micah Jones and Lisa Speidel, *The Edge of Sex: Navigating a Sexually Confusing Culture from the Margins* (Milton: Routledge, 2020).

### ARTICLES

- Dawn Reynolds, "Disability and BDSM: Bob Flanagan and the Case for Sexual Rights," *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* 4, no. 1 (March 2007): 40–52.
- Tina Takemoto, "Love Is Still Possible in This Junky World: Conversation with Sheree Rose About Her Life with Bob Flanagan," *Women & Performance* 19, no. 1 (2009): 95–111.

### JOURNALS

- Body, Space and Technology*
- Women & Performance*
- Performance Research*