

## **e(merge)**

Performance artists were the annual gallery fair's stars.

By Kriston Capps, Dec. 20, 2012

The performance artist is the new DJ. Or maybe not new: The performance artist has always labored under complaints from traditional fine artists that it takes no talent, no training, to float or starve or get shot or what have you, a gripe that is cousin to the guitarist's grievance that DJs don't know their scales. It's not even an analogy: Performance artists today book gigs and headline festivals, just as any modern DJ would. The biggest of these events in D.C. is the annual (e)merge Art Fair, where reliable suspects from more fashionable performative scenes—the storytelling set, for example—share a lineup with members of the traditional nontraditional visual art scene. It's great for (e)merge, which boasts a vibrant lineup of performance artists from D.C. and beyond, including, in this 2012's festival, [Mindy Cano Villalobos](#)—an artist who has been making work about the ongoing Ciudad Juárez femicide since 2009. It's great for the artists, who have not just (e)merge but a host of similar events around the calendar that serve as venues. But sometimes it's not so great for the viewer: Today's breed of performance artist depends on branding, which means repeat performances, which in turn means shorter performances, more accessible performances, and lower-stakes performances.