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FACTORY GIRL

With her newest work, video artist Mika Rottenberg takes on the absurdity of the assembly line

Rock Rose, an adult-entertainer-turned-wrestler famous for her generous bosom, has done some weird stuff in her career, but she says the strangest film she's ever appeared in was a 2004 piece by New York City video artist Mika Rottenberg, which was recently acquired by the Museum of Modern Art. In *Mary's Cherries*, a cryptic short pronounced "hilarious" by *The New York Times*, Rose stars as an assembly-line worker

who spends her days laboriously turning painted fingernail clippings into maraschino cherries. "It's about two types of femininity," Rottenberg explains. "The fingernails represent the mature side, and the cherries represent being a little girl." As Amy Smith-Stewart, a former curator at New York's P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, puts it, "Mika talks about big issues with such



Scenes from *Dough*

humor that it's incredibly seductive."

Rottenberg was born in Argentina and raised in Israel by parents steeped in the country's labor movement, a strong influence on her work, along with the films of Matthew Barney and the feminist performance art of the '70s. Her latest video, *Dough*, at New York's Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery (January 27–February 25), stars a 600-pound woman in another unusual processing plant: Her teary-eyed

flower allergy activates yeast to make dough rise. (Nice work if you can get it.) Although the precise meaning of the piece is typically elusive, suffice it to say that the artist's favorite themes—advertising and industry, the commodification of the body and the resilience of the soul—figure prominently. And that Rottenberg, too, is very much on the rise.—AARON GELL