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By Jessica Dawson

Abstraction at Mexican Cultural Institute

Making the most of the snaking galleries of the Mexican Cultural Institute, curators Berta Kolteniuk and Gabriela Molina mounted works by 12 artists -- six from Mexico City, six from Washington -- in "Fission/ Fusion," an appealing, if uneven, show of contemporary abstraction.

The show's strongest works have an architectural bent. Mauricio Alejo's black-and-white photographs of what look to be clear plastic blocks hang alongside Pedro Reyes and Jose Castro's video of a continuously morphing shape. The proximity underscores their structural investigations -- the photographs look like maquettes, the video like CAD drawings. In another room, Hector Zamora's installation -- clear plastic cord strung in a grid from wall to wall -- creates significant structure from minimal material.

Weak spots appear when pretty abstraction edges toward preciousness. Wendy Ross's wrought-iron works have curlicue forms too lovely for her rough-hewn material; she needs to toughen it up. And Antonio Sanchez's digital print back-lit by a light box, while an attractive juxtaposition of rainbow colors, doesn't pack enough graphic punch to stand on its own.

Fission/Fusion, at the Mexican Cultural Institute, 2829 16th St. NW, Monday-Friday 10 a.m.-5 p.m., 202-7281628, through April 25.