



onestar press

rodrigo valenzuela we are in the mythmaking business

onestar press



we are
in the
mythmaking
business

we are **rodrigo valen-**
in the **zuela**
mythmaking
businesss

Diamond Box is a video piece that mixes the narrative structure of oral history and fiction. The idea to develop *Diamond Box* came from a process of self-examination. How would I look if I were a character rather than a person? My personal story once I hit new surroundings. I search for these similarities with others. I explore the possibility of drama development from there.

True Story. I lived three years without documentation in the United States. I searched for work standing on the street and at labor agencies. I hired out as general labor on various construction sites. During this time, I never felt that my job defined me. Not because I thought that I was better than the other workers. Honest hard labor always makes me feel more skillful than editing videos or taking a photo. I still looked at myself as a secondary character in a Dardenne movie. Ignoring my feelings but never my aspirations. I didn't pay attention to the other workers, not to the Latinos complaining or to the insults coming from the rough white workers. Now I see that I missed a great chance to interact with interesting people. What's left is the ridiculousness of a 22- year old Latino guy eating lunch by himself and reading Kant. Many images from this time still stick with me and inform my artwork.

In an attempt to connect and find my personal history in others, I started going to Home Depot and Lowe's to meet migrant day laborers. I drove to these places and I offered them work. I told them about the project and I paid each one their hourly rate. Once at my studio, I interviewed the workers. We exchanged life experiences and talked until we got used to one another. I recorded audio throughout the entire process. The camera was on, pointing at them before we even started talking. At some point the presence of these devices goes away. My agenda during the interviews was very simple. I told my interviewee my story first, stopping and asking him, in a subtle way if they can relate. Waiting for the reply can be a long process. I have to be aware of the small gestures and their manners in order to continue our engagement, executing my interest as a voyeur of details.

I built the stage for the interviews from memories of my time in Boston, Massachusetts. Working on site on a Sunday morning, I saw a U-haul van pulling close to the building. The driver opened the back door and six or seven Latinos workers came out with long sheets of drywall. I decided to build my interview stage for *Diamond Box* based on this scene. I loved the idea of building a room inside of a room. Having a reduced space in my studio creates bigger tension making the first minutes a little bit awkward but later giving a sense of intimacy that helped the interviewing process.

Many of the mechanisms I used to structure *Diamond Box* come from Verbatim Theater. In this approach, the playwright interviews people that are connected a topic which the resulting play will focus on. Testimony constructs the piece. *Diamond Box* does not look like a movie in a traditional sense. The individual stories are important but are only part a larger gestalt. The piece also needs the surplus stories, the excess of information and its re-distribution. I reconvene the voices and images separately. Working and treating each one as independent elements. Stripped of sound the interviews become a series of ponderous portraits bringing attention to their sense of vulnerability and lack of context, as well as the exploration of a pause and the space between thought or action. By separating these two elements, I wanted to reinforce the story, giving the sense that those events belong to anybody and not to a particular face.

Diamond Box
2012
video
4:00

– RV

the need

was something really fast
was even a couple of days

Was like I...

when you get to the border
there are like hotel
but they are security houses
of the coyotes

Let's say
on thursday I was talking to him
and I had to leave on sunday

Took the decision of coming here

where they gather
all the people that will pass



a minimum of 80 people
even 100
in a room like this one (30x15)

we had to arrange everything
buy shoes
food

there in San Isidro
when we tried to cross
walking... the border

I left my parents

as soon you leave
there will be no more doubts

I tried crossing two times
the second time I passed
the first time
they fought me



There the immigration got me
they told me that they had a few questions

they didn't give us food
they just gave us water
definitely not enough for all

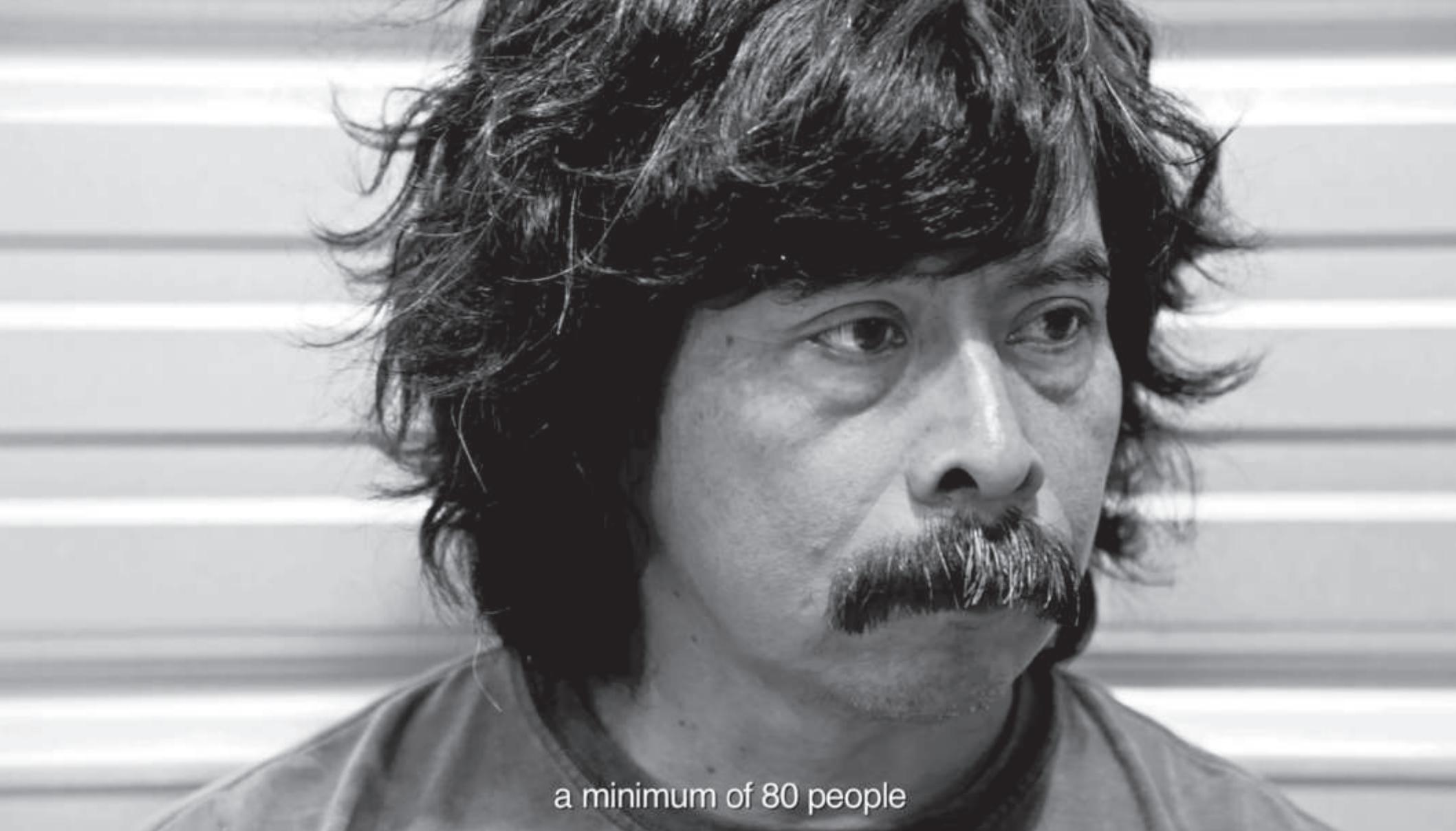
they took it
we were sixteen
but we separated

and...

but those questions were like...
five days in prison

thirty two including the coyote
they threw away our food
everything that we had in the backpack

immigration got some
we got away



a minimum of 80 people

we ran... they were behind us
after that the helicopter followed us
but they got a hold of the others

the police let us go...They were too busy with the other group

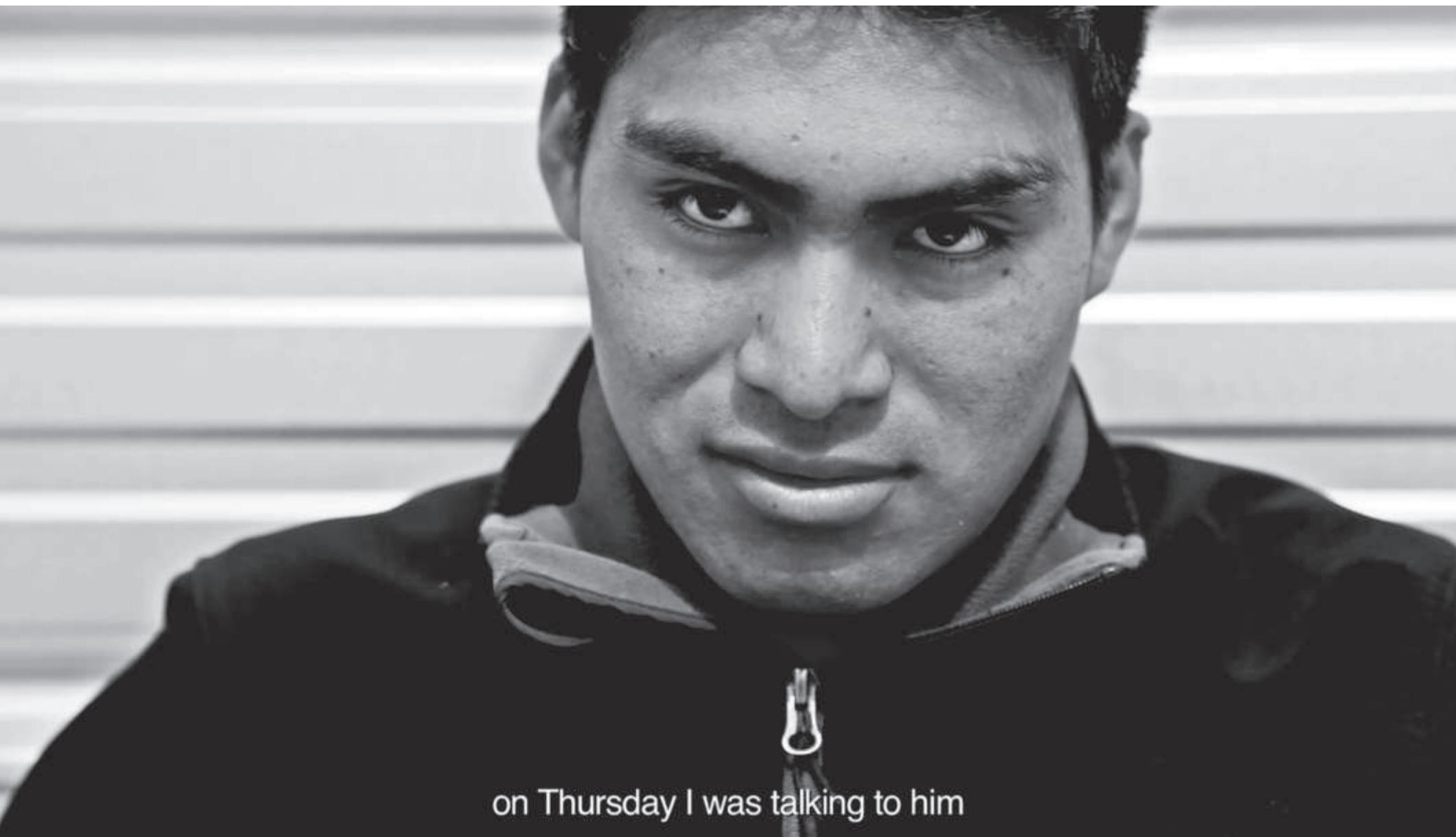
well...you never know if one should come back or not

keep awake
to be aware of the danger
animals or something

that were behind...stuck there
they stayed there

the night in the desert is totally dark
sometime the moonshine let's you see the path

we walked like three nights
part by bike, part by foot



on Thursday I was talking to him

we slept on the ground
between the stones and branches
there we stayed
all day

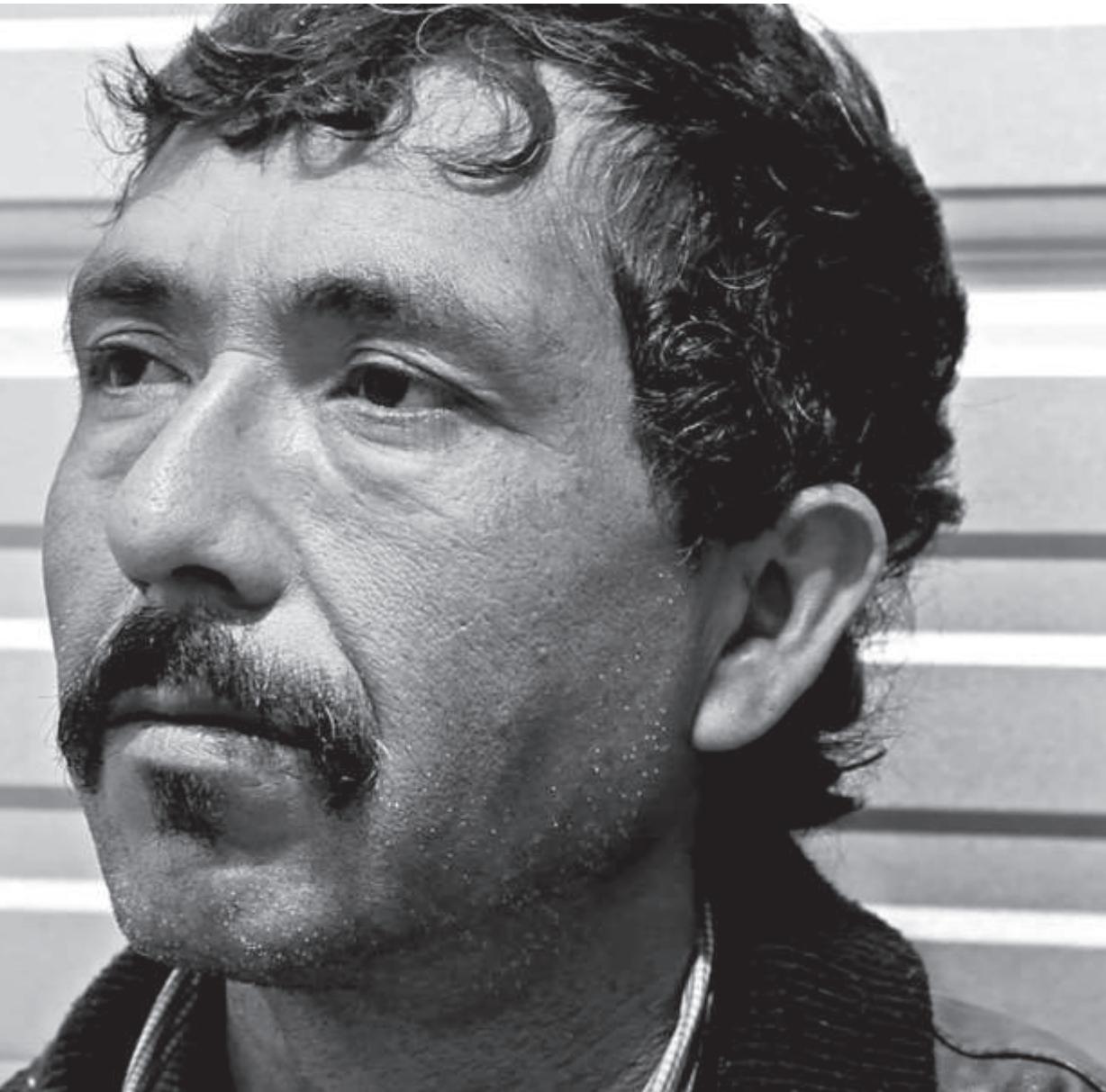
during the day you have to sleep

the worst shit that one can remember is being thirsty

then in the evening... we started walking

well...you never know if you'll come back or not

we all carried gallons of water



after the second day we ran out

three days
and a day

bodies that are like...and tombs

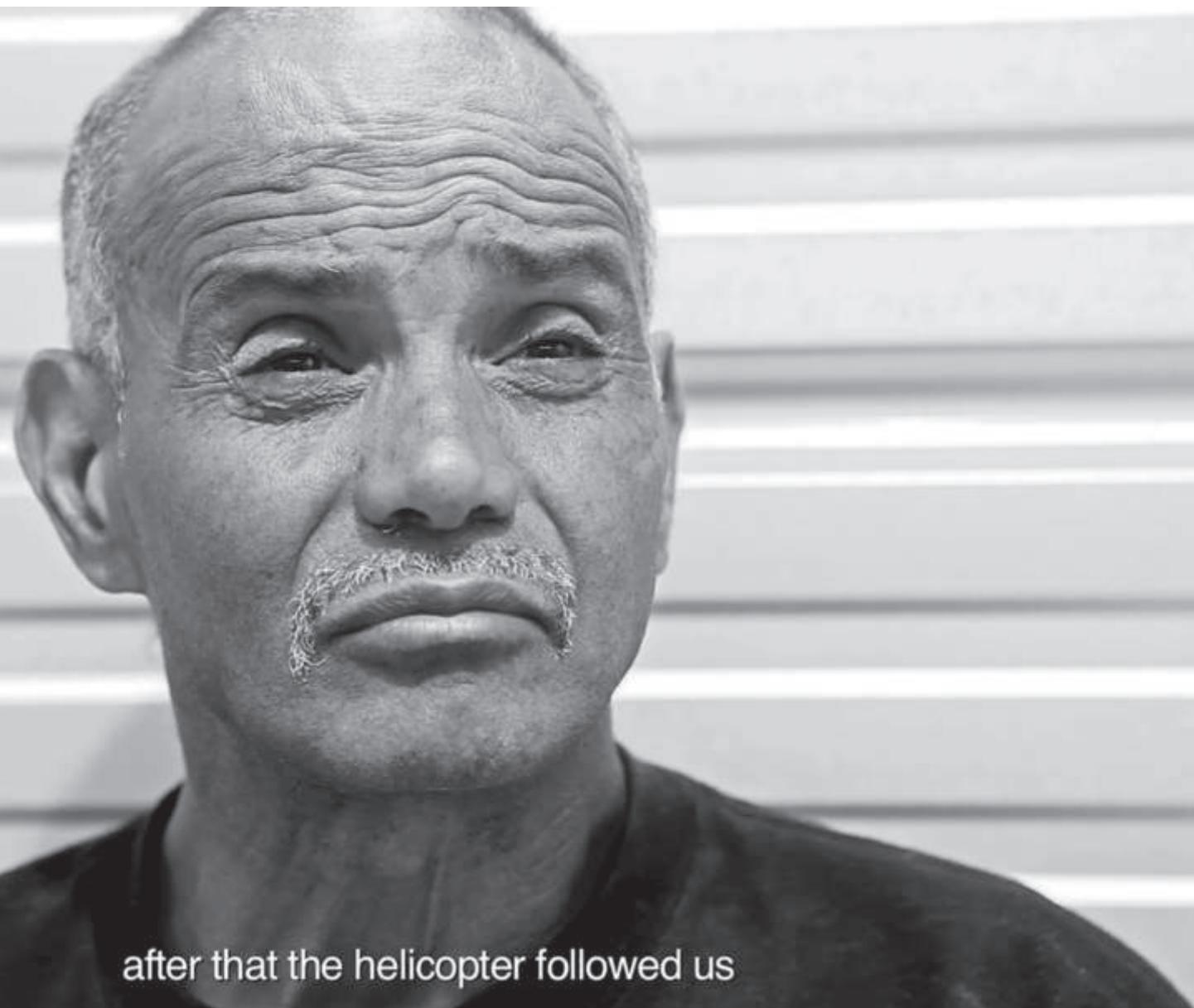
in one of those...
chases that immigration gave us
you split from the pack

I walked three nights

on the way you see bones
on the way you see clothes

a lot of crosses

we had to separate
because we were afraid



after that the helicopter followed us

a girl was left behind
she faltered

I am scared I am alone in this country

they left her
what else are you going to do for her

after crossing the desert
we go the side of the road in Phoenix

I saw how she took her socks off
and...all her toenails had popped out
if something happens to me... I have nobody

it is her life or yours

the coyote connect us
with another man that brought us to California



there will be no more doubts

when you get here for the first time
one comes to the unknown

DIAMOND BOX



The Builder #1

2012

photograph

The Builder #2

2012

photograph



The Builder #5
2012
photograph



The Builder #4
2012
photograph



The Builder #6
2012
photograph



The Builder #3

2012

photograph



The Builder. These are black-and-white photographs of decaying, deserted structures in desiccated, desolate landscapes. Once, while driving from Yakima to Ellensburg, I passed a landscape that's much like the ones in these images (four in all). It was hilly, harsh, and sparsely vegetated. Occasionally, a military installation would appear in the distance. Occasionally, military trucks would approach and pass. Occasionally, there was no other car for miles around. And as the road rose and fell, I felt the need to have sex, the need to negate this lifeless landscape with the flows and discharges of sexual desire. Landscapes always do this to us. They make us want to do something to them: to connect with them, to lose ourselves in them, to change them.

The landscapes in *The Builder* series appear to be real. They are instead fusions of different landscapes: These are the hills, bushes, structures, skies of Eastern Washington, Chile, Peru, and other places Valenzuela has visited. But the fact of the matter is this: A photograph of, say, a part of the landscape between Yakima and Ellensburg would be much further from the truth than the ones Valenzuela fabricated for his thesis. We never see just one thing (that is the illusion), we see many things at once (the actual).

I borrow this from Richard Dawkins: A computer is a serial processor that creates, by means of speed, the illusion of doing a number of tasks simultaneously. The human mind is the very opposite: It creates the illusion of seriality (moment by moment) by collapsing simultaneous chronological and spatial processes. We experience everything, the living layers (landscape after landscape) of the past, as one neat moment in the present.

— Charles Mudedde









The Worker #1

2013

photograph

The Worker #4

2013

photograph

The Worker #2

2013

photograph

The Worker #3

2013

photograph

The worker exists within the ambiguous zone between documentary and fiction; between the purely pictorial and the cinematic. The concepts and imagery in my video and photography are inspired by my own life experience, particularly those moments and events that implicate and contextualize broader themes of estrangement, isolation, and loneliness. Through the intermixed territories of the psychological, geographic, and social, each piece is a form of navigation - of searching, getting lost, and of finding - a relic of my attempts to become part of the world around me. Through the language of displacement and alienation, both aesthetically and in subject matter, I observe, depict, and construct landscapes and stories that reveal much broader issues concerning individuality, community, belonging, and sense of place: Autobiographical fragments translate into gesture, metaphor, and narrative, engaging with more universal fields of experience and predicament. Through the constructedness and uncertainty inherent within the image itself, I address other tenable and transitory 'mediums,' such as location, identity, and power – how their interrelatedness operates within subjective experience and in socio-political institutions and mechanisms. The way an image is 'inhabited,' and the way it inhabits the spaces and people it presents, is therefore central, as my work serves as an expressive and intimate point of contact, and simultaneously confronts contentious relationships within and between the broader realms of subjectivity and community. Through my videos and photographs, made up of images that feel at the same time familiar yet distant, I engage the viewer in questions concerning the ways in which they too are situated - how they exist in and out of 'place' - especially in relation to the 'others' that contribute to the formation and experience of that place.

– RV

Maria TV
2014
video
17:15

what do you want me to do?
I want my son
therefore you will stay here
until he is born
I want you to take care of yourself
so he is born in the best conditions
I want you to be strong
it is the only thing I ask of you
will you look at me again?
we have nothing more to talk about
we will wait until the child is born
and that is all
and afterwards?
afterwards you will have to leave
that is the least that can happen to you
after all that you have done
you will leave to never come back

I feel that I am a strong woman
for everybody else
but when it comes to
protecting myself
I feel that I don't fight enough
and I feel that I am strong
because I arrived to this country
knowing no one
and like many others
I encountered a country
that has a lot of racism
at work and in the community
I figured out a way to move up
without anyone's help
that is why when I look back
I see that I am strong
because I am still here



I want you to take care of yourself

somebody to pull me up
I had two kids
never had the support
like in our countries
of our parents
of having a mother
of having a friend
someone that could help me
to know how to protect that child
and now I see
my children so big
one that has already graduated
and one that is in high school
and I see myself strong
and people that know me
tell me
"you are strong"

I always started working
from the bottom
always..
dishwasher
then I became the manager
housekeeper
then I became the manager
so I know I can be strong
but in my personal life
I feel I am not strong enough
to make decisions and speak just for myself
and then...
I wish to have
the power to not fear myself
so when I make decisions in my life
they are for myself
and not because I am afraid



I came here when I was seventeen
with fifty dollars in my bag
and a suitcase
without a father
without a mother
without a sister
I had no one
I didn't know where to go
or exactly with whom I would live
everything is a risk
and I think everyone that comes to this
country
comes with a risk
with an abyss

and
everyone that comes to this country
I think we always have the desire to go back
home
and we say that in a year
six months
nine months
ten years...
and we are still here
the path here wasn't easy
and the jobs were really hard too
you work twelve or ten hours a day
as a nanny
in the field
in the fast food restaurants
every time I cleaned a bathroom
every time I picked strawberries



I could not see myself
doing that work for the rest of my life
but the fears were
as simple as transportation from one place
to another
of going to the clinic to look for medical help
of not knowing if you are going to make it
home or not

what do you want me to do?
I want my son
therefore you will stay here
until he is born
I want you to take care of yourself
so he is born in the best conditions
I want you to be strong

will you look at me again?
we have nothing more to talk about
we will wait until the child is born
and that is all
and afterwards?
afterwards you will have to leave
that is the least that can happen to you
after all that you have done
you will leave to never come back
and you will forget that child forever

again
and again
again
you lied to me
who do you think I am



then I became the manager

why do you ridicule me
it is a mockery
it's not just a lie
it is a mockery
who do you think I am
with perseverance
with faith
with hope
everything is possible
with work
with support
with perseverance
with faith
all is possible
focusing
perseverance

why don t I take care of myself

My father is dead
and I never forgave him
because of this I feel more...
like a stranger among my family
I am the only person that decided
that the only way to sleep without nightmares
was to cut from the roots
the question I always ask myself is
am I wrong
do I not have the right to feel the way I feel
to think the way I think
or to act the way I act
it is assumed that I have to follow the clan
and please the rest of the family



like a stranger among my family

what has your response been?

I hate
I hate the situation
and I hate myself
because the way you make me feel
how can it be possible
it's not fair
why?
why me?
I hate
rancor
and I hate this
and I hate myself
and the situation

I don't want you to see me
as an enemy for the rest of your life
no, of course not
I could never look at you as an enemy
well, why don't we change the subject
all that is in the past
yes, you are right
I'm glad everything worked out well between
you two
yes, we are doing well
I have to go
I hope you are very happy

I'm mad because you lied to me again
again
I gave you another chance and you lied



I can't believe in you anymore
because you do it again
over and over again
I'm so angry and disappointed
I won't believe in you any more
I can't talk, I can't say anything
I'm frustrated
it is not fair
I hate you
I hate you
why did you lie to me
the only thing I asked from you was the
truth
an explanation that was not false
I hate you
I am mad
I am angry

why can't I do it?
if I knew how to do it
I would have gone ahead
and people wouldn't look at me in this way
why
why can't I do it?
I'm frustrated
I have such low self-esteem I can't take it
why can't I do it?
I don't know what happens
I don't want...I don't understand
and the consequences are horrible
I wouldn't be able to feed my daughter
I would be without a home
I know it is unfair
I need to free myself
I need everything to go away

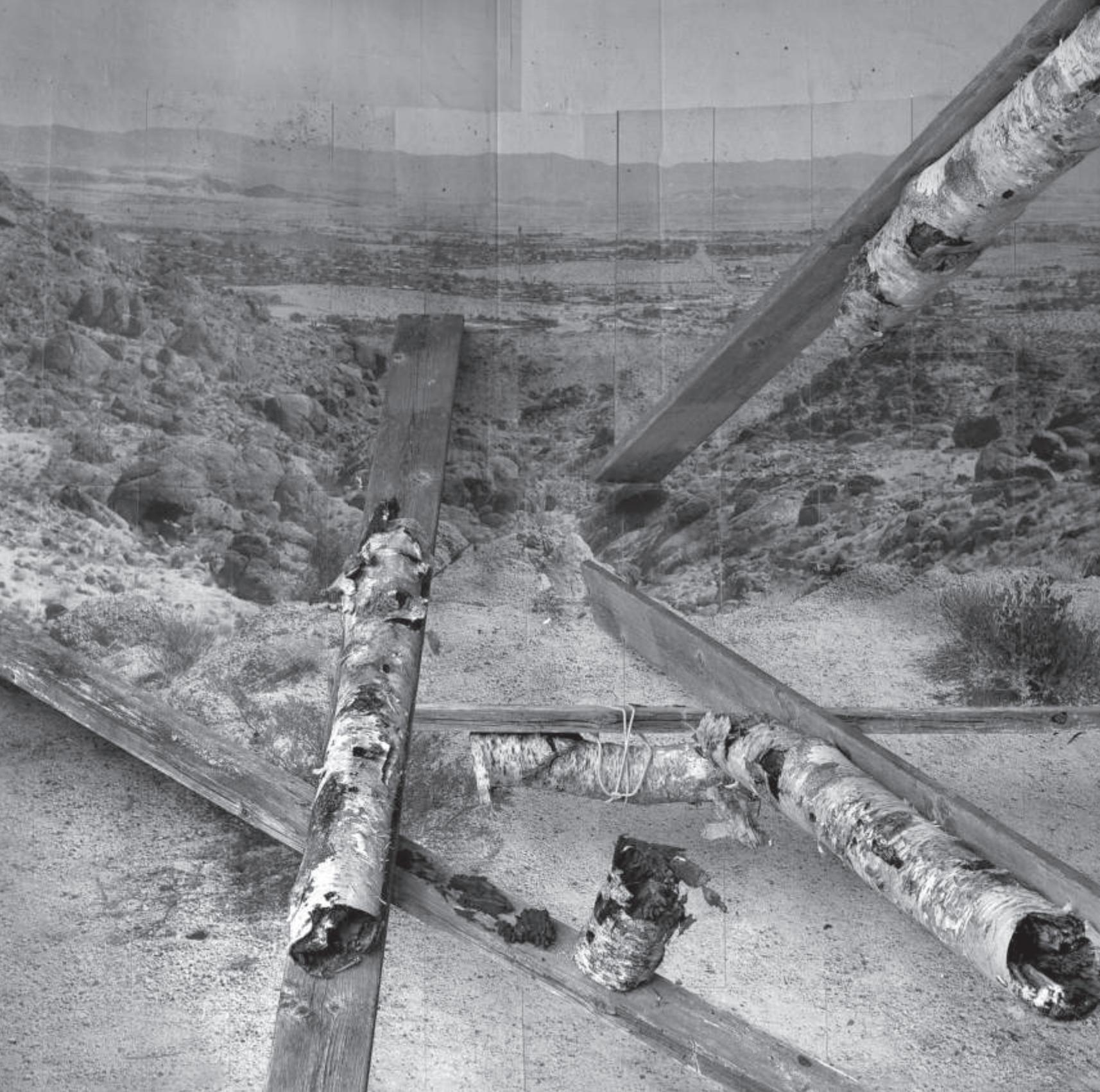


I didn't know where to go

irritated?
I laugh at the frustration
I laugh at it
why feel this way?
that's enough
I can say what I want
when I want
where I want
without feeling rejected
without being afraid to speak up
and letting no one undermine me



I gave you another chance and you lied again

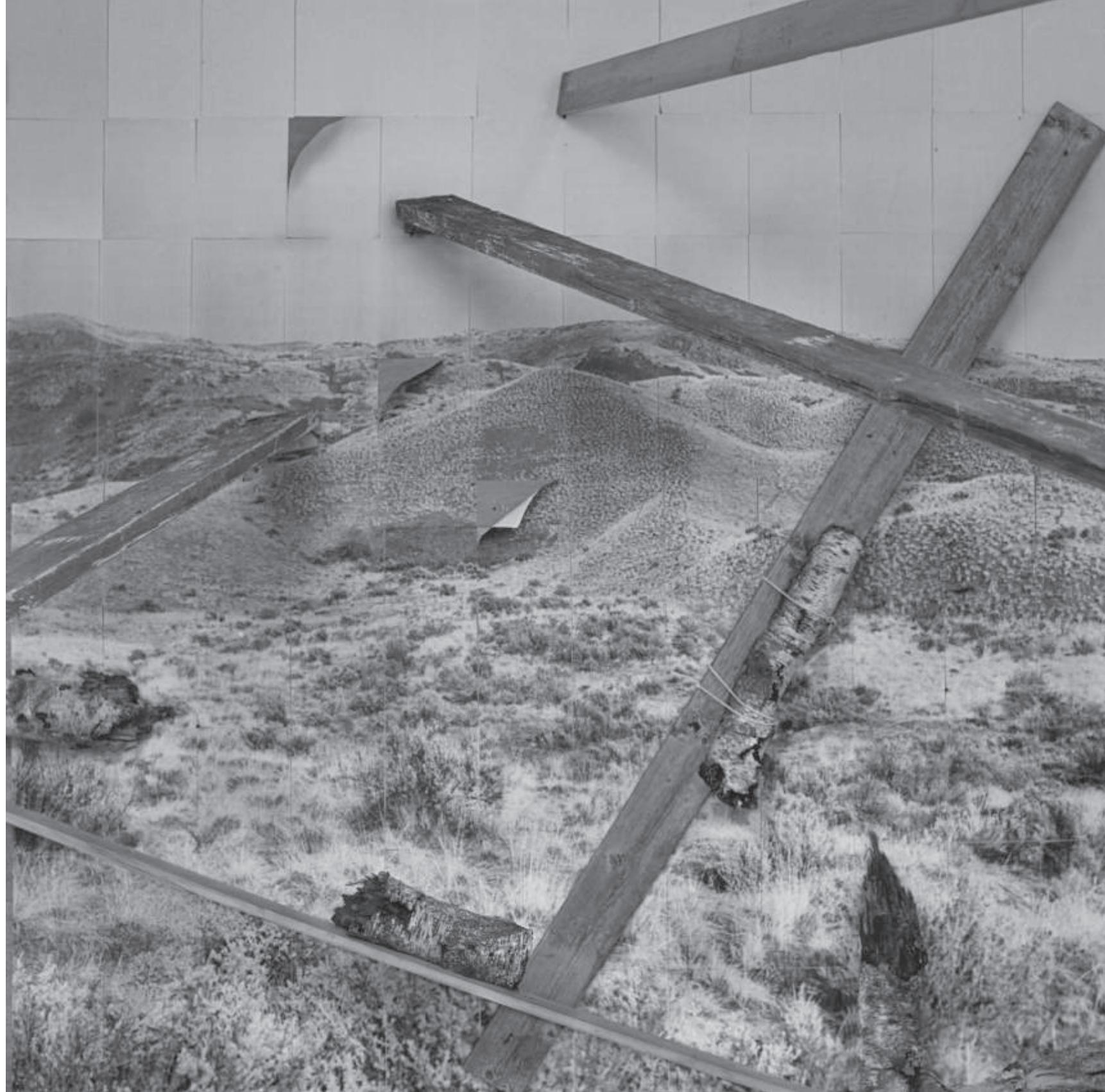


Still Life #1
2013
photograph

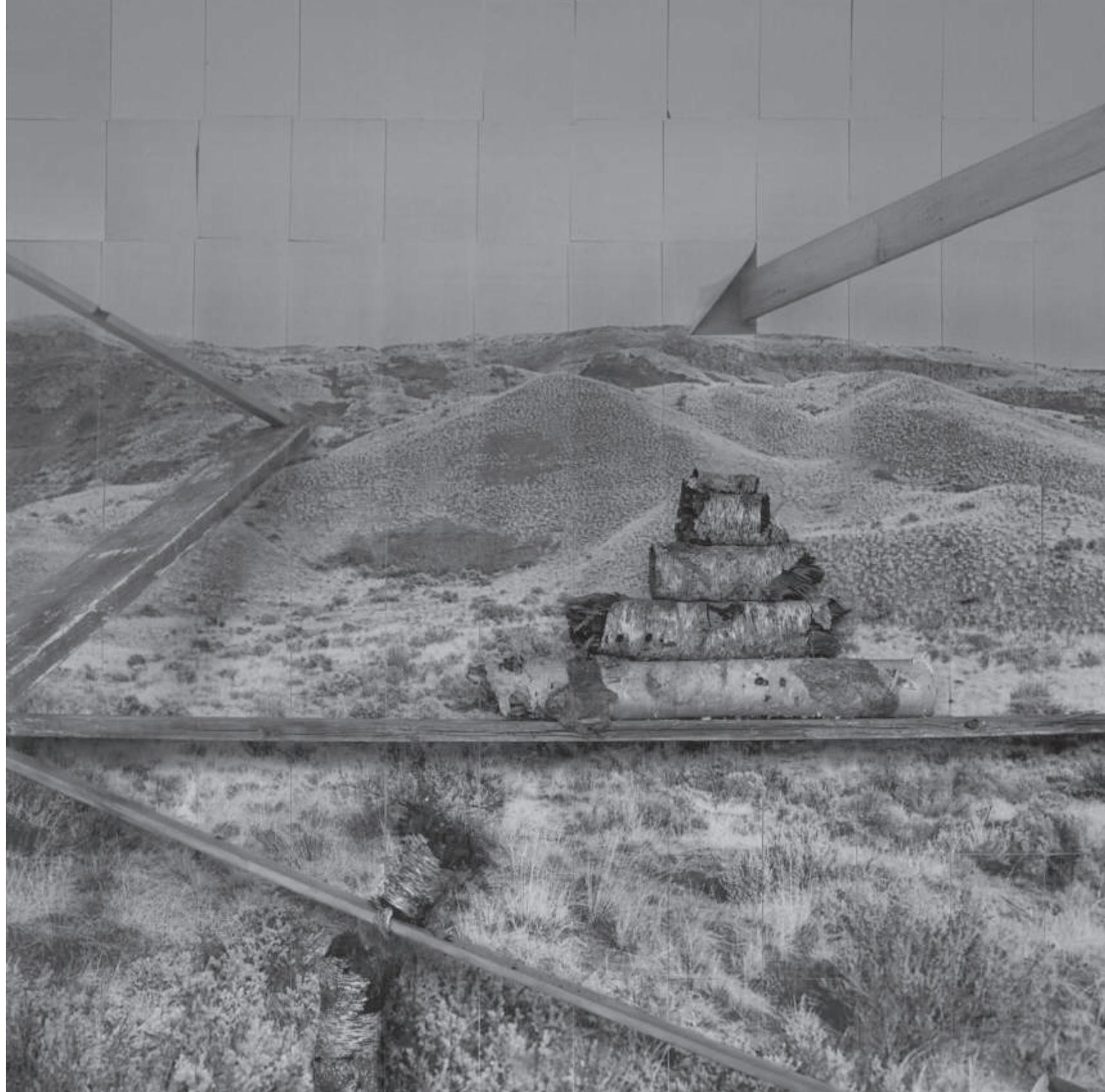
Still Life #5
2014
photograph

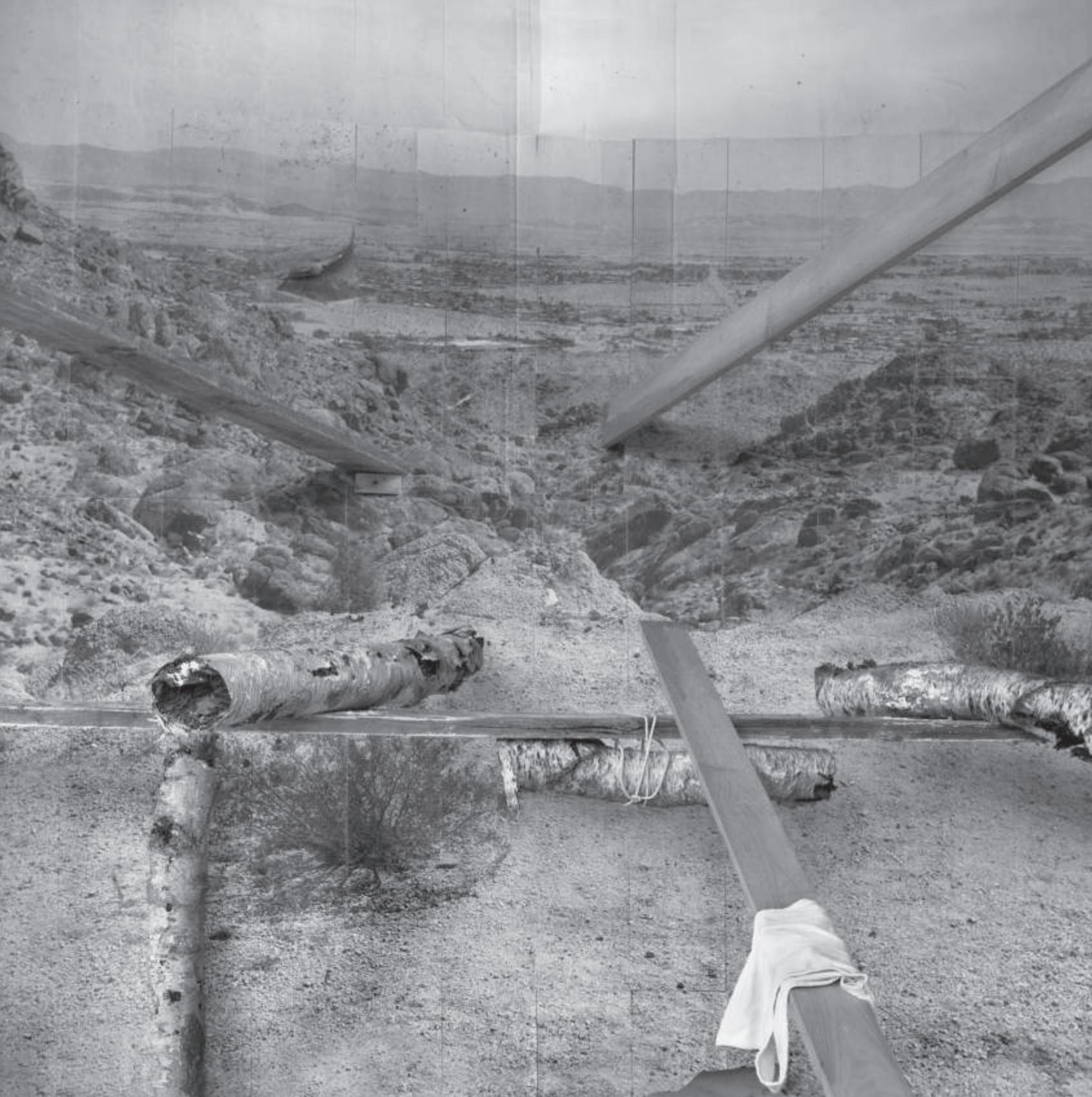


Still Life #3
2013
photograph



Still Life #4
2013
photograph





Still Life #2
2013
photograph

Still Life #7
2013
photograph





Still Life #8
2013
photograph

“I want to set the viewer as the goalkeeper, as an observer of structures – how the images are articulated from the maker’s perspective giving her or him responsibility in the making (sense) while removing myself”.

– Excerpt from 2014 interview with Jake Uitti, *Monarch Review*

Goalkeeper #2
2014
photograph

Goalkeeper #1
2014
photograph

Goalkeeper #3
2014
photograph

Goalkeeper #6
2014
photograph

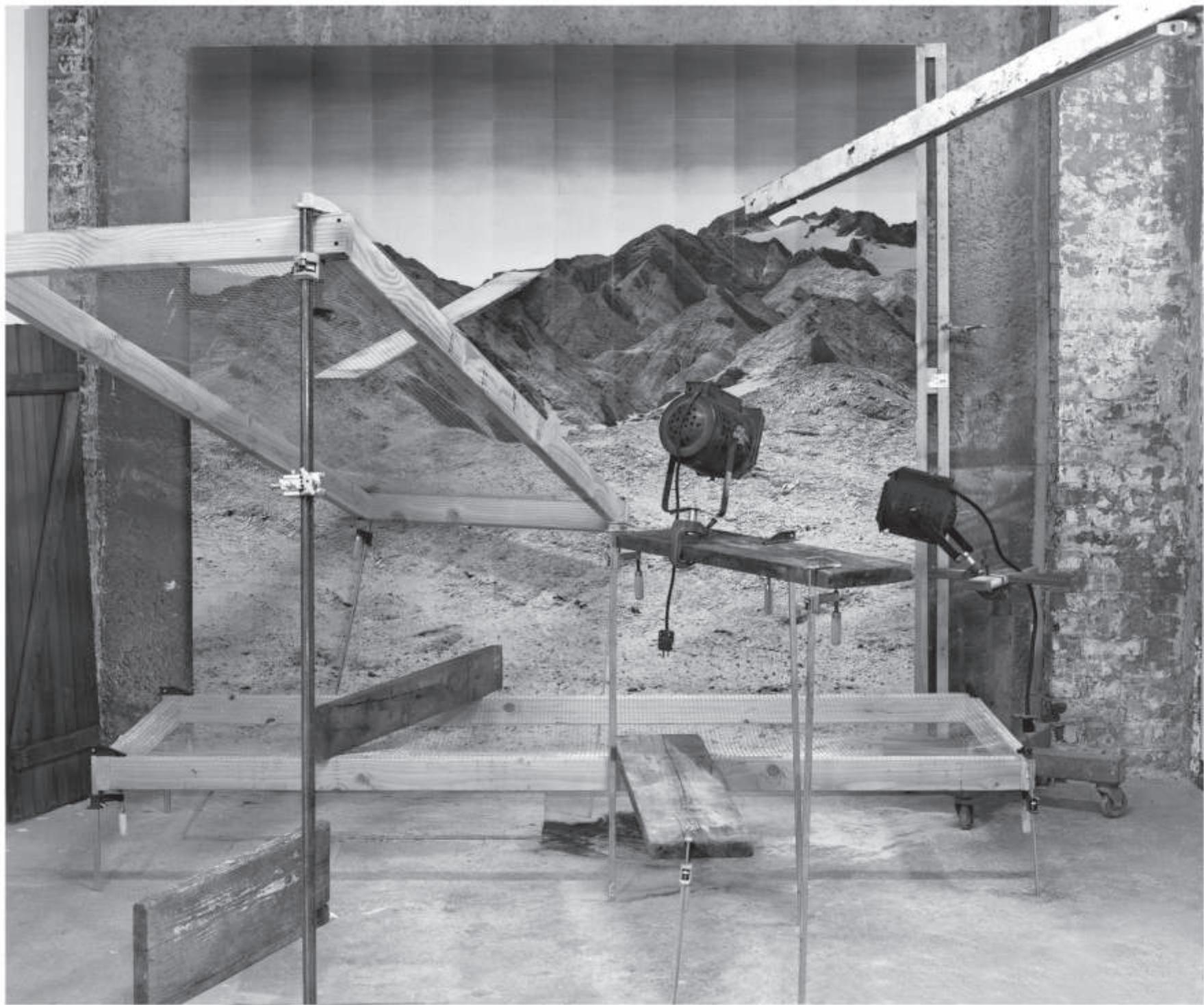
Goalkeeper #7
2014
photograph

Goalkeeper #4
2014
photograph

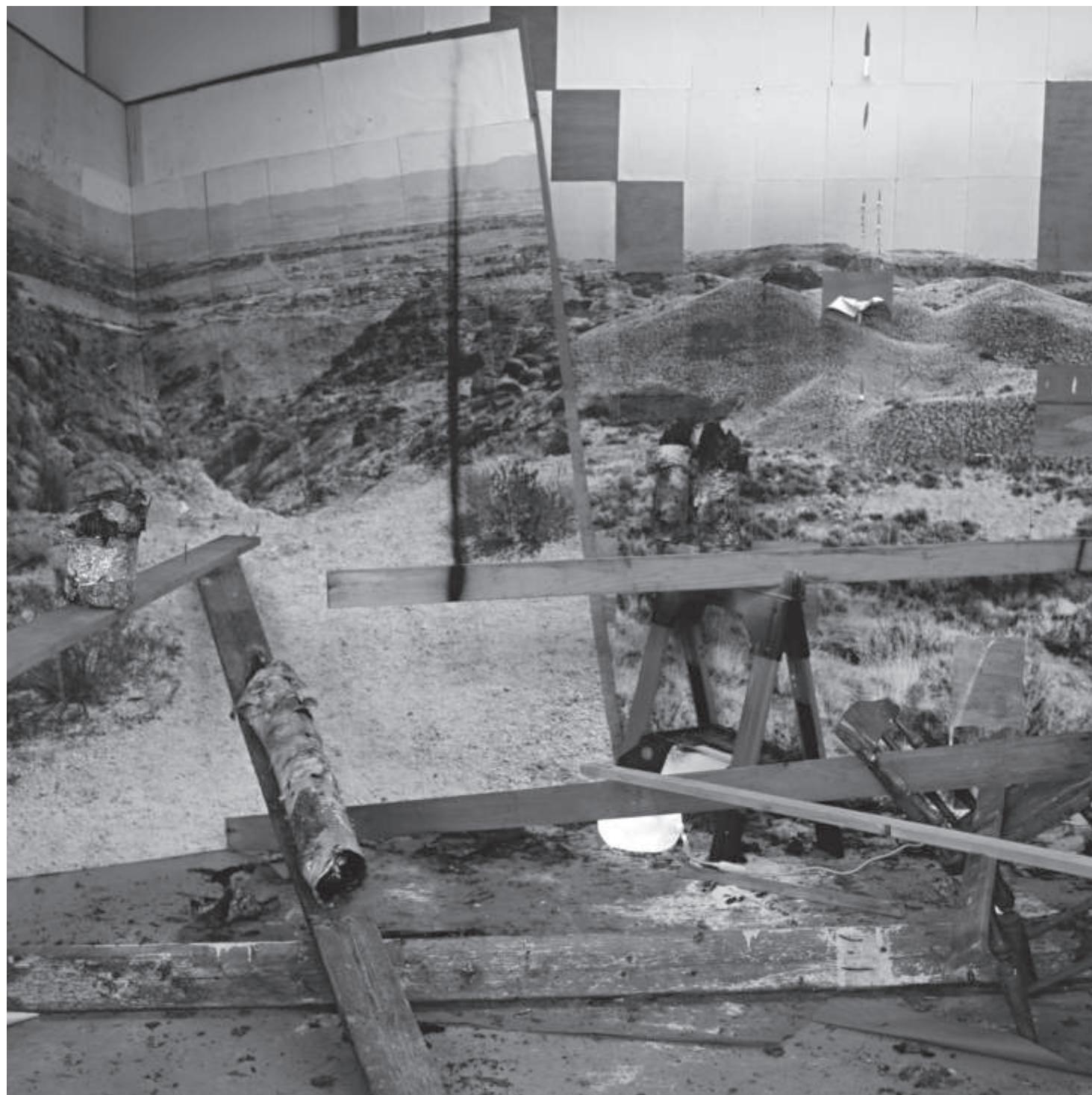










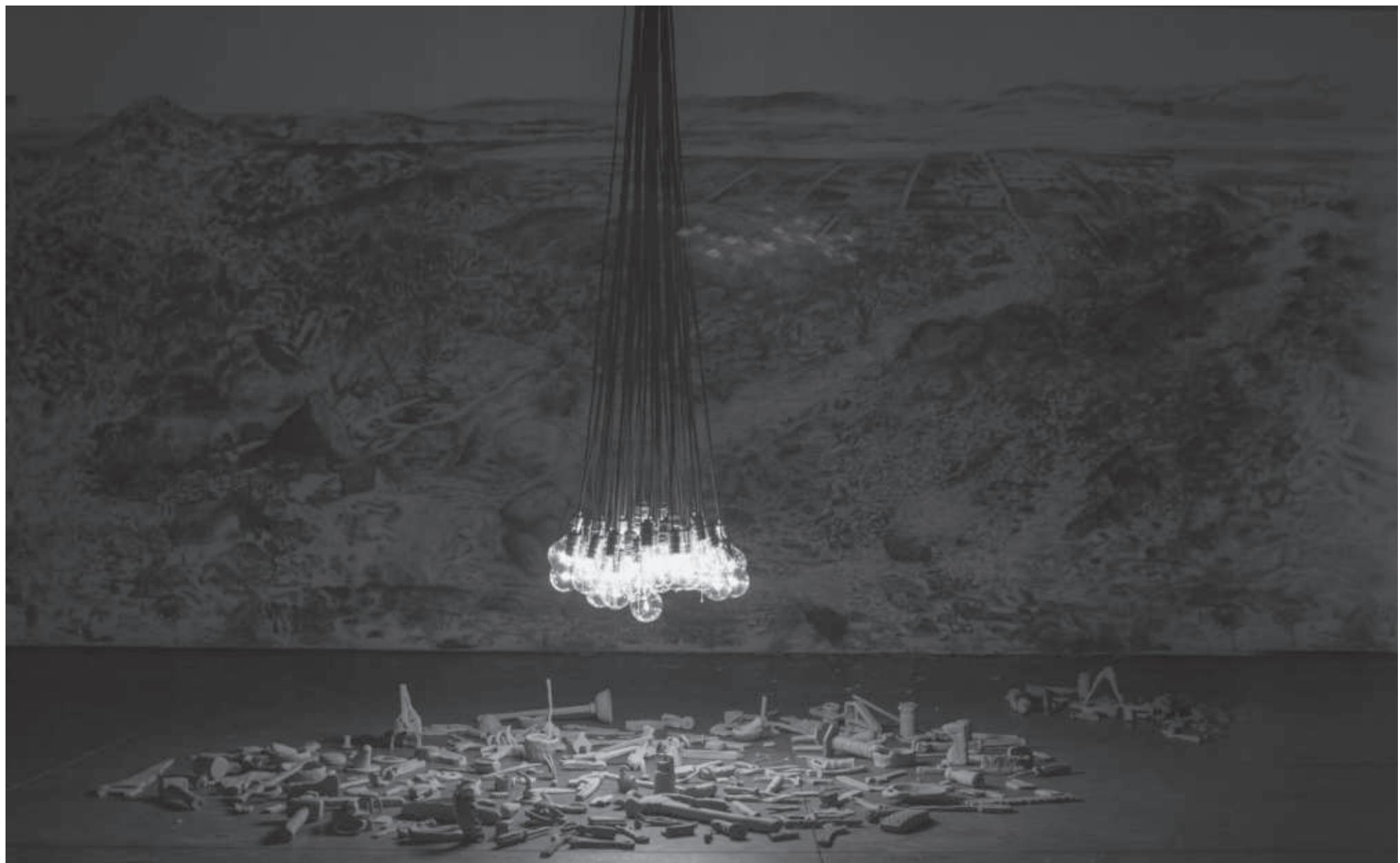


Help Wanted

2014

installation

wall drawing, clay, video









Shitty Job

2014

3:37

video





“Some company recently was interested in buying my ‘aura.’ They didn’t want my product. They kept saying, ‘We want your aura.’ I never figured out what they wanted. But they were willing to pay a lot for it. So then I thought that if somebody was willing to pay that much for it, I should try to figure out what it is.”

So says Andy Warhol in *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*.

For Warhol, aura was the mysterious stuff (or rather, the ineffable, intangible non-stuff) that makes famous people famous. A presence, vibe or energy that drenches the negative space around a famous person with electricity or color.

For Walter Benjamin, aura was the halo of preciousness that clings to an original, unique object and is absent or diminished in mechanical reproductions. (He writes about it in the seminal 1936 essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.”)

In contemporary art terms, aura is a blend of both: the Midas touch bestowed by an artist, an authorship that turns the mundane into something magical, or at least mind-bogglingly expensive. This status can be sublime or disheartening. Sometimes “aura” is shorthand for “it’s art because the artist says it is.”

The portraits of migrant workers in *Auriatic Workers* also play with erasure. Photographed against a green screen, the subjects in the *Auriatic Workers* series are situated in absurd mise en scenes of incomplete, half-erased action. Valenzuela asked his subjects to take naps or play soccer in the studio, then photoshops the ball out of the picture. We’re left with images of workers frozen, midflight, all their magnificent, chiaroscuro corpulence suspended between heaven and earth.

Everything’s a mirage: work, aura, authorship, absence. Valenzuela has turned the banal into something sublime, as good artists are wont to do. But we can’t even tell exactly what the artist has done, what work is in is work. His labor has melted away, almost as much as the soccer balls, almost as much as the bullish, unglamorous diligence of the goalie, almost as much as the labor of the forgettable men who dissolve into the background as the world rushes past, who are just trying to earn a day’s wages on the corner at Home Depot. What Valenzuela does well in *Auriatic Workers*, as in much of his work, is point a soft spotlight on systemic social injustices while operating from within and without those very systems, simultaneously making critique and mythology with one swift, seemingly effortless but oh, so laborious blow.

– Amanda Manitach, “When Labor Shines”, *CityArts*. 2014

Auriatic Workers #2

2014

photograph

Auriatic Workers #1

2014

photograph

Auriatic Workers #3

2014

photograph

Auriatic Workers #4

2014

photograph

Auriatic Workers #5

2014

photograph











Shot in a 100-year-old ghost town in the Atacama desert in Chile, the spectral camera navigates the town as a floating memory of the Belle Époque of Chilean economy.

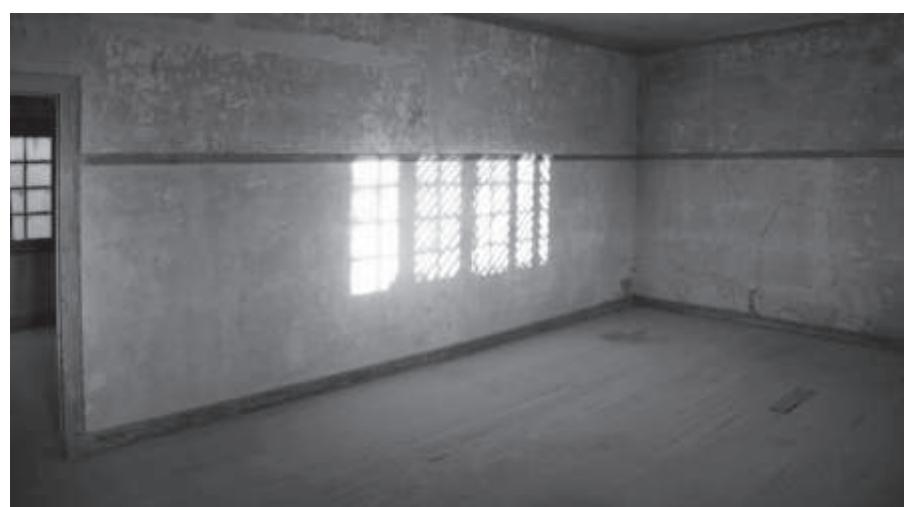
Light and Emptiness

2012

video

3:30





Gigantess
2013
video
7:20
Produced by
Susie Lee







No Place
To Start
2013
photograph



Going
Somewhere
2013
photograph

Esperando
2013
photograph





Here

2013

video

3:11







Meditations on Land

2013

video

8-minute loop





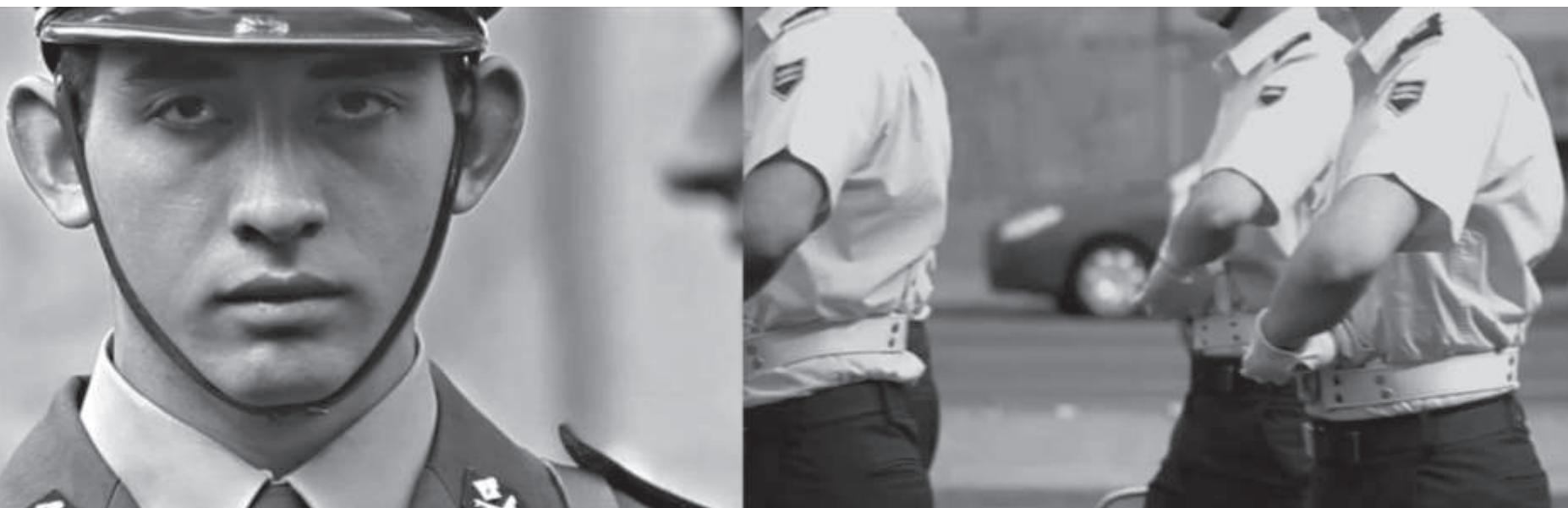
Marcha
2012
video
2:20

Being part of a community is important for our sense of belonging and our capacity to relate to others. These are crucial elements in the development of a healthy social life, and in private life as well. Through voluntary encounters and relationships with one another, parameters for interaction are established through common understanding-parameters specific to place, time, weather, a person's appearance...Surroundings and degrees of self-awareness become integral to how one operates in society. The gaze is one of the most efficient and intricate gestures of awareness because through it, in keeping track of everybody else, the self becomes visible as well.

In the video MARCHA the gaze is explored as an act revealing doubt and power. When we look at others, especially within an institutionalized context, our urge to imitate is awakened by the necessity and desire to fit in. Structures of power emerge, not so much in terms of the individual but rather they form between the watcher and the watched within concerted distributions of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; arrangements that order and manage the individual caught up within. Discipline is maintained by constant surveillance, including an internalized surveillance of the self, which regulates the behavior of individuals within the social body. Considering Foucault's use of the Panopticon as a metaphor for structures of social control, I focus on the gaze as a means of both expressing and revealing power through visibility-as-knowledge. This allows me to explore the relationship between structures and mechanisms of control in the context of institutionalized performance of discipline.

The video is divided into two screens, each focusing on different moments of the same event: rehearsals and training for a large-scale military parade. One screen displays a series of gazes. The characters, constantly looking out, exhibit an ambiguous sense of focus – perhaps concerned with their appearance, or maybe just keeping track of others. I utilize their faces, revealing doubt and vulnerability, to comment on the relationship between disciplinary power and an individual sense of self. The second video is about the complete loss of individualization – the march – but also how, through this loss, one gets to be part of the institution, part of a community. Where order determines the mise-en-scene of the military apparatus, I use repetition in the shot to emphasize how, as a form of power, it penetrates their behaviors. Editing out their faces through framing, I show the characters executing the regimented gestures of the institution, presented to them to embody or emulate; modes of address, uniform, bodily expression – reinforcing the internal mechanisms of the apparatus. I am not using military imagery to comment on the loss of personal freedom but as a way to understand the structures and function of surveillance and control. The transition from one screen to another represents a move toward a society in which discipline is based on observation and examination. Presenting the videos side-by-side creates a dialogic interconnection, emphasizing and drawing tension between the two, mirroring the circular process of acquiring and maintaining knowledge and power.

– RV





The Coyote Project

Anastasia Yumeko Hill & Rodrigo Valenzuela

Supported by the University of California Institute for Research in the Arts, artists Rodrigo Valenzuela and Anastasia Yumeko Hill present a series of live, site-specific video and performance works to be produced and exhibited en route from the Mexico-California border. Traveling northbound in a rented moving truck – which serves as their housing, mode of transportation, production and exhibition space - each of the ten works will be created in the time, space, and distance between points (A) and (B), drawing out dialogues within and among the artists, the landscape, and various California communities.

This series of time-based works is framed by questions concerning the relationships we have with our environment – the way it acts upon us, and the meanings we attach to it, which are conditioned by history, culture, and real-time reaction and response. Experimenting with ideas about, and experiences of, estrangement, isolation, getting lost, and the sense of being in no place in particular, this collaboration developed out of Hill and Valenzuela's shared interest in the phenomenology, poetics, and politics of space, as well as their divergent personal histories.

Each individual piece will serve as an immediate and creative response to the shifting dynamic between both the artists and the territory through which they travel. With predetermined parameters for distance and time, and the incorporation of varying degrees of audience participation and interactive elements, the videos and performances will constitute improvised documents of endurance, constraint, and chance. By entering into a shared space of displacement and transitoriness – into the truck-as-testing ground - the givenness of the environment is stripped away, providing new room for the particularities of identity in-and-out-of context to come into being, disturb, and be altered.



Exhibition Schedule

April 22nd – May 3rd

April 22nd – 8:00 PM, San Diego, CA

April 24th – 8:00 PM, Irvine, CA

April 26th – 8:00 PM, Riverside, CA

April 28th – 8:00 PM, Los Angeles, CA

April 28th – 8:00 PM, Santa Barbara, CA

April 29th – 8:00 PM, Santa Cruz, CA

April 30th – 2:00 – 7:00 PM, Merced, CA

May 2nd – 8:00 PM, Berkeley, CA

May 3rd – 8:00 PM, Davis, CA

The Coyote Project /

Berkeley

2013

video

3:54



either from coming out of the light



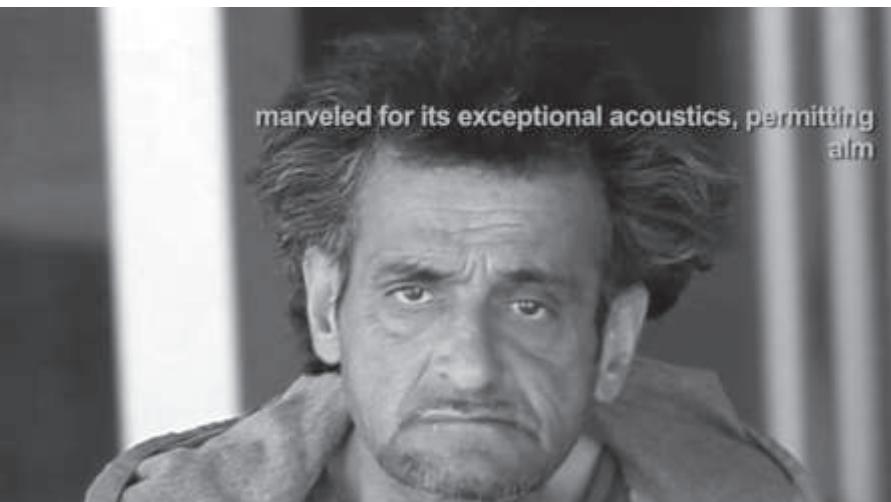
as did the other, on top of the roof



(1. to make light of a situation)



that you can't take part...



marveled for its exceptional acoustics, permitting
alm



And these movies



**The Coyote Project /
Irvine**
2013
video
2:59

Hedonic Reversal #1
2014
photograph



Hedonic Reversal #2
2014
photograph



rodrigo valenzuela

**we are in
the mythmaking business**

Limited to 250 numbered copies.
In addition to this book a limited edition multiple by the artist
is available from onestar press.

Book designed by Ronny Quevedo

Printed and bound in France

2014 Rodrigo Valenzuela & onestar press

onestar press
49, rue Albert
75013 Paris France
info@onestarpress.com
www.onestarpress.com

/250