


onestar press

onestar press    rodrigo valenzuela    we are in the mythmaking business



we are  
in the  
mythmaking  
businesss

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 labors. 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

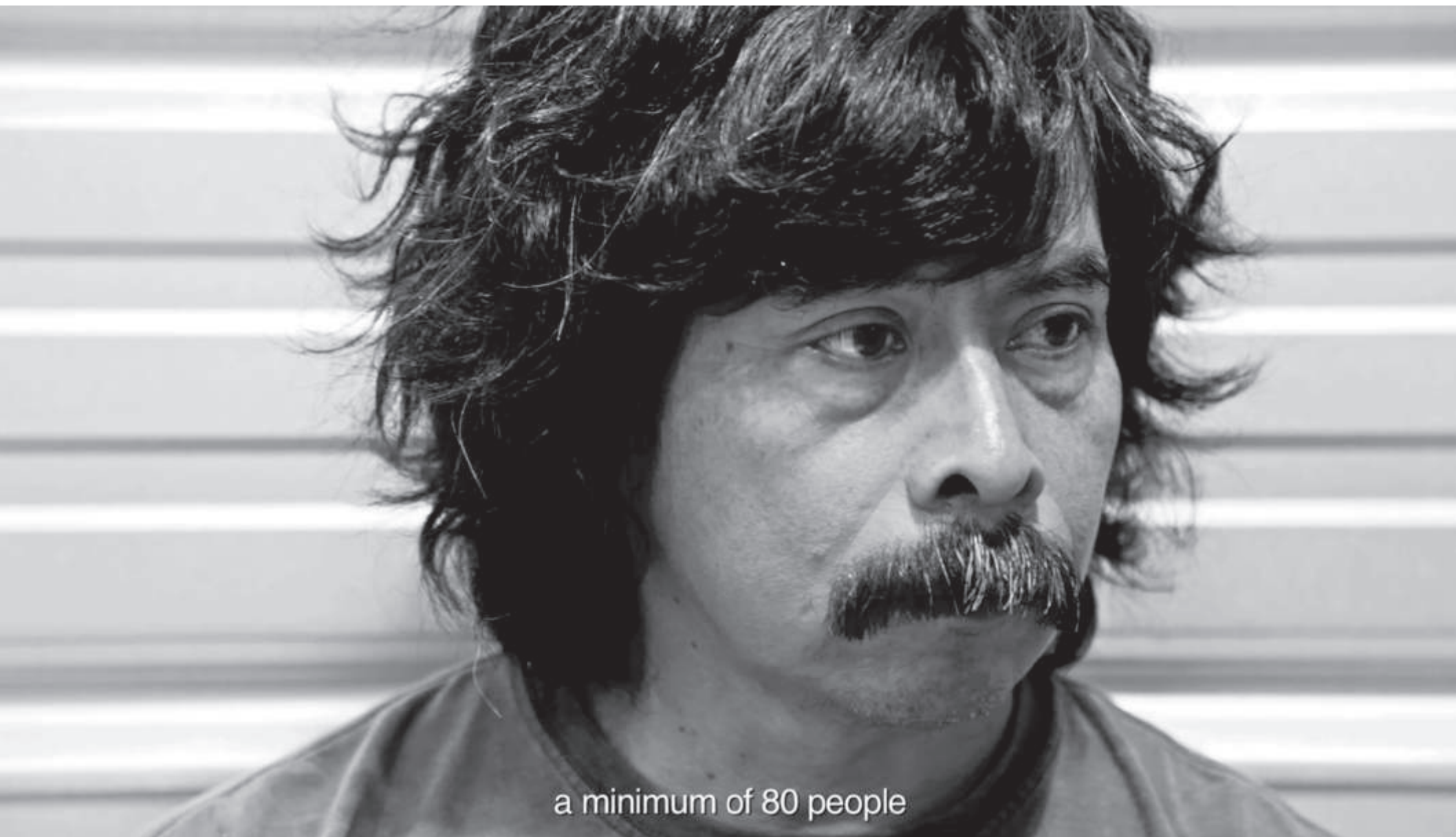
they took it  
we were sixteen  
but we separated

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

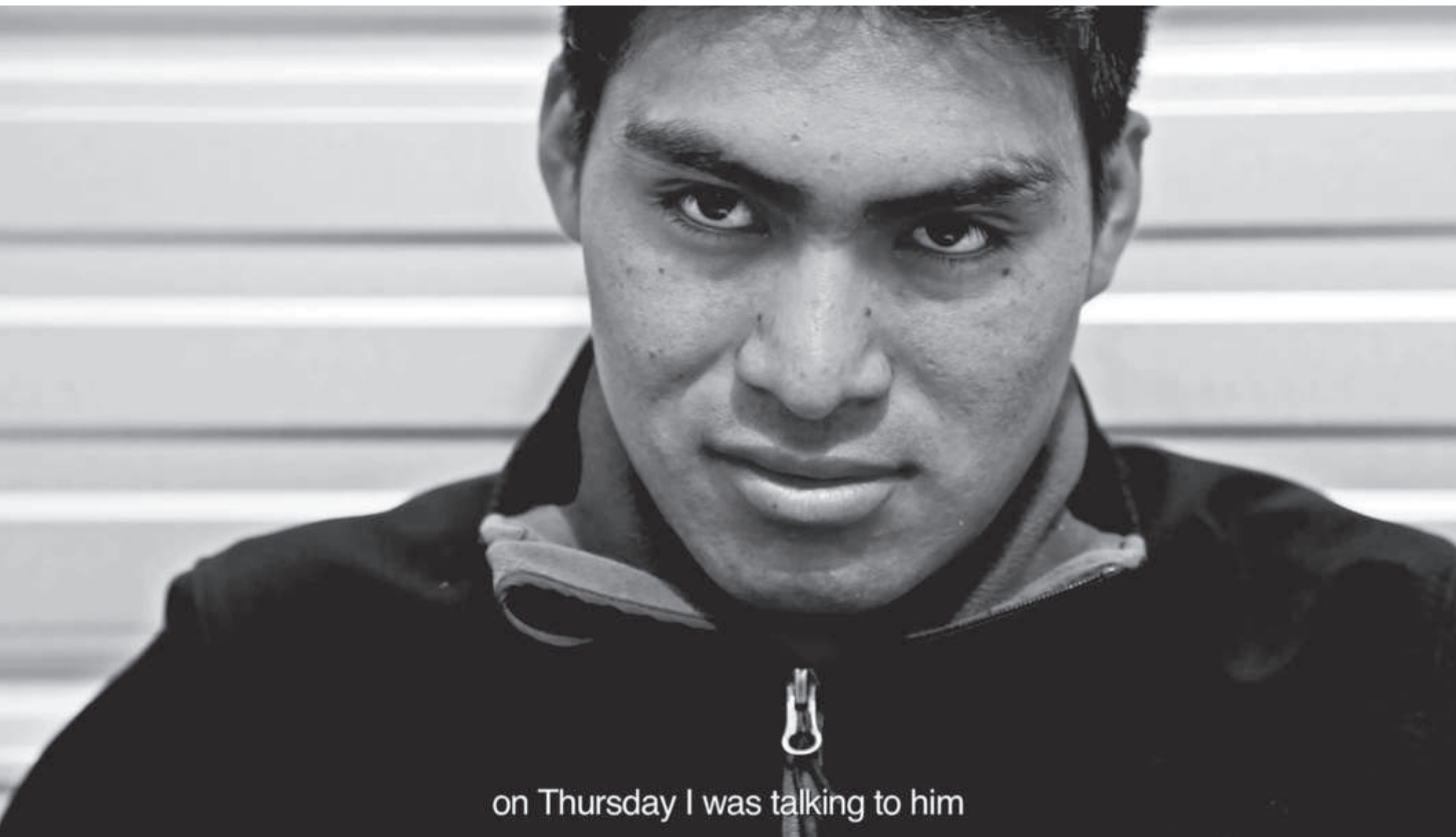
well...you never know if one should come back or not

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

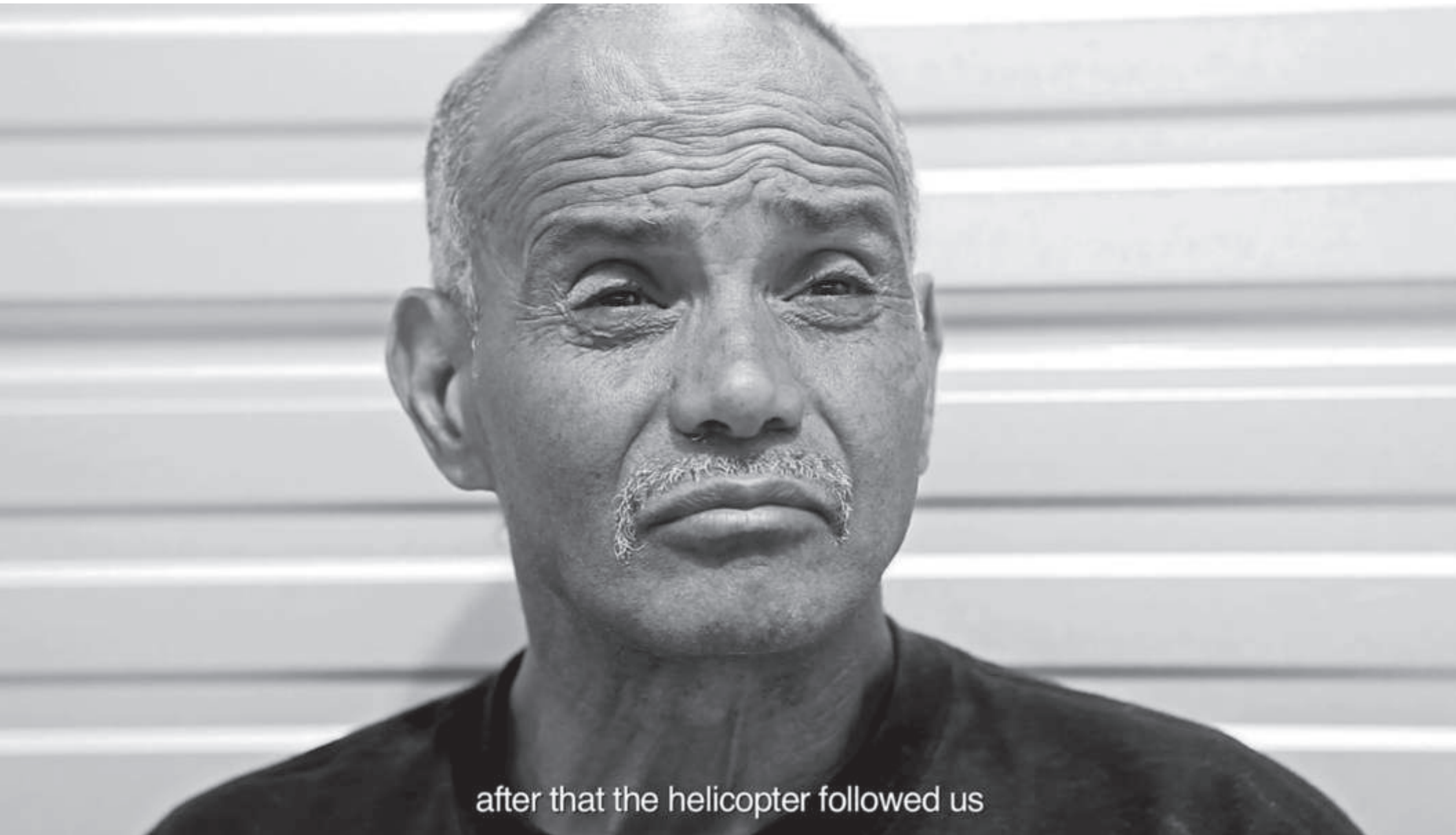
in one of those...  
chases that immigration gave us  
you split from the pack

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



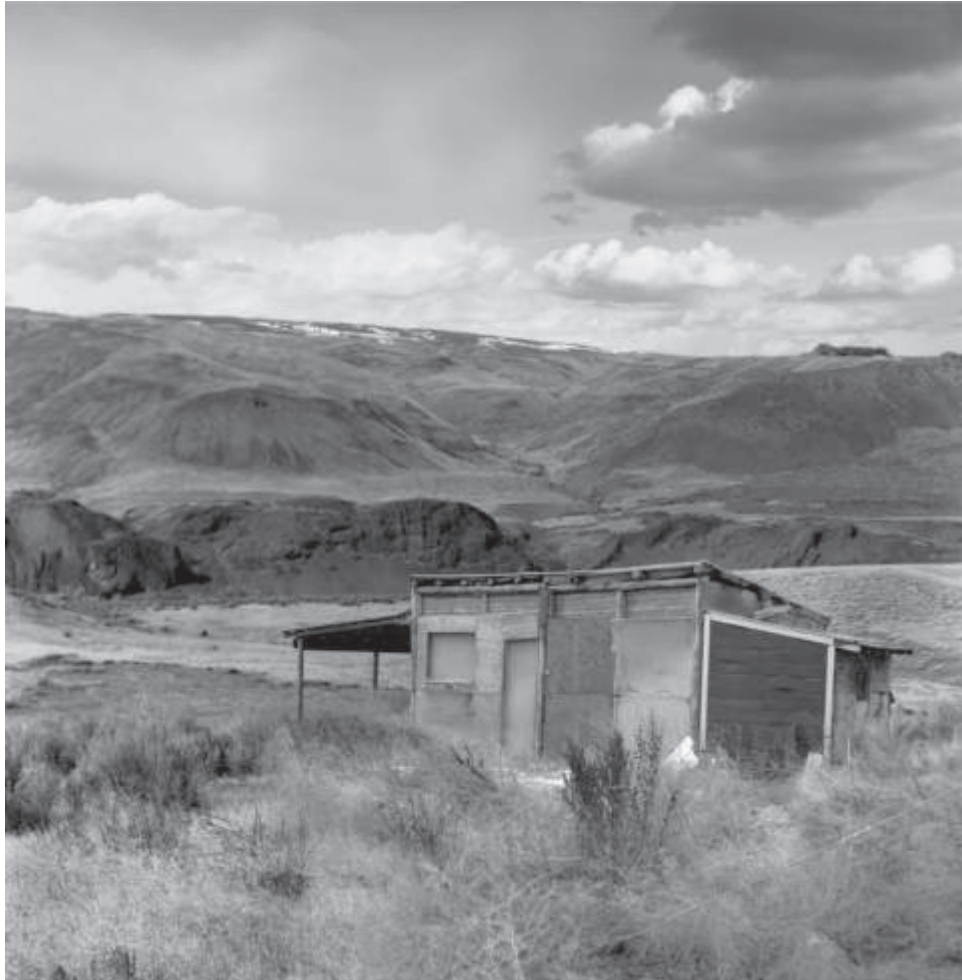




### The Builder #3

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 Mudede



















**The Worker #1**

2013

photograph

**The Worker #4**

2013

photograph

**The Worker #2**

2013

photograph

**The Worker #3**

2013

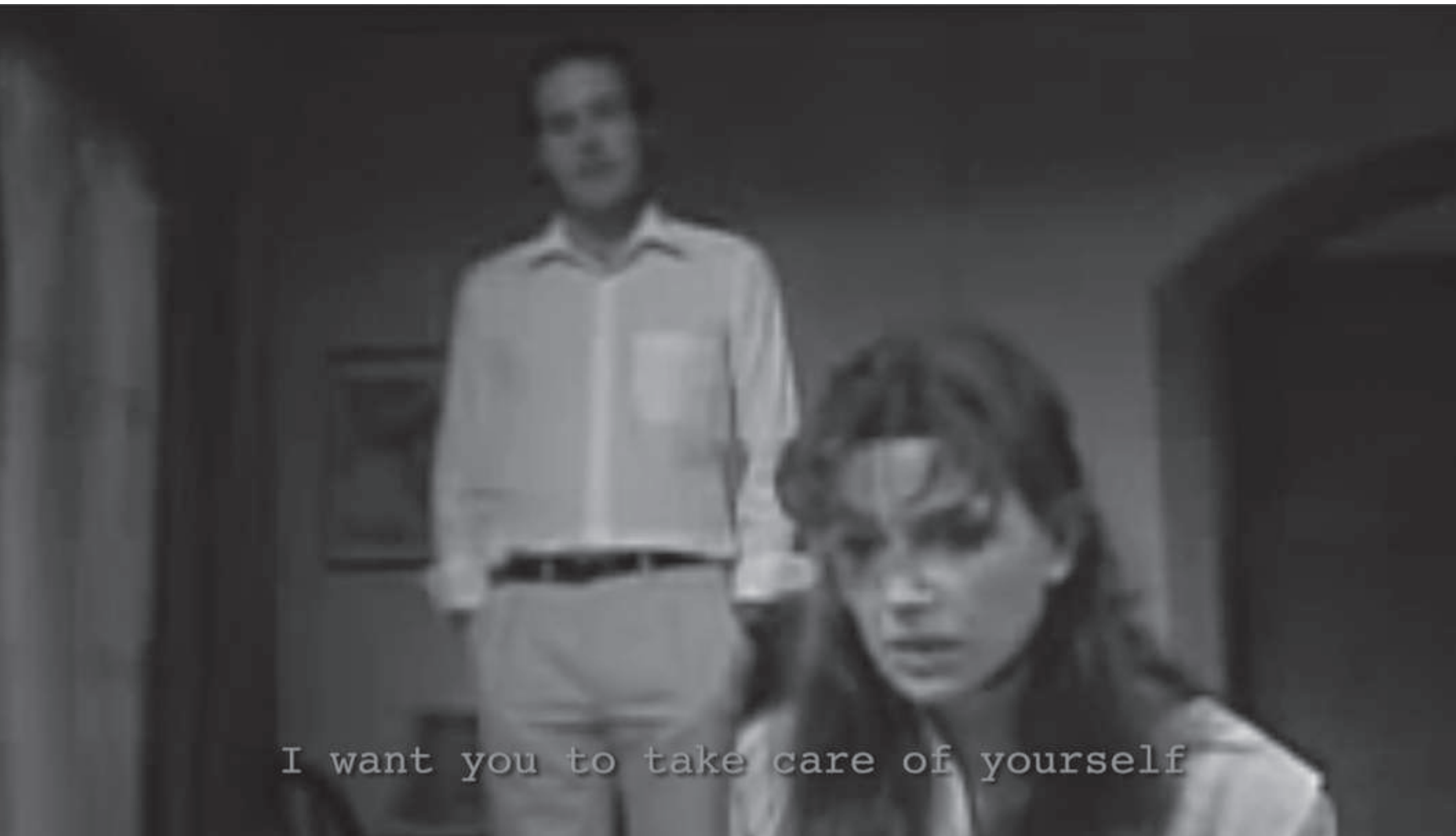
photograph

*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.



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





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

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

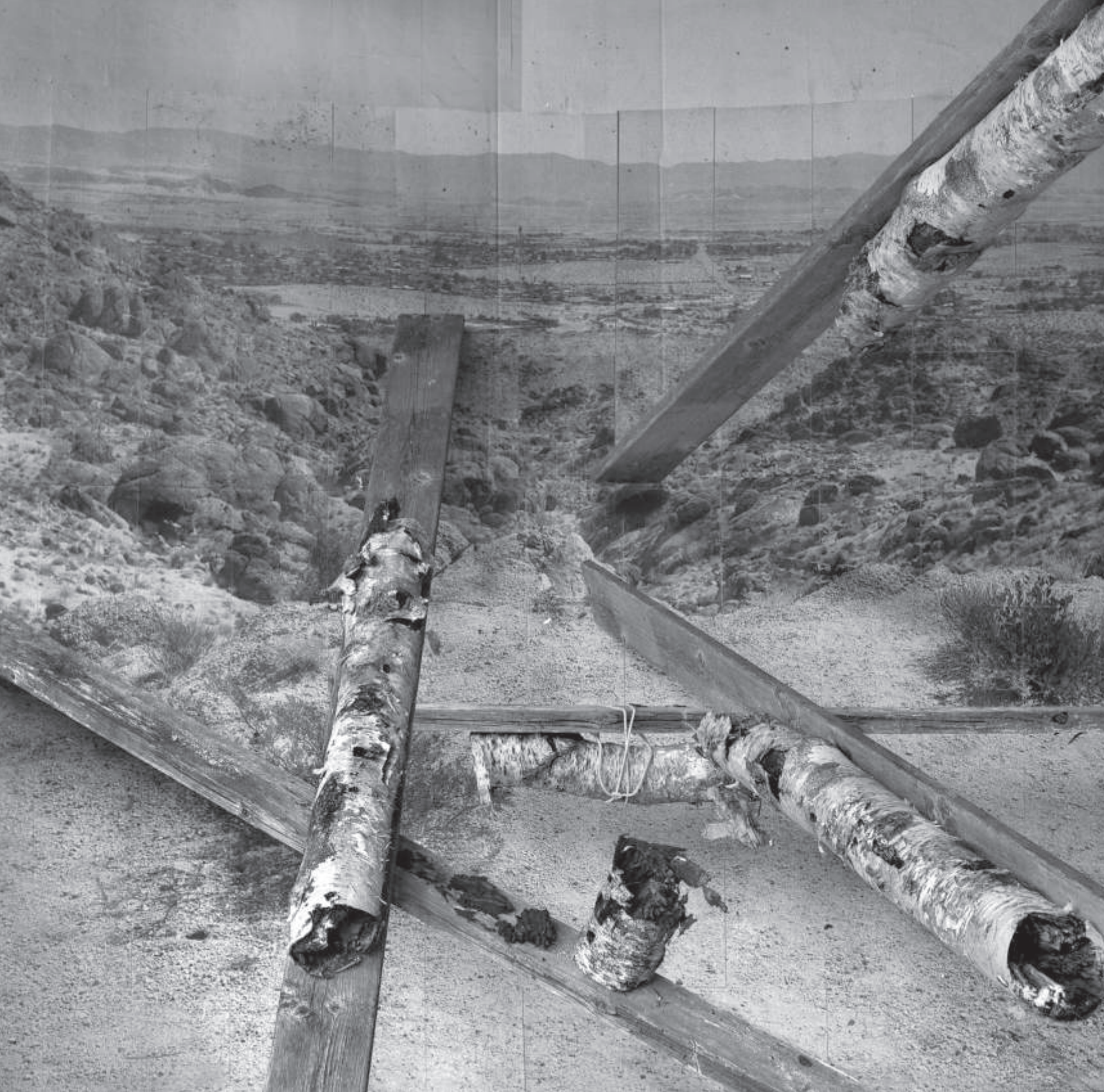


frustrated?  
I laugh at the frustration  
I laugh at it  
why feel this way?  
that's enough  
I can say what I want  
when I want  
where I want  
without feeling rejected  
without being afraid to speak up  
and letting no one undermine me



I gave you another chance and you lied again





Still Life #1  
2013  
photograph

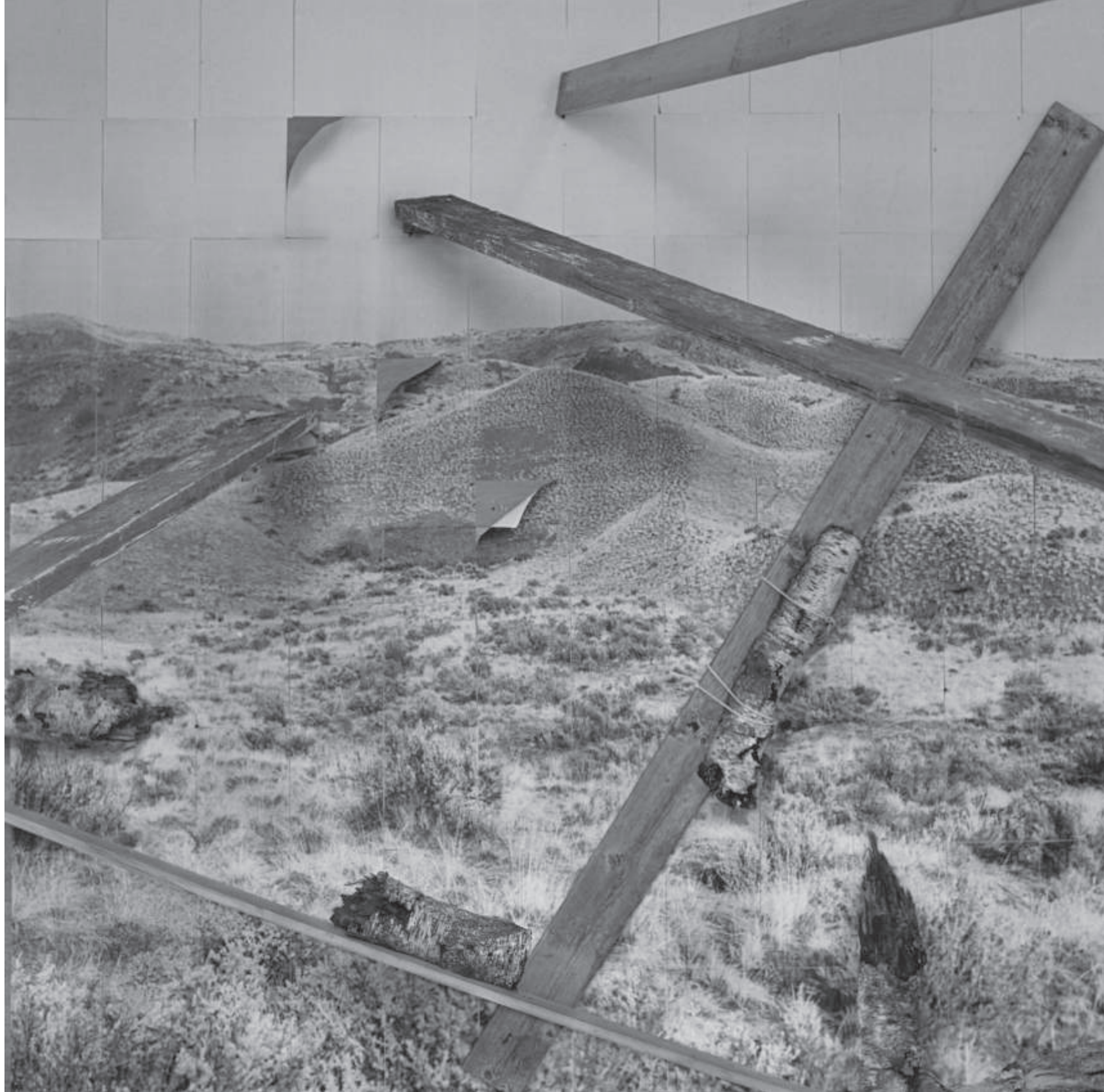


**Still Life #5**  
2014  
photograph



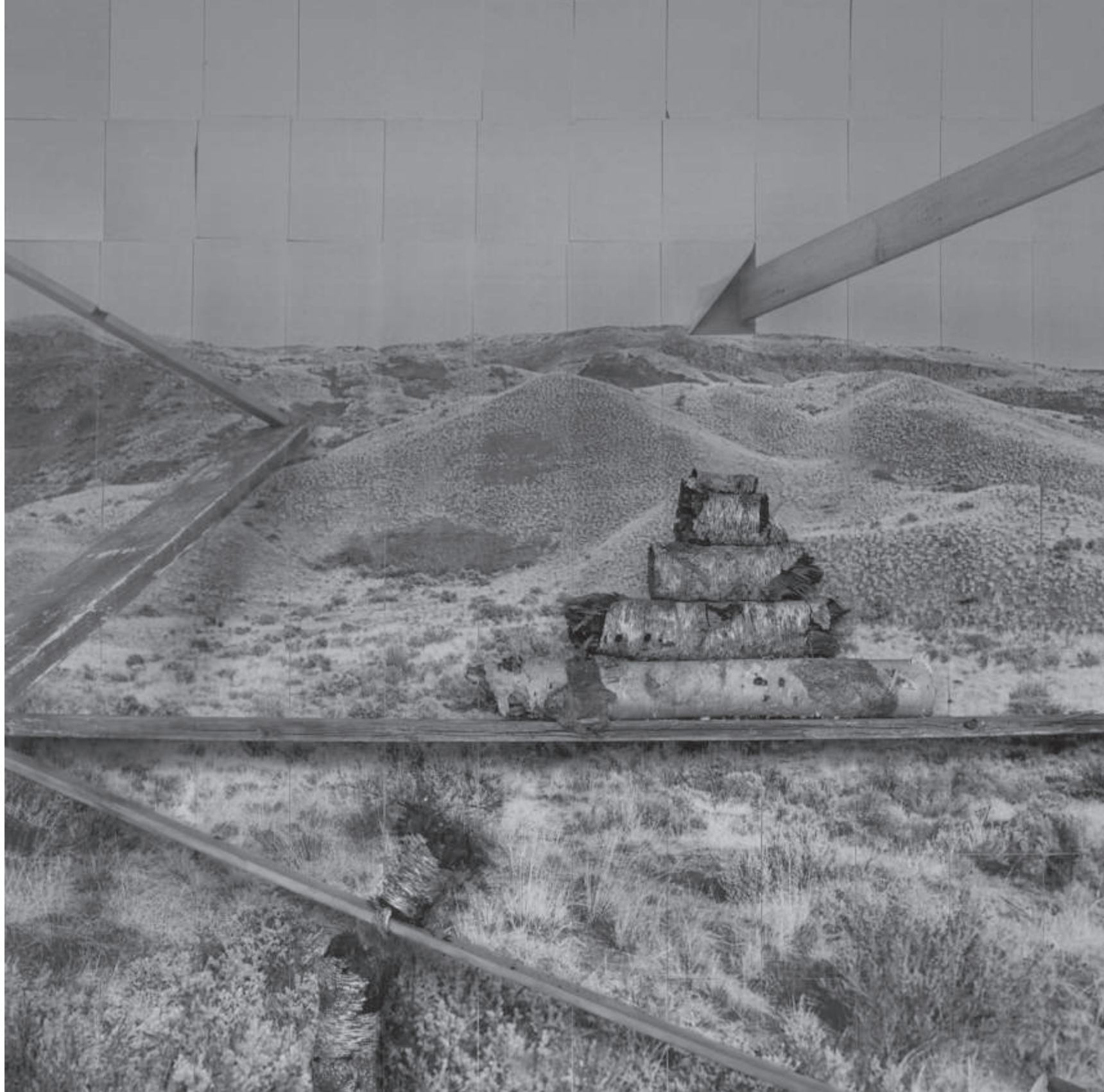


**Still Life #3**  
2013  
photograph

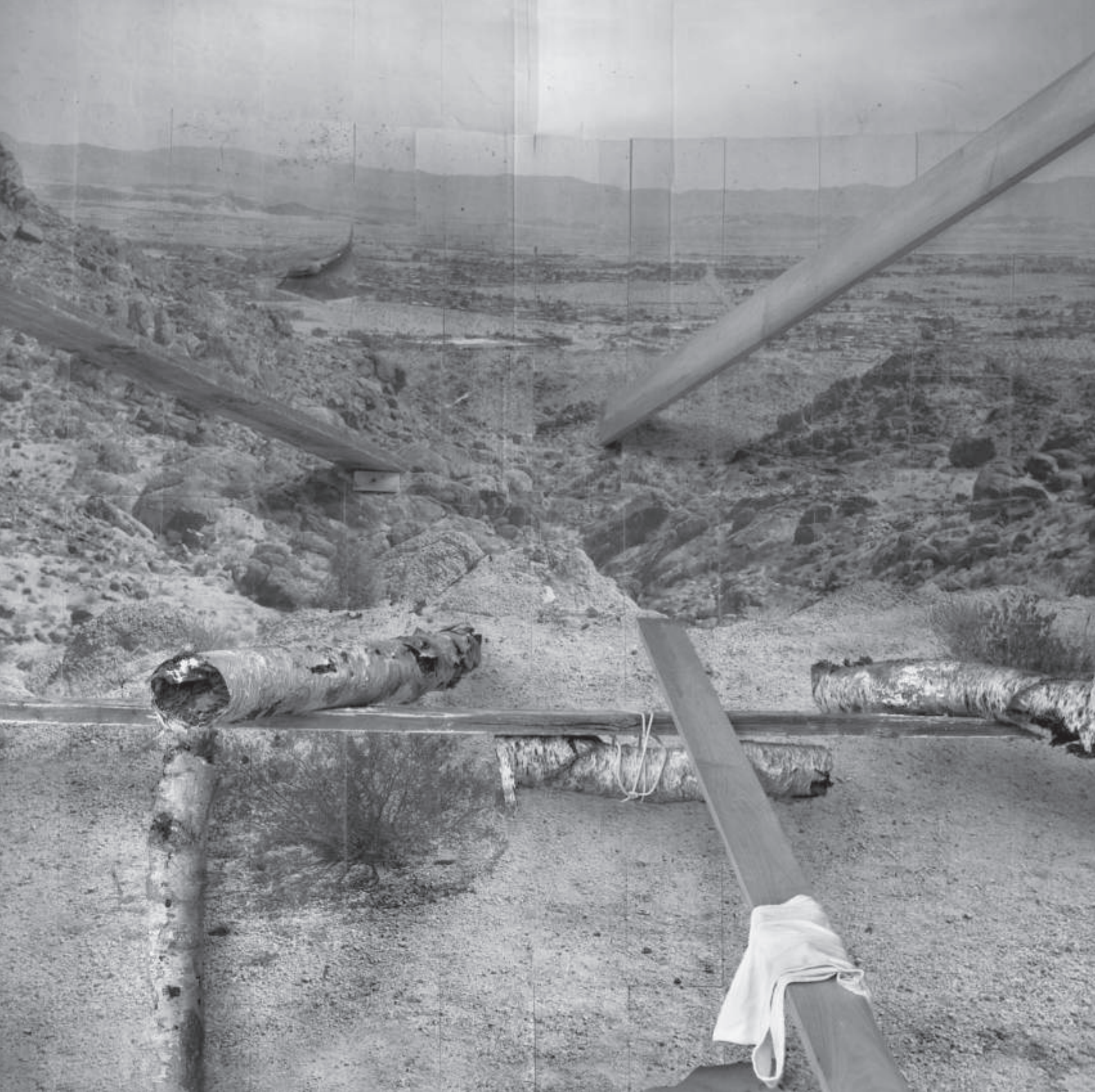




**Still Life #4**  
2013  
photograph







**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





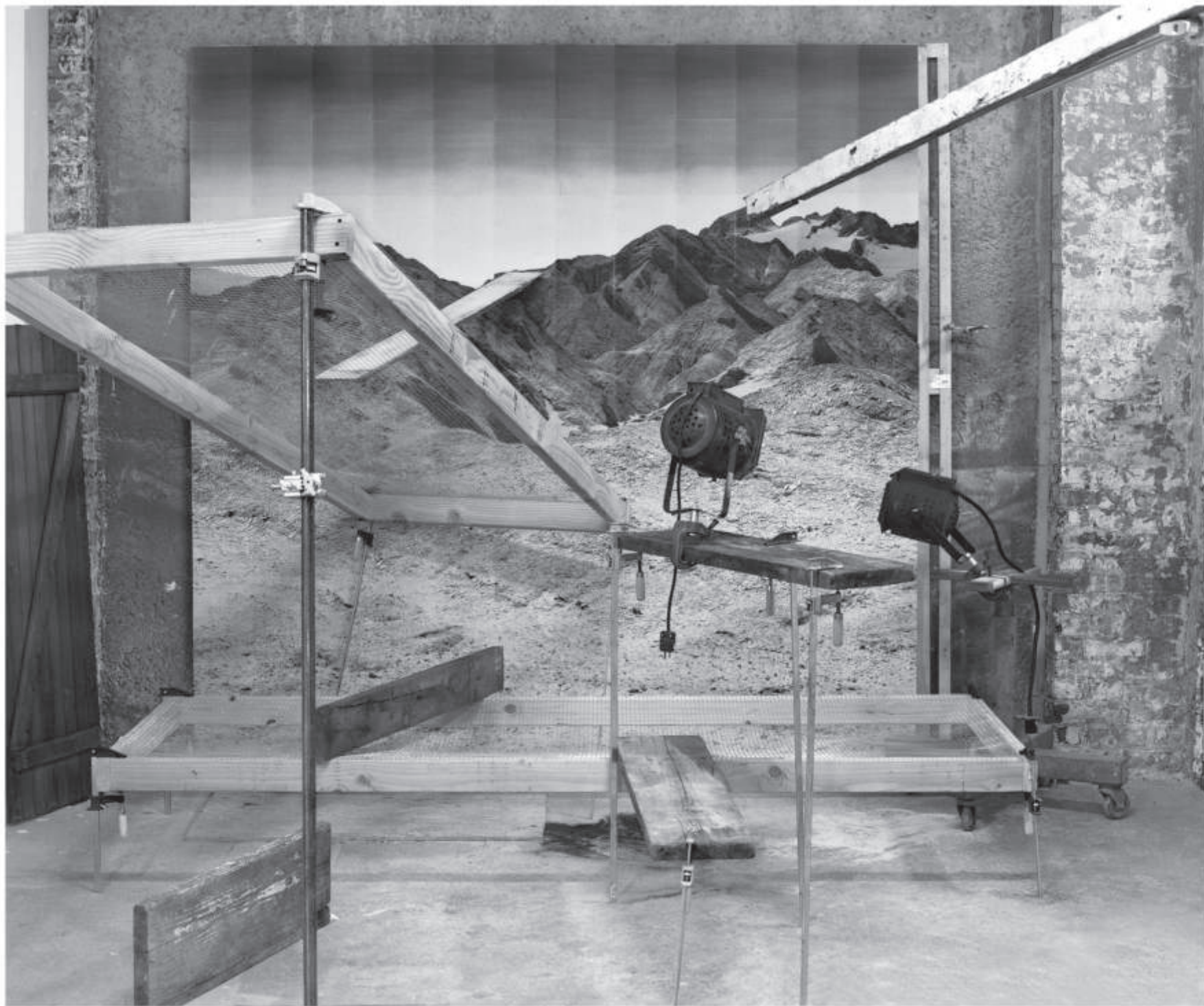








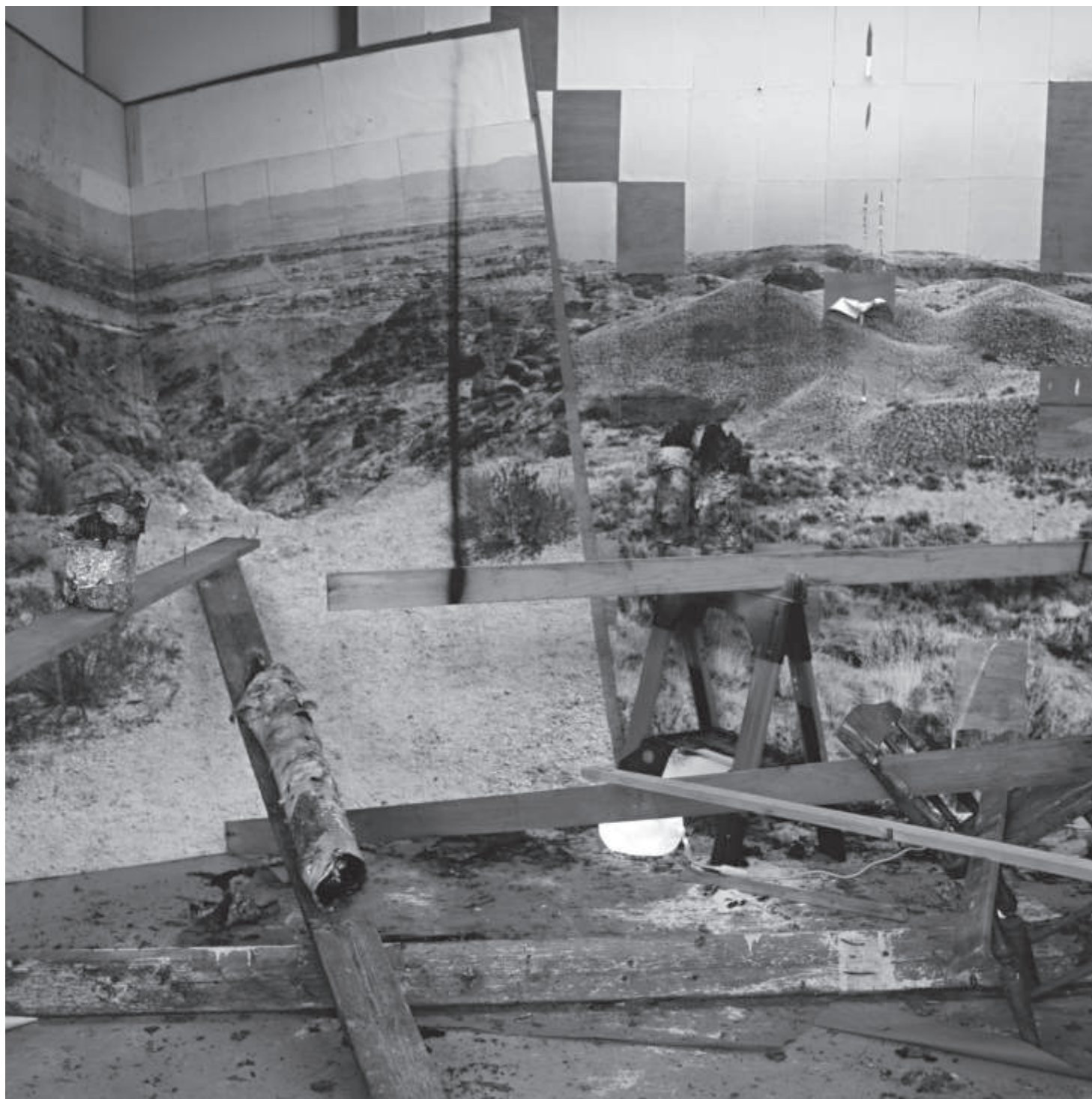












**Help Wanted**

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 Maniatach, "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















**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, disturb, and be altered.



### Exhibition Schedule

*April 22<sup>nd</sup> – May 3<sup>rd</sup>*

*April 22<sup>nd</sup>—8:00 PM, San Diego, CA*

*April 24<sup>th</sup>—8:00 PM, Irvine, CA*

*April 26<sup>th</sup>—8:00 PM, Riverside, CA*

*April 26<sup>th</sup>—6:00 PM, Los Angeles, CA*

*April 28<sup>th</sup>—8:00 PM, Santa Barbara, CA*

*April 29<sup>th</sup>—8:00 PM, Santa Cruz, CA*

*April 30<sup>th</sup>—2:00 – 7:00 PM, Merced, CA*

*May 2<sup>nd</sup>—8:00 PM, Berkeley, CA*

*May 3<sup>rd</sup>—8:00 PM, Davis, CA*

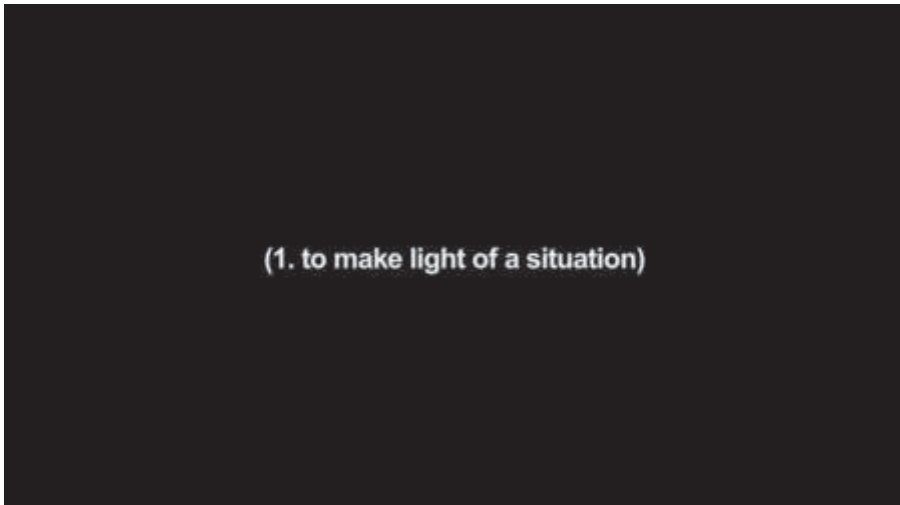
**The Coyote Project /  
Berkeley**  
2013  
video  
3:54



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**

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