



STUDY GUIDE

SPRING 2024 EXHIBITION

Thursday, February 1-Saturday, April 20



MESSENGERS

Leslie Hewitt, Tarrah Krajnak, Rodrigo Valenzuela

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The Moss Arts Center would like to thank each of the artists and their respective galleries for providing these images for our educational resources. For more information about each artist, visit the links and additional resources in the guide.



ABOUT THE MOSS ARTS CENTER GALLERIES

The Moss Arts Center at Virginia Tech provides transformative arts experiences to children through gallery tours, artist engagements, and special school-day performances from renowned touring artists for children, teachers, and families.

Explore exciting new opportunities to connect with the arts through exhibitions and study guides created especially for young audiences. Contact us to register for a gallery tour and to sign up for emails to learn more about the Moss Arts Center's PK-12 programs.

Plan Your Visit

Gallery Hours

Tuesday-Friday, 10 AM-5 PM

Saturday, 10 AM-4 PM

(during exhibition run dates)

Admission to the galleries is always free and open to the public. The Ruth C. Horton Gallery is located downstairs in the Moss Arts Center near the Alumni Mall entrance. The Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and Sherwood Payne Quillen '71 Reception Gallery are located upstairs near the Turner Street entrance. Find parking information [here](#).



WE WANT EVERYONE TO **ENJOY THE EXHIBITION**

Please prepare your students for their visit to the Moss Arts Center by practicing museum manners. The following guidelines will ensure that everyone can enjoy the exhibition.

- Do not touch the works of art. Always stay a safe distance away from each work of art.
- Do not lean on the gallery walls or pedestals. You may sit on the benches or the floor.
- Food, gum, and beverages are not allowed inside the galleries.
- Please remove backpacks and place them in a safe place away from the art.
- Use only pencils when writing or drawing in the galleries.
- Photography is allowed, but please do not use a flash.

We're Here to Help

Please reach out to schedule a visit or for questions about teaching, learning, and engaging with our programs.

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MESSENGERS

Leslie Hewitt, Tarrah Krajnak, Rodrigo Valenzuela

Curricular connections in grades 6-12

Lower gallery: Appropriate for all ages

Upper gallery: Contains artwork that features nudity, which some visitors may find to be inappropriate for very young visitors.

About the Exhibition

Messengers explores the use of photography to communicate — not only through visual aesthetics, but to transmit more profound personal, cultural, or societal messages. Photography acts as a conduit for the artists' hybrid interdisciplinary approaches, enabling them to convey rich and multifaceted narratives, evolving through their formal and material languages.

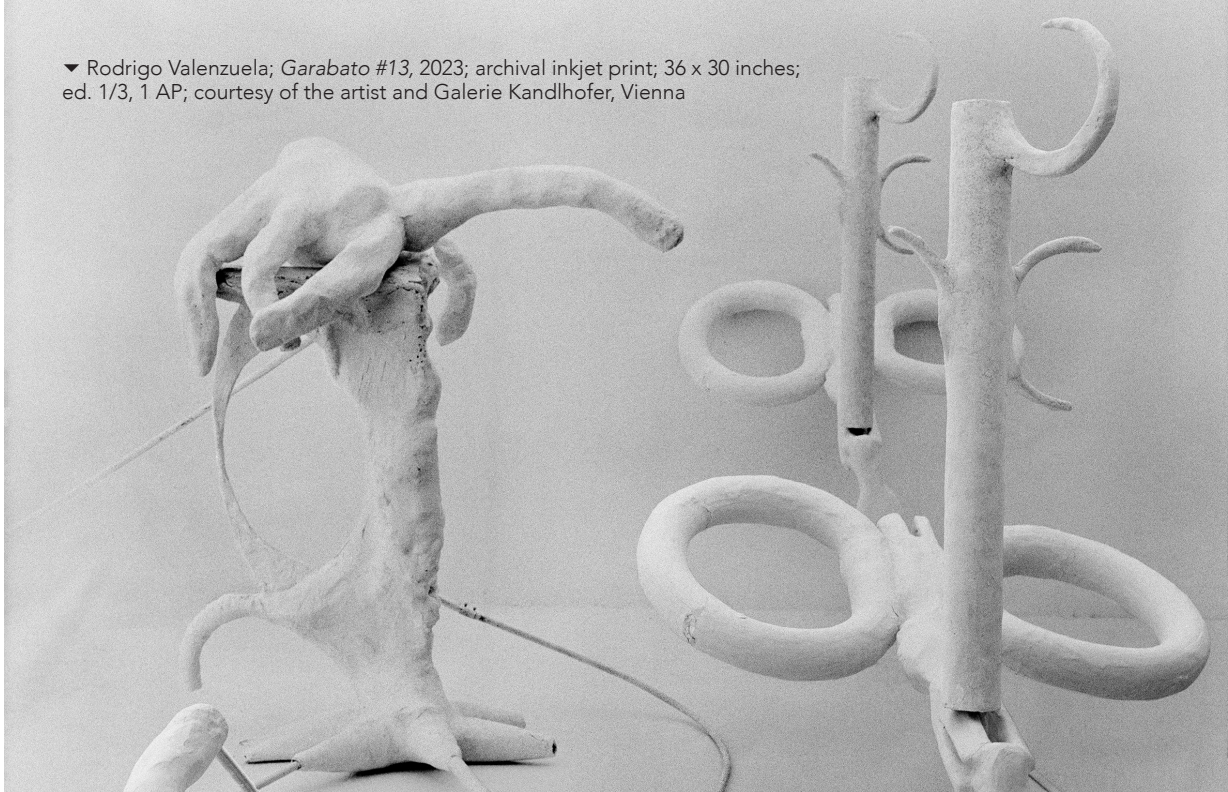
The title refers to the transcendental nature of photographic images to transcend time and space by capturing the moment in static form. Hewitt, Krajnak, and Valenzuela transmute the traditional boundaries of photography by juxtaposing constructed and archival images and abstracting the documentary and spatial attributes of images.

Helpful Terminology

Tableaus: A painting or photograph in which characters are arranged for picturesque or dramatic effect and appear absorbed and completely unaware of the existence of the viewer.

▲ Tarrah Krajnak; *Black Messengers*, 2013-present; silver gelatin print; 8 x 10 inches; ed. 2/3, 1 AP; © Tarrah Krajnak, courtesy Zander Galerie

▼ Rodrigo Valenzuela; *Garabato #13*, 2023; archival inkjet print; 36 x 30 inches; ed. 1/3, 1 AP; courtesy of the artist and Galerie Kandlhofer, Vienna



Post-Minimalist: An art movement that emphasizes the mental and physical processes involved in the creation of art, often reflecting personal and social concerns.

Assemblages: An artistic composition made from scraps, junk, and odds and ends (e.g., paper, cloth, wood, stone, or metal).

Site-specific installation: A work of art designed specifically for a particular location and that has an interrelationship with the location.

Resources

Rabinowitz, Cay Sophie. *Leslie Hewitt*. (New York: OSMOS, 2019). osmos.online/books/lesliehewitt

Shane, Robert. "Rodrigo Valenzuela: New Works for a Post Worker's World." *The Brooklyn Rail*, 2022. brooklynrail.org/2022/11/artseen/Rodrigo-Valenzuela-New-Works-for-a-Post-Workers-World

Soldi, Rafael. "Q&A: TARRAH KRAJNAK." *Strange Fire Collective*, 2019. strangefirecollective.com/qa-tarrak-krajnak

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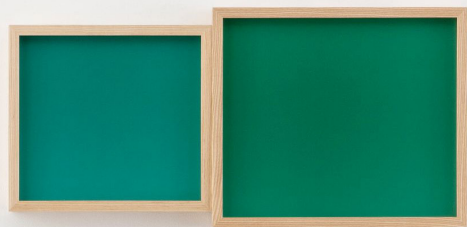
Hewitt, Leslie. "Leslie Hewitt, Artist Statement." *Headlands Center for the Arts*, 2015. headlands.org/artist/leslie-hewitt/

Krajnak, Tarrak. "Bio." *Tarrak Krajnak*. 2023. tarrakrajnak.com/bio

Krajnak, Tarrak. *Black Messengers*. Tarrak Krajnak. 2023. tarrakrajnak.com/black-messengers/1

"Leslie Hewitt, Biography." *Perrotin*. perrotin.com/artists/Leslie_Hewitt/347#biography

Valenzuela, Rodrigo. "Statement." *Rodrigo Valenzuela*. rodrigovalenzuela.com/text



▲ Leslie Hewitt; *Blue Green, Blue Green Yellow, Sometimes*, 2022; chromogenic prints; 14 13/16 × 25 3/4 × 2 inches; courtesy of the artist and Perrotin; photo by Guillaume Ziccarelli



LESLIE HEWITT



Artist Statement

Working with photography, sculpture, and site-specific installations, I address fluid notions of time, exposing paradigm shifts relevant to perception and space. My work oscillates between the illusionary potential of photography and the physical weight of sculpture. In my photographed arrangements, I tend to isolate personal ephemera, material, and virtual residue of mass culture to consider the fragile nature of quotidian life.

— Leslie Hewitt

▲ Photo by Tony Rinaldo

▲ Leslie Hewitt; *Subfield* (Crossroads, Intersections, Coral Reefs), 2023; chromogenic prints; 40 1/2 x 34 3/4 x 2 inches

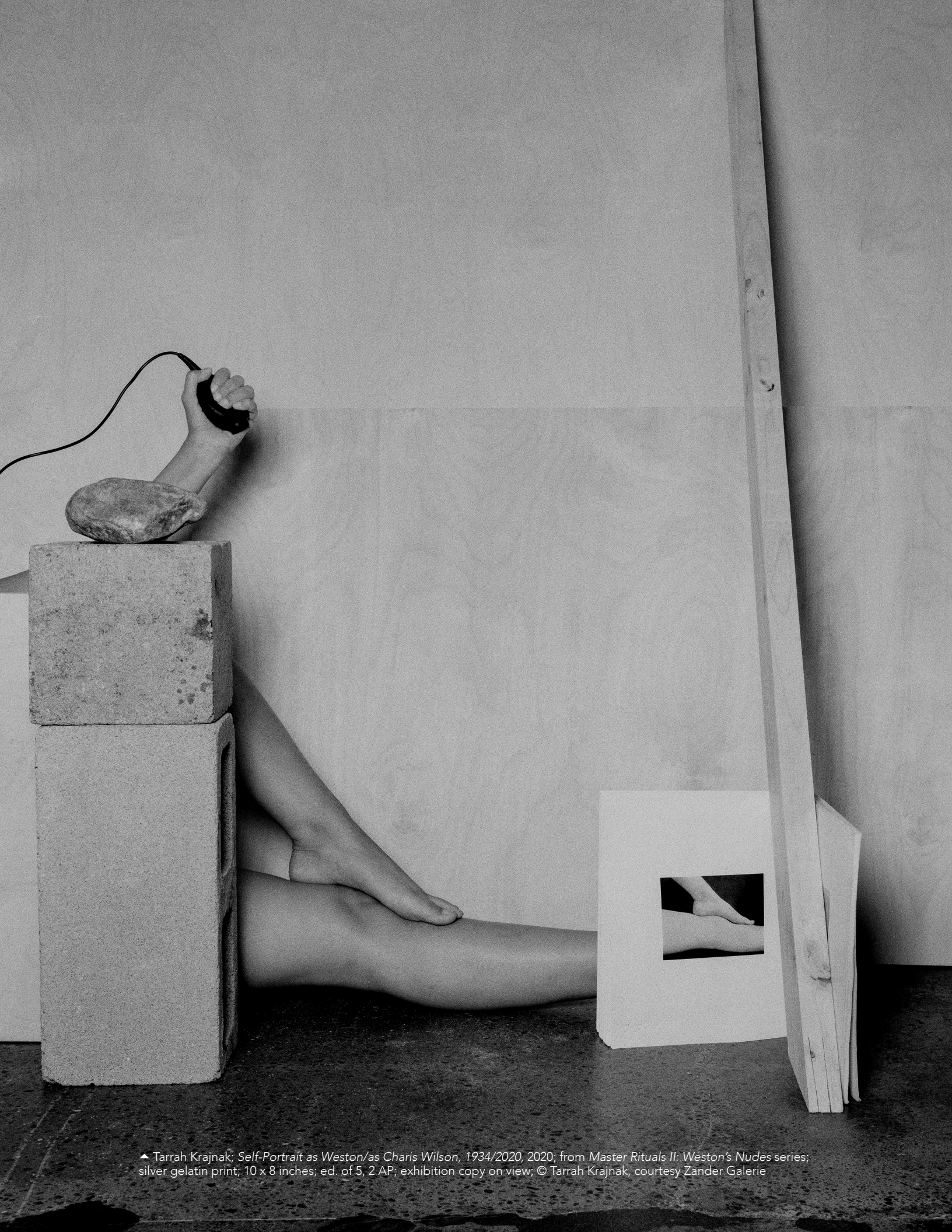
Synopsis of Artwork

Leslie Hewitt combines photography and sculpture in her work, exploring still life from a post-minimalist perspective. Hewitt uses geometric compositions to frame and crystallize ordinary materials, including personal mementos like family photos, books, and vintage magazines. This hybrid approach challenges the construction of meaning and memory, emphasizing formal connections over didactic ones. Hewitt also explores the relationship between physical space and her photo sculptures.

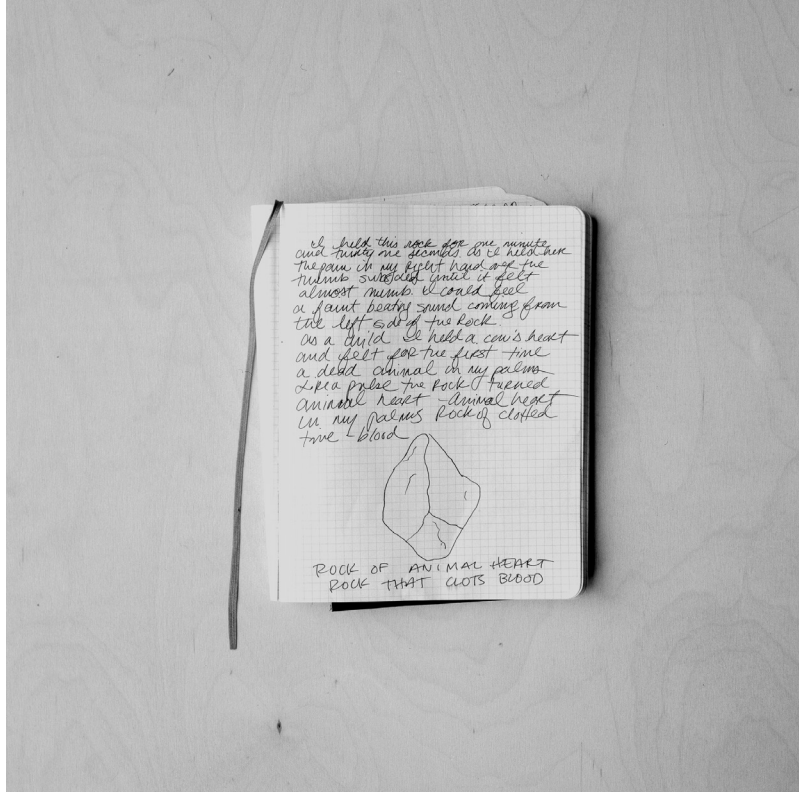
Biography

Leslie Hewitt's hybrid approach to photography and sculpture revisits the still life genre from a post-minimalist perspective. Hewitt's geometric compositions — which she frames and crystallizes through the disciplines of photography and film theory, respectively — are spare assemblages of ordinary effects and materials, suggesting the porosity between intimate and sociopolitical histories. Whether discreetly arranged in layers on wooden planks or stacked before a wall in her studio, Hewitt's objects often include personal mementos like family pictures, as well as books and vintage magazines that reference the Black literary and popular-culture ephemera of her upbringing. Interested in the mechanisms behind the construction of meaning and memory, she decisively challenges both by unfolding manifestly formal, rather than didactic, connections in her heteroclitite juxtapositions. She puts pressure on physical space as the ultimate frame of her photo sculptures by displaying some of them leaning against a wall, as they were originally conceived. Hewitt further works with site-specific installation and film as modalities to contend equally with the notions of space and time.

Hewitt studied at the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, the Yale University School of Art, and at New York University, where she was a Clark Fellow in the Africana and Visual Culture Studies programs. She was included in the 2008 Whitney Biennial and was the recipient of the 2008 Art Matters research grant to the Netherlands. A selection of recent and forthcoming exhibitions include the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Studio Museum in Harlem, Artists Space in New York, Project Row Houses in Houston, and LA><ART in Los Angeles. Hewitt has held residencies at the Studio Museum in Harlem; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University; and the American Academy in Berlin, Germany, amongst others.



▲ Tarrah Krajnak; *Self-Portrait as Weston/as Charis Wilson, 1934/2020, 2020*; from *Master Rituals II: Weston's Nudes* series; silver gelatin print; 10 x 8 inches; ed. of 5, 2 AP; exhibition copy on view; © Tarrah Krajnak, courtesy Zander Galerie



TARRAH KRAJNAK



Artist Statement

Using a temporary darkroom, multiple projections, large format cameras, and re-photography, I imaginatively “return” my body to Lima, Peru in 1979, the year I was adopted from an orphanage there. The resulting series of self-portraits emerges from intersections between the city’s fraught history and my own, making visible the ways that violent or traumatic histories can be held in bodies and excluded from archives. I am interested in the multitemporality of the photographic medium and the potential of the darkroom, itself, as a site of performance or spectro-poetics — a way of conjuring the ghosts that haunt a life.

— **Tarrah Krajnak**

▲ © Self-Portrait of Tarrah Krajnak

▲ Tarrah Krajnak; *Rock of Animal Heart/Rock That Clots Blood*, 2022; from *Automatic Rocks / Excavation* series; silver gelatin prints; 24 x 20 inches each; ed. of 5, 1/2 AP; © Tarrah Krajnak, courtesy Zander Galerie

Synopsis of Artwork

Tarah Krajnak delves into photography, performance, and poetry. Krajnak focuses on the craft and material processes of photography, printing her photographs. Her work explores the rematerialization of photography, the darkroom as a women's performance space, and the historical ties between her body and the early mystical aspects of photography. Krajnak's life experiences as an Indigenous transracial adoptee influence her work, which reclaims marginalized histories and bodies hidden in the archive through archival interventions.

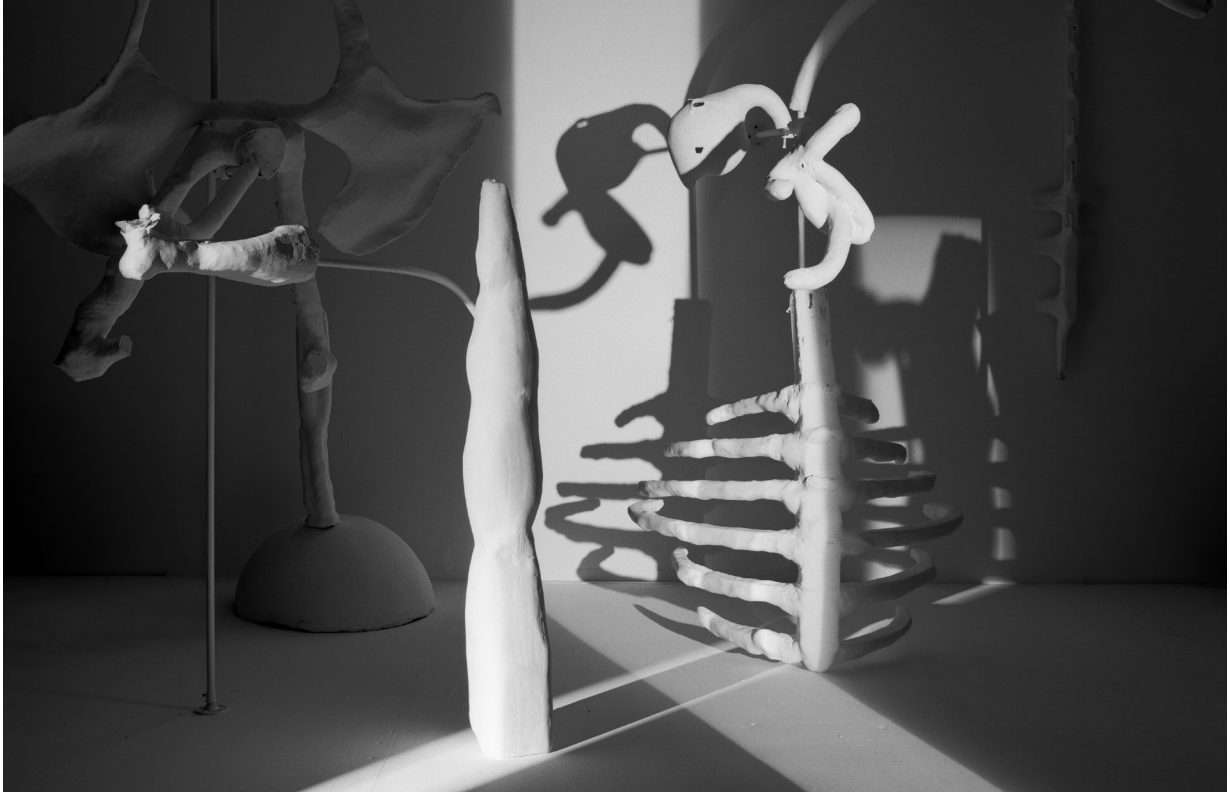
Biography

Tarah Krajnak is an artist working across photography, performance, and poetry. Krajnak was born in Lima, Peru in 1979, and she is the recipient of the Jury Prize of the Louis Roederer Discovery Award at Les Rencontres d'Arles and a Dorothea Lange-Paul Taylor Prize from the Center for Documentary Studies. Her book, *El Jardín De Senderos Que Se Bifurcan*, was shortlisted for the Aperture/Paris Photo First Book Award in 2021 and named to MoMA's inaugural list of 10 photo books of the year.

Krajnak has exhibited widely at Honor Fraser Gallery, Houston Center for Photography, SUR Biennial Los Angeles, Filter Photo Chicago, Silver Eye Center for Photography, Center for Photography Woodstock, SF Camerawork, Philadelphia Photographic Arts Center, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Belfast Photography Festival, Unseen Amsterdam, Les Rencontres d'Arles, and Landskrona Foto Festival. Her photographs are held in numerous collections, including the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; and the Pinault. Her work has been published and reviewed in *Aperture*, *Artforum*, *New York Review of Books*, and *Contemporary Art Review Los Angeles*, among others. Krajnak's work is supported by a Howard Foundation Fellowship and a Lewis Baltz Research Fund Award. She is currently an assistant professor of art at the University of Oregon and an artist-in-residence with Unseen California. Krajnak currently lives and works between Eugene, Oregon and Los Angeles.



▲ Rodrigo Valenzuela; *Garabato #7*, 2023; archival inkjet print; 36 x 30 inches; ed. 1/3, 1 AP; courtesy of the artist and Galerie Kandlhofer, Vienna



RODRIGO VALENZUELA



Artist Statement

I construct narratives, scenes, and stories that point to the tensions found between the individual and communities. I utilize autobiographical threads to inform larger universal fields of experience. Gestures of alienation and displacement are both the aesthetic and subject of much of my work. Often using landscapes and tableaus with day laborers or myself, I explore the way an image is inhabited and the way spaces, objects, and people are translated into images. My work serves as an expressive and intimate point of contact between the broader realms of subjectivity and political contingency. Through my videos and photographs, I make images that feel at the same time familiar yet distant. I engage the viewer in questions concerning the ways in which the formation and experience of each work is situated — how they exist in and out of place.

— Rodrigo Valenzuela

▲ Photo by Robert Wade

▲ Rodrigo Valenzuela; *Garabato #20*, 2023; archival inkjet print; 24 x 30 inches; ed. 1/3, 1 AP; courtesy of the artist and Galerie Kandhofer, Vienna

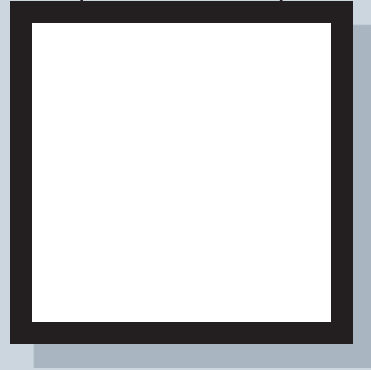
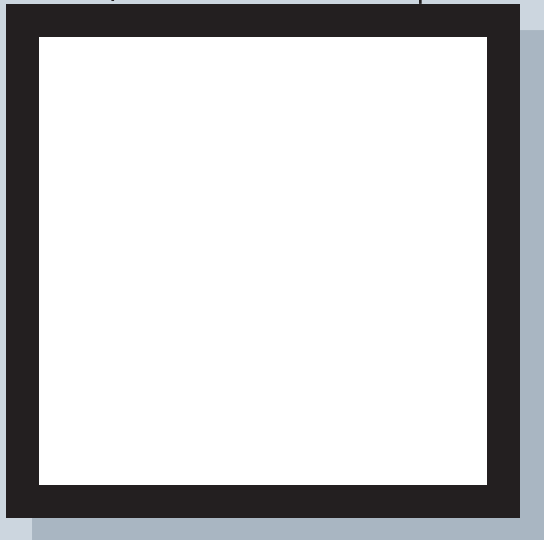
Synopsis of Artwork

Rodrigo Valenzuela works with photography, video, and installation. Valenzuela uses simple building materials to construct scenes in his studio, resulting in monochrome photographs that oscillate between flatness and architectural space. His compositions resemble miniature ruins, documentative of his performance in the studio. His new series, *Garabatos*, explores abstract gestures of insults from various nationalities, using sculpture and photography to capture these guttural social responses to unfairness and anger, yielding intriguingly aestheticized results.

Biography

Rodrigo Valenzuela (b. 1982, Chile) received a master of fine arts from the University of Washington in 2012, a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Evergreen State College in 2010, and a bachelor of fine arts from the University of Chile, Santiago in 2004. Valenzuela has presented solo exhibitions at New Museum in New York (2019), Lancaster Museum of Art and History in California (2019), Orange County Museum of Art in California (2018), and Portland Art Museum in Oregon (2018). He has participated in group exhibitions at the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. (2019); the Drawing Center in New York City (2017); the Frye Art Museum in Seattle (2016); the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston (2015); and Henry Art Gallery in Seattle (2017). He was awarded residencies at Light Work in Syracuse, New York (2017); MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire (2016); Core Program in Houston (2016); Bemis Center for Contemporary Art in Omaha, Nebraska (2015); Kala Art Institute in Berkeley, California (2015); and Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine (2013), among others.

In 2021 Valenzuela was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship Award and a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship. He received a Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Grant (2017) and an Arts Innovator Award (2014). His work is included in the collections of Los Angeles County Museum of Art in Los Angeles; the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City; the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston; the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Missouri; and the Frye Art Museum in Seattle, as well as numerous private and corporate collections. Valenzuela lives and works in Los Angeles.



Activities in the **GALLERIES**

Art Critic

Recommended for students in grades 6-12

Introduce students to the artists' backgrounds and general exhibition information. Allow students to wander freely throughout the gallery for five minutes. Ask students to select a work from the show that intrigues them, and spend another five minutes studying the work and describing the piece in detail, including color, pattern, shape, materials, etc. Students should take notes and consider what elements of the work help to make the piece cohesive. Students should also think about how the piece fits into the larger show. Have one or two students share their critique with the group and discuss with the students what they like and dislike about the show.

Guiding Questions for Students:

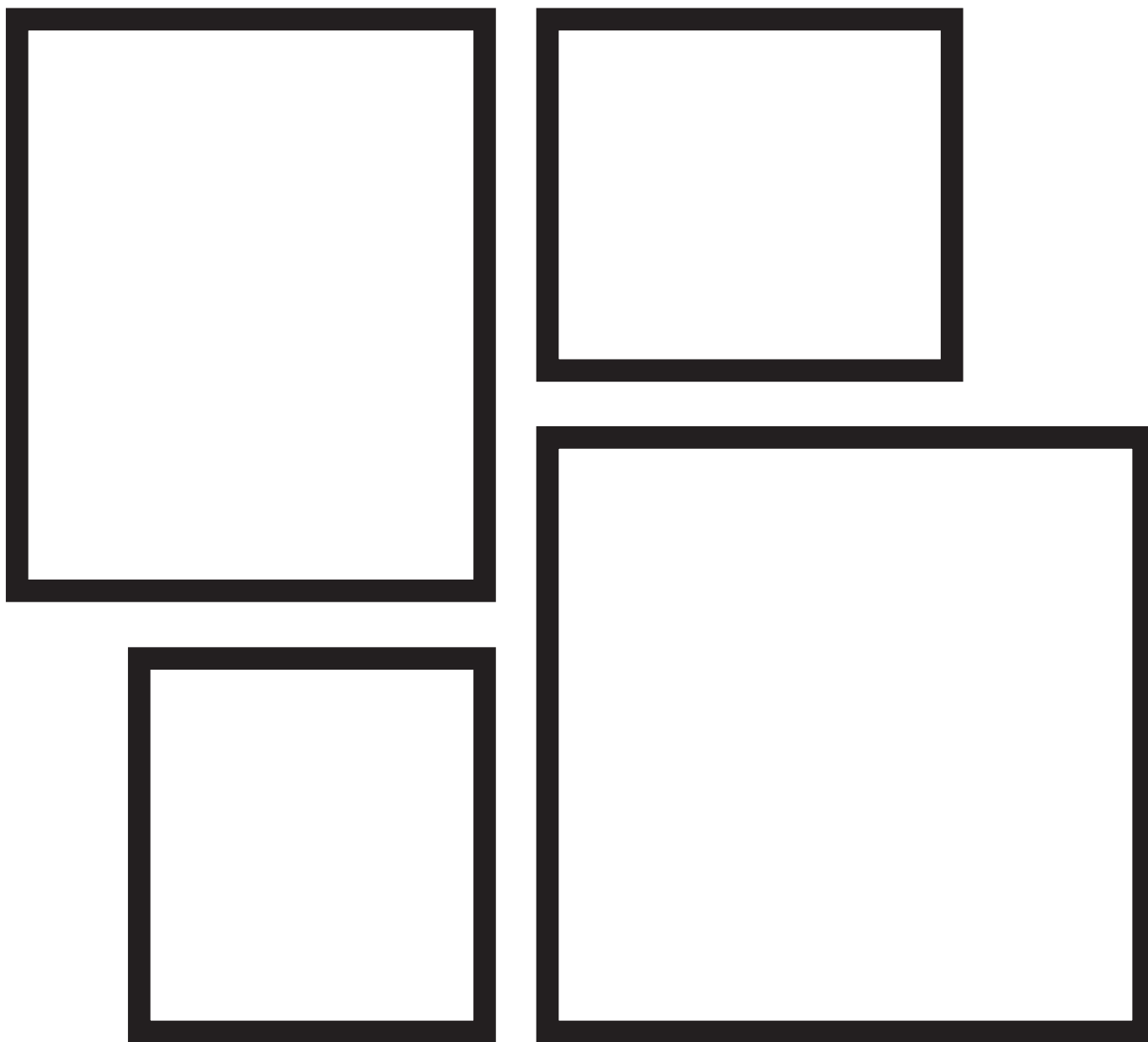
- What color scheme is used?
(e.g., triadic, monochromatic, complementary, analogous)
- Is there a high or low contrast in the values used? How does this affect the artwork?
- Does this piece have a focal point, or is there an intentional lack of a focal point?
- What is the message of the artwork? How do you feel when you look at the piece?
- Is the artwork successful or not, and why? Are the techniques used appropriate and well executed?

► **VIRGINIA VISUAL ARTS SOL:** 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, AI.3

Sketch It!

Recommended for students in grades 6-12

Ask students to begin sketching a work within the exhibition. Create a short time limit; after about one to three minutes, ask each student to pass their work to another student. The second student will continue the work of the first student, and so on for five turns or so. The resulting layered sketches bear the work of several students, similar to the assemblages in the exhibition. Discuss how each drawing reflects the work of each individual student, but also the work of the group. Ask students how they felt about working together, trusting the next student to continue to tell their story through the drawing.



► **VIRGINIA VISUAL ARTS SOL:** 6.1, 7.1, 8.1, AI.1

Activities in the **CLASSROOM**

Critical Response Protocol: Responding to Photography

Recommended for students in grades 6-12

Teach students Critical Response Protocol to analyze and interpret visual art using the See, Feel, Think, Wonder chart provided on the following page.

- Project a photograph. Give students time to silently fill out their See, Feel, Think, Wonder chart. Encourage them not to talk about their reactions yet so that other students have an opportunity to interpret the image for themselves. It may be easiest to prompt students to switch from one box to another every minute or so.
- Ask students to share what they recorded in each box. As they share, record their answers on a class See, Feel, Think, Wonder anchor chart. Prompt students to elaborate on their answers. Ask what elements of the photograph made them feel, think, or wonder. Returning to what students noticed first is a helpful way to solicit more in-depth interpretations and analyses.
- Conduct a gallery walk with a series of photos. Next to each photograph, post a See, Feel, Think, Wonder chart. Give students two to three minutes at each photograph to write down one reaction on a post-it and stick it on the chart in the appropriate space.
- Ask students to interpret one of the photographs in a short paragraph. Consider providing a teacher-created mentor text about the first photograph you projected.

See, Feel, Think, Wonder



What do you notice?

Imagine using all of your senses.
(No touching, please!)

What do you recognize?

Try to avoid making judgments.



How do you feel?

Is there a mood in this image?

Do you like how it makes you feel?

What are you drawn to in the image?



What do you think?

What is going on in the image?

What does it remind you of?

What other meanings could it have?



What do you wonder?

What more do you want to know?

What are you confused about?

What would you like to ask the artist?

► **VIRGINIA VISUAL ARTS SOLS:** 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, AI.3

► **ENGLISH, READING, AND LITERACY SOLS:** 6.2b, 6.2c, 6.2d, 6.2e, 6.3b, 7.2b, 7.2c, 7.2d, 7.2e, 7.3b, 8.2b, 8.3, 9.1b, 9.2b, 10.2d, 11.2d, 12.2b

Sentence Starters



What do you notice?

I noticed that _____, which made me think about _____.

I saw _____ in the image, which stood out to me because _____.

I recognize _____ and _____.



How do you feel?

This image makes me feel _____ because _____.

The mood of this image is _____.

I'm drawn to the _____ because _____.



What do you think?

This image reminds me of _____ because _____.

It seems like _____.
I think this because _____.

I think the artist is trying to say _____.



What do you wonder?

What would the artist _____?

What is the purpose of the _____?

Could _____ symbolize _____?

Do other people think _____ too?

A Walk in My Shoes: Photography Narrative

Recommended for students in grades 6-12

1. Teach or review the following 10 elements of photography:

Line	Framing
Texture	Cropping
Pattern	Color
Symmetry	Rule of Thirds
Depth of Field	Light

2. Show students a series of photographs and ask them to identify which of the 10 elements are used in each photograph. Have students analyze how the various techniques impact the overall impact of each photograph. Consider using photographs from the New York Times' "The Year in Pictures" or a series of photographs from a local photographer.
3. Have students practice using each of the 10 elements in their own photography. Give students 10 to 15 minutes during a class period to take photos that use as many different elements of photography as possible. **Option:** Make it a scavenger hunt by dividing students into small groups and challenging them to capture a photograph for each of the 10 elements within the time limit.
4. Assign students to take 10 photographs that represent a walk in their shoes or the shoes of someone they know. You may require students to use at least five of the elements of photography throughout their project, or you may require them to employ all 10. Have students write a brief reflection or artist's statement about how they use the elements and how the specific techniques they chose help to shape the narrative of their series.
5. Arrange a gallery walk for students to view their peers' projects. Depending on class size, you may consider assigning students a place to start in the room and rotate to the next project every two to three minutes. If the class size is smaller, it may be easier to have the movement free flowing.

Guiding Questions for Students:

Prompt students to reflect on their creative process.

- How did you decide what to photograph in order to communicate a walk in your shoes?
- Which techniques proved most challenging? Why?
- Which element(s) were most effective in your final project? How so?
- If you were to recreate this project or expand it, what would you change or add? How would those adaptations or additions change the overall impact of your work?

► **VIRGINIA VISUAL ARTS SOL:** 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.12, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.12, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.12, AI.1, AI.3, AI.2, AI.12