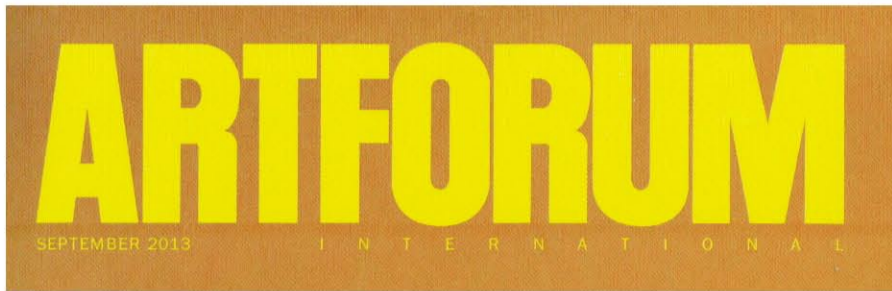


REGEN PROJECTS

Bryan-Wilson, Julia, "Abraham Cruzvillegas: Walker Art Center," Artforum, September 2013, p. 418 [ill.].



MINNEAPOLIS

Abraham Cruzvillegas

WALKER ART CENTER

In his first midcareer retrospective, Mexican artist Abraham Cruzvillegas demonstrates a distinct flair for affective accretion. Ingeniously clustering diverse items such as knives, umbrellas, fabric, paint, plants, wood, and cardboard into dynamic sculptures, he pursues a logic of accrual that often brings disparate objects both familiar and rarefied into direct confrontation. This aesthetic, though it resonates with the work of figures such as Isa Genzken, is place-based and specific, for Cruzvillegas finds inspiration in the improvised architecture—*autoconstrucción*—in which he grew up: patchwork buildings that rise with no plans and are shaped by scarcity and the inventive reuse of materials.

At the core of this exhibition is the two-channel video *Autoconstrucción: A Dialogue Between Ángeles Fuentes and Rogelio Cruzvillegas*, 2009, in which the artist's mother and father describe the history of their house—built piecemeal over the years, using available resources and modified constantly—and of the Ajusco neighborhood in Mexico City, which, like the houses within it, grew and gradually changed. In her testimony, Cruzvillegas's mother recounts her conversion into a participant in community organizing, detailing how she and other women in Ajusco demonstrated against evictions and fought for child-care centers, water and sewage services, and a center for popular education. The video produces a charged framework for Cruzvillegas's own cobbled-together pieces; situated in this context, the artist's process of amalgamation takes on political resonance, not only operating on a physical, sculptural level but also conjuring wider realities of economic inequality and collective resistance.

This activist element is illustrated in the show's "resource" area, which includes Latin American protest posters, maps of Mexico City, and manuals on self-construction—a presentation that borders on the didactic. But any hint of conceptual dryness in this laconic array is



View of "Abraham Cruzvillegas," 2013.

mitigated by Cruzvillegas's sincere engagement with the corporeal components of his practice. Much of his sculpture is infused with a certain raunchiness, as the artist plays with the sensual pleasures of commingling textures. This eroticism crosses over to the pornographic in *Autoconstrucción: The Film*, 2009, an hour-long movie featuring shots of vernacular architecture intercut with explicit footage of heterosexual couples having sex. Like the "resource" area, which literalizes an otherwise metaphorical dimension of the sculptures, the film renders the theoretical links between bodies and buildings too overtly.

Curator Clara Kim makes excellent use of the ground-floor galleries of the Walker, opening them up by removing all non-load-bearing walls for the first time since the space was renovated in 2005. The vast room is less filled than occupied by Cruzvillegas's works: Every part of the institutional site feels taken over, inhabited, activated by his compelling configurations and provisional dwellings. A rangy, fortlike installation (part of a set for a performance Cruzvillegas staged at Mexico City's kurimanzutto gallery in 2010) squats in the center of the space. Works dangle from above, as in the small dismembered heads of *The Optimistic Failure*, 2011; swarm over the walls, like the black-painted cardboard boxes of *Hausmannian Leftovers: Richard Lenoir*, 2007; stretch from floor to ceiling, as in *Errores universales*, 2005; and amass in corners, like *Esquina Rosa* and *Esquina Azul*, both 1999/2013—piles of different hues of ground corn made in homage to Robert Smithson.

Cruzvillegas's work can be seen as a manifesto on the ongoing vitality of assemblage and enduring relevance of the found object. By tethering his practice to sociopolitical necessities, he transforms contemporary sculpture into a discourse on adaptation, one that offers a language with which to speak the potency of stuff, the "vibrancy" of matter that theorist Jane Bennett has explored. In his hands, remainders, leftovers, and castoffs are formally as well as emotionally reanimated, revealed to have an inner force if not a measure of sentience. Cruzvillegas inflects the international style of "unmonumentality" with the specificity of local self-construction: The result is one of the most thoughtful, sweet, and powerful shows in recent memory.

—Julia Bryan-Wilson