

REGEN PROJECTS

Moshayedi, Aram, "Abraham Cruzvillegas: Regen Projects," *Artforum*, February 2013

Abraham Cruzvillegas

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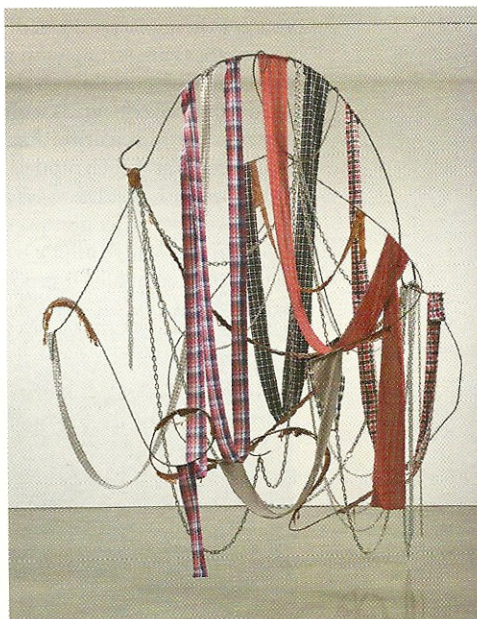
"How to generate a living sculpture nowadays?" Abraham Cruzvillegas asked in a notebook and online video that complemented his street-bound activities for Documenta 13. What about a sculpture without fixed form or shape? A definitely unfinished sculpture? A nonbudgetary sculpture? A sculpture made with nothing? A tale that is being written or told as a sculpture? These questions suggested a shift in the Mexican artist's practice—a turn from *autoconstrucción* to *autodestrucción*. Outlining the largely invisible, unmarked, basically nonexistent works that Cruzvillegas placed throughout the city of Kassel for an indeterminate audience over an unspecified period of time during Documenta's one-hundred-day run last summer, these notes also foreshadowed "Autodestrucción 1," the first of a series of exhibitions by the artist that will favor the removal, absence, and indeterminacy of forms and materials over their construction, presence, and ability to convey meaning.

The protagonist of "Autodestrucción 1"—approximated through a series of sculptures, charcoal wall drawings, and a short story that relays the style and spirit of resistance that characterized the zoot suit fashion and Zazou culture of 1940s Paris, Los Angeles, and Mexico City—took as muse the late traveling trumpeter and flamboyant Pachuco Miguel "El Rebaje" Prado, the artist's great-uncle. Though this character figured at the center of Cruzvillegas's tale, one expressed as sculpture and intimated by fabric flourishes and sinuous linking chains, no clear image bearing Prado's likeness was made available. Rather, a text written by the artist, a love story told from the perspective of Prado's loyal trumpet, gave the best picture and closest impression: "That night in La Joue I had someone put me in Miguel's hands and—missing all his front teeth now—he smiled at me and kissed me all night, with his damp tongue, his thick saliva, and his alcoholic breath."

It is significant that the trumpet's words are those of an object whose voice would be mute were it not for its subject, who breathes life into it. The contingency and withholding of subjectivity have often loomed large in Cruzvillegas's work. For example, his ongoing series of monochromatic "Blind Self-Portraits," 2006–, are accumulations of paper fragments and receipts that he covers in thick paint so as to obliterate the identificatory information (time and date, place, personhood) that the systematic tradition of Conceptualism came to fetishize. Similarly, the sculptures in "Autodestrucción 1" are blank portraits, forms whose identities have been constructed by means of found objects sourced in Mexico and Los Angeles. Fashioned out of bent rebar; plaid fabric strips; feathers; industrial and jewelry chains; cured meat that dried and sweated oil throughout the run of the exhibition; copper rod; and, in one sculptural assemblage, *April in Paris (brief & delirious)* (all works 2012), Dos Equis, Tecate, Sierra Nevada, Samuel Adams, Red Stripe, and MGD 64 bottle caps, the accumulated parts form surrogate bodies. The zoot suiter's subcultural identity is shaped through the signifiers of style and material approximations that form the basis of each object.

In Cruzvillegas's sculptural lexicon, a readymade is an object experiencing

Abraham Cruzvillegas,
Boogie Woogie
(handmade &
sensual), 2012,
rebar, chain, fabric,
meat, 12' 6" x
11' 7" x 6' 8".



its second life. Resuscitated to form a partial history, it offers a narrative based not only on alchemy but on entropy: The meat in his sculptures, for instance, is cured and lifeless, but it decays and excretes and will eventually deteriorate into a flaky, dry mass—which is to say that the meat is without fixed form. As malleable as the roles of objects in storytelling, Cruzvillegas's ready-made materials take on prosaic qualities, enabling the artist to write in three dimensions, to privilege sculptural means over the supposed communicability and legibility of words and images, and, as visual clues once apparent become less and less legible, to convey an image's inability to retain information over time. Here, Miguel Prado (or someone like him) was pictured not through his likeness but through objects and postures that might be associated with him. In the nearby wall drawings that enveloped the exhibition, images were subsumed even further by markers of style—faint traces of charcoal dots that, bearing some relationship to actual photographs, disappeared into the ether. These, too, were portraits of removal, asking very little while making the case that image is nothing, style is everything.

—*Aram Moshayedi*