

REGEN PROJECTS

Golden, Regan, "Abraham Cruzvillegas," Modern Painters, November 2013

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REVIEWS

MINNEAPOLIS

Abraham Cruzvillegas

Walker Art Center // March 23–September 22

"THE AUTOCONSTRUCCION SUITES" is inspired by the self-built home in Mexico City's Ajusco area where the artist grew up. *Autoconstrucción* (or self-construction) refers to using found materials to build a house in stages depending on the inhabitants' needs, but Cruzvillegas uses the term as a metaphor for identity formation.

The exhibition—the artist's first major survey in the U.S.—includes 35 sculptures and installations that he made and remade over the past decade. With no division between the works, the show initially appears as a sprawling landscape of wood and concrete interspersed with maps, books, sprouting tubers, and rotting leaves. The artist describes it as a "warm system" or "an organic organization of re-arrangeable elements, in which subjectivity, affection, emotion, but mostly needs, rule." At times the Walker's massive gallery diminishes the warmth and liveliness of the structures and overwhelms the intimacy of his small sculptures, but the joy of this exhibition is

in getting lost in the tangle of objects and uncovering what is hidden within.

In a video interview, Cruzvillegas's father describes the process of building their family home using salvaged materials. As the house evolved they reused, rather than discarded, old materials. Cruzvillegas calls this house a sculpture that his parents modify daily, but his father laments that they are always "stuck in the middle" of rebuilding. Like his parents' house, the sculptures made of found materials appear incomplete, as though he paused in the midst of assembly. Reconfigured for each showing, they appear perpetually on the cusp of transformation.

Cruzvillegas's accompanying narrative about living in an impoverished but increasingly politicized community enables viewers to form tacit connections between seemingly disparate objects. A work entitled *Objeto útil pero bonito* (Useful but pretty object), 1992, includes a painting of roses in full bloom done by his father that hangs folded over a white metal bar like a hand

towel. With the addition of a "resource room" stocked with population-density maps of Mexico City, silkscreened protest posters, and Cruzvillegas's favorite books on building and politics, a larger story of immigration, of political corruption, and of families struggling to glean order from chaos unfolds. These materials impart a sense of place that binds together the artist's array of objects and unifies the exhibition as a whole.

The catalogue, which Cruzvillegas designed with Dante Carlos, acts almost as a key to the exhibition. Organized in much the same way as the gallery, it resembles a box in which seemingly random materials are layered: A protest poster is followed by a receipt, then a family photograph. In the accumulation of information, a nonlinear narrative unfurls and the reader begins to understand a specific place in all its complexity. This aggregate investigation of how place informs our sense of self shows how the spaces we inhabit mirror our needs and desires. —Regan Golden

**Abraham
Cruzvillegas**
Installation
view of
"The Auto-
construcción
Suites," 2013.



ONLINE EXTRA: For a video tour of the exhibition, go to blouinartinfo.com/cruzvillegas.