



NEWSLETTERS

ARTFORUM

SUBSCRIBE

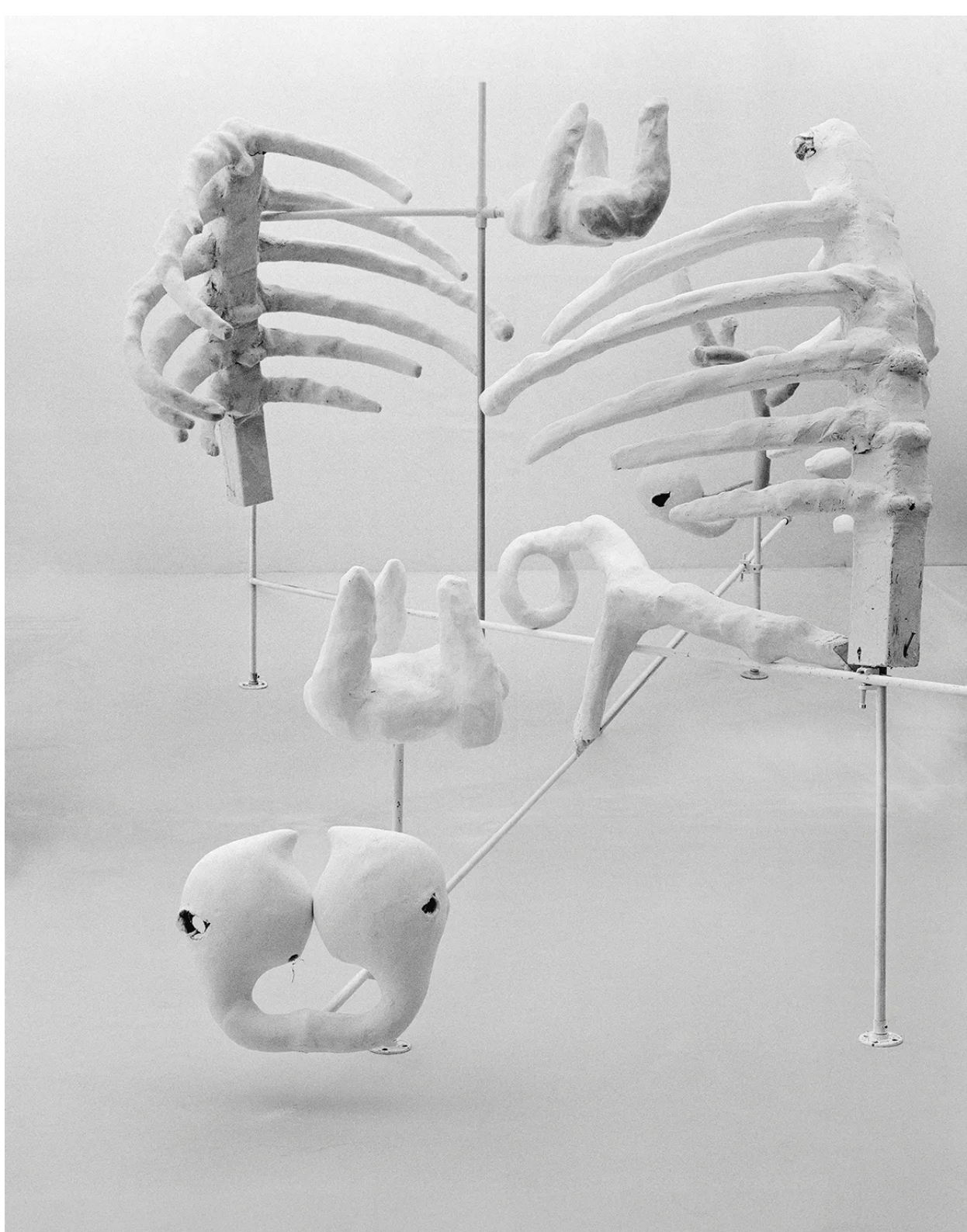
REVIEWS SAN FRANCISCO

Rodrigo Valenzuela

EUQINOM Gallery

By Brian Karl

SHARE



Rodrigo Valenzuela, *Garabato #2*, 2024, inkjet print, 38 x 30".

In "Peripheral Gestures," Rodrigo Valenzuela expanded notions of the photographic to address the possibilities and limits of communication that can exist beyond language. Accompanied by a handful of striking physical sculptures, a series of medium-scale photographs depicted mysterious physical installations that presented as remnants of alien, obsolete, or long-forgotten subcultures.

In his series "Garabatos" (Scribbles) (all works 2024), stark black-and-white photographs depict sculptural constructs arranged within small interior spaces. Resembling abandoned stage sets or laboratories, the contents of these chambers range from the organic to the machinelike. The staged images' multiple sculptural components, made of plaster-like material and mostly irregular in shape, were supported by thin metal rods and in some instances are interconnected with other elements. Abstracted allusions to living forms and mechanical apparatuses, they invited disparate projections and speculations by viewers, without making their intended functions apparent.

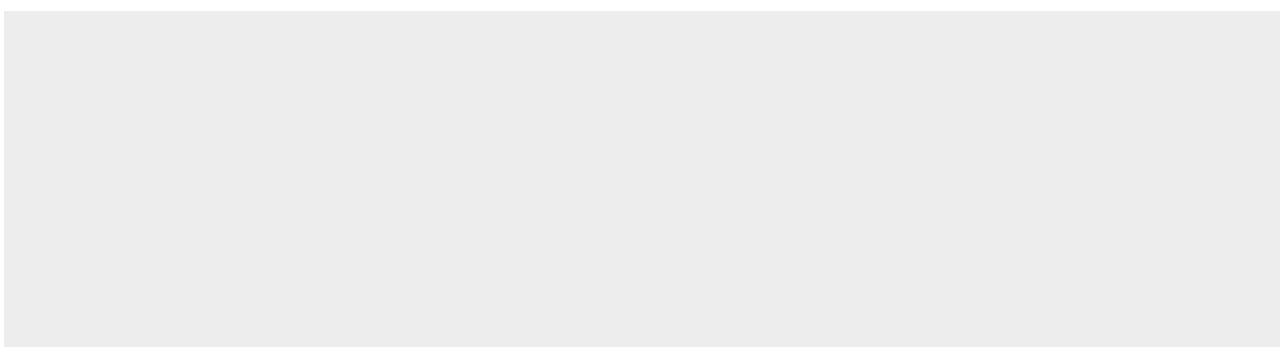


In *Garabato #9*, for instance, a round figure—resembling a large alembic, a clay oven, or a roly-poly creature—is posed on a metal stand, while a flattened, frond-like tube trails out a hole in its side and reaches across the floor. *Garabato #5*, meanwhile, shows a snake-shaped tail running like an electric cord from the lower end of an upright vertebrae-like armature, while *Garabato #13* depicts a device made of multiple rings, evocative of medical gear. The purpose of each object remained unclear—they seemed to stand at the ready, primed for reactivation or expired past any further utility.

Contrasting with those brightly lit scenes, other photographs from the series depicted sculptural forms mostly cast in shadows, punctuated by sharply defined lighting of a single circular spotlight (*Garabato #21*) or slats of light as if from partially opened doorways (*Garabato #23*)—generating atmospheres evoking vintage horror B movies. Arid and macabre, *Garabato #18*, shows a pelvic bone-like element suspended prominently in the upper middle of the composition, while *Garabato #2* and *Garabato #20* feature what seem to be near-complete human rib cages.

As if erupted from those still tableaux to manifest defiant mischievousness, the show's other primary body of work, "Muecas" (Grins), comprised five small-scale ceramic sculptures on two dark-colored, waist-high plinths—recalling the presentation style of archaeological remains at a museum. Molded in slightly rough, matte, bone-like white, these sculptures mainly consisted of representations of human hands, with other bodily elements occasionally extruding or intervening—a stray tongue or more ambiguous members with the pieces' petrified appearance suggesting ancient ritual objects embalmed in lava flows. An extended middle finger gestures in *Mueca #5*—a punkish fuck you, while other ambiguously modern gestures included heavy-metal devil's horn signs (*Mueca #7*) and, more timelessly perhaps, a notched digit between two others at the end of the hand in *Mueca #8*, suggesting uninhibited masturbatory impulses. Unlike the dormant scenes of the *Garabatos*, the moments captured in the *Muecas*, with their mash-ups of multiple fragmented body parts caught mid-gesture, are imbued with great dynamism.

Each ceramic surface is elaborately inscribed with small ideographs, markings reminiscent of Mesoamerican codices, Nazca Lines, or petroglyphs, seemingly decipherable but not quite. Here, they represented attempts at communication, even if they weren't fully successful communicators of actual meaning themselves.



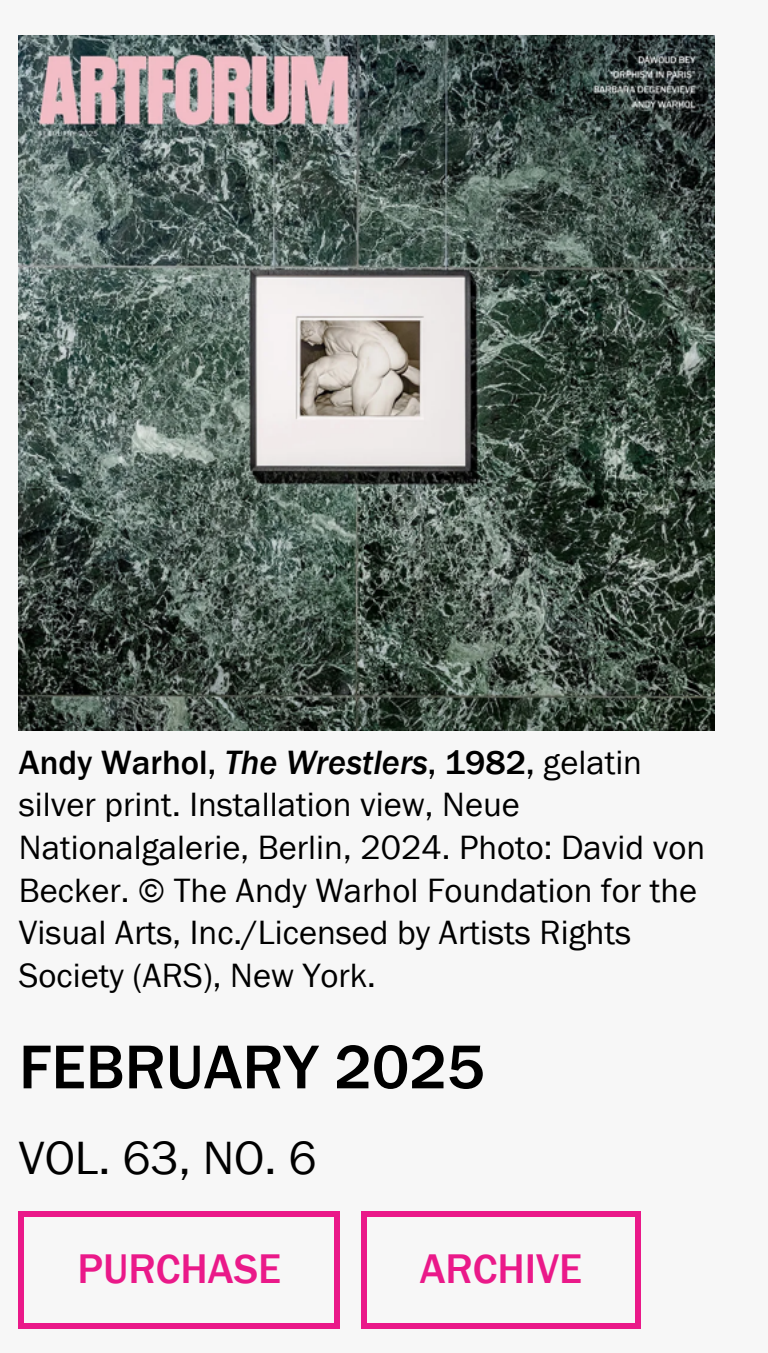
Jouissance permeated this exhibition, but something impotent or forlorn was also present—replete with the ghostly debris of obsolete cultural artifacts or remains of humans no longer living or reachable. The *Muecas'* contrary or edgy gestures served, as the show's overarching title suggested, as passing alternatives to or protests against dominant cultural narratives, which might have been seen as residues of subcultural movements relegated to the peripheries of any mainstream. The *Muecas* read as products of an expired set of cultural understandings shared only by forgotten participants in no longer surviving groups. The restive but perhaps obsolete ideas and attitudes asserted by the various *Muecas* (implied as well by the deactivated apparatuses in *Garabatos*) foregrounded ideas of what might lapse and become overlooked as communicative possibility, or what might possibly reemerge out of neglected backroom spaces of cultural activity.

MORE: EUQINOM GALLERY | RODRIGO VALENZUELA | SAN FRANCISCO

Artforum Inbox

Register to receive our full menu of newsletters—From the Archive, Must See, Video, In Print, Dispatch, and ArtforumEDU—as well as special offers from Artforum.

SIGN UP



Andy Warhol, *The Wrestlers*, 1982, gelatin silver print. Installation view, Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 2024. Photo: David von Becker. © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc./Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

FEBRUARY 2025

VOL. 63, NO. 6

PURCHASE

ARCHIVE



MOST READ



FEATURES AUDIENCE ANTICIPATION



BEST OF 2024 TOP TEN

MOST POPULAR

- RollingStone**
Musk Melts Down as Tesla Stock Price Plunges
- VARIETY**
Disney Scales Back 'Snow White' Hollywood Premiere Amid Rachel Zegler and Gal Gadot...
- billboard**
Playboi Carti Delays 'I AM MUSIC' Album Release by Three Hours

YOU MAY ALSO LIKE

RollingStone
Watch Julien Baker Join Jasmine.4.t to Cover System of a Down's 'Toxicity'

VARIETY
France TV Distribution's Corsica Blood Feud Thriller 'Vendetta,' From 'A Prophet' Producer...

billboard
Iggy Azalea Calls Takes Aim UMG: 'You Will Pay Me What's Owed'



SUBSCRIBE

SUBSCRIBE

ARCHIVE

CUSTOMER SERVICE

ARTFORUM

About Us
Contact Us
Accessibility
Advertising
PMC

LEGAL

Terms & Conditions
Privacy Policy
EU Privacy Preferences
Ad Choices

FOLLOW US

Facebook
Instagram
X
YouTube

NEWSLETTERS

Enter your email address

SIGN UP >

By providing your information, you agree to our Terms of Use and our Privacy Policy. We use vendors that may also process your information to help provide our services.