

MUSÉE

VANGUARD OF PHOTOGRAPHY CULTURE

DEC 12 RODRIGO VALENZUELA: GUEST EDITOR

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Portrait by Zachary Fabri

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When Andrea asked me to select artists making work under the theme of control, I worried and paused. The feeling of Control is an alien concept to most immigrants, especially if they are poor or working-class background trying to participate in the art world. Control is something that we find ourselves under, and the power where it emanates is so distant that it makes us look smaller than we are.

Control is the preferred tool that those in power use to become present. It is so ubiquitous in its use in our daily lives that it cannot be defined easily; we can only detect its abuse. And even then, the mechanism for recourse is unclear. Control, from the individual to the community, is so normalized that we continue to blindly trust the rules and regulations that institutionalize it instead of asking ourselves how to break free from it.

Immigrants, people of color, and the working poor have a subtractive relationship with power. Our power manifests itself initially as quietness, invisibility, the ability to move through spaces like an idea, learning to zero our presence, working nights, and the jobs everyone needs but no one wants to do. You are only allowed to offer your opinion or make a demand once you have been deemed indispensable. But until that point, an accent, the color of your skin, or the wrong clothing can quickly reduce your power during the most mundane interaction. Those without an accent, lighter skin, and

nicer clothing operate in the currency of trust, and trust is just the ease of control without a transfer of power.

How can immigrants and the poor trust themselves if control in and of our lives is elusive and power so distant?

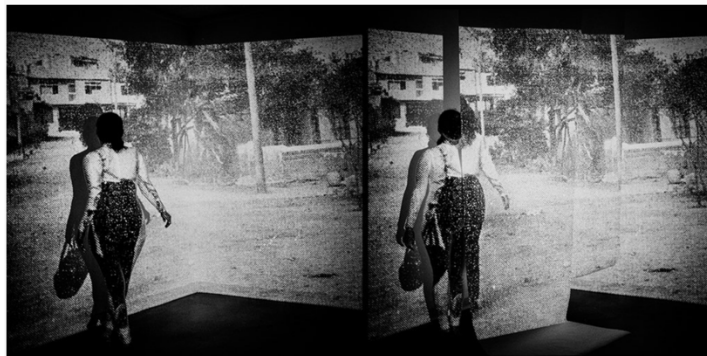
For this edition, I chose three Latinas that use their art to take control of their narrative. By reframing their position in art, finding their heritage, or subverting their limitation, Amina Cruz, Tarrah Krajnak, and Tere Garcia are making some most compelling photography right now.



Tarrah Krajnak, *Dead Ringer/Self Portrait as Found Photograph (1979 Lima, Peru)*, 2018. Courtesy of the artist

TARRAH KRAJNAK

Named after a time-bending short story by Borges, El Jardín de Senderos Que Se Bifurcan moves fluidly between found vernacular photographs, my own original text, and appropriated images from 1979 Peruvian magazines I collected in Lima. Indigenous to Peru and orphaned as an infant I was adopted into a transracial family from the American coal country. After thirty years I returned to the orphanage where I was born. I set out not to recover some stable authentic identity hidden by the circumstances of my birth and adoption, but rather to build a psychic history, to imagine lineages, invent mothers, and to resurrect ancestors in an effort to understand my place within the larger political, social, and historical narratives of my birth place— Lima, Peru circa 1979.



Tarrah Krajnak, *(Sites of Violence) Self Portrait as Walking Woman with Bag, September 1979, Lima, Peru/ Claremont, CA, 2018* Courtesy of the artist



Tarah Krignak, Opposite, Holding Hands, 2018. Courtesy of the artist



Tere Garcia, The architecture of the wall. Courtesy of the artist.

TERE GARCIA

I remember wanting to be an architect. I was eager to study bridges, their measurements, and the history behind their forms. Massive human-made structures made to connect people. The world should have more of them. Now as a migrant living (trapped) in the United States, I am constantly haunted by the most controversial contemporary architecture- the oppressive and militarized US/Mexico Wall.

Artificially imposed, the border is a 2000 miles boundary that divides two nation-states; the barrier separates cultural forms, people, and regions. There are short and long sections of the fence that intercept, imprison and disturb the neighborhood and ecosystem of the borderlands.

The architecture of the wall consists of a typology of war-like fences sadistically adorned with razor wire and controlled by the latest surveillance technology of cameras and human enforcers.

The built environment is that of a battlefield. Different from the bridges of my childhood the design behind the measurements and forms of the wall is intended to mimic war zones. A landing mat style wall is 12 feet long, 22 inches wide, and a quarter-inch thick. Each steel sheet weighs 147 lbs. Also,

its form has military associations: “landing mat” is named after the portable helicopter pads used by the United States in the Vietnam War. They transform the landscape of the United States to resemble the control architectures of World War I and II, Vietnam, the Berlin Wall, and the Israeli West Bank barriers. They are brought back to the United States—physically—via the wall.

The truth is unlike bridges historically walls have never accomplished anything. They are just massive cursed structures that exist for their strong psychological deterrent effect. I am an anti-wall resistance artist. Like Chomsky, I believe America’s Architecture is one of oppression and violence. The real people crossing the wall and its wicked assemblages of razor wire only risk their lives in search of connection. We need bridges, not walls.



Tere Garcia, *The architecture of the wall*. Courtesy of the artist.



Tere Garcia, *The architecture of the wall*. Courtesy of the artist.



Amina Cruz, *(They Are Their Own)* Mexico City. Courtesy of the artist

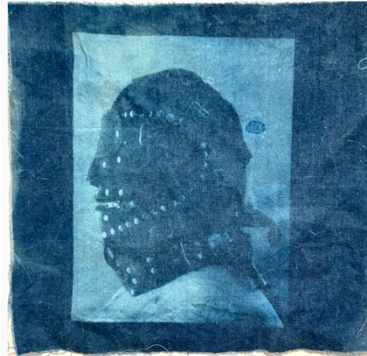
AMINA CRUZ

Most of my work centers black and brown queer creative embodiment. I photograph the outsiders of an already marginalized group; my community. When I walk into a space, I am not trying to overtake my surroundings or make myself distant, it's collaborative and personal. I call this practice the Brown Gaze. Through this lens I am reclaiming the camera to tell stories from a queer and brown perspective. It disrupts the consumption of bodies and conquering of territory and allows for an openness to what wants to be seen. Through the Brown Gaze my photography practice is in collaboration with others and a part of a larger emancipatory strategy of centering and humanizing QTPOC lives. It's not only my work but a joint communication with people or the land, a spiritual practice.

The first time I saw and heard of Laura Aguilar was at her retrospective, Show and Tell. I cried, it was the first time I saw myself not only on the walls but as the maker of images. That was a turning point for me. I'm here to tell my own story, expand the understanding of Brown identity and explore a future for ourselves.



Amina Cruz, *(They Are Their Own)* Self Portrait. Courtesy of the artist



Amina Cruz, *Untitled (Mask)*. Courtesy of the artist



Amina Cruz, *Untitled (Mask)*. Courtesy of the artist