

NEGOTIATED FRONTIERS

William Camargo
The Latinx Project

NEGOTIATED FRONTIERS

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NEGOTIATED FRONTIERS on January 14 – April 30, 2021.

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CIATED TIERS

William
Camargo

I dedicate this book to my mother Esperanza and my father Jose, who have allowed me to follow my dreams as an artist. My siblings Osbaldo and Jessica, who I saw become the first members of my family to graduate college. My nephew Ezra, I hope we leave this country better than what it currently is for BIPOC youth. I dedicate this to all my family in the states and Guerrero, Mexico; your resilience to colonization and injustice is what has given me a lot of strength.

To all my mentors, especially mentors of color who keep on pushing me. To all my friends, both still here with us and others who have left us too early. To all my students, past, present, and future. To all I have worked with during my years in Chicago and Anaheim. Arlene Davila, Nicole Mourifio, and everyone at The Latinx Project at NYU.

And finally, to Dalina and Jessy, who without their dedication and hard work, this wouldn't be possible.

What does it mean to have, or indeed to be with, an image of oneself? How is that image constructed? How is that image controlled? To have an image implies the rights of ownership. To be with an image implies a relation of cooperation, community.

Negotiated Frontiers: Contemporary Chicano Photography by Jennifer A. Gonzalez

In the online exhibition *Negotiated Frontiers*, William Camargo brought together four different projects from their body of work to highlight and connect two central themes—notably, identity, and land—both subjects of interminable discourse and constant threat. This accompanying publication presents these projects, plus documentation of a new performance work. As a primarily photo-based artist, Camargo questions the idea of the photographic canon as a resolved and imposed discipline that simultaneously excludes, tokenizes, and invisibilizes minoritized peoples and communities. As such, the artist presents various ideas of intersections that are under continued negotiation, opening it up to further discussion. As Jennifer A. González states in “Negotiated Frontiers: Contemporary Chicano Photography,” from which this exhibition and publication borrows their titles, in the space of the gallery “it is not only the artist but also the viewer who inhabits this frontier space; for a photograph is defined not only by its material form but also, and more importantly, by its audience.”¹

This publication features selections from *As Far As I Can Get*, a response that challenges the privilege of running while white and not seen as suspect in Southern California-born photographer John Divola’s series *As Far As I Could Get*. The ensuing section draws from the long-term research project *Origins & Displacements*, which includes performance, portraits, landscapes, and archived materials from the city of Anaheim. It continues with excerpts from

1 Jennifer A. González, “Negotiated Frontiers: Contemporary Chicano Photography,” in *Chicano and Chicana Art: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Jennifer A. González, C. Ondine Chavoya, Chon Noriega, and Terezita Romo (Durham: Duke University, 2019), 144.

All That I Can Carry, a more recent project born during the COVID-19 lockdown, in which the artist invoked a rasquachismo sensibility by utilizing the objects and resources at hand in their household to create new artwork. The curation ends with the debut of a new project, *XL Pro Club. 9.0 Nike Cortez. Blue Dickies. 11.14.2020. 125 N. Broadway. 53 Minutes.*, a departure from the artist's usual self-portraiture approach to their performance work as it is instead seen through the lens of a collaborator, Alkaid Ramirez. The broad scope of work provides viewers with an experience of the artist's creative process, inspired by photography theory, activism, and their upbringing in Anaheim.

The decision to lead with the project that serves as commentary for Divola's famous series establishes the artist's intentions to reflect on the history of photography. A tribute to Stephen Shore bridges this project to the selections from *Origins & Displacements*, which depicts Anaheim as the artist sees it. The impulse to reference these photographers stems from the artist's art school education, where they realized they were seeing photographers such as Divola and Shore appear frequently in their curriculum, at the expense of other perspectives being included. The portraits and landscapes that follow are indicative of the artist's other inspirations, such as Alec Soth, Gordon Parks, Dawoud Bey, and Juan Brenner. They also call specifically to Chicanx/Mexican photographers such as Delilah Montoya, Christina Fernandez, Graciela Iturbide, and Laura Aguilar. While Camargo exposes the futility of the idea of an institutionalized canon, they make a case for the importance of adaptable, progressive, and, above all, negotiable curriculums.

Camargo explores the ambiguous nature of several markers of their own identity, particularly brown, Chicanx, and Latinx. Brownness is a racial identifier present in various cultures globally, but is specifically used in Latinx culture as a product of mestizaje and rejection of whitewashing. It is a contentious term because it has been wrongly appropriated to racialize evidently white Latinxs and in turn decenter Black Latinx and Indigenous issues, but Camargo utilizes it in the Chicanx tradition in the style of the Brown Berets, more as what José Esteban Muñoz terms the "brown commons," a politics that "is not about the production of the individual but instead about a movement, a flow, and an impulse to move beyond the singular subjectivity and the individualized subjectivities."² Exploring Chicanx identity in both an art

historical context, such as through the inspiration of the rasquachismo sensibility, as well as a style and subculture represented by iconography such as Nike Cortez or the swap meet, their work falls into a generation that Tomás Ybarra-Frausto defines as “post-movimiento,” consisting of millennial Chicana artists who “are impatient with national narratives of culture and belonging, and more involved with global artistic practices of fusion, exchange, and negotiation.”³

In these projects, Anaheim is presented as a contested site, not only due to the acts of gentrification pushing out people of these minoritized identities, but because of the ever changing landscape in the afterlives of colonial settlement and how the same land can be perceived by its inhabitants in different ways. In Camargo’s portraits of Anaheim locals, the subjects are posing for the camera, aware of their positionality, in a sort of peaceful discomfort, like guests in their own home. Anaheim is all at once indigenous Tongva/Kizh land, a space for a sprawling entertainment resort, and home to a brown working-class.

The past tense in the title ultimately points to the self-defeating nature of the negotiations to which the exhibition and publication allude. There is no apparent consensus to these negotiations, and perhaps there never will be, as negotiations under the systems of colonization and empire are inherently at an impasse. Camargo’s work expresses the confusing existence under a political system where resistance is a constant struggle between palliative and curative approaches to the legacies of colonialism, and learning to survive under the results of bad faith negotiations.

3 Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, “Post-movimiento: The Contemporary (Re)Generation of Chicana/o Art,” in *Chicano and Chicana Art: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Jennifer A. González, C. Ondine Chavoya, Chon Noriega, and Terezita Romo (Durham: Duke University, 2019), 67.















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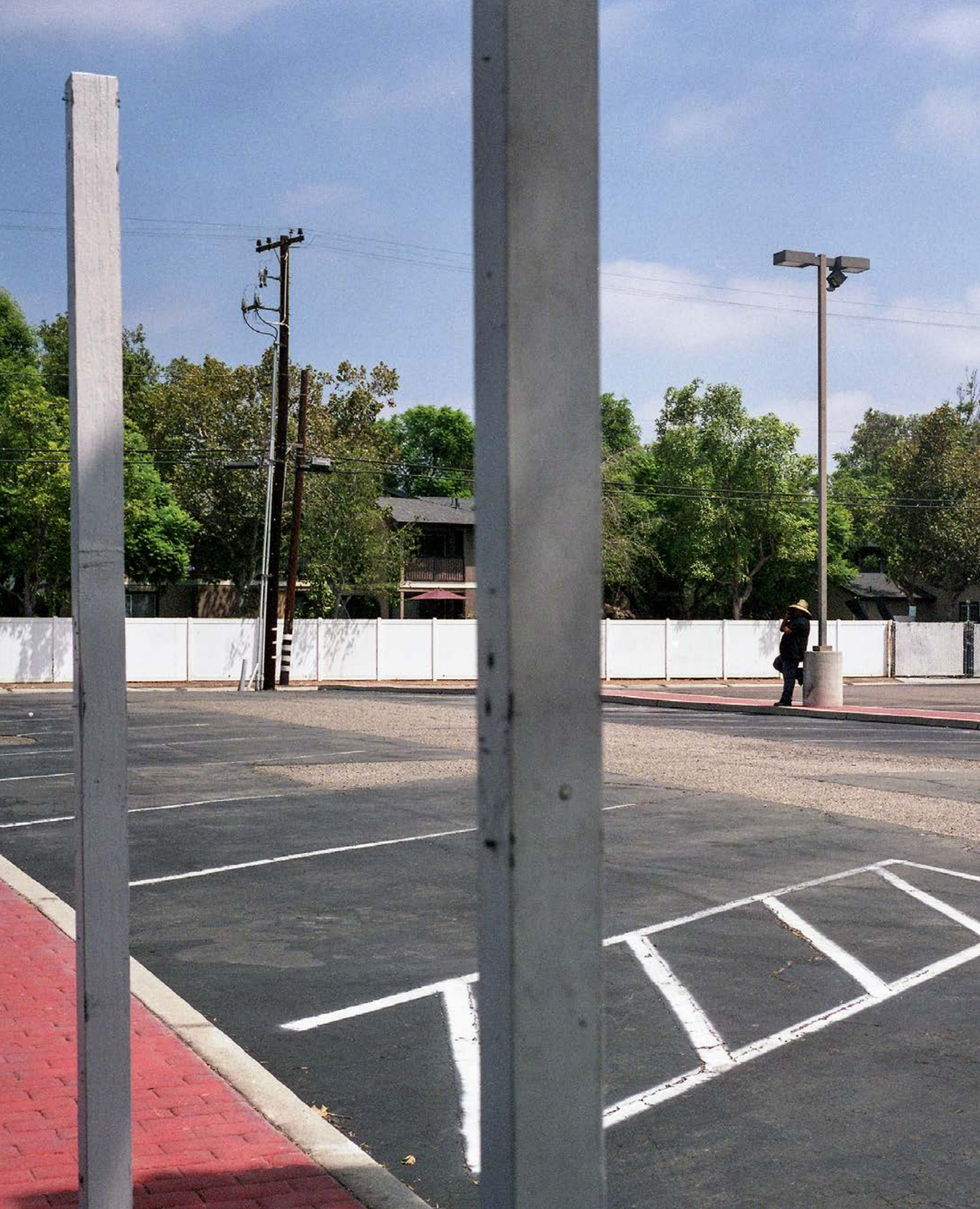
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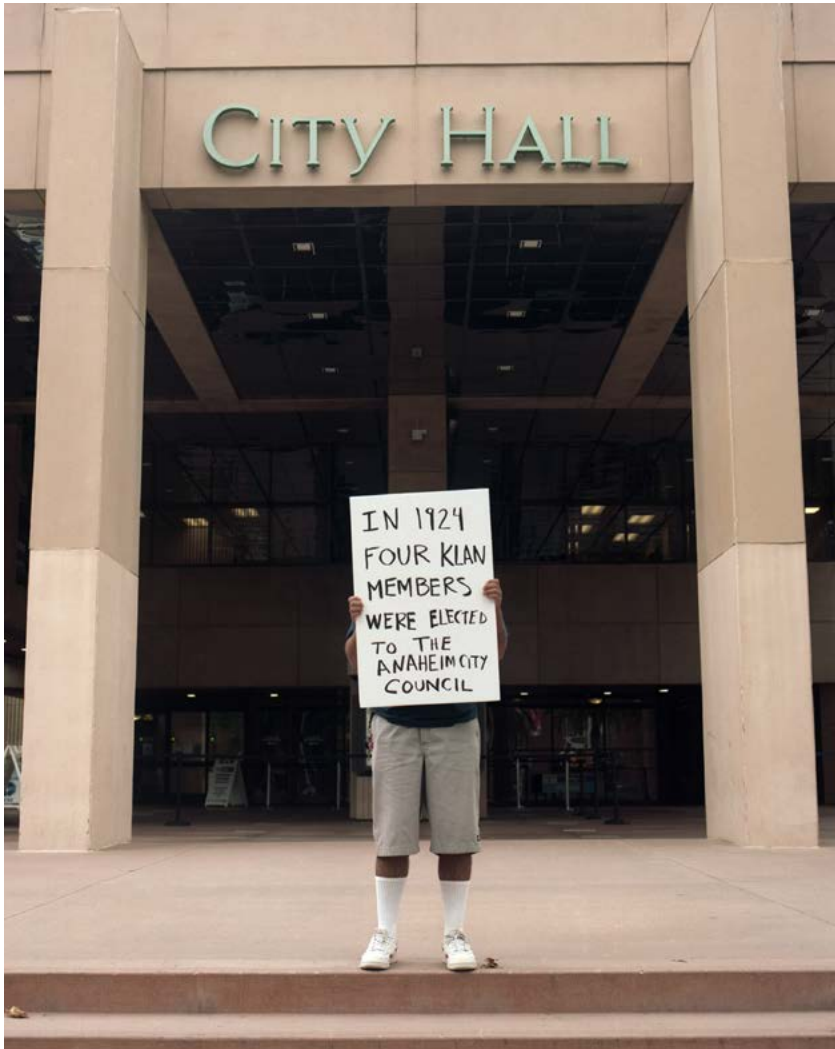




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**“Rasquachismo is
that is not elevated
but playful and elegant
delight and refinement
many consider bad
an alternative aesthetic
good taste of bad**

s a sensibility
ed and serious
emental. It finds
ement in what
anal, and projects
esthetic—a sort of
taste.”

Rasquachismo by Tomás Ybarra-Frausto













“By looking at pictures we imagine that we can know who we are and who we were. Though the fashioning of one’s self image may be most frequently associated with family snapshots or portraits, the endeavor to see, and thus to know oneself is also a public, communal activity.”

Coco Fusco. *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self* edited by Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis







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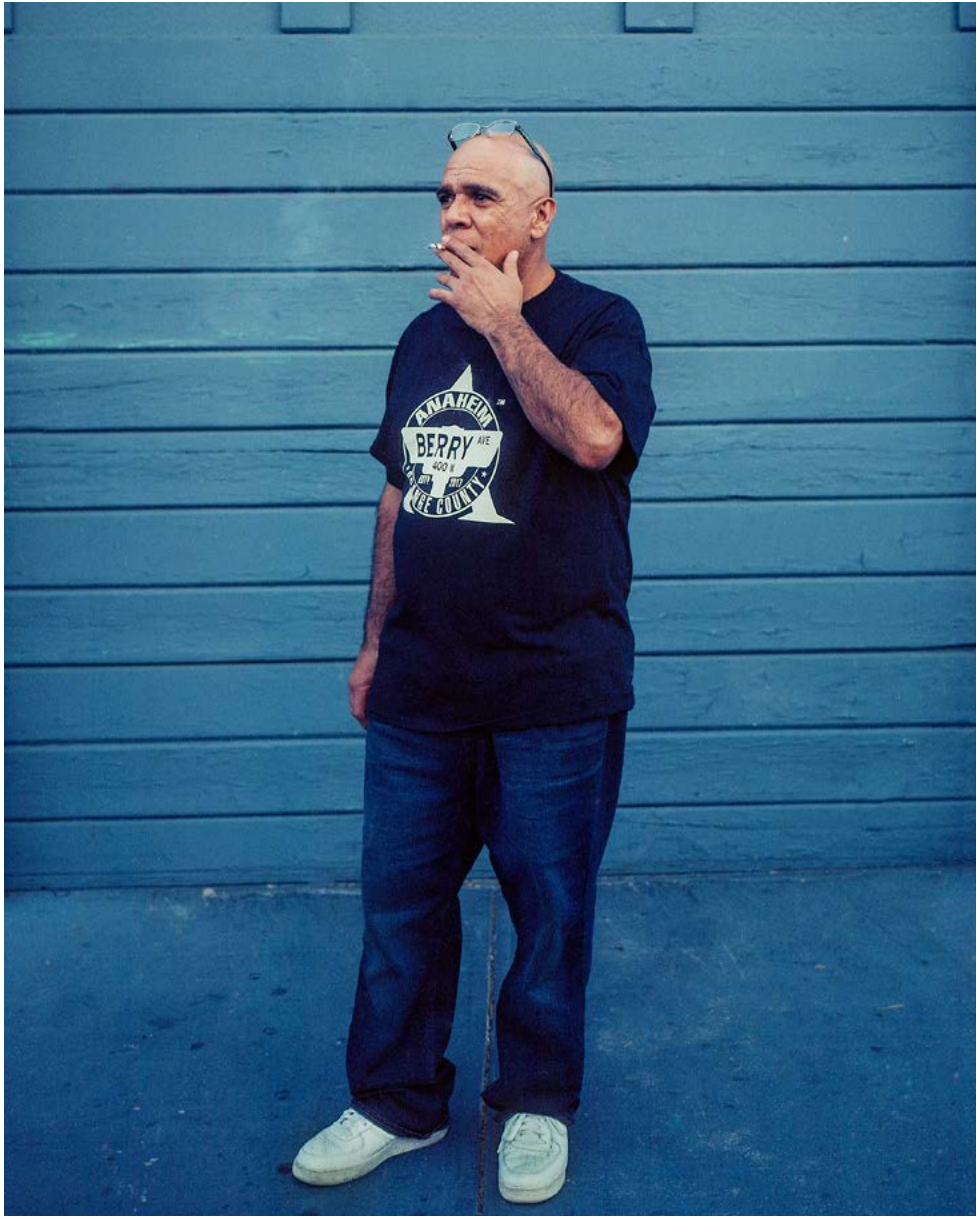
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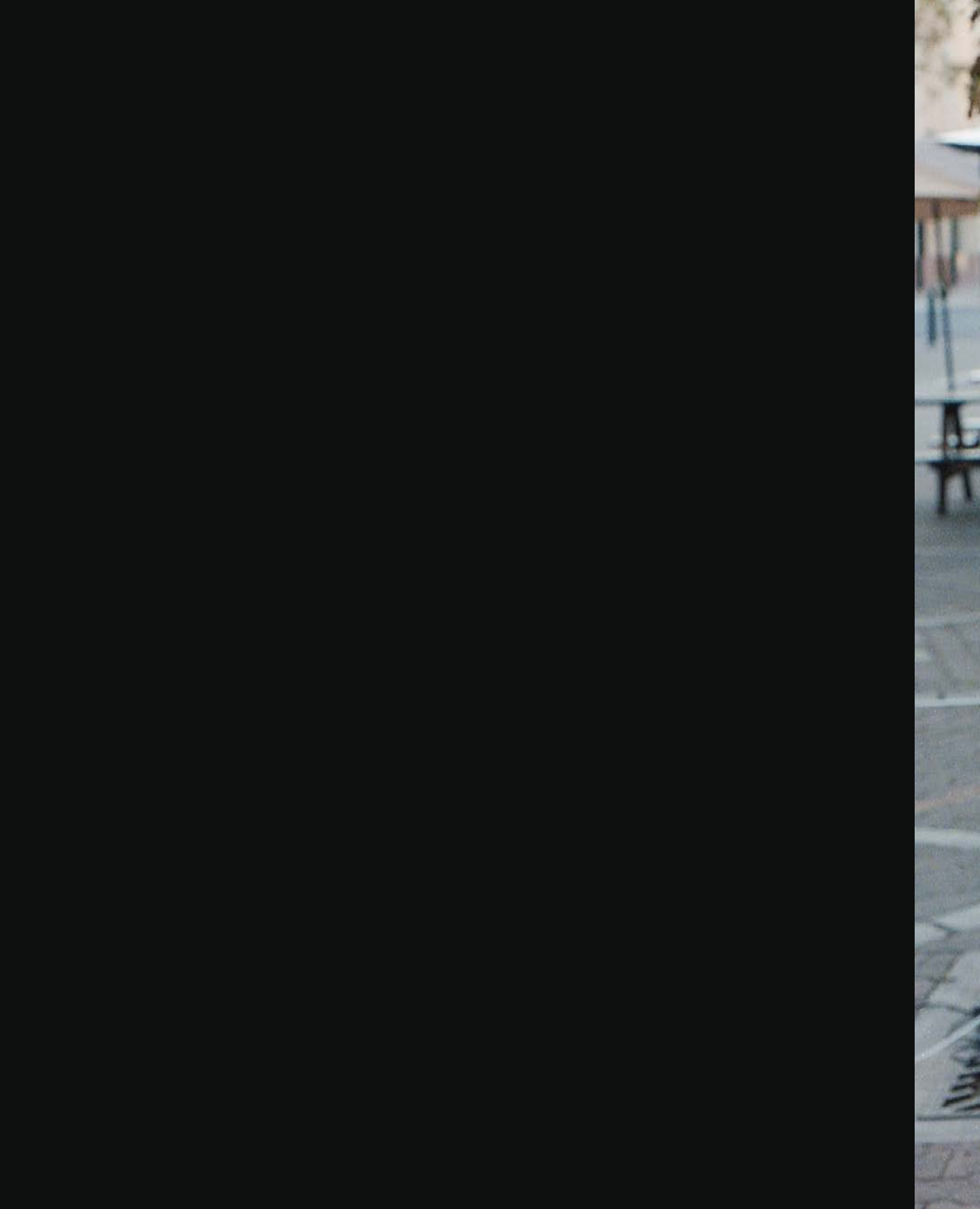




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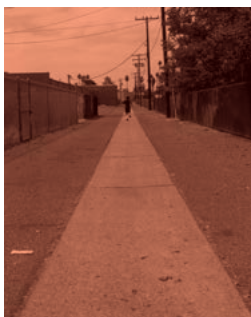


Plates Index



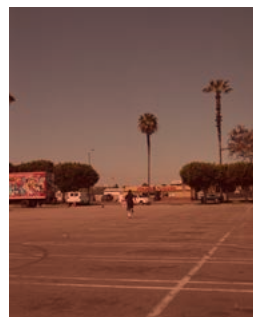
As Far As I Can Get Closer to the Showroom
In My Nike Cortez and Dickies Shorts in 10
Seconds after Divola

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



As Far As I Can Get in 10 Seconds in the
Alley Where Cops Chase Brown People
Thinking They Are Cholos after Divola

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



As Close As I Can Get To the Liquor Store
From the Swapmeet Parking Lot in 10
Seconds after Divola

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



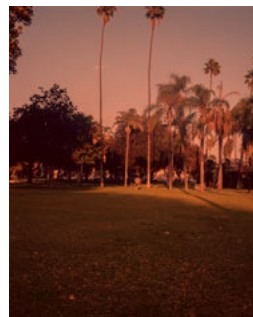
As Far As I Can Get Towards the Hood in
Anaheim, Calif in 10 Seconds After Divola

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



As Far As I Can Get Closer to the Indoor
Swapmeet en Anaheim Califas, in
10 Seconds after Divola

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



As Far As I Can Get In A Park That Brown
People Couldn't Play At In 10 Seconds After
Divola

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



After Stephen Shore but in Penquin City and Paisa

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



About Half A Mile From Disneyland

Archival Inkjet Print
2019



Anaheim Landscape #2

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



Benji at Comanche Market

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



American Mexican Landscape

Archival Inkjet Print
2018



Elizabeth and Child

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



Rich on the Other Side

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



About A Half A Mile From Disneyland #2

Archival Inkjet Print
2019



The Oldest Tree In Anaheim

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



Landscape of Romneya Drive
Archival Inkjet Print
2020



Gloria aka Goonies
Archival Inkjet Print
2019



Araceli and Her Chicken
Archival Inkjet Print
2019



What We Will Witness
Archival Inkjet Print
2020



Red Truck Still Life
Archival Inkjet Print
2019



Lavinia
Archival Inkjet Print
2018



Maritza
Archival Inkjet Print
2020



We Gunna Have to Move Out Soon Fam!
Archival Inkjet Print
2018



Yo, There is a Bunch of Brown Folks On This Side!
Archival Inkjet Print
2018



Ya'll Forget Who Worked Here?

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



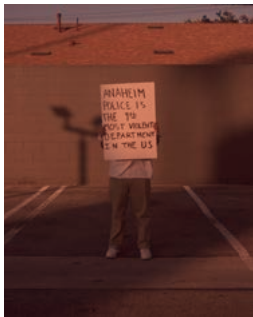
Damn! Four of Them Got Elected?

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



Damn Ya'll Were Violent in 1936

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



Ya'll! Who Do You Protect Disneyland?

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



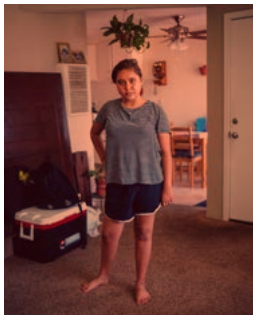
Getting That Rasquache Haircut

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



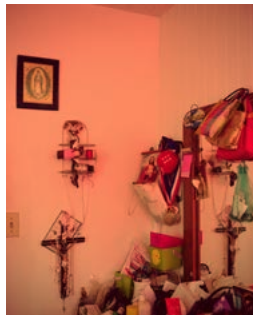
Chicanx Still Life #5

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



Kenya

Archival Inkjet Print
2018



Chicanx Still Life #4

Archival Inkjet Print
2019



School Picture That Never Happened

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



This Is Not A Gun#2
Archival Inkjet Print
2020



This Is Not A Gun #1
Archival Inkjet Print
2019



We Got Everything you Need Here
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Oscar
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Turn off the Water
Archival Inkjet Print
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More Work After Work
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All That I Can Carry #1
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All That I Can Carry #2
Archival Inkjet Print
2020



All That I Can Carry #3
Archival Inkjet Print
2020



All That I Can Carry #4

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



All That I Can Carry #5

Archival Inkjet Print
2020



All That I Can Carry #6

Archival Inkjet Print
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XL Pro Club. 9.0 Nike Cortez. Blue Dickies.
11.14.2020. 125 N. Broadway. 53 Minutes.

Photograph by Alkaid Ramirez
Archival Inkjet Print
2020



XL Pro Club. 9.0 Nike Cortez. Blue Dickies.
11.14.2020. 125 N. Broadway. 53 Minutes.

Photograph by Alkaid Ramirez
Archival Inkjet Print
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Archival Inkjet Print
2020

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About the Artist

William Camargo is an Arts Educator, Photo-Based Artist and Arts Advocate born and raised in Anaheim, California, he is currently serving as Commissioner of Heritage and Culture in the city of Anaheim and holds an M.F.A at Claremont Graduate University. He is the founder and curator of Latinx Diaspora Archives an archive Instagram page that elevates communities of color through family photos. He attained his BFA at the California State University, Fullerton, and an AA from Fullerton College in photography.

William has held residencies at Project Art, the Chicago Artist Coalition, ACRE, and at LA Summer held at Otis School of Art and Design. He has also participated in the New York Times Portfolio Review, NALAC's(National Association of Latino Arts & Culture) Leadership(2018), and Advocacy(2020) Institutes. He is a current member of Diversify Photo an initiative started to diversify the photography industry. He was awarded the Friedman Grant and J. Sonneman Photography Prize from CGU and has given lectures at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, Gallery 400(Chicago), University of San Diego, Cal State Long Beach, the Claremont Colleges, USC Roski School of Art, Stanford(upcoming).

Additionally, his work has been shown at the Chicago Cultural Center, Loisaida Center(New York), the University of Indianapolis(IN), Mexican Cultural Center and Cinematic Arts(Los Angeles), Stevenson University(Baltimore), The Cooper Gallery of African and African American Arts at Harvard, Irvine Fine Arts Center, Los Angeles Municipal Gallery, Filter Photo(Chicago), among others.

William is located in Southern California. @billythecamera

