

# *Exhibition Guide*

## **Carmen Argote: I won't abandon you, I see you, we are safe**

June 10–September 10, 2023



## **Carmen Argote: I won't abandon you, I see you, we are safe**

The work of Los Angeles-based artist **Carmen Argote** (b. 1981, Guadalajara, Mexico) is distinguished by her commitment to process and her characteristic use of organic and biological materials—from bananas, and palm fronds to chicken excrement and human urine. Often collected on her daily walks, these materials are reconstituted into artworks through the ritual actions of braiding, rubbing, and consuming, which speak in significant ways to the artist's relationship to body and place. Argote's most recent series, titled *Mother*, brings these site-specific investigations inward.

Including drawings, sculptures, and works in process, this exhibition maps Argote's journey toward a deeper understanding of her interior self and the binaries that it holds—adult and child, man and woman, resident and exile, individual and collective. In this featured body of work, patterns of power and control are traced across cultures and generations to explore patriarchy as a learned behavior. Bringing together her interests in architecture, personal history, and psychology, this series engages with the scaffoldings of the mind, body, and spirit to consider the role that art, like therapy, can play in disrupting these recurring habits.

In the *Mother* series, figures emerge in states of submission, protection, restlessness, and desire, pointing to the postures that Argote assumes as she engages with her mother self and child self. Works made from thrown papier-mâché, evocative of spitballs on a classroom ceiling, reveal the artist's attempts to nurture her ripe child within—rebellious, messy, and full of cosmic wonder. Encircling the galleries is a group of braided and bound sculptures. Intended to be held and hugged, these are the comforting objects to which Argote continuously returns, the documents of her practices of re-mothering and rebirth. Guiding words of affirmation appear throughout the installation, including the exhibition's title, which is drawn from the phrases that Argote speaks over her inner child, "I won't abandon you, I see you, we are safe."

Moving from the individual to the collective, this presentation also signals a new chapter for the *Mother* works. On the gallery floor, a circular canvas marks a space of play where Argote and invited collaborators including her mother, **Carmen Vargas**, as well as **Young Chung**, **Daniela Lieja Quintanar**, **Mary McGuire**, and **Cedric Tai**, will participate in collective actions that allow the exhibition, like Argote's work, to evolve over time.

Operating at the threshold between the physical and psychological, *I won't abandon you, I see you, we are safe* gives material form to the inhabitants of the interior architectures of the self—those we project, those we neglect, those we desire, those we defend, and those we have yet to discover.

*Carmen Argote: I won't abandon you, I see you, we are safe* is organized by Amanda Sroka, Senior Curator, with Caroline Ellen Liou, Curatorial Assistant.

Support for the exhibition is provided by Kristin Rey and Michael Rubel, and Ann Soh Woods and Mel Woods. Special thanks to Commonwealth and Council.

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## About the Artist

**Carmen Argote** (b. 1981, Guadalajara, Mexico; lives and works in Los Angeles) is a multidisciplinary artist whose work often points to the body, class, and economic structures in relation to architecture and personal history. She received her MFA in 2007 from the University of California, Los Angeles, where she also received her BFA in 2004. Recent solo exhibitions have been held at Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego (2022); Primary, Nottingham (2021); Clockshop, Los Angeles (2020); New Museum, New York (2019); and PAOS GDL, Guadalajara (2019). Argote has been featured in group exhibitions at MAK Center for Art and Architecture, Los Angeles (2022); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2021); SculptureCenter, New York (2019); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2018); Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2017); and Ballroom Marfa (2017). She is the recipient of the Fellows of Contemporary Art Award (2020); the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award (2019); Artadia Los Angeles award (2019); an Artist Community Engagement Grant from the Rema Hort Mann Foundation (2015); and a California Community Foundation Fellowship for Visual Artists (2013). Argote's work is in the collections of Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego. Argote is represented by Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, and is co-chair of the Artist Advisory Council at Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.





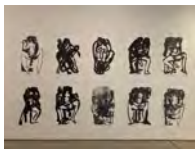
*let the child speak, 2022*

Cochineal, papier-mâché, post its, tape, gel medium, iron powder, paper, and graphite  
Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



*you are not late, 2022*

Cochineal, papier-mâché, post its, acrylic, tape, gel medium, iron powder, and banana skin  
Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



Selection of *gynecological fantasies, 2023*

Oak gall dye and gouache on paper  
Courtesy of the artist



*Gynecological Fantasy, 2023*

Oak gall dye on linen  
Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



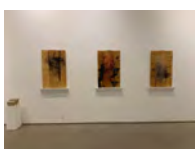
*Two Paintings Projecting, 2022*

Oil on linen, oil on canvas, bath towels, artist's clothing, museum wax, red Egyptian paste, paper, graphite, cold wax, and rooster leg ties  
Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



*Dis Ease 2, 2020–21*

Earth, strawberry syrup, acrylic, and crayon on paper  
Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



Selection of *urine maps, 2021*

Tannic acid dye, crayon, iron powder, and urine on paper  
Courtesy of the artist



*Part of the flock, 2023*

Chicken coop parts, oak gal dye, pastel, iron powder, and papier-mâché  
Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



*The Feral One, 2023*

Palm fronds, jute, blue powder stain, papier-mâché, gel medium, and clear gesso  
Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



*other other, 2023*

Oak galls, oak gall dye, gel medium, and linen  
Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



*Protector: Surrender, 2022*

Figs, acrylic, gesso, gel medium, crayon, and iron powder on paper  
Courtesy of J. Patrick Collins



*Protector: No, 2022*

Figs, acrylic, gesso, gel medium, crayon, and iron powder on paper  
Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



*Nest for my father, 2022*

Motorcycle gear, found palm nest, acrylic, bird leavings, iron, and gel medium  
Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



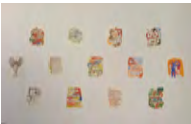
*Pain Body*, 2022  
Oil on canvas  
Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



*Protector: Fig*, 2022  
Figs, acrylic, gesso, gel medium, crayon, iron powder, and salt on paper  
Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



*Protector: Open*, 2022  
Crayon, gel medium, and iron powder on paper, frame  
Private collection



Selection of *written affirmations*, 2022–23  
Colored pencil and gouache on paper  
Courtesy of the artist



*2833 Boulder Street*, 2020  
Compilation of videos of actions with shaving cream and strawberry syrup  
(color, sound)  
Videography by Craig Kirk  
Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



*Ripe Child (a cosmic one)*, 2022  
Cochineal and papier-mâché on linen  
Collection of Michael Sherman & Vinny Dotolo, Spaghetti Western



*Daughter: also a son, 2022*

Pillow, silk, glass beads, ceramic beads, leather, intimate garments, palm fronds, iron powder, watercolor, oil, acrylic, gathered nature, cap, linen, zip ties, plastic supermarket bag, and dried sponge mushroom

Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



*Ripe Child, 2022*

Banana, papier-mâché, and pastel on linen

Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



*How I carry HER, 2022*

Oak galls on linen, gel medium, oak gall dye

Courtesy of Ann Soh Woods



*I do not need to give to receive, 2020–21*

Earth, strawberry syrup, acrylic, crayon, chestnut dye, and iron on paper

Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



Carmen Vargas

*Huipil, 2023–ongoing*

Huipil, belt unfinished, and necklace in henequen estropajo and hemp, with symbols.

Teabags flower, dry avocado peel, ginger, seeds, aluminum pearl, natural pearls, and handmade miniature book with wise words from tea bags

Courtesy the artist

In vitrine, right to left:

*Letter to Carmen Vargas, 2023*

Pen on paper

Courtesy of Carmen Vargas

*Letter to Mary McGuire, 2023*

Pen on paper

Courtesy of Mary McGuire



*Letter to Young Chung, 2023*

Pen on paper

Courtesy of Young Chung

*Letter to Daniela Lieja Quintanar, 2023*

Pen on paper

Courtesy of Daniela Lieja Quintanar

*Letter to Cedric Tai, 2023*

Pen on paper

Courtesy of Cedric Tai



Carmen Argote, Young Chung, Daniela Lieja Quintanar, Mary McGuire, Cedric Tai, and Carmen Vargas

*Opening action, June 2, 2023, 2023*

Pigment, papier-mâché, canvas, and rope

Courtesy of the artists

On floor:



*comforting object: hold me down, 2022*

Oil on canvas, shirt, canvas tote bag, and crepe rubber band

Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



*comforting object: and paradox, 2022*

Corn husks, banana peels, linen, crepe rubber band, and clear gesso

Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



*comforting object: nothing is lost, 2022*

Palm fronds, crepe rubber band, linen, copper, copper powder, clear gesso

Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



*comforting object: eraser, 2022*

Cotton house mats and crepe rubber bands

Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



*comforting object: endure the wait, 2022*

Palm fiber, shells, linen, clear gesso, zip ties

Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



*comforting object: endure the wait, 2022*  
Palm fiber, shells, linen, clear gesso, zip ties  
Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



*comforting object: stacked, 2023*  
Palm fronds, acrylic, plastic feed bag, oak galls, thermoplastic, banana, clear gesso, and linen  
Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City



*comforting object: The one who chokes, 2023*  
Oil on canvas, oil on hat, graphite, pillow, linen, and crepe rubber band  
Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, Mexico City

On tables:

*Communication Tools, 2023*

Oak gall and rope

Courtesy of the artist

*Visitors are encouraged to use these according to the instructions*