

LUIS DE JESUS LOS ANGELES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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RODRIGO VALENZUELA: New Works for a Post-Worker's World
January 8 – February 19, 2022
Opening Reception: Saturday, January 8, 3 to 7 PM

Luis De Jesus Los Angeles is very pleased to announce **RODRIGO VALENZUELA: New Works for a Post-Worker's World**, the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery. The exhibition will be on view from January 8 through February 19, 2022, with an opening reception to be held on Saturday, January 8th from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm.

In their projection of a post-worker's world, Rodrigo Valenzuela's *Afterwork* series and *Weapons* series speaks to the elimination not only of individual laborers but of the idea itself of the work force, pushed aside by the very shapes we see here: odd machines and automation, engines that no longer require an operator, but that rage when no one is watching.

At the height of early industrial steel production, workers were treated as engines, their bodies wrung out of vitality, transformed into glowing steel bars, sweat and capital. The smoke in Valenzuela's series of photographs invokes the blazing steam and white heat of steel in the process of formation, but also the perspiration of labor indefinitely suspended in air. In these depopulated photographs, viewers are left to their own imaginative devices. Valenzuela's contemporary Frankensteinian contraptions are uncanny, and some have a sinister edge, embodied by the threat of metal chains and hooks. Others are delicate, almost sympathetic.

These images suggest the roaring steel mills of the past, quickly abandoned once outdated, while also offering a retro futuristic vision in which workers and machines devised a better plan than their mutually assured futility. As stand-ins for the growing numbers of workers dispossessed due to automation, the pictures—in their invocation of histories of labor, and of industries created by humans to displace themselves in the service of capital—intersect with the struggles for unionization, a longtime interest for Valenzuela. They stress the body's worth—both single and collective—as well as that of rest and pleasure.

Often using landscapes and tableaus with day laborers or the artist himself, Valenzuela explores the way an image is inhabited, and the way that spaces, objects and people are translated into images. His work serves as an expressive and intimate point of contact between the broader realms of subjectivity and political contingency. Through his videos and photographs, Valenzuela makes images that feel simultaneously familiar yet distant. He engages the viewer in questions concerning the ways in which the formation and experience of each work is situated—how they exist in and out of place.

Rodrigo Valenzuela (b. 1982, Chile) received his MFA from the University of Washington, Seattle in 2012, a BA in Philosophy from Evergreen State College, Olympia, WA in 2010 and a BFA from the University of

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Chile, Santiago in 2004. He has presented solo exhibitions at New Museum, New York (2019); Lancaster Museum of Art and History, CA (2019); Orange County Museum of Art, CA (2018) and Portland Art Museum, OR (2018), and has participated in group exhibitions at the Phillips Collection, Washington, DC (2019); The Drawing Center, New York, NY (2017); Frye Art Museum, Seattle, WA (2016); Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX (2015); and Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, WA (2017). He was awarded residencies at Light Work, Syracuse, NY (2017); MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, NH (2016); Core program, Houston, TX (2016); Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, Omaha, NE (2015); Kala Art Institute, Berkeley (2015) and Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, ME (2013), among others.

In 2021, Valenzuela was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship Award and a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship. He received a Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Grant (2017), Arts innovator Award (2014). His work is included in the collections of Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC, NY; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO; Frye Art Museum, Seattle, WA; as well as numerous private and corporate collections. Valenzuela lives and works Los Angeles, CA.

Appointments to visit and view the exhibition are optional and may be made at luisdejesus.com/contact. Please note that face masks are required.

Press release adapted from the essay "Machine Sweat" by art historian Paula Kupfer.

For further information, including images and previews, please call 213-395-0762, or email: gallery@luisdejesus.com.

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