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Felipe Romero Beltran

KLEMM'S











Bravo (2025)

Bravo situates itself in the liminal space of the Rio Bravo, a site of perpetual tension and migration where identity and geography intersect. Focusing on a 270-kilometre stretch of the river, Romero Beltrán's Bravo constructs an elusive visual narrative where the river itself becomes a silent protagonist, shaping the lives of those who approach it but rarely appearing in the frame. Through stark portraits, austere interiors, and scarred landscapes, Bravo captures the suspended time of migration as his subjects wait, sometimes for years, in the shadow of an uncertain crossing.

Divided into three chapters—Endings, Bodies, and Breaches—Romero Beltrán's inscrutable documentary approach challenges the semiotics of classification, enclosure, definition, and identification in his visual aesthetics that mirror the suppressed and controlled notions of identity at the border.

Also included within Bravo is *El Cruce*, an audiovisual work that underscores the river's dual role as a life source and militarized boundary through scenes of baptism, fishing, and migrant stories. With accompanying texts by Salvadoran migrant Dominick Bermúdez, thinker Albert Corbí, and artist Alejandra Aragón, as well as an interview with the artist, Bravo is an urgent and poetic meditation on a border defined by contradictions—where hope, despair, movement, and stillness converge.

from: Loose Joints, publishing, 2025





Bravo, 2024, Pigment Print, 120 x 150 cm, ed 3 + 2 AP



Bravo, 2024, Pigment Print, 120 x 150 cm, ed 3 + 2 AP



Bravo, 2024, Pigment Print, 120 x 150 cm, ed 3 + 2 AP



Bravo, 2024, Pigment Print, 120 x 150 cm, ed 3 + 2 AP





El Cruce

Perhaps we can define the border in relation to its only purpose: to cross it. The border is a geography that resides in the realm of language; once it is transgressed, it vanishes. Or, to put it another way, once you reach the place that defines one side and the other, you realize that the border never existed. Perhaps this is why crossing the border is the least of the tasks, the least of the ways in which it appears, because the border is not only ambiguous, it takes different forms, it even takes the form of water.

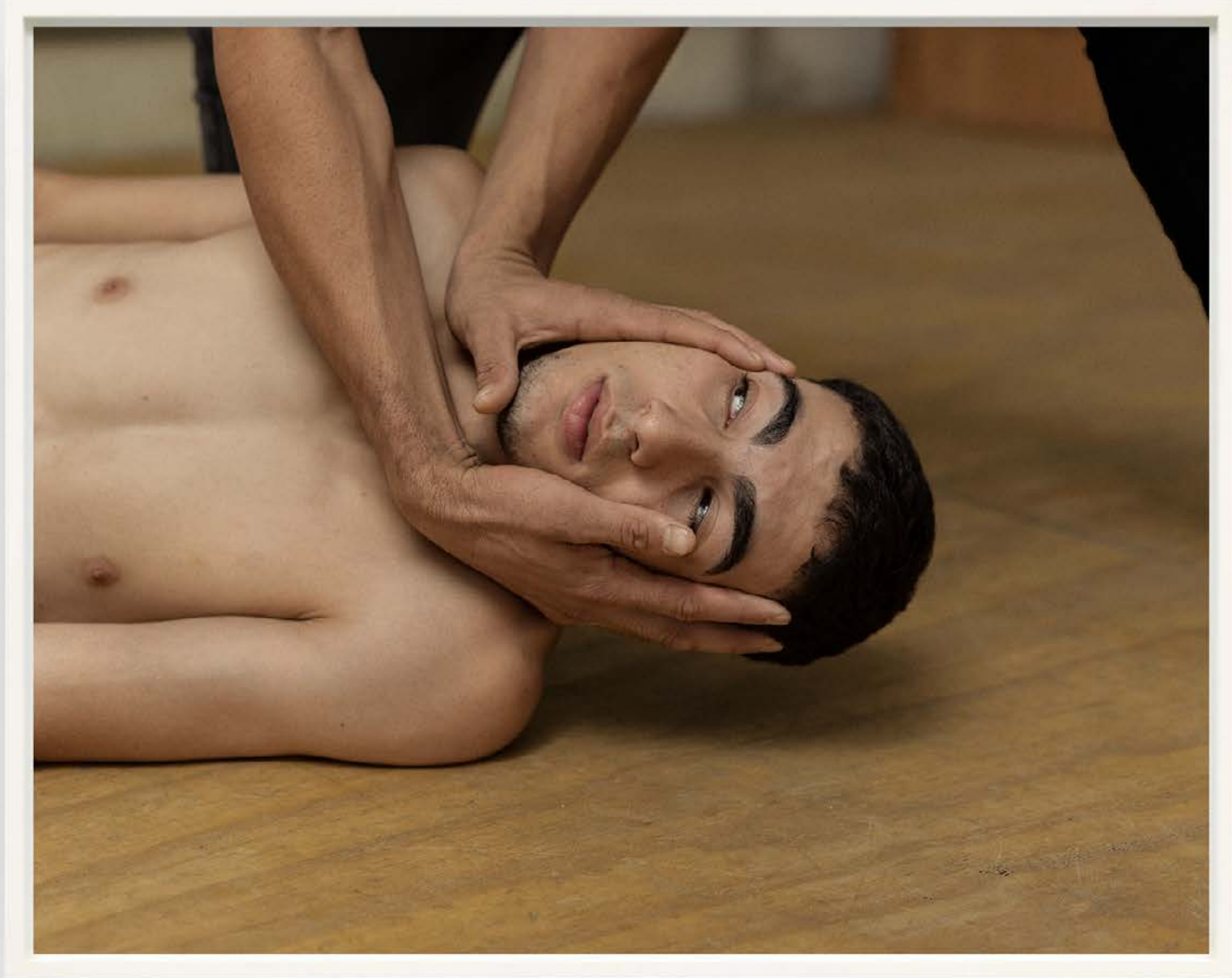
The Rio Bravo is established as a border between Mexico and the United States, it rises or lowers the water level, before its dam was built, it was the divinity that gave it order: periods of flood, during the rains, and dry periods without rain. Now it is an emancipated border. It is itself a god. The water can disappear, at the moment the floodgates close, it can lose all its volume. When this happens, the border becomes another kind of edge, which is the place where there used to be a river.

The water that covers the border ignores the swimmer who crosses it from one side to the other for fun, who lets himself be carried away by the stream, and who questions its political condition. The water that covers the border ignores those who enter up to the waist, to be baptized, and use the river to cleanse all sins. The water that covers the border ignores those who now cross it and see how the swimmer and the Baptists are left halfway across.

El cruce is a video project that explores the logics of the irregular crossing of migrants between Mexico and the United States through the Rio Bravo.

Albert Corbí, 2024





Dialect, 2022, Pigment Print, 104×130 cm, ed. 3 + 2 AP

Born in Bogotá in 1992 and now based in Paris, Felipe Romero Beltrán's artistic endeavours are deeply rooted in exploring social issues, with a particular focus on the tension that arises from the introduction of new narratives within the realm of documentary photography. He juxtaposes his image-cycles with film and videos, performative elements and installation-type-settings.

Beltrán experiments with a visual understanding similar to documentary photography, an anticipation that quickly dissolves in the irritating artificiality of the scenes. The images bear witness to the photographer's sensitive empathy, yet simultaneously reveal his distinct artistic style. His extremely precise compositions succeed in posing questions about identity, power dynamics, and social structures, while at the same time creating a completely new imagery that resists clear typological classification. Beltrán's images achieve a dual impact, in which their visual potency supercedes their narrative power.

A key element in Beltrán's work is its commitment to long-term projects, accompanied by a deep research on the context of his work. In recent bodies of work he fosters a subtle yet profound reflection on migration not only as a geographical phenomenon but also as a bureaucratic, social, and emotional experience.

Through his staged compositions, he renders the monotony and inertia of time almost tangible, using the body as a metaphor. His images, reminiscent of Renaissance religious paintings, exude a sacred, almost wax-like quality. They allude to waiting as an existential condition — the anticipation of a promise, of a life poised to unfold but frozen at the moment captured on photograph, existing merely as a distant ideal.

Beltrán's photographs depict a specific view on 'reality' while also conveying the artificiality of the situations his protagonists and their surrounding settings find themselves in. His meticulous sense for composition and choreography of the images amplifies this impression.









Dialect, 2022, Pigment Print, 50 × 40 cm, ed. 7 + 2 AP



Dialect, 2022, Pigment Print, 50 × 40 cm, ed. 7 + 2 AP



Dialect, 2022, Pigment Print, 40 x 50 cm, ed. 7 + 2 AP



TEXTO CONSOLIDADO

JUAN CARLOS I

REY DE ESPAÑA

A todos los que la presente vieren y entendieren.
Saber: Que las Cortes Generales han aprobado y Yo vengo en sancionar la siguiente Ley Orgánica.

TÍTULO PRELIMINAR

Disposiciones generales

Artículo 1. Delimitación del ámbito.

1. Se consideran extranjeros, a los efectos de la aplicación de la presente Ley, a los que carezcan de la nacionalidad española.

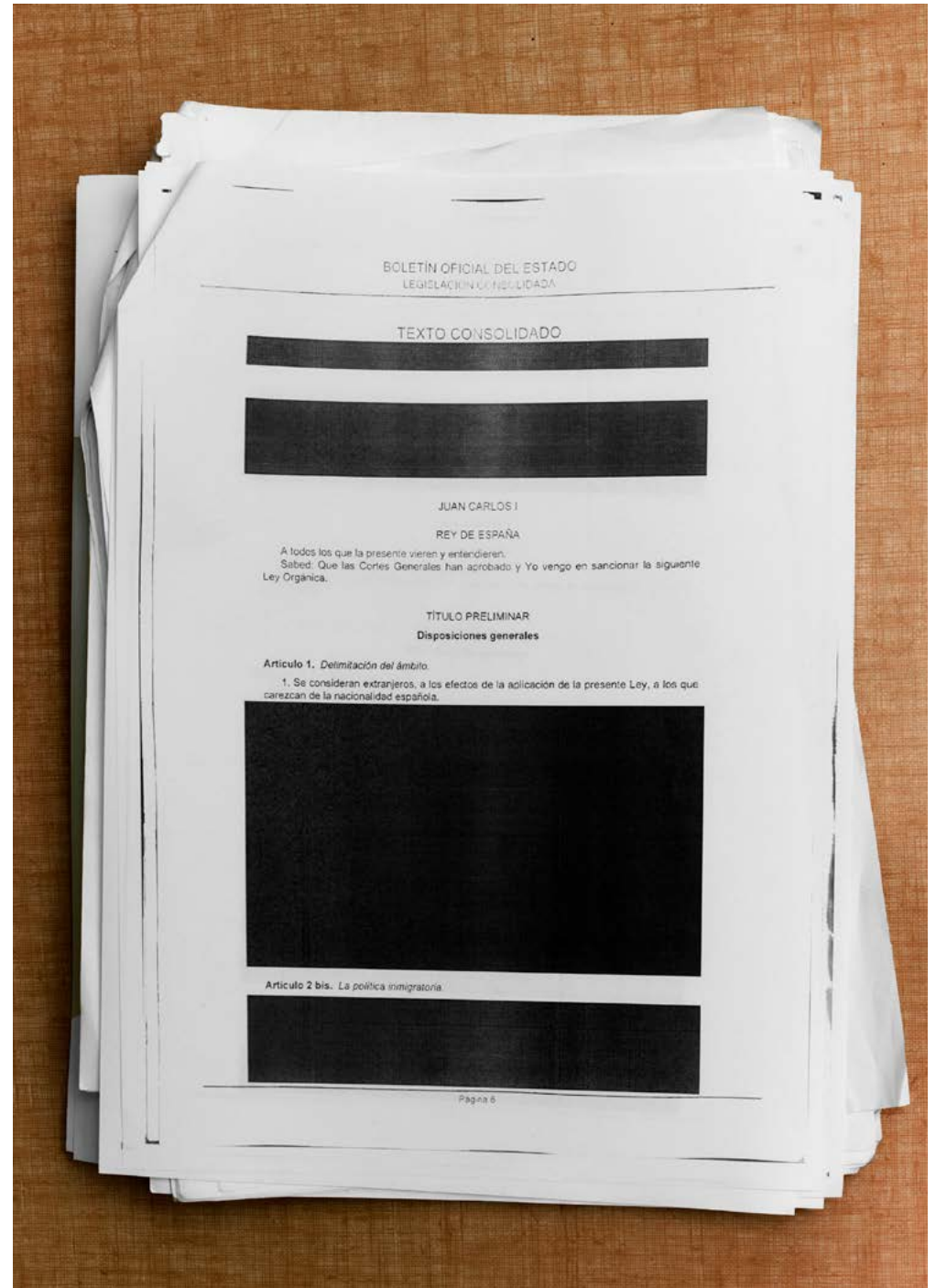
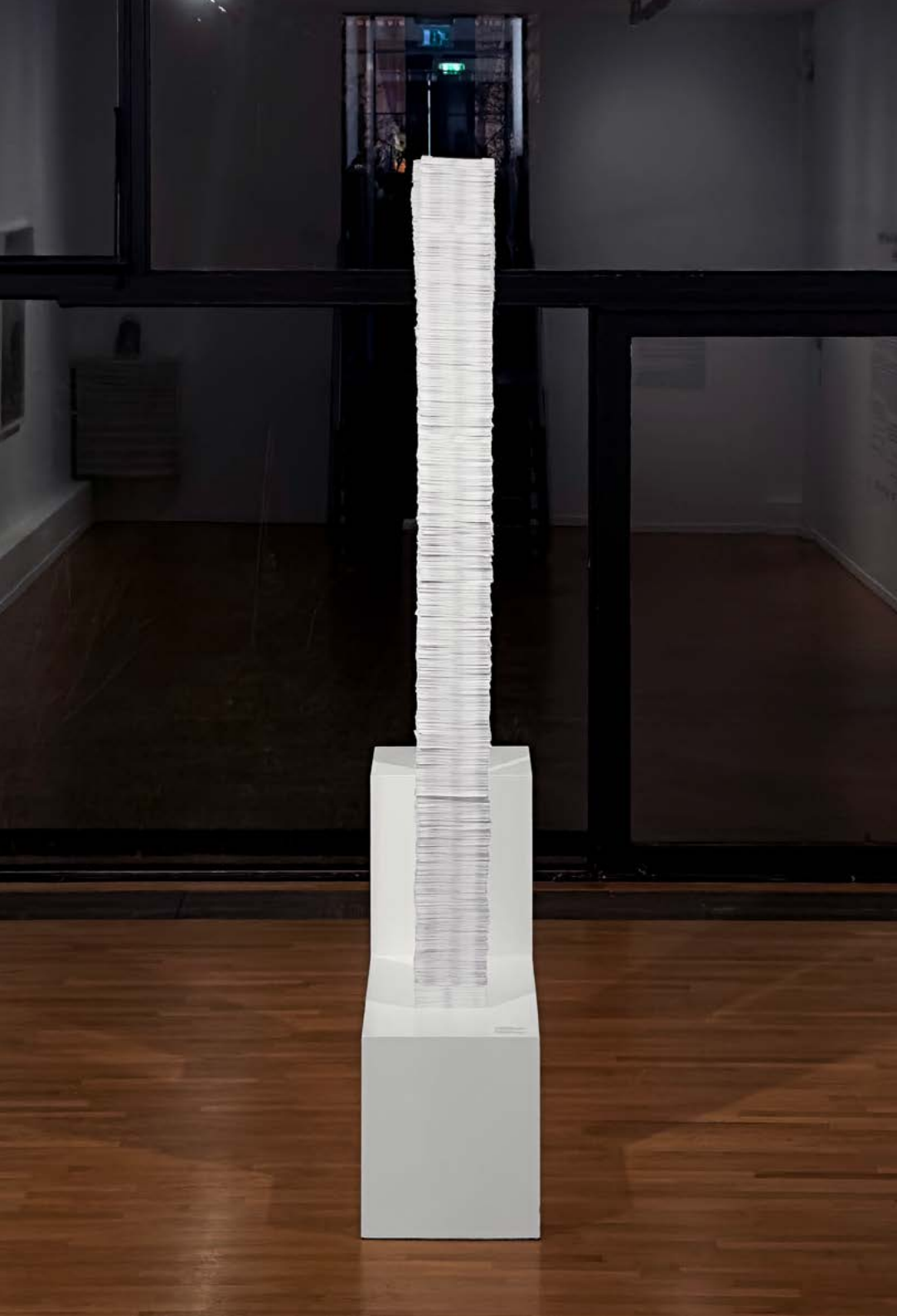
Artículo 2 bis. La política migratoria.

Dialect (2020- 2023)

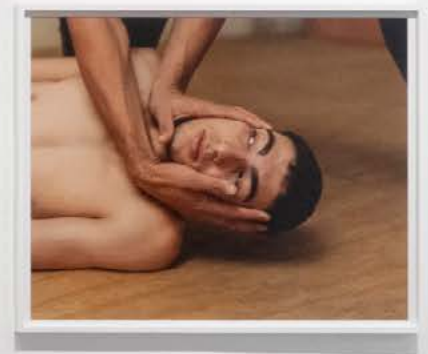
European states have categorized the bureaucracies for crossing their borders. Anyone who avoids or transgresses those controls is subject to an irregular legal condition. During the last decades, each EU state has enforced its own immigration laws to regulate and control the movements of immigrants who enter their territory. If a person enters irregularly into Spanish territory, and he or she has not reached the age of majority (according to a sworn declaration and medical controls), the custody and control of the immigrant remains in the hands of the state. Such custody and control are exerted through a dedicated Center, an internment building that houses immigrants in the same condition. Once the immigrant is legally declared an adult, he or she must wait one to three years to normalize his or her legal status in the country.

Dialect begins within a group of young immigrants who have recently crossed the strait (the maritime border between Morocco and Spain) avoiding border controls. In Seville, they settled while their legal situation is solved or diluted.

Felipe Romero Beltran documentation and staging merge into an ambiguous yet powerful narrative about waiting, companionship, and the conditions of migration, both bureaucratic and linguistic. Over the course of three years, Beltrán accompanied a group of minors from Morocco who had entered Spain irregularly and were placed in a temporary center while awaiting permission to legally immigrate. It can take up to three years for these youth to receive resident status, at which point they are legally declared adults. Trapped in limbo, they fill the time with sports, personal hygiene, and conversation.



Exhibition view: *Dialect*, Paul Huf Award, FOAM, Amsterdam, 2024







Felipe Romero Beltrán: Dialect

In his recent series *Dialect*, the photographer Felipe Romero Beltrán, winner of the 2022 Aperture Portfolio Prize, collaborates with young immigrant men navigating legal limbo in Spain. Romero Beltrán met his subjects, who crossed into Spain from Morocco as minors, while participating in a theater workshop in Seville about inclusion. Soon he began to make staged photographs that reenacted the experiences of migration and the new lives the men were creating. As Kaelen Wilson-Goldie writes in *Aperture's* Summer 2022 issue, the empathy with which Romero Beltrán captures the lives of these young men is related to his own relocation from Colombia to Spain. Comparing his work to projects by leading artists, including Yto Barrada, Hassan Khan, and Bouchra Khalili, Wilson-Goldie describes Romero Beltrán's alliance with his subjects: "*Dialect* has given its subjects a chance to relive some of the more difficult moments in their young lives, and, in doing so, in remaking the droop of a young man's hips, the fall of his arm, the slight of his worried brow smoothing out, transform those moments into gestures of real beauty, of tension being poetically undone by novel forms of collective support."

Felipe Romero Beltrán (born in Bogotá, 1992) is a Colombian photographer based in Madrid, and a PhD candidate at Complutense University of Madrid.

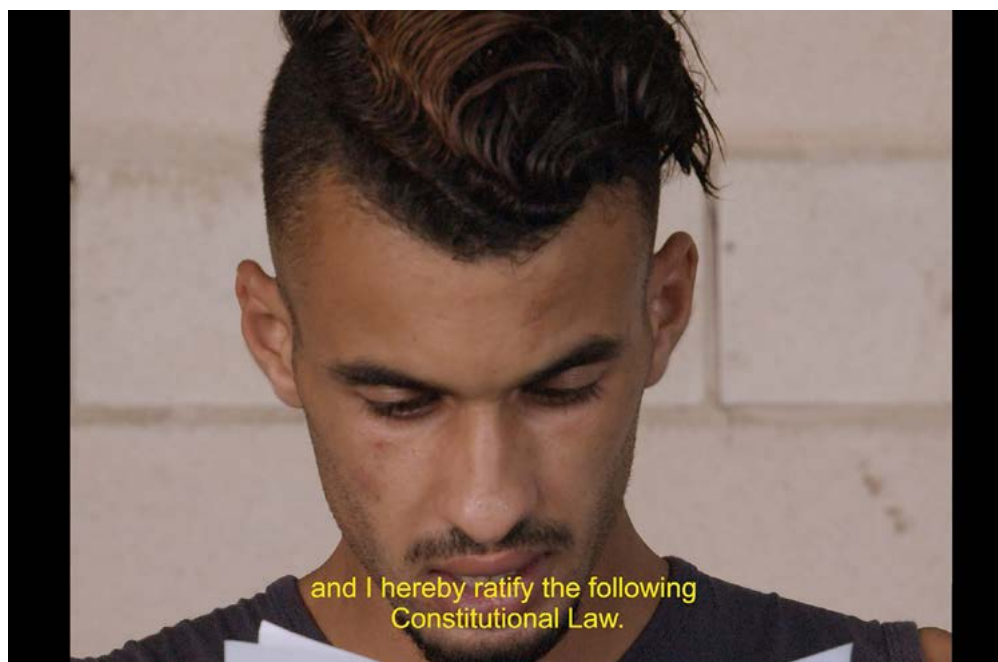
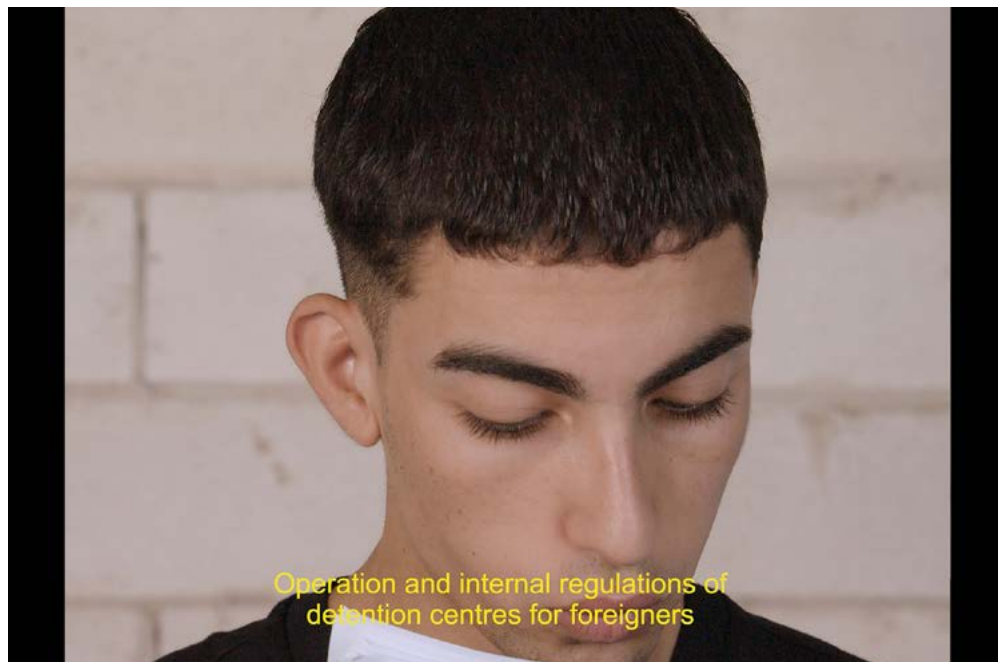
The Aperture Portfolio Prize aims to spotlight new talent in photography, identifying contemporary trends in the field and highlighting artists whose work deserves greater recognition. Romero Beltrán's work, chosen from more than one thousand submissions, is published in the Summer 2022 issue of *Aperture* magazine.

The young men pictured in *Dialect* are Younes Belkhi, Hassan Chabouni, Aziz Chahid, Mohamed El Azzouzi, Youssef Elhadi, Mouad El Khamli, Hassan Ghannit, Habib Houtti, Zakaria Mounehid, Soufiane Nafiz, Mohamed Rida, Slim Sin, Bilal Smees, and Bader Zora.

aperture



Exhibition view: *Recital*, BredaPhoto, Netherlands, 2022



Recital

The video work *Recital* (2020), which delves deeper into these themes, highlights the language barriers and the surreal, often absurd demands faced by migrants. Beltrán films the young men reading the first four pages of the Spanish migration law out loud, an attempt that takes over 20 minutes as they struggle with the language that seeks to categorize them. Communication and comprehension in a system of administration and control. For the presentation in the gallery spaces Beltrán developed a special setting in which echoes of the bureaucratic and temporary interact with the artworks and accentuate the conceptual structure by recalling its constructedness.



Exhibition view: *Reducción*, Tabacalera Residence, Madrid, 2022







Reduccìon, 2019, Pigment on paper, framed: 40 x 50 cm

Reducción (2019)

The legal nature of the immigrant (body) determines whether they can walk down the city's streets on a regular basis or not. The everyday journeys that the immigrant (body) makes are affected if they do not have identification documents or are not legally resident in the country. In legal terms, immigrants without papers are known as illegal aliens (body). The police carry out regular checks of the legal status of people (bodies) living in areas where statistics show that more irregularities are likely to be found.

These places are known as zonas calientes or "hotspots". Whenever a warning goes out that police are in an area, illegal immigrants (bodies) keep away from them to avoid being detected. The likelihood of being caught determines which areas the immigrant (body) can move around in. There is a police presence in the new zone. This means that illegal immigrants (bodies) have to change the routes they take.

If the immigrant (body) is intercepted, they are forcibly arrested and taken to the Alien Detention Centre (CIE). The forcible arrest and subjugation of the illegal alien (body) is regulated by the Police Defense Manual established by the National Police Corps. The manual explains in detail how to use force to detain someone or, in other words, neutralize the illegal alien (body) using combat techniques.

Reducción (Forcible arrest) explores the procedures for arresting illegal aliens in Spain and the violence deployed against the.



Reducción, 2019, Pigment on paper, framed: 40 x 50 cm



Magdalena, 2017 -2020



Magdalena, 2017 - 2020



Magdalena

The Magdalena project reflects on the condition of the Magdalena River during the armed conflict in Colombia. Taking geographies of the river where missing bodies emerge as case studies, the phenomenon articulates the identity of a territory affected by war.

„The grave is a river. The grave is moving. The graveyard was made for posterity, and now is undetermined, in constant change. Does the corpse remember? The grave is a river. Those who live above water worship those who were found under the water. The grave is a river.“





Biography

Born 1992 in Bogotá, Columbia; lives and works in Paris

Education

2018-2023

PhD Photography, Universidad Complutense de Madrid

2010-2015

BA Visual Arts, Buenos Aires

Scholarships and Awards

2023

Foam Paul Huf Award

KBr Photo Award by the Fundación Mapfre

2022

Aperture Portfolio Prize, New York, US

2020

Getxo Photo Award Getxo, Spain

Madrid Photobook Prize, Madrid, Spain

2019

Galician Contemporary photography Award, Lugo, Spain

Publications

2025

Bravo, Felipe Romero Beltrán, Loose Joints publishing, 2025, Belgium

2023

Dialect, Felipe Romero Beltrán, Loose Joints publishing, 2023, Belgium

2020

Hedjuk towers, A distancia da imaxe - Cantz, 2020, Santiago de Compostela (SP)

Solo Exhibitions

2025

Dialect; MEP – Maison Européenne de la Photographie; Paris, France (upcoming)

Felipe Romero Beltran; Carré d'art Nimes, France

Bravo, Fundacion Mapfre, Madrid, Spain

Bravo, KbR - Barcelona; Spain

Dialect/Recital, Klemm's Berlin, Germany

2024

Dialect, Foam, Amsterdam, Netherlands

2019

Photoespaña, Madrid, Spain

Selected Group Exhibitions

2025

States of Rebirth – Körperbilder in Bewegung, Haus der Fotografie – Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Germany

2022

From where I stand – Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie, Mannheim, Germany / *Circulations Festival*, Paris

2021

FORMAT Photofestival, Derby, UK

2020

Joop Swart Masterclass, World Press Photo / *Hedjuk towers, A distancia da imaxe - Cantz*, 2020, Santiago de Compostela

2019

VIPHOTO Fest, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain
Tabacalera Museum, Madrid, Spain