As do many in the United States, Francis Almendárez comes from a family of immigrant farm workers; his parents hail from Honduras and his grandparents are from El Salvador. In 2014, he traveled to Honduras to better connect with his origins and his family’s paths of migration. Upon his return, he realized the photographs and video he captured in Honduras primarily featured people working.

For rhythm and (p)leisure, he returned to and shot video and sound in northern and southern Honduras as well as in the mountains of El Salvador. For the project, he juxtaposes video portraits of people performing tasks of labor like farming, preparing tortillas, cleaning house, and constructing “Nike” soccer cleats with cultural productions like street dancing, singing, and playing music. He takes the visitor on a visual and aural tour of working-class labor at increasing speeds from the slower pace of the countryside to the hurried pace of a restaurant in the city.

With this presentation, Almendárez blurs the lines between work and leisure. Music and dance are usually considered to be entertainment but the creation, preservation, performance, and transmission of these cultural traditions is work itself. He sheds light on and elevates the value of both material and immaterial labor, and challenges the prevailing negative depictions of migrant, working-class, and queer people of color.

The piles of clothes atop the wooden pallets have each experienced their own global circulation from their various international origins, shipped to vendors, worn, and disposed. Their placement at the center of the gallery welcomes the viewer and offers up a place to sit or recline, but only for this brief moment in their existence before they are deinstalled to continue on their individual journeys. The circulation of both the pallets and clothes mirrors the circulation of people offering up their physical labor, and by extension, the circulation of culture and how it’s consumed, appropriated, repackaged, and resold.

This exhibition was made possible through the generous support of Artpace San Antonio and Artadia: The Fund for Art and Dialogue.
Francis Almendárez was born and raised in Los Angeles, CA and is currently living and working in Houston, TX. He has participated in exhibitions and screenings in the United States and abroad including the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts; Houston Center for Photography; Pi Artworks, London; CCI Fabrika, Moscow; GALERIE DIX9, Paris; and Westwerk, Hamburg. He is the recipient of a Houston Artadia Award, the Carol Crow Memorial Fellowship, and a participant of the ICA Moscow Summer School. Writing on his work has been featured in publications including D Magazine, ARTnews, and Glasstire among others. He has been a Visiting Artist at the University of Houston and teaching photography at Houston Community College, Houston Center for Photography, and the Museum of Fine Arts Houston.

Almendárez received an MFA in Fine Art (with Distinction) from Goldsmiths, University of London and a BFA in Sculpture/New Genres from Otis College of Art and Design.

Artpace is a nonprofit residency program which supports regional, national, and international artists in the creation of new art. As a catalyst for artistic expression, we engage local communities with global art practices and experiences.

Since 1995, Artpace has welcomed more than 260 artists through its renowned International Artist-in-Residence program. Annually, Artpace hosts three residencies, which each feature one Texas-based artist, one national artist, and one international artist, who are selected by a notable guest curator. Each residency culminates in a two-month exhibition on site. The mission of this program is to provide artists with unparalleled resources and facilities that allow them to experiment with new ideas and take provocative risks.

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Support for the International Artist-in-Residence Program comes from Artpace members & donors and:

About the Artist

Francis Almendárez

About the International Artist-in-Residence Program

INTERNATIONAL ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE 2019

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