

Tkach, Colleen

From: Inform

Subject: EM: Opening September 13, gajes del oficio by Carmen Argote explores the realities of labor in garment manufacturing and citrus farming

From: Pitzer College Art Galleries

● Pitzer College
● **Art Galleries**

PRESS RELEASE

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Carmen Argote and her mother, Carmen Vargas, harvesting lemons in the Pitzer College citrus grove, March 27, 2025.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***gajes del oficio* by Carmen Argote opens September 13 at Pitzer College Art Galleries**

CLAREMONT, CA, April 17, 2025 – Pitzer College Art Galleries presents *gajes del oficio*, a new site-specific installation by Los Angeles-based artist Carmen Argote. This new work explores the intersection of labor, migration, and intergenerational knowledge through the lenses of garment manufacturing and citrus farming—two historically gendered labor forces that have significantly shaped immigrant experiences in

Southern California.

Translating roughly as “occupational hazards,” *gajes del oficio* examines the inevitable human challenges within manual trade. In a labor market that demands machine-like levels of production, Argote redirects attention to the lived realities of labor. Central to this project is Argote’s collaboration with her mother, whose migration from Mexico to Los Angeles led her to sewing—a skill passed down from Argote’s grandmother. For Argote, this familial trade operates within an economy of care, where the acts of creation are inseparable from acts of love, protection, comfort, and intergenerational connection. The handmade large-scale scrolls and jumpsuits central to this project symbolize both the burdens placed on immigrant women and the agency reclaimed through craftsmanship.

Yet, this project critically acknowledges the exploitative dimensions of these labor histories, which places immigrant workers within relentless cycles of undervalued labor, grueling conditions, and low wages—cycles perpetuated by consumer demand for cheap goods and willful disconnection from the realities of production. This duality underscores how these labor histories have been both empowering and oppressive, reflecting broader patriarchal and capitalist systems built on consumer complicity.

By weaving together personal and historical narratives, Argote invites viewers to reconsider our relationships with consumption, desire, and sustainability by revealing the hidden labor embedded in everyday materials. Her garments and sculptures—designed to carry heavy weight or incorporate organic materials such as locally-sourced citrus fruit that gradually decays—serve as metaphors for waste in consumption while evoking the interconnectedness of bodies, natural cycles, and material culture.

Through this layered investigation, Argote challenges viewers to recognize the invisible infrastructures sustaining our economies, urging a reconsideration of how we approach living responsibly, compassionately, and creatively within broader ecological and social frameworks.

About the Artist

Carmen Argote (b. 1981, Guadalajara; lives and works in Los Angeles) received an MFA and BFA from University of California, Los Angeles (2007, 2004). Selected solo exhibitions have been held at Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2023); Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego (2022); Primary, Nottingham (2021); Clockshop, Los Angeles (2020); New Museum, New York (2019); PAOS, Guadalajara (2019); MAK Center for Art and Architecture, Los Angeles (2015); and Vincent Price Art Museum, Los Angeles (2013). Argote is a recipient of Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award (2019), Artadia Los Angeles Award (2019), and California Community Foundation Fellowship for Visual Artists (2013).

Argote is a multidisciplinary artist who often points to the body, class, and economic structures in relation to architecture and personal history. Argote’s practice draws upon their immediate environment

and the networks of labor and consumption that mark these spaces. She manifests these connections through drawings, paintings, site-specific sculpture, installation, and performance that directly reference the visual language of abstraction.

Dates: September 13 – December 6, 2025

Location: Nichols and Lenzner Galleries

Gallery Hours: Tuesday through Saturday, 12:00PM to 5:00PM

Admission: Free and open to the public

Information: <https://www.pitzer.edu/offices/art-galleries>
