

ARTFORUM

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Marcos Ávila Forero

ADN GALERÍA

C/ Enric Granados 49

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View of “Marcos Ávila Forero: Unruly Landscapes,” 2015.

A key characteristic of French-Colombian artist Marcos Ávila Forero's practice is an ethnographic engagement with political subjects and contexts. In this exhibition, the installation *Zuratoque*, 2013, is exemplary of that method. Zuratoque is a shantytown in the Santander region of Colombia, mostly occupied by peasants who fled the countryside due to the ongoing warfare between the Colombian government, revolutionary guerrilla movements, and conservative paramilitary groups. Forero collaborated with them to produce this work, wherein the refugees wrote testimonies to their experiences on jute bags, which were then photographed before being unraveled in order to reweave the resulting fibers into traditional sandals. By displaying the photographs documenting their stories and shoes repurposed from tragedy, the artist creates an emotional portrayal of personal encounters with violence that illustrates his examination of mass displacement in conflict areas.

Forero often focuses on the misfortunes of South American populations, and elsewhere, two works that address the relationship between music and collective identity in the African-Colombian community intelligently encapsulate this approach: *Palenqueros*, 2013, and *Atrato*, 2014. The latter is a video that records various men and women rhythmically agitating the water of the Atrato River, a crucial site in Colombia's armed hostilities and upheavals. The former work consists of two sets of five drums made by French artisans, similar to those employed in festivities such as that of Palenque de San Basilio, a Colombian village founded by escaped slaves—the titular *palenqueros*. With instruments, Forero brilliantly connects ancestry, cultural expression, and memory.

— *Miguel Amado*

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