



Iván Argote. *Señores*, 2023. Unglazed ceramics, branches, and Spanish moss. 39 x 28 x 29 inch. ©Iván Argote / ADAGP, Paris & ARS, New York, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

## IVÁN ARGOTE *BREATHINGS*

April 23 - May 31, 2025

Perrotin New York is pleased to present a special solo exhibition with Iván Argote, which marks his third show at Perrotin New York and over fifteen years of collaboration. Offering a narrative arc of Argote's work across almost twenty years, *Breathings* is realized on the heels of three significant exhibitions: *Descanso*, the central outdoor installation of the Venice Biennale's Giardini (2024); *Dinosaur*, his prestigious award of the High Line Plinth commission (2024–2026); and *Air de Jeu*, his installation for the Centre Pompidou in Paris, part of the Prix Marcel Duchamp exhibition (2022–2023). These projects encapsulate Argote's concerns with monuments as markers of power both historical and present, while their concurrence enforces Argote's critical relevance for this moment.

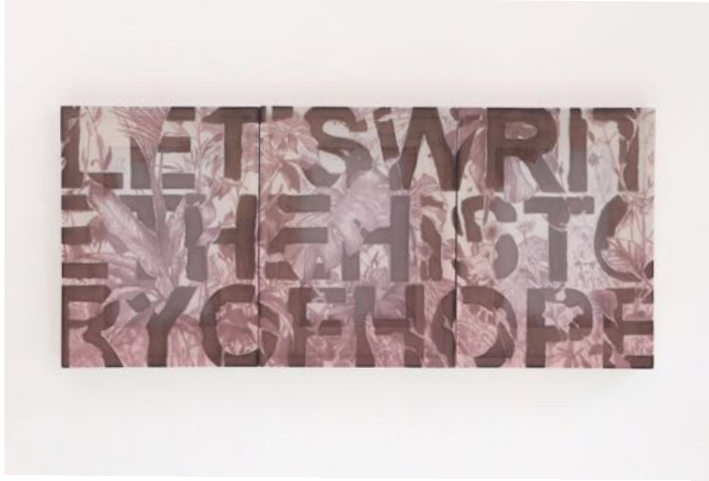
With *Breathings*, Argote follows the global impact of these exhibitions with a selection of artworks that articulate the long-standing ambitions of his practice. He guides us the throughline he has followed like breadcrumbs over the past two decades. Here, the artist links crucial previous bodies of work with new interventions that offer tender protest to the bombast of the world around.

In this exhibition, Argote's first gesture is one of critique, wherein he dismantles, topples, and pokes fun at monuments and their contingent histories, using humor and fiction to spark conversation and encourage us to imagine other possible worlds. His second gesture offers a generative force, one of poetry and tenderness, love poems to the public to soften the hard histories etched into the built environment.

While *Breathings* is titled for the six text-based paintings on silk that bring this generative chapter to the exhibition, I have imagined a few alternate titles as entry points to Argote's thinking.

### *Iván Argote: Laugh Lines*

The series wherein he began working with monuments, *Touristas* (2012–2013), comprises photographs of three marble statues of former kings of Spain that the artist found on his first visit to the country. Located in the Parque del Retiro in Madrid, each monument is draped with a poncho made by indigenous craftsmen from, what would become, colonies of Spain. With the series title and their costumes, Argote mocks these rulers and points to their expansive violence.



Iván Argote. *Breathings: Let's Write the History of Hope*, 2025. Painting on silk. 16 x 35 inch. ©Iván Argote / ADAGP, Paris & ARS, New York, 2025. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



Iván Argote. *Dignidad Y Respeto*, 2025. Super 8mm film transferred to video. Duration: 3 minutes, 21 seconds. ©Iván Argote / ADAGP, Paris & ARS, New York, 2025. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

*Señores*, in turn, points to the anonymous person who may have participated in these kings' colonial domination: statues to a collection of anonymous men, now removed and revealed to be empty. They are filled with weeds and plants, some with special historical and traditional meanings, such as dandelions and sages found wild around New York City. We see a pile of exhausted *señores* ready to take a nap, to be relieved of their lofty posts to serve a simple but practical use as flower pots.

#### ***Iván Argote: This Isn't Working***

In *Levitate*, Argote stages extraordinary actions, first in Rome, then Madrid, and finally Paris. In Rome, the artist suspended a model of the famous Flaminio Obelisk from cranes in the Piazza del Popolo, alongside the original. The obelisk was brought to the city by the first Roman emperor to commemorate the 20th anniversary of their conquest of Egypt. In Madrid, he laid a copy of the Plaza de Colón's Christopher Columbus statue down on an open truck bed, parading him down through the streets of the city on October 12th, the country's national holiday for Columbus. Finally, in Paris, Argote staged the removal of brutal French military officer Joseph Gallieni's statue. In each of these actions, Argote uses the props and costumes of the city— construction fences with hard hats and maintenance worker uniforms, business suits with clipboards, construction vehicles— to create a believable stage for his fiction. With his theater sets, Argote distracts us with the signs of a city working— government staff and officials doing their jobs to maintain a status quo— while presenting fictions that invite us all to ask for something different.

Argote shows us that all of public space is provisional, a stage ready for each of our own live productions. The built environment is simply a mutable attempt of some to transform theater into a fixed history through bronze, stone, and steel. Argote tells us, it's okay to try again. To apologize. To take down what should not have been put up in the first place.

#### ***Iván Argote: Love Poems***

With *Breathings*, Argote shifts his energy to a creative, generous, and caring voice, one that imagines what we would say if we could speak openly and tenderly through our cities. His paintings on silk have grown out of a decade working in text, including public interventions in Colombia and sculptures that appear to have been plucked right from the city's streets. Offering phrases like 'The warm air between us,' 'Having your hands holding my fingers,' and 'Let's write the history of hope,' these paintings are love poems to and from each of us to one another in a world where tenderness and love come first.

#### ***Iván Argote: Letters to a Young Country***

Finally, Argote brings us two new works, short videos that document actions he undertook on the sidewalk near the gallery. In response to the vertiginous chaos and horrors of the United States in this moment, Argote chose to walk outside and mend the cracks in the pavement, a gesture of repair and generosity. Argote filled each of the cracks with pigmented cement. Before they dried, he wrote the words "dignidad y respeto"— dignity and respect— in the wet concrete.

#### ***Iván Argote: Dignidad y Respeto***

In previous Perrotin exhibitions, Argote has directly addressed the dictators looming in the room; here, in a different scale gesture, he calls for us all to remember our capacity for dignity and respect for one another when we are at risk of losing it.

— Melanie Kress  
Senior Curator of Public Art Fund