

The Embrace of the Saw

Laura Acosta and Santiago Tavera

January 23 to March 21, 2026

Sometimes the smallest crack is enough for what lies inside to break open and speak. A sliver of wall gives way, a thin blade of light slips through, a stubborn sprout forces itself out of a place it was never meant to grow — and suddenly the world rearranges itself around the break. The fracture becomes a threshold. Fragility becomes passage. *The Embrace of the Saw* holds this very moment: the edge where something gives so that something else can come into being.

The Novels of Elsgüer — the expansive five-part installation series that Laura Acosta and Santiago Tavera have been developing since 2017 — follows the body through successive states of becoming. Across its chapters, the body grows its first skin, reshapes desire after rupture, learns to camouflage itself for survival, and eventually reclaims visibility on its own terms. Each episode offers its own

grammar of transformation. Revealed out of sequence as the final instalment of the series, Episode 2 becomes the emotional crescendo of the whole arc: the moment when the narrative splits open so the rest of the story can breathe. Rupture here is not a break in continuity — it is the engine of it. A generative split. A necessary tearing.

This sense of rupture is deeply rooted in the lived experiences Acosta and Tavera carry in their bodies — brown bodies, queer bodies, immigrant bodies, bodies that have long inhabited “elsewhere” as both geography and inner climate. Elsgüer — the Spanglish inflection of “Elsewhere” — names that simultaneous presence and absence, that slight drift between one’s outline and one’s essence. In the artists’ practice, dislocation is not an anomaly; it is the terrain they move through — a condition shaped by movement, by cultural multiplicity, by the queerness of never fully belonging. Identity becomes a construction site, and every crack is an invitation to rebuild differently.

In *The Embrace of the Saw*, this condition unfolds through an immersive scenography in which nothing can ever be apprehended at once. Video projections, holographic apparitions, LED surfaces, drifting light, and mapped surround sound accumulate into a single, breathing environment — a sensorial membrane, a living field of fragments. The installation refuses the authority of a single viewpoint. With every shift of the spectator’s body, the

images reconfigure, the narrative fissures, and a different trajectory reveals itself. What cannot be seen is not a void but a proposition — an insistence that partiality can also hold truth.

The bodies within the installation appear only in pieces: a shoulder, a limb, a curve stretching against the tension of the textile. In these moments, the textile — part garment, part organism — becomes an extension of the body, a place where gesture multiplies and pressure reveals what language cannot hold. Inside these elastic skins, an uncanny “third body” emerges: a collective form born from the friction between pain and pleasure, between the lone body and the shared one. It is a body in flux, continually reshaping itself, negotiating the terms of its own becoming.

This corporeal tension echoes through the filmed architectures: classical façades splintering, staircases giving way, edifices once meant to dominate now yielding to the quiet insistence of nature. Through cracks in the marble, a blade of green appears. Through the seams of abandoned monuments, time exhales. Nature here is not decoration — it is resistance. A reminder that what endures is rarely the unbroken surface, but the fissure that lets life through.

Then comes the whiteout: a moment of total illumination, an interruption so bright it feels like cleansing. The image dissolves into pure light, not to erase but to reveal — a threshold where rupture clarifies. And when the waterfall follows, cascading through the space, it washes away the remnants of the previous cycle and makes room for another form to emerge.

Within this fractured landscape, rupture is not an ending. It is the precondition for futurity — a queer, feminist, Latinx futurity shaped by bodies that refuse inherited ideals, by identities that slip out of colonial frames, by spaces that breathe, bend, and remake themselves. In Elsgüer, to break is to grow. To split is to open. To fracture is to begin again.

And like the small plant forcing its way through concrete, the world this work imagines is already insisting — quietly, steadily — on another way of becoming.

— Kama La Mackerel

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