

International
Center of
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The International Center of Photography Presents Laia Abril: On Rape and Institutional Failure

The International Center of Photography | 84 Ludlow Street, New York
On View October 15, 2026-January 11, 2027
Public Opening October 15 | 5–8PM



Laia Abril, *Ala Kachuu (Bride Kidnapping)*, Kyrgyzstan, 2019 © Laia Abril, Courtesy Galerie Les filles du calvaire, Paris



The International Center of Photography (ICP) is proud to present *On Rape and Institutional Failure*, an exhibition by Laia Abril that centers on the second chapter of her ongoing project *A History of Misogyny*, which examines different forms of violence against women throughout history. Weaving together images, compiled testimonies, archival materials, select objects and installations with sound and video, the exhibition investigates how gender-based stereotypes, coupled with worldwide prejudices and misconceptions, have contributed to a systemic rape culture that persists today. By focusing on institutions, Abril aims to avoid narratives of victim-blaming, instead addressing the on-going problem of social accountability that has allowed offenders and enablers alike to avoid justice. *On Rape and Institutional Failure* was first exhibited in 2020 in the wake of the initial, galvanizing allegations against Harvey Weinstein and other powerful men. While #MeToo has led to few sustained consequences and little systemic change, Abril offers a meaningful opportunity to address the long history of silencing victims and the transgenerational trauma that has developed as a result.

While continuously emerging stories of sexual violence and institutional failures maintain the urgency and relevance of Abril's project, it began with research into the history of systemic responses to sexual violence after a 2018 case in her native Spain: five men raped a young woman and were later released on bail. Ultimately, the men were charged with sexual harassment, which carried a lighter sentence. Video footage filmed by the perpetrators was used to claim the victim had consented. These events sparked the largest feminist protest in the country's history, one that called for Spain's sexual assault laws to be rewritten. Occurring at the height of the #MeToo movement and widespread, global protests against the many systems and institutions hostile to women, Abril wanted to understand why failures to deliver justice on this scale occur, and how traditional assumptions, cultural influences, myths and laws serve to shield or even encourage offenders, whether they be common citizens or those holding positions of power.

Abril's practice is always grounded in research. *On Rape and Institutional Failure* investigates historical and contemporary narratives from disciplines including law, history, psychology and politics. This research led to her discovery of maps, architecture, sculptures, medical devices, weapons and many other objects related to sexual violence throughout history. Presented in this exhibition as



straightforward photographs Abril calls ‘conceptual portraits,’ these objects visualize laws and customs which contributed to rape culture over time. One key series of images, shown alongside first-person testimony, depicts garments which serve as stand ins for institutions. These uniforms symbolize all of the victims and survivors past, present and future that an institution betrays. Together with the video, sound and installation components, these works switch the focus from victims to institutions, exposing the structures of justice which fail survivors of sexual violence and in the process reaffirm a culture of impunity for the perpetrators.

Curated by Sara Ickow, associate director of exhibitions at ICP, this is the first time the project will be exhibited in the United States. “Laia’s practice reveals the normalization of misogyny and sexual violence without resorting to sensationalized, exploitative or victim-blaming narratives,” said Ickow. “As we approach the tenth anniversary of the #MeToo movement, and as misogyny continues to be normalized in new and disturbing ways, we hope bringing her socially-concerned practice to New York will provide visitors with a chance to reflect on accountability and justice.

About Laia Abril

Laia Abril (b. 1986) is a research-based artist working across photography, text, video and sound, focusing on biopolitics and gender issues. Her work is rooted in a politically engaged, process-driven methodology that employs strategies of forensic aesthetics and counter-narratives, interrogating dominant histories and the politics of representation.

Her work has been exhibited in over 25 countries and is held in collections such as Centre Pompidou, Photo Elysée, Fotomuseum Winterthur, MACBA, Reina Sofía, MNAC and the V&A Museum. She has authored acclaimed books, including *The Epilogue*, *Lobismuller* and the *A History of Misogyny series: On Abortion, On Rape and On Mass Hysteria*.

She has received the Foam Paul Huf Award (Amsterdam), RPS Hood Medal (London), Aperture Best Book Award (NY/Paris), and Spain’s National Photography Award. Based in Barcelona, she is a senior lecturer at HSLU and is represented by Les Filles du Calvaire in Paris and Set Espai d’Art in Spain.

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About The International Center of Photography

The International Center of Photography (ICP) is the world's leading institution dedicated to photography and visual culture. Cornell Capa founded ICP in 1974 to champion 'concerned photography'—socially and politically minded images that can educate and change the world. Through exhibitions, education programs, community outreach and public programs, ICP offers an open forum for dialogue about the power of the image. Since its inception, ICP has presented more than 700 exhibitions, provided thousands of classes and hosted a wide variety of public programs. ICP launched its new integrated center at 84 Ludlow Street on Manhattan's Lower East Side in January 2020. ICP pays respect to the original stewards of this land, the Lenape people and other Indigenous communities. Visit icp.org to learn more about the museum and its programs.

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