

## CRITICS' PICKS

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Rafael Soldi, *CM-32*, 2018, ink-jet print, 8 x 10 1/2".

## PHILADELPHIA

### Rafael Soldi

THE PRINT CENTER  
1614 Latimer Street  
January 18–March 30

Rafael Soldi's exhibition "Cargamontón" features selections from two of the artist's recent series that consider dissonance as a tool of identity formation. Hung across one wall in three rows are twenty-five of the fifty self-

portraits Soldi took in a photobooth over the span of two years, which make up the series "Imagined Futures," 2016–18. Each black-and-white image documents the Seattle-based artist sitting with his eyes shut as he imagines a life he could have lived but, ultimately, will not—a result of his immigrating from Peru. The regularity of the photographs' format and hanging, and the consistency of Soldi's frontal pose, contrasts with the implied variety of unknowable futures that cannot be pictured.

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The show also includes six prints from Soldi's latest series, "Cargamontón," 2018, another group of black-and-white photos. Each image is a still from found footage of schoolboys being hazed. The title comes from the Peruvian term for ganging up on an individual, which is also used in a vernacular sense to mean a game in which a group of people forms a pile on top of one person—an activity which Soldi was intimately familiar with from attending an all-boys school in Peru. In their tight cropping and small format, at about eight by ten inches, the images thrust viewers into the suffocating proximity of breathless, gleeful, violent male bodies; the eye is not granted the mercy of an orienting horizon line. Only the photos' pixelated quality provides some optical remove. In this abstraction, the movements of aggressive play—the grasp of a leg, or the clutch of a torso—double as exploratory gestures of queer intimacy. Although Soldi situates "Cargamontón" within his own adolescent navigations of queerness, its pulsing irony around ritually condoned masculine behavior feels unsettlingly relevant.

— Serena Qiu