

GALLERY WENDI NORRIS

PRESS RELEASE

Gallery Wendi Norris presents

MARÍA MAGDALENA CAMPOS-PONS: If I Were a Poet

January 11 – January 28, 2018

Presidio National Park, 649 Mason Street, San Francisco, CA

Thursday, January 11: 6PM Live performance, 7 - 9PM Opening Reception

Exhibition hours: Thursday - Sunday, 12 - 6PM



Nesting II 2000, Polaroid Polacolor Pro, approx. 24 x 20 inches each (50.8 x 61 cm)

San Francisco, *November 15, 2017*. Cuban-born artist María Magdalena Campos-Pons addresses the unique and resilient nature of the Afro Cuban diaspora through photography, sculpture, performances, and video installations. Her West Coast debut and first exhibition with Gallery Wendi Norris, presents works ranging from 1990 to 2017, including three major installations, rare large-format Polaroid photographs, and a performance work.

Among the significant works in the exhibition are gridded variations of large-format Polaroid photographs depicting ancestral, totemic and futuristic themes ranging from the slave trade to migration. Polaroid manufactured only four large-format cameras and they have been used by very few artists, including Chuck Close, Gerhard Richter and William Wegman. The company ended production of the film in 2017 making existing works increasingly rare.

If I Were a Poet features several works from international museum exhibitions. *Matanzas Sound Map*, a sound and glass sculptural installation, debuted at Documenta 14 in Athens,

GALLERY WENDI NORRIS

Greece, and will be part of her upcoming retrospective at the National Museum of Fine Art in Havana in 2019. Another video and sound piece, *Meanwhile the Girls were Playing*, has been shown at the Frist Center at Vanderbilt, Spelman College in Atlanta, and Smith College in Northampton, MA.

Another highlight of the show is the performance work titled *Remedios*, inspired by Remedios Varo's painting *Creacion de las aves* (1957) in which Campos-Pons negotiates narratives of pain, loss and resilience while imagining herself in a time of societal and geopolitical transition. During her singular meditation on survival, the artist wears a costume that she designed and made by hand. *Remedios* has been performed at the New Museum in New York and at Colby College in Waterville, Maine. Campos-Pons will perform *Remedios* at 6PM on January 9, 2018 at Building 649.

The exhibition in Presidio National Park utilizes raw spaces in historic building 649 in Crissy Field. The building was constructed in 1951 by the United States Army to house the Sixth Army's US Army Reserve Center. The 6,000 square foot interior features a large assembly hall surrounded by storage, classrooms, and a rifle range. Building 649 was dedicated to training and administrative activities. In April 1975, the facility was used to house and medically treat more than one thousand orphans from Vietnam, a program called Operation Babylift.

About the Artist

Campos-Pons was born in 1959 in the province of Matanzas, in the town of La Vega, Cuba. She grew up on a sugar plantation in a family with Nigerian, Hispanic and Chinese roots. Her Nigerian ancestors were brought to Cuba as slaves in the 19th century, and passed on traditions, rituals and beliefs. Her polyglot heritage profoundly influences Campos-Pons's artistic practice, which combines diverse media including film and video, performance, painting, sculpture, and photography. Her work is autobiographical, investigating themes of history, memory, gender and religion and how they inform identity. Through deeply poetic and haunting images, Campos-Pons evokes stories of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, indigo and sugar plantations, Catholic and Santeria religious practice, and revolutionary uprisings.

In the late 1980s, Campos-Pons taught at the prestigious Instituto Superior de Arte in Havana, and gained international reputation as an exponent of the New Cuban Art movement that arose in opposition to Communist repression on the island. In 1991, she immigrated to Boston, where she continues to live and work. She has had solo exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Indianapolis Museum of Art, the Peabody Essex Museum, and the National Gallery of Canada, among other distinguished institutions. She has presented over 30 solo performances commissioned by the Guggenheim and The Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery. She has participated in the Venice Biennale, the Dakar Biennale, Johannesburg Biennial, Documenta 14, the Guangzhou Triennial in China and is included in

GALLERY WENDI NORRIS

Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA and Prospect.4 Biennial. In October she received the endowed Cornelius Vanderbilt Chair at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee.

Campos-Pons' works are in over 30 museum collections including the Smithsonian Institution, The Whitney Museum of American Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the National Gallery of Canada, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Perez Art Museum, Miami and the Fogg Art Museum.

About Gallery Wendi Norris

From its global headquarters in San Francisco, Gallery Wendi Norris represents Modern and Contemporary artists working in a variety of media around the world. The gallery specializes in re-contextualizing the work of Modern artists while providing connections to contemporary art, artists, and culture. Active on both the local and international stages, Gallery Wendi Norris mounts exhibitions where they are most relevant, and also works with individual collectors and museums in both the primary and secondary markets. Founded with an emphasis on scholarship and education, the gallery produces highly researched exhibitions and catalogues, sponsors artist talks, hosts visiting academics, and engages in public art projects. Learn more at gallerywendinorris.com

Along with María Magdalena Campos-Pons, Gallery Wendi Norris represents: Firelei Báez, Val Britton, Leonora Carrington, Christine Elfman, Ana Teresa Fernández, Chris Fraser, Chitra Ganesh, Marcel Jean, Julio César Morales, Ranu Mukherjee, Yamini Nayar, Wolfgang Paalen, Miguel Angel Ríos, Eva Schlegel, Dorothea Tanning, Remedios Varo, and Peter Young. For more information on these artists visit gallerywendinorris.com

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