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**MIGUEL ANGEL RÍOS *A Trilogy***  
ARTIST'S FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION AT GALLERY WENDI NORRIS  
April 28 - July 5, 2016

**Opening Reception: Thursday, April 28, 4-8PM**



*Piedras Blancas*, 2014, Video, 5 minutes, Edition of 6

March 17, 2016 – San Francisco – For *A Trilogy*, Miguel Angel Ríos' first exhibition with Gallery Wendi Norris, he will exhibit three of his most recent video works: *Piedras Blancas*, *Mulas*, and *Landlocked*. Ríos first became recognized in the late 1980's and early '90's for his paintings and collage works, and has since gone on to create video work that has influenced contemporary artists working today. The exhibition highlights his unique artistic practice that addresses issues of power, apathy and violence, while incorporating an innovative use of social and political narratives and original production techniques.

The new video projects are site-specific and grounded in an approach to Land Art, where Ríos challenges traditional modes of representations within the landscape – works that he describes as the most ambitious and challenging video projects of his career. The works are similar in that they all take place in the open, arid and mountainous landscapes of South America. To produce them, the artist worked under conditions that he describes as “difficult, dangerous, and impossible,” three qualities that are required to pique his interest in making an artwork. These projects are carefully conceived performances that rely on an impossible plot: the choreography of chance. In all of them, the artist works with gravity and mediates objects and/or animals to tell a story: white balls in *Piedras Blancas*, pack mules in *Mulas*, and stray dogs in *Landlocked*.

His experiments with video push the boundaries of a camera to its limits, and at times to its destruction. Some of these videos are based on his own childhood games from Argentina, translated into provocative works that explore societal issues related to his own vivacity and understanding of social life.

In the case of *Piedras Blancas*, the acting characters are more than 3,000 white cement balls handmade by the artist. The “white stones” loudly roll, bounce, and even careen down the side of a mountain, over existing paths with artery-like trails. One can view this action as a metaphor for the

economic struggles surrounding present day migrations in Europe, or perhaps they symbolize drug trade routes taken from South to North America. With this work, Ríos questions “Are we witnessing some kind of game, or is it a catastrophe in the making?”

*Mulas* refers to Ríos’ on-going fascination with the conquest of Latin America by referencing Christopher Columbus who was the first to breed mules in the New World. In the video, two mules—half donkey, half horse—are seen carrying satchels slowly spilling a mysterious white powder that draws lines on the South America desert landscape as they cross narrow trails and unpopulated terrain. This automatist drawing of a white line recalls minimalist land art, but it has a political edge that suggests contemporary stories of narcotics trafficking. The mules in the video start by slowly climbing scenic mountains until the tone changes to a more sinister eruption edited almost like a symphonic poem leading into the abyss. The title, *Mulas*, references the Spanish slang for young women traffickers convinced to transport drugs across borders, under perilous conditions.

The third video, *Landlocked*, features a pack of four seemingly wild dogs that were in fact extensively trained by Ríos. The drama of the video is heightened by the screeching barking of the dogs and their urgency to get to the “other side” as they vigorously dig tunnels through a hillside at the foot of the Andes Mountains on the Western edge of Bolivia, impossibly working their way toward the Pacific Ocean. Their work appears as though it may be fruitless, a metaphor for the location of the country of Bolivia, extremely close to the ocean but without access to export goods by sea which severely impairs the country’s capacity to bring in revenue. The video also plays off thematics of labor, power and economy that are influenced by the recent discoveries of more than 80 tunnels found between Mexico and the United States.

Related paintings, works on paper, drawings and photographs all created in preparation for or alongside the videos will be on display as well, providing insight into the artistic process. After shooting video footage during the mornings and afternoons, Ríos spends his evenings making one painted or drawn work, a storyboard of a shot he envisions recording the following day.

#### **ABOUT MIGUEL ANGEL RÍOS**

Born in 1943, **Miguel Angel Ríos** studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Buenos Aires before moving to New York in the 1970’s to escape the military dictatorship in Argentina. He subsequently relocated to Mexico and now divides his time between New York and Mexico City. Ríos pairs a rigorous conceptual approach with a meticulously constructed, handmade aesthetic. Since the 1970’s, he has made work about the concept of the *Latin American*, using this idea as both an artistic strategy and a political problem. In the 1990’s he became known for a series of maps that he cut, folded and pleated, marking the 500<sup>th</sup> “discovery” of the Americas and tracing histories of colonial interventions and unbalanced power dynamics.

The artist has had solo exhibitions at Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe; the Des Moines Art Center, Iowa; Museo Carrillo Gil, Mexico City; Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires; Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris; The Art Museum of the University of Houston; and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. His videos have been screened at La Biennale de Lyon, the Liverpool Biennial, and the Biennale of Sydney. He has received numerous awards including the John Guggenheim Fellowship for his work exploring the mediums of painting, drawing and collage. Ríos’s work is featured in collections around the world, including the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation, Miami; Colección Isabel y Augustín Coppel; Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros; Daros Latinamerica Collection, Zürich; Fundación Costantini, Museo de Arte Latinoamericano, Buenos Aires; Kunsthalle Hamburg; La Fundación Caixa Art Forum de Barcelona, Spain; La Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris; Santa Barbara Museum of Contemporary Art, California; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Miami Art Museum; Musée d’Art Moderne et Contemporain, Toulouse, France; Museo Nacional, Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Fries Museum, Leeuwarden, Netherlands; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Pérez Art Museum Miami; Philadelphia Museum of Art, among others.

**ABOUT GALLERY WENDI NORRIS**

Gallery Wendi Norris presents a contemporary and modern program that showcases artists working over many geographic locations and in a wide array of media. The gallery, located in downtown San Francisco, often shows two exhibitions simultaneously in order to encourage dialogue across practices, often connecting a modern with a contemporary artist. Gallery Wendi Norris is active locally as well as internationally, working with collectors and museums alike in both primary and secondary markets. Founded with an emphasis on scholarship and education, the gallery produces researched exhibition catalogues, sponsors artist talks, hosts visiting academics, and engages in local public art projects, among other initiatives. Learn more at [gallerywendinorris.com](http://gallerywendinorris.com).