INTERNATIONAL ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

Rafa Esparza

With Land

Spring 2018 International Artist-in-Residence
In residence January 17 > March 26, 2018
On view March 22 > May 13, 2018

Rafa Esparza is a multidisciplinary artist who was born, raised, and is currently living in Los Angeles. Woven into Esparza's bodies of work are his interest in history, personal narratives, and kinship. He is inspired by his own relationship to colonization and the disrupted genealogies that come forth as a result. Using live performance as his main form of inquiry, Esparza employs site-specificity, materiality, memory and (non)documentation as primary tools to interrogate and critique ideologies, power structures and binaries that problematize the "survival" process of historicized narratives and the environments wherein people are left to navigate and socialize. Esparza has performed in a variety of spaces including AIDS Project Los Angeles, Highways Performance Space, REDCAT, Human Resources, SOMArts, Vincent Price Museum, LACE and various public sites throughout Los Angeles. He is a recipient of an Emerging Artist 2014 California Community Foundation Fellowship for Visual Arts, a 2014 Art Matters grantee, and a 2015 recipient of a Rema Hort Mann Foundation Emerging Artist Grant. Esparza was recently part of the 2016 Made in L.A. Biennial at the Hammer Museum and the 2017 Whitney Biennial.

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Rafa Esparza *Los Angeles, CA*
Kapwani Kiwanga *Paris, France*
Carlos Rosales-Silva *Austin, TX*

Risa Puleo
Curator

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ABOUT

THE EXHIBITION

TELL US ABOUT YOUR EXHIBITION:
The time and resources provided by the Artpace residency enabled me to focus on my process and explore a more intimate relationship with adobe. Adobe is a building material and labor that I've inherited from my father, Ramon Esparza, who was an adobe brick maker and builder when he was a young man growing up in Durango, Mexico. For me and my practice, adobe has functioned as a building material and vehicle that allows me to explore ways of building community with Brown, queer folks in Los Angeles and beyond. It's also a material that I've used to build spaces that confront the architectures of the white cube.

The work has always manifested collaboratively and collectively with at least three other people. The process has functioned as a laboratory to think about Browness—Brown bodies, our ideas, our creative practices in relation to each other and in relationship to land. Working with adobe in these capacities has been incredibly generative for me and the folks I've had the opportunity to work with. I've had the immense honor and privilege to work alongside 50+ artists, workers, community members, art workers, family members, and friends over the last four years that now make up a large part of my closest community.

I chose to begin my residency exploring a one-to-one relationship with adobe. While working collaboratively on projects still feels necessary and exciting to me, I also felt it important to spend time thinking about the long-term sustainability of working with land. I started by listening to narrated books while shoveling ten cubic yards of soil earth, five cubic yards of horse dung, a couple bales of hay, and water (all ingredients needed to mix adobe) around the space. In order to explore the possibilities of working with mud, I needed to build a hard earth surface to work on. Immersing myself in the readings and my labor informed the ideas that emerged—ideas about Browness, identity, and space. The dry cracked adobe floor took me back in time to the desert where years ago I volunteered with the No Mas Muertes camp to provide humanitarian aid to end migrant death in the desert. Today's divisive rhetoric around border building in the USA created an urgency for me to think about how the inherent harshness and difficulty of the desert land is weaponized against migrants. These adobe panels, dogs, and clutches became ways for me to synthesize these different relationships between Brown bodies and land.

With Land is a meditation on the ways our bodies and land are targets of white supremacy and its violence—systemically oppressed, exploited, stolen, seized, sold, occupied, owned, divided—and how to, within this matrix of consequences of colonization, be with land as a cultural steward that struggles, loses, thrives, and is resilient. *With Land* is a space of reflection and a monument to the insurmountable loss and resilience of Brown life.

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