

## TIERRA. SANGRE. ORO.

Rafa Esparza with Carmen Argote, Nao Bustamante, Beatriz Cortez, Timo Fahler, Eamon Ore-Giron, and Star Montana.

October 27, 2017



Carmen Argote  
*Hunting and Gathering*  
*Oh wow... The Marfa Sky*  
2017

Ballroom Marfa is pleased to announce Tierra. Sangre. Oro., an exhibition envisioned by artist Rafa Esparza. The program includes new installation, performance, and sculptural work from Esparza alongside collaborations and contributions from artists Carmen Argote, Nao Bustamante, Beatriz Cortez, Timo Fahler, Eamon Ore-Giron, and Star Montana.

Esparza's work manifests primarily through performance and sculpture, in a territory where the two mediums combine and hybridize. The artist uses adobe brick-building as a process-centered site for personal, cultural, ecological, and political investigation.

Esparza produced new work and conceived a site-specific installation that is particular to the landscape and cultural context of the Big Bend region and northern Mexico, where adobe building is prevalent.

For this project, Esparza transformed Ballroom's architecture using the adobe bricks that are central to his work. While making these interventions, the artist will explore, in his words, "the visibility of Brown people in Marfa." Esparza will work with his father, who taught the artist how to make adobe, as well as with people from his community and local adobe craftsmen to produce bricks and install the project.

Esparza's adobe architecture provides the ground for presentations by the artists he has invited to join him in Marfa as he "expands the idea of a Brown laboratory." New and existing work will be presented amidst structural additions to Ballroom's facade, galleries, and courtyard, creating spaces for the artist's "laboratories for dialoguing, thinking, working and making together with my peers."

Esparza addresses and excavates the history of colonialism; labor and economic value scales; queer culture and masculinity; as well as personal and familial legacy. He sets traditional materials, inherited processes, and ephemeral choreographies up against institutional structures and the historical narratives of Western sculpture, land art, and performance. The exhibition is a continuation of Ballroom Marfa's mission to commission internationally-relevant artworks and performances that respond to and engage with our community and environment.

Tierra. Sangre. Oro. is organized by Ballroom Marfa's curator and interim director, Laura Copelin.

### **About Rafa Esparza**

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.

### **About Ballroom Marfa**

Founded in 2003 by Virginia Lebermann and Fairfax Dorn, Ballroom Marfa is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and a dynamic, contemporary cultural arts space where varied perspectives and issues are explored through visual arts, film, music, and performance. The gallery is housed in a converted dancehall that dates to 1927.

As an advocate for the freedom of artistic expression, Ballroom Marfa's mission is to serve international, national, regional, and local arts communities and support the work of both emerging and recognized artists working in all media.

Ballroom Marfa is particularly interested in helping artists and curators achieve projects that have significant cultural impact but would be impossible to realize in a traditional gallery or museum setting.

Ballroom Marfa is located at 108 E. San Antonio St., Marfa, Texas, and open Wednesday through Saturday, 10am-6pm, and Sunday, 10am-3pm.