

Merged with vastness

18 Jan — 8 Mar 2025 at Sicardi | Ayers | Bacino in Houston, United States

20 FEBRUARY 2025



Miguel Angel Rios, *Merged with vastness*, exhibition view. Courtesy of Sicardi | Ayers | Bacino Gallery

Landscape is the central theme in Miguel Angel Rios' most recent work, where pilgrimage becomes a metaphor to explore the space in which figure and environment dissolve into each other, creating tensions between the material and the spiritual, the visible and the imperceptible. Through his painting, Miguel Angel Rios depicts vast territories that unfold as a visual journey, where mountains and deserts trace a path towards the unknown. These geographies, defined by light, the folds of the terrain and silence, transcend their natural condition to become ambiances in which the viewer can merge into the vastness of the landscape.

This artistic synthesis finds its roots in an exploration initiated by Ríos in the 1990s, when he undertook a journey through regions as diverse as the Amazon basin, the Andean region of Bolivia, the Huarungas, magical lagoons in Piura, Peru, the Wirikuta desert in Mexico, and the Calchaquíes Valleys, his homeland in northern Argentina. During this period, his painting underwent a significant transformation from an abstract and symbolic language based on the use of geometric patterns (a connection to the ancestral) with a language that could be interpreted as a “spiritual map” and a neutral palette as in the case of *In the middle of nowhere* (1989), to a figurative and narrative one in *Be careful* (2023), where the landscape is presented with greater realism and depth, showing a vast horizon with a luminous atmosphere in which the main character coexists in a balance that seems to explore a new level of interaction.

This change reflects an artistic renovation with respect to the environments where the landscape goes from being cryptic and secondary to becoming the centrality of the work. In his previous works, the character stood out as the main element while the landscape was not so present. In the current production, the figure is blurred in the environment, giving way to the immensity of the landscape, which now represents the journey of the wanderer without a destination but with a purpose of pursuing the light.

During Rios' travels, he connected with a vast botanical and ritualistic knowledge of indigenous roots, immersed himself in ancestral practices that use medicinal and hallucinogenic plants to open channels of spiritual connection with the environment, blurring the notion of the “self”, as seen in *Territorio de la mente* (2024), which represents an experience of the cosmic order. In this state, he accessed a timeless cartography of the Americas, where the individual dissolves in the landscape and in the spiritual force of nature.

In this selection of works, the artist challenges the conventional relationship between figure and landscape. Sometimes it is a man, sometimes a dog or even a cactus - silhouettes that embody the pilgrim during his journey - but none of these presences pretend to dominate the scenery, as seen in *From the visible to the invisible* (2023). Rather, they integrate and dissolve into the landscape. The images reveal themselves as a territory of ambiguity, representing no particular place, yet with undulating landscapes in folds that evoke mountains at times, and rising clouds close to ground level at other times, almost as if the earth itself was breathing. It is in this sense that the video *Landlocked* (2014), presented in the exhibition, shows the relationship of space with an audiovisual plane, where four dogs seek to cross the dunes to reach the promised landscape, without image, inviting the viewer to an introspective immersion analogous to the one summoned by his painting.

In this way, his work moves away from a simple visual representation and invites us to reflect on the landscape as an embodiment of infinite vastness that becomes a refuge from the overload of stimuli of the present. It does not seek to dazzle or overwhelm; its austerity invites us to a profound experience, where stillness and emptiness expand in space.

Beyond his clear technical virtuosity in both painting and video, Rios defies the conventions of European-Western visual language by fusing painting techniques of pre-Columbian tradition and diverse American cultures. His open landscapes are not a representation of the physical territory, but an emotional and symbolic map that reflects the relationship of the being with its environment, with its history and its own existence. In works such as *They stole the map of my town*, *Different time in the same frame* (2023) and in the video *Landlocked* (2014), the pilgrim not only crosses mountains and deserts; he also crosses the limits of perception, leading us to “see ourselves differently. Hasn't that always been the challenge of painting?”¹

(Text by Mariana Camargo Meléndez, independent curator)

Notes

¹ O. Sánchez, *Suspendido en el aire, fundido en la vastedad* (2023), 5.

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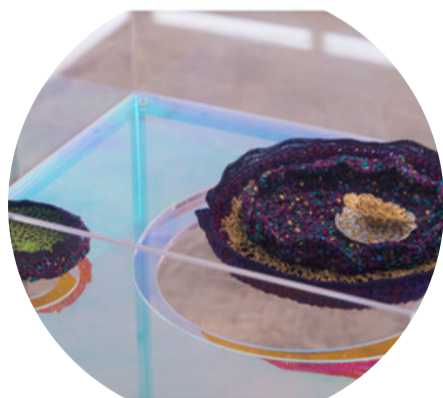
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Sicardi | Ayers | Bacino

Founded by María Inés Sicardi in 1994, Sicardi Gallery was among the very first in the United States to represent avant-garde and contemporary artists from Latin America. As of today, the gallery is known as Sicardi | Ayers | Bacino in recognition of its founder's twenty-three year partnership with Allison Armstrong Ayers and Carlos Bacino.

[Gallery profile](#)

Location

Houston, United States

Founded in

1994



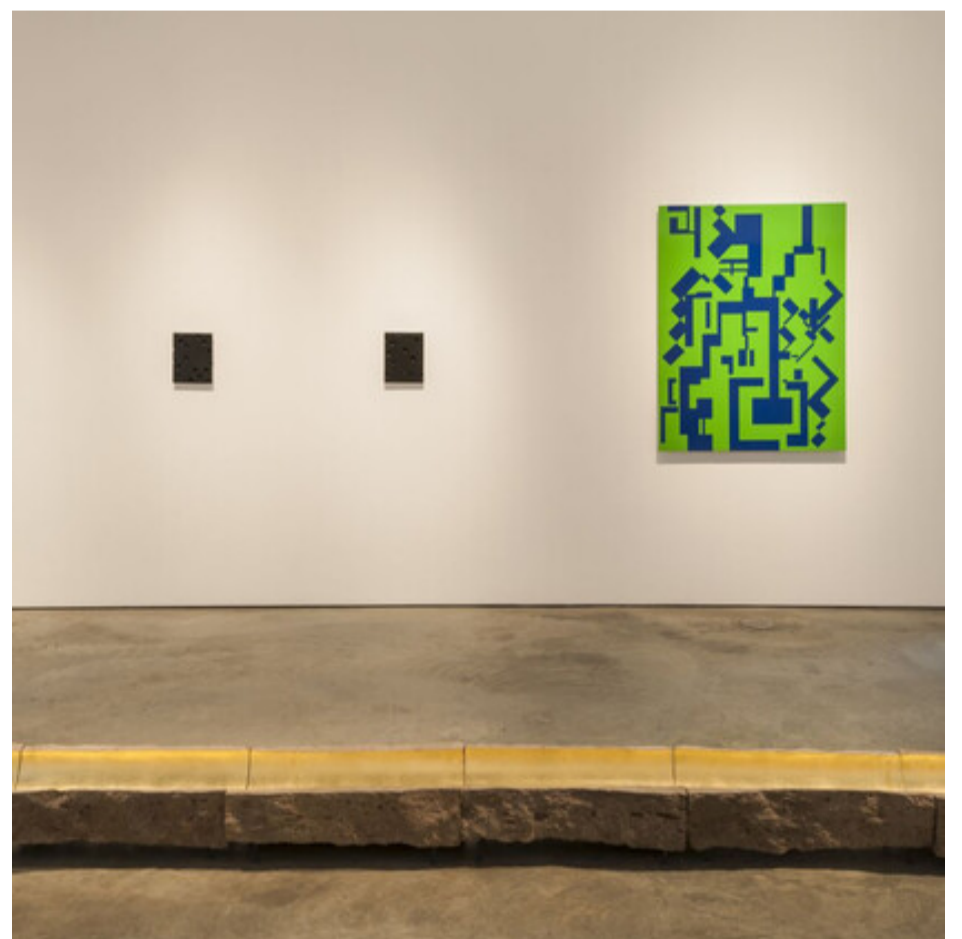


1. Miguel Angel Rios, Merged with vastness, exhibition view. Courtesy of Sicardi | Ayers | Bacino Gallery
2. Miguel Angel Rios, Merged with vastness, exhibition view. Courtesy of Sicardi | Ayers | Bacino Gallery
3. Miguel Angel Rios, Merged with vastness, exhibition view. Courtesy of Sicardi | Ayers | Bacino Gallery

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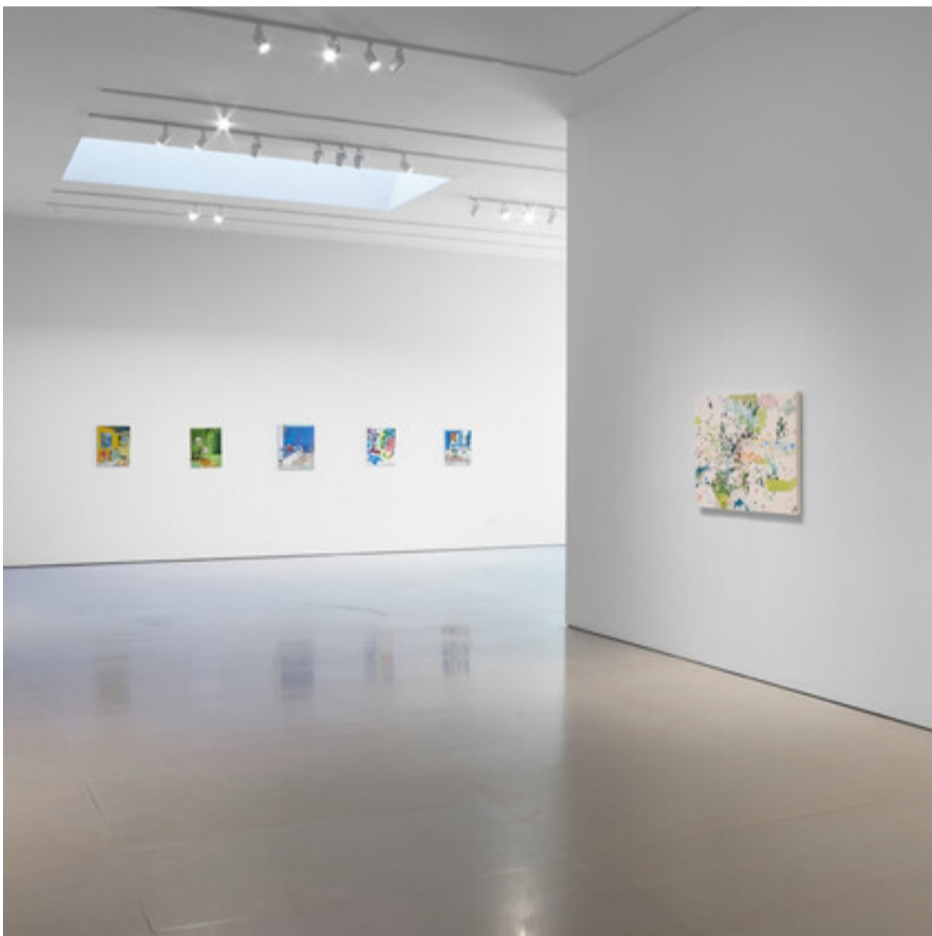
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Project Video 2015

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