

GUADALUPE MILES

Rodrigo Alonso

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After eight years of work, Guadalupe Miles started to show the first images from her series, *Chaco*. In them she portrays a group of inhabitants of the chaco salteno (the tropical forest area of Salta province) belonging to the Wichí community, one of many indigenous peoples of our country who have been relegated to oblivion, indifference, and invisibility.

The photographs that make up the series stand out for the powerful dialectic play of glances. In contrast to the traditional anthropological print, here we don't find the cold, distanced observation of self-described scientific objectivity - the more violent, invasive and piercing the less it attempts to become involved with its "object of study". On the contrary, Miles' photographs underscore the subjectivity of her take, but also - most especially - the visual contract previously established with those she portrays.

Her images are not wrenched from her models, but built on the basis of their concessions. In this way, the Wichís cease to be entities being looked at to become individuals that allow themselves be seen, in their place and context, bathed by the sun or submerged in mud or water, facing the camera or lending themselves to a visual play over which they always retain a strong measure of control. It's a game that allows them to become visible, with a reality and a body, in a radically new, even defiant way.

The artist, for her part, develops her gaze piercing through canons of beauty and sensuality. Bordering - yet, at the same time, subverting - the guidelines of advertising photography, she extracts from the faces, the poses and the situations images that are quite unlike the usual representations of such people. Everything about them is beauty, joy, and vitality. A vitality that's infrequent in urban portraiture, a vitality that advertising only achieves through long hours of makeup.

The contact with nature is something more than an obvious input. It is, first and foremost, a source of energy that strikes the chaco salteno with its presence, but which - at the same time, through its absence - strikes the urban environment of the observer. The latter is, in the end, the main intended audience for the images. Upon him this enigmatic and fascinating universe unfolds; removed, yet not alien, inhabited by unknown beings redolent with seduction and sensuality.



Guadalupe Miles. *Untitled* (from the series *Chaco*). 1999.