



Praying Hands
Aerosol on wood
18" x 24"



Warning Apaches Ahead 1 & 2
Mixed media collage diptych on found metal sign
12" x 36" (future skateboard designs)



Indeh X Apache Arrows In The Back
Artist Greg Ruth in collaboration with Ethan Hawke and Apache Skateboards / Douglas Miles
31" x 8" Apache Skateboards Team Deck on 7 ply maple wood

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Douglas Miles is a San Carlos Apache-Akimel O'odham artist, designer, photographer, filmmaker, muralist, and public speaker that assembles traditional and non-traditional materials and images to tell Native American stories. Born in 1963, in the San Carlos Apache Nation in Arizona, Miles grew up in Phoenix, where he attended the Bostrom Alternative High School and later the AI Collins Graphic Design School before moving back to San Carlos. A professional artist for two decades, Miles's work has been shown in Pravus Gallery, Princeton University, the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History, and the Institute of American Indian Arts Museum in Santa Fe, among others. Several pieces of his work are in the collection of the National Museum of the American Indian and in the permanent collections of the Montclair Art Museum, the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, Warner Brothers Studios and the Eddie Basha Collection.

CATALOGUE

La India

Mixed media paint on wood
31" x 7"

Apache Ramos: The Orphan

mixed media paint on wood
31" x 7"

In America (Rita Moreno)

Mixed media paint on wood
31" x 7"

Hector LaVoe

Mixed media paint on wood
31" x 8"

Star Spangled Banner

Mixed media paint on wood
31" x 9"

Husband with Guns

mixed media paint on wood
31" x 7"

Wife with Guns

mixed media paint on wood
31" x 7"

Daughter with Guns

mixed media paint on wood
31" x 7"

Indeh X Apache Geromimo Waits

Artist Greg Ruth in collaboration with Ethan Hawke and Apache Skateboards / Douglas Miles
31" x 8" Apache Skateboards Team Deck on 7 ply maple wood



Indeh X Apache Arrows In The Back

Artist Greg Ruth in collaboration with Ethan Hawke and Apache Skateboards / Douglas Miles
31" x 8" Apache Skateboards Team Deck on 7 ply maple wood

1st Apache Skateboard

Mixed media paint on wood
31" x 7"
(*The first mass produced Apache Skateboard)

Original Pistolero

Mixed media paint on wood
31" x 7"

Apache Samurai, limited edition

Apache Skateboards
31" x 8" Apache Skateboards Team Deck on 7 ply maple wood

Warning Apaches Ahead 1 & 2

Mixed media collage diptych on found metal sign
12" x 36" (future skateboard designs)

Praying Hands

Aerosol on wood
18" x 24"

Stronger Than Pride

Aerosol on wood
18" x 24"

India on the Ramp, 2016

C-Print
18" x 23"

Joanne's Girls, 2015

C-Print
18" x 23"

Doug at Two Guns, 2016

C-Print
18" x 23"

Reuben Ringlero

Defy Gravity, 2014
C-Print
20" x 20"

The Team in Fort Duchesne, 2015

C-Print
20" x 20"

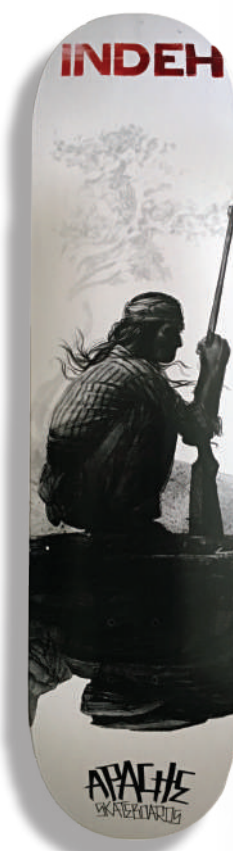
APACHE Rain Digital, 2016

C-Print
18" x 23"

Reuben Ringlero and Douglas Miles

Fight, 2015
C-Print
18" x 23"
At Cesar Chavez Park in South Phoenix

GALLERY at the CENTER, Columbia University
Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race
420 Hamilton Hall, New York City
Gallery hours: 11:00am - 4:00pm, Monday thru Friday



APACHE CHRONICLES: THE ART OF DOUGLAS MILES

GALLERY at the CENTER
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
NOVEMBER 17, 2016

DOUGLAS MILES' MOVING HISTORY

Dakota, the Gallery at the Center presents *The Apache Chronicles: The Art of Douglas Miles*, a rich sample of iconic Apache artist Douglas Miles' work. Indispensable, Miles' art both visualizes Apache freedom, resistance and creativity in the face of centuries of settler colonialism, and poses the urgent question of how to remember the past to open up more hopeful futures.

Miles' themes and core questions would already make his work relevant, yet his formal boldness makes it vital. Defying decades of curatorial and pedagogical practices that have sought to limit Native artistic expression to traditional art forms like basket weaving and jewelry making, Miles keeps the spirit alive otherwise. Aware of custom but not constrained by it, Miles intertwines non-traditional materials, including stencils, spray paint and contemporary fashion with diverse visual styles from comic books, skateboarding culture and Apache historiography, into a distinctive artistic vocabulary. Equally important, although Miles shows his work in galleries and museums, his artistic project is of an entirely different kind: a participatory praxis that "turns any alley or wall into a world class museum or canvas."

Accepting Miles' invitation, *The Apache Chronicles* features twenty-three works on photographic paper, wood, and the artist's signature skateboard decks, which offer a particularly compelling entry point into his art. Miles first considered painting Apache motifs on skateboards in the 1990s when his son wished for a board with Apache imagery. While the gift certainly fulfilled the son's request, it did significantly more: it literally put Apache "myths, legends, [and] history" into motion and turned young skaters into active bearers of Native tradition and knowledge.

The emphasis on movement by both skaters and artist is not a coincidence; rather, it is a direct challenge to the settler project that has attempted to physically and mentally confine peoples that once moved freely in isolated reservations. Moreover, it recasts what critic David Martinez called the "frozen world" of photographers such as C. S. Fly, who took some of the few photos of the Apache Chief Geronimo. To the extent that Native Americans are almost always portrayed in US visual culture as part of a fixed and distant past, Miles' moving history seizes on a decidedly "modern" device and crashes into those assumptions with the full weight of living Native bodies. To skate with "Apache style" is then not only to "roam" through space but also to liberate the collective imagination.

Skateboarding similarly recalls and renews Native warrior traditions, including painting on war horses—another mode of transportation and pride—in order to protect, honor and heal. As the practice of war, skateboarding entails risk and the "willingness to bleed." When successful, skaters, like warriors, glide and float over obstacles, and transform physical barriers into testaments to their skill, bravery and endurance—on and off the skateboard park. Flying high, the art of Apache skateboarding is a way of "going to war" against hopelessness.

Fittingly, many of Miles' images are of Apaches wielding weapons. Some critics have understood the gesture literally as a call to arms, yet it is more complex. On the one hand, guns and rifles explicitly refer to the "loaded histories" of Native modernity, namely the deep violence perpetrated by European and US governments against Native polities, and the disarming of Native Americans exemplified by the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890, which was allegedly triggered by the resistance of a Lakota man who refused to surrender his weapon to the US military. On the other hand, it alludes to Native America's "fighting spirit" and the fundamental role of cultural practices in that fight. In Miles' own words, "The art of tribal people/people of color is probably the most powerful weapon we possess in our 'survival arsenal.'"

This vision is evident in his skateboard tributes to not only Native icons such as Chief Geronimo but also to Puerto Rican and African-American cultural figures, particularly those who have adopted the terms "Indian" or "Apache" as part of their own names like salsa singer Linda "La India" Viera Caballero, or who have fiercely challenged stereotyped knowledge in US popular culture like Rita Moreno ("In America"). In this way, Miles' moving history knowingly alters perceptions of Native Americans. Instead of frozen in time, isolated from others, and absent from contemporary art, they appear free, present, and already drawing from the future.

Frances Negrón-Muntaner
Founding Chief Curator

We did not plan it this way. But less than two weeks after a tense 2016 election in which the winning campaign's slogan was "make America great again" and in tandem with protests against the construction of an oil pipeline near Native American land in North

THE APACHES TELL THEIR STORY

During a parlay with federal officials in the fall of 1871, the Western Apache leader Hashkeebanzin criticized the unequal treatment afforded his people in the popular press of the day. "[T]hese Tucson people," observed Hashkeebanzin, "write for the papers and tell their own story. The Apaches have no one to tell their story."

In the years since, the prominence of Apaches in the American popular imagination has only increased. Geronimo's stubborn resistance against the U.S. Army riveted the nation during the 1880s, turning the Apache into stock characters in the Gilded Age's burgeoning dime novel industry. In the early twentieth century, the new American cinematic genre of the Western featured Apaches as savage counterparts to its white heroes in everything from "Stagecoach" (1939)—the movie that turned a young John Wayne into a star—to "Fort Apache" (1948), a retelling of the Custer tale, only with Apaches instead of Lakotas. In 1981, the U.S. Army dubbed its AH-64 attack helicopter—a vehicle that has gone on to see service in the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan—the Apache.

Yet, throughout this century-long process of transforming the Apache into an enduring American archetype, the indigenous Apache perspective has been all but absent. Hashkeebanzin's comment remains almost as valid today as in 1871: "The Apaches have no one to tell their story."

Douglas Miles' art ruptures such silences, producing art with an aesthetic that is once rooted in Apache history yet deeply engaged with the world of contemporary pop culture. The proverbial seventh son (out of family of twelve children in total), Doug came by his unique, category-blurring approach to art organically. His background encompasses both the sprawl of South Phoenix, where he was born and studied at the AI Collins Graphic Design School, and the rural isolation of the San Carlos Apache Reservation, where he has lived for the past thirty years. If South Phoenix conjures up an urban landscape of taquerias, low riders, and graffiti, San Carlos—nicknamed "Hell's Forty Acres" by U.S. Army soldiers for its heat and dust—is a place of harsh beauty, a high desert plateau home to some 14,000 tribal members (including, briefly, in the late 1870s and early 1880s, Geronimo himself) yet also a community wrestling with the challenges of a seventy percent unemployment rate.



The Team in Fort Duchesne, 2015
C-Print
20" x 20"



Joanne's Girls, 2015
C-Print
18" x 23"

The modern-day visitor to San Carlos cannot spend much time there without encountering Doug's art: he has painted dramatic public murals that foreground Apache figures in locations across the reservation, ranging from the recently constructed Apache Gold Casino to the skate park near the tribal headquarters. This last site is no accident. Although Doug works in various media—printmaking, photography, video, and paint—it is the skateboard that has proven one of the most enduring vehicles for his art and skateboarding's improvisational ethic that has inspired much his work. As he puts it, "I don't really want to be lumped or considered a part of any 'scene' except one that is purely 'skateboarding,' which absorbs and accepts all nationalities and people without regard to race or ethnicity."

In the popular mind, skateboarding may invoke urban street life, but for the Apache it connects powerfully to indigenous warrior traditions. This blend of influences—in which young Apaches, boys and girls alike, utilize skate culture to express long-standing tribal customs—highlights the extent to which Doug's work explodes the art world's dualities of highbrow/lowbrow, Indian/mainstream, traditional/modern, fine art/pop art. Indeed, if there is any common theme running through Doug's work, it is his impatience with the solemn, museumized conceptualizations of Indians that prevail in the art world—and which segregate him and other Natives from the rest of the American story, in all its grandeur and horror.

Doug first painted a skateboard in the late 1990s as a present for his son, Douglas Jr., who had been fruitlessly searching for a skate deck that featured Apache images. Encouraged by the enthusiastic response of his son and his friends to this new work of art, Doug went on to found Apache Skateboards, the first Native-owned skateboard company, in 2002. Several years later, he helped to create Native Agents, an artists' collective that puts together exhibits mixing visual arts, music, and skateboarding. If such exhibits sit uneasily with some in the art world, that would seem to be the point. Doug explains that "Attempting to emulate this [mesh-up] model is difficult for 'native museums' due to stodgy board members, and fearful uninformed directors wondering how this art fits into the 'native art continuum.'"

Doug's ability to convey such messages to audiences outside of San Carlos can be seen in the multi-layered project that he created in the South Bronx neighborhood of Hunt's Point this past summer. During the urban neglect of the 1970s, Hunt's Point was known (not always affectionately) as Fort Apache, inspiring the controversial Paul Newman movie "Fort Apache, the Bronx." Yet Hunt's Point was also the birthplace of hip hop, graffiti, and breakdancing, art forms which have gone on to enjoy global influence over the past half century, including among Apache skateboarders on San Carlos. With the help of community children, Doug painted a mural on one of Hunt's Points main thoroughfares that brought to the surface the connections between Fort Apache, Arizona, and Fort Apache, the Bronx—not only the shared Apache symbology and the mutual interest in hip-hop culture, but the struggle of each community in the face of the misunderstanding and commodification of the outside world. In telling the Apaches' story, it turns out, Doug has also been telling the stories of countless others as well.

Karl Jacoby
Columbia University

Further reading: David Martinez, "From Off the Rez to Off the Hook" Douglas Miles and Apache Skateboards' *The American Indian Quarterly* 37:4 (Fall 2013): 370-394

Apache Samurai, limited edition
Apache Skateboards
31" x 6"
Apache Skateboards Team Deck on 7 ply maple wood

