MY COUNTRY TIS OF THY PEOPLE YOU'RE DYING

STEVEN J. YAZZIE

NICHOLAS GALANIN

TOM JONES

CANNUPA HANSKA LUGER

WINTER COUNT

RadiatorArts

Curated by
Erin Joyce Projects

PRESS RELEASE

About the Show: *Indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere have a spiritual and mystical connection with the land. The land is part of the Indigenous tradition and religion, from creation stories, to the way in which Indigenous peoples live their lives—the land is indivisible from Native America. Throughout the history of the United States and their relationality to Native tribes, the issue of land rights and ownership has been at the forefront of confrontation. From historic events like forced relocation from traditional lands, to contemporary issues of unauthorized sale of tribal land, energy extraction, and contested landscapes, My Country Tis of Thy People You're Dying, is in reference to the song of the same title by Buffy Sainte Marie, and will feature artworks by contemporary Indigenous North American artists examining the environmental impact of energy extraction, the impact it has on the collective Indigenous psyche, and the political framework that has and continues to enable unsanctioned land deals and the abuse of powers over the people. With issues in recent years such as the sale of Oak Flat on the San Carlos Apache Reservation in Southeastern Arizona, First Nations tribes fighting pipelines through their territory, and most prominently the conflict at Standing Rock in North Dakota, the timing of this exhibition could not be more relevant.*

The mediums represented in this exhibition will be mixed. A film installation by Steven J. Yazzie (Navajo) looks at the impact of uranium mining on the Navajo reservation, on the Navajo people, their health, and the health of the land through stunning and poignant narrative and visual imagery. Nicholas Galanin's (Tlingit) God Complex, inspects the dynamics of power structures, the glorification of violence, and police brutality; redressing pop culture iconography with a religiosity, echoing Western society's worship of material over life. Tom Jones (Ho Chunk) work, The North American Landscape, is a series of photographs of plastic toy trees. The work utilizes the trees as stand-ins for the landscape of North America and represents the areas American Indians continue to inhabit on this continent. It also comments on the destruction of the natural world replacing nature with manmade replicas. Other artists in the exhibition include ceramic sculpture by Cannupa Hanska Luger (Lakota/Mandan/Arikara/Hidatsa), and a video installation by Winter Count.

The exhibition is generously supported by a Social Justice Grant from the Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation and fiscal sponsorship from New York Foundation.

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STEVEN J. YAZZIE

Biography

Steven J. Yazzie (b.1970) Newport Beach, California; lives and works in Phoenix, Arizona. Yazzie is a proud member of the Navajo Nation and a veteran of the Gulf War serving honorably with the United States Marine Corps. He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Intermedia at Arizona State University and was named the 2014 outstanding graduate for the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts. He also studied at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine.

Yazzie has been apart of numerous regional, national, and international exhibitions. Most notably he has exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; National Museum of the American Indian, New York, NY; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada; the Museum of Contemporary Native Art, Santa Fe, NM. Throughout Arizona, Yazzie has exhibited at the Heard Museum, Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona State University Art Museum, Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Tucson Museum of Contemporary Art, Tucson Museum of Art, and the Museum of Northern Arizona. Yazzie's work can be found in a number of public and private collections throughout the country. Yazzie has also received a number of regional and national grants; Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, The National Museum of the American Indian, the Arizona Commission on the Arts, and the Joan Mitchell Award.

Mountain Song, 2015

Steven J. Yazzie

Single channel video, 11min 11sec edition of 4

STEVEN J. YAZZIE

Publications/Articles

Phoenix New Times

How Steve Yazzie Turned Three Years of Hiking into an Art Show at the Heard Museum

By: Lynn Trimble

Steve Yazzie, a Phoenix multidisciplinary artist of Navajo (Diné), Laguna, and European descent, spent the last three years creating the "Black White Blue Yellow ("BWBY") exhibition that opens Friday, February 3, in the Heard Museum's Jacobson Gallery.

It's a four-channel video and sound installation meant to inspire greater connection between people and landforms, and it continues through Sunday, March 12.

Yazzie started by hiking and exploring regions where sacred mountains comprise geographic borders and cultural signifiers for the Navajo/Diné people.

"Each mountain carries with it: forms of symbolic and sacred power, protection, stories, female or male identities, and a color," Yazzie shares in his artist statement for the show. Along the way, Yazzie documented his journey through videos, photographs, and audio recordings.

"Most of the exhibition is brand-new, but some of the elements were drawn from earlier works," Yazzie says.

He's manipulated some of the recordings and photographs, and left others as is. It's a way of adding magical elements, Yazzie says. And it's meant to leave people wondering about which parts of what they're seeing might be real, and which manufactured. It's an important question not only inside the gallery, but within culture at large, Yazzie says.

In addition to videos – one on each of four screens facing north, south, east, and west – he's installed a wall filled with 40 still shots of his mountain excursions. Many capture natural elements encountered along the way. But gallery-goers who linger will also see visual artifacts, from fireworks to tiny bubble-like spheres, Yazzie created and superimposed into the actual mountain scenes he encountered.

"The photographs are really fragments of my life," he says.

Yazzie used yellow lighting to infuse the space with a warm glow. It's most evident over large-scale polished rocks repurposed from earlier Heard Museum exhibitions. They're big enough that viewers can use them as seating, soaking up the light as they survey shifting images on the four screens at the heart of the installation.

But Yazzie included several additional elements – including a tent he used while camping in these sacred spaces, and a tower of painted rock forms that stands like a sentinel near the gallery's entrance. It's all designed to give gallery-goers the feeling of being in these sacred spaces, which have what Yazzie calls "a special place in our spiritual consciousness."

Yazzie has long incorporated walking into his work, after discovering the joys of hiking as a child. In 2014, he co-founded the Museum of Walking with multidisciplinary artist Angela Ellsworth. Currently housed on ASU's Tempe campus, the Museum of Walking promotes walking as an art practice. And it will be presenting an activity at the Heard Museum during First Friday's opening reception for Yazzie's show.

Yazzie's previous work with the Heard Museum includes Fear of a Red Planet, a multi-panel mural he painted over the course of six months in 2000, which was removed last year as the museum undertook renovations to transform two smaller gallery spaces into one larger space. The public reveal of those changes, funded by the Virginia G. Piper Foundation, happens on February 10.

The mural, which was part of a National Endowment for the Arts initiative, features scenes of Navajo, Yaqui, and Colorado River people

being displaced or assimilated during the boarding school period. Currently it's on view just above the "Black White Blue Yellow" exhibition, on the second story of the Jacobson Gallery.

So those who head to the Heard Museum can see not only Yazzie's most recent work, but also work created more than a decade ago – with a vastly different focus and medium. "I painted for 20 years, but being in a studio is restrictive," Yazzie says of making the shift to work that's tied more directly to the land.

The recent work is all about connection, he says. "It's really a spiritual journey of trying to reconnect with sacred places."

The "Black White Blue Yellow" exhibition, which runs from February 3 to March 12 at the Heard Museum, is free with museum admission ($18/ adults or free after 6 p.m. on First Friday).

STEVEN J. YAZZIE

Publications/Articles

AZ Central

Art first, ethnicity second Native artists embrace multicultural world

By: Richard Nilsen

Artist Fritz Scholder once spoke to a group of young Native American students.

"Stop painting Indians," he told them.

Galleries were full of "traditional" Native American art, and Scholder, who had made a national reputation by painting Indians, felt stereotyped by the label, imprisoned by the expectations of being an "Indian artist."

"I remember Fritz talking about being an artist before being an Indian artist," Phoenix artist Steve Yazzie said.

Scholder didn't want to be ghettoized in a limiting category.

Yazzie and 14 other contemporary artists of mixed Native/non-Native backgrounds from the United States, Canada and Mexico make up a new show at the Heard Museum that looks at the way a younger generation of Indians have transcended the issues Scholder felt diminished by.

"Remix: New Modernities in a Post-Indian World" demonstrates the way some Native Americans can, indeed, define themselves as artists first.

That definition is part of a sea change in culture over the past 10 years. Where once Native American artists felt compelled to define themselves against the mainstream, mostly White, culture, they now feel free to engage as part of the global - mostly non-White - culture. Where before they drew a line of exclusivity, they now open up to an inclusive diversity. It's a Tiger Woods world.

It's what writer Eleanor Heartney, in the catalog that accompanies the show, calls the "Age of Hybridity."

"These artists represent an inescapable reality of contemporary life, namely the hybrid nature of all identity," she says. "The artists in 'Remix' favor a more promiscuous approach to art and identity. They express a fluid sense of identity, which affirms that there is no such thing as ethnic purity."

Yazzie, for instance, is Navajo and Laguna on his father's side, French, Welsh and Hungarian on his mother's.

"I've come to terms with being in the middle and being mixed race," he said. "That's what my work for 'Remix' is all about."

Scholder, who died in 2005, faced the same issue a decade ago. He was Luiseño on his mother's side and German-American on his father's. When his art left behind the Indian subject matter for which he became famous, he briefly proclaimed himself to be a "German artist," although that was no more descriptive of his work than "Indian."

Heard Museum curator Joe Baker is Delaware, Dutch and English.

"That's in terms of blood," he said. "But I have many other influences beyond genetic. And that's the point of this exhibition. We are all, in today's world, products of hybridized experience."

'Identity politics'

Times have changed. It used to be that Native American artists emphasized the separateness of their Indianness.

In the 1980s and '90s, Native American political activism tended to focus on the question of authenticity - who was really an Indian - and the assertion of Native political rights. The political commitment of those artists and activists made the current generation's wider engagement possible.

"We shouldn't bash identity politics too much," Heartney said. "It was useful at the time in reminding us that art isn't universal and there's not a single standard of quality. It was useful for that, but it rigidified and became another thing. I remember a performance by [artist] James Luna [Luiseño], who said, 'I don't want to be an Indian anymore.' "

[Luna is one of the contemporary artists

whose work addresses many things, not just Native identity. It's about what he calls "hightechpostmodernsurrealisticsubculture."]

"These artists participate in the artistic dialogues of the larger culture," Heartney said. "Not just rediscovering their Native roots, but very much attuned to the larger debates in the art world."

Shifting values

With the Native Arts and Crafts Act of 1990, Congress meant to give Native Americans a means to defend "the tradition that as an Indian you have significant rights and privileges, a kind of tribal copyright, unwritten but there by way of inheritance," said Gerald McMaster, one of the curators of the show and curator of Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto. "But that doesn't translate to contemporary art. Under the old way of looking at it, it was no longer a discussion about art, but about how you were defined as a Native artist."

That is, about whether you could legitimately claim to be Indian. The question of the art became secondary.

It is refreshing, he says, that with such artists as those in "Remix," "the issue of Indianness is not the Number 1 question for them. They're interested in other things."

For McMaster, "the making of an identity is a creative act of interpreting, sifting and generating ideas and experiences for both the artist and all members of the community."

He is a full-blooded Cree but now is a citizen of the Blackfoot Nation: "As if I were born German but moved to Indonesia," said McMaster, who calls himself a "mutant Ninja-Injun."

"I've been an urban Indian since the age of 9."

He's also part of the Hybrid Planet.

"I'm comfortable with the 'world out there,' " McMaster said. "Identity is very interesting, and we realize that our identities shift. There is the 'Capital I' identity, and that's what we present to the world, but there are a lot of other I's in there, too - father, male, Cree, husband, human."

These aren't exclusive identities, but overlapping circles in a Venn diagram.

"Sometimes I just want to be a father," he said.

International reach

These artists are just as aware of what's happening in Berlin or Prague as what's happening in Santa Fe.

"We're looking for international exposure," Yazzie said, "so I don't think Santa Fe is going to work for me."

Commercial galleries naturally want to sell work, he acknowledges, so, perhaps museums are the better venue for art that isn't meant as commodity.

Yazzie, who just returned from London, says he has joined a new collective, called "Post Commodity," with Cherokee artist Kade Twist and video artist Nathan Young (Pawnee/Delaware/Kiowa).

"We went to the Czech Republic," Yazzie said, "and it was an interesting experience. We were near the border with Austria and doing an installation in a small village that had to do with border issues, like that the ones we have here with Mexican immigration and how the Tohono O'odham nation (straddles) the border in southern Arizona."

Questions of immigration and borders aren't just a U.S. issue, but something that resonates around the world.

"This summer I was in Venice for the Biennale," McMaster said, "and last month at Documenta in Germany. (The Biennale and Documenta are two of the world's biggest showcases for contemporary art.) "What is exciting is the world that is coming, what is being created everywhere in the world today.

"What I'm seeing from these countries, even like China, is so much excitement coming out of there, or Istanbul. It's all influenced by what is going on in the world, in the new media."

"Remix" is a joint venture between the Heard and the George Gustav Heye Center in New York, which is part National Museum of the American Indian. The show will travel to New York after it closes in Phoenix.

"These artists all have deeply held opinions, world views formed at the intersection of traditional and Postmodern expression, and an urgency to find media and language to express complex ideas," said John Haworth, director of public programs at the Heye Center

"Their work speaks about geographic, generational, cultural and psychological boundaries. They explore the mix of high and low, popular and fine, historic and contemporary, communal and universal."

Baker, the Heard curator emphasizes the inclusiveness of this new direction.

"The human race is fascinating, complex and interesting, and I think our diversity is a fact of life and in interesting fact of life," Baker said. "I'm curious about the world and my expectation of others is that they would share that curiosity."

CANNUPA HANSKA LUGER

Biography

Born in North Dakota on the Standing Rock Reservation, artist Cannupa Hanska Luger comes from Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, Lakota, Austrian, and Norwegian descent. Luger's unique, ceramic--centric, but ultimately multidisciplinary work tells provocative stories of complex Indigenous identities coming up against 21st Century imperatives, mediation, and destructivity. Luger creates socially conscious work that hybridizes his identity as an American Indian in tandem with global issues. Using his art as a catalyst, Luger invites the public to challenge expectations and misinterpretations imposed upon Indigenous peoples by historical and contemporary colonial social structures. His work has been noted as "a modern look at ideas of colonization, adaptability and survival as major components to the development of culture" by Western Art Collector Magazine and The Native Arts and Cultures Foundation noted that "Luger could well rise to be one of those artists whose caliber is unmatched and whose work will be studied by students to come, thus furthering the path for many more contemporary Native artists." Cannupa Hanska Luger currently holds a studio practice in New Mexico, maintaining a clear trajectory of gallery and museum exhibitions worldwide.

Cannupa Hanska Luger was the recipient of the 2016 Native Arts and Cultures Foundation Artists Fellowship Award and was the 2015 Rasmuson Foundation Artist in Residence. Luger graduated with honors from The Institute of American Indian Arts in 2011 with a BFA focusing in studio ceramics. He has been exhibited at Blue Rain Gallery Santa Fe, NM; Museum of Northern Arizona Flagstaff AZ; Navy Pier Chicago, IL; University of Alaska Fairbanks, AK; Duhesa Gallery CSU Fort Collins, CO; La Bienalle di Venezia Verona, Italy and Art Mur Montreal, Quebec, among others. Luger is also in the permanent collections of The North America Native Museum Zürich, Switzerland; The Denver Art Museum Denver, CO; The Museum of Contemporary Native Arts Santa Fe, NM; and The Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art Norman, OK.

Champion, 2016
Cannupa Hanska Luger
Ceramic and fiber

At What Cost: Extraction, 2016
Cannupa Hanska Luger
Ceramic, steel, rubber, fiber,
dimensions vary

Ceramic Knives, 2016
Cannupa Hanska Luger
Ceramic, dimensions vary

CANNUPA HANSKA LUGER

Publications/Articles

L.A. TIMES Q&A

The artist who made protesters' mirrored shields says the 'struggle porn' media miss point of Standing Rock

By: Carolina A. Miranda, Contact Reporter

For Cannupa Hanska Luger, the protests at Standing Rock are personal. The artist, who makes sculpture, video and installations, was born on the Standing Rock reservation in North Dakota, and he is an enrolled member of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation, whose territory is nearby. He is in possession of German and Norwegian blood too. "I am North Dakota," he jokes.

Now based in New Mexico, where he was recently an artist in residence at the Institute of American Indian Arts, he has been traveling to his home state over the last nine months to support the encampment in opposition to the Dakota Access pipeline. Though many protesters left the site after the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers denied a permit for the pipeline in early December — and after a hard winter set in — the encampment is still active.

In this lightly edited telephone conversation, which took place late in December, he discusses what it's been like to watch the protests evolve, why these have been so important to Native American culture and what inspired him to produce mirrored shields to help protect activists on the front lines.

What was it like to see Standing Rock develop into one of the major news events of 2016?

It's been pretty interesting — even more so being from that region and growing up around there. When we were kids, we used to fish and dive off of those bridges that are now the front lines. That river is home. I go back every summer guaranteed. I've been up seven or eight times since this whole thing began.

My dad's side of the family, they have a ranch in the Standing Rock reservation. My mom's side is from Fort Berthold [reservation], which is where the current oil fields are. I watched that community get destroyed by the extraction of oil. I've seen wells poisoned. I've seen the cycles of boom and bust.

A lot of artists I've spoken with have described their journeys to the Standing Rock encampment as transformative.

It seems like everyone who has interacted with the space, there is something transformative that has happened there. The media's general interest is in "struggle porn," so people have missed what is beautiful about it.

When you first come through the gate — there is one entrance and one exit — they look through your car. They ask you if you have weapons or drugs. Then you are welcomed in, and they say, "Welcome home." Your first interaction is being included, which is not something that people are used to in this country. This is an exclusive country. It's all about fences and borders.

You set up camp and someone gives you firewood. The whole thing of guarding your stuff goes away. It's so much easier to share things. Culturally we have a practice called "seven generations." As you walk through the world, you are not yourself. You are not a singularity. You are not an American individualist bootstrapping bull .... You are only borrowing this place from children you will never meet. And the only reason you have an opportunity to do that is because elders took care of it for you.

Everybody came in hoping to experience something new, something profound. But when they got there, they realized they're not a part of something new, they've just been absorbed into something that is much older than the entire country. That's incredibly humbling.

What do you think Standing Rock has done for society's understanding of indigenous culture

and issues?

The big difference is that I think [people have] had the opportunity to encounter us not as a mystic, romantic other. It's just like, "Dude, we're just human beings." What does "Lakota" mean in English? It literally means "the people."

This is why we say this is not a protest, why we are water protectors. We're not just in protest of a pipeline. What we are trying to do is maintain a cultural practice. This is our culture. It's a part of our society.

Our original bible, that comes down from on high, it is the land. We have an oral tradition and we tell stories about magical characters that are bound to the landscape, that are bound to geology. Why is that stone red? There is a story. So where everyone else sees a pipeline and "progress," what we see is someone going through our bible and editing things without any care, ripping a line straight through that story.

The battle for the pipeline isn't over, but having the Army Corps of Engineers deny the permit certainly stands as an important victory.

The amazing thing is that whether you were Native or not, what we witnessed up there is the awakening of a giant that has been sleeping. It's the power of us as living things — rather than us waiting for somebody to save us. It was so grass roots.

Native people have never been subject to that amount of solidarity. It left everybody awestruck. And the number of Native people coming together, nothing like this has been seen since the 19th century. Enemies that had previously been enemies, coming together — there's no way for me to describe to you what that means. It's far too profound.

You made a series of mirrored shields that you distributed to people on the front lines. How did that come about?

I was inspired by these activists in the Ukraine. These women — old women and children — and they came out and carried mirrors from their bathrooms and into the street to show these riot policemen what they looked like. From the photos I saw, it seemed profoundly effective. I wanted to bring that same level of recognition to the front lines there.

But Standing Rock is in the middle of nowhere. I didn't want people to bring mirrors to the front line and get hit with batons and cause more damage than good. So what we needed was a mirrored shield. So I came up with a simple, easy and cheap design to make these mirrored shields using vinyl and Masonite — materials you can find in any hardware store. From one sheet of Masonite, you could make six shields.

I started making them after that Sunday that they were hitting people with hoses. I personally made close to 100 of them. But then another group out of Minneapolis made 500. I have no idea how many are in circulation. But I keep seeing them here and there.

What role do you think artists can have in protest?

Being an artist, it is a way to weaponize privilege. I could have been on the front line a dozen times, but my wife said, "You are one person there; you are 10,000 here — where you can engage all of these resources."

I did a mural at the Center for Civil and Human Rights [in Atlanta] about these issues because I had the opportunity. And if I don't utilize every amount of privilege for a cause that's worthwhile, then what is the point? If I am not for you, then who am I for?

Artists, we live on the periphery. But we are the mirrors. We are the reflective points that break through a barrier. You don't have to be in the same economic place that I am to relate to the work that I make. That is the power of art.

We are not rich people. But we are incredibly wealthy. We have ideas.

CANNUPA HANSKA LUGER

Publications/Articles

VICE, CULTURES. 50 STATES OF ART. January, 2017

Standing Rock-Born Sculptor Cannupa Hanska Luger Fights for Cultural Survival | #50StatesofArt

By: Emerson Rosenthal

A steel blindfold covers the head of a human female figure, yet, unlike Lady Justice, her arms and legs too are bound. Fiber, in an interlocking braid, ties her wrists, wraps her neck and belly, and snakes down to hitch her legs at the ankles. Over her shoulder, however, her hands clutch the means to freedom from her bondage: a soft white blade digs beneath the rope around her neck. Salvation via ceramics.

Artist Cannupa Hanska Luger was born on the Standing Rock Reservation. He is of Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, Lakota, Austrian, and Norwegian heritage. A graduate with honors from The Institute of American Indian Arts, in 2016 he was the recipient of the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation Artists Fellowship Award for artists who "represent the cultural continuity of Native peoples in contemporary contexts, and are the creative voices of their communities." His work in sculpture is figurative yet imaginative, assembling a panoply of cultural symbols—feathers, bones, textiles—into signifiers all his own. More mythopoeic than surreal, it frames him as a medium, a psychic intermediary between colonizer and Native, ancient tradition and modern understanding, soft clay and hard ceramics.

Instead of synthesizing these disparate elements into things tidy and deliverable, however, felted ceramic totems (his Once upon a time there were human beings series) and the aforementioned steel sculptures (We Have Agency) exalt their differences. Luger's is an Otherness that seeks not approval; it stands independent, an Other with its own embrace around a thriving universe.

Fortunately, Luger's a major proponent of sharing: art, ideas, and resources all flow through him like a conduit. Whether with his wife, via her Broken Boxes podcast; with students, via residencies; with artist collectives, like Winter Count; or through galleries around the world, his is a practice that thrives on communication. Just days before the horrific federal raid of Sioux sacred lands in North Dakota, Creators spoke to Luger about ceramics, culture, and the human need to make art, via email.

Creators: Why ceramics?

Cannupa Hanska Luger: I work with a lot of different materials but I find ceramics or clay in particular to be a material that is very malleable. I have a history of painting and drawing and so clay is a wonderful form that can take the line and mark making in a very similar way to those art forms, ceramic transfers two-dimensional ideas into three-dimensional forms with consistency.

How'd you get to it and why'd you stick with it?

I got into ceramics in my undergrad while looking to develop a skill set that I had no knowledge of prior to going to school. I began working with clay and I just really liked it. And I stuck with it because in general the more I work with a material the more I learn from that material, and I'm always interested in developing skill sets to better accomplish ideas that I am working with. I find that the more skill sets I have, the easier it is to manifest any sort of concept. I tend to work with a variety of materials, but my work focuses on ceramic, steel and fibers as I find these three materials to be pinnacles of civilization throughout world history and they are often points of societal significance.

And... because before clay, I was a painter... and I'm pretty sure we are heading towards an apocalypse, and I am certain that when we get to this point, if my only skill set is painting, I will be food... I will be killed and eaten. So with this in the back of my mind, I wanted to have a skill set, some sort of craft, something that makes me valuable to a society of a post apocalyptic future,

to be able to contribute and to ensure survival. So knowing ceramics has been key to this as well.

What experiences—both in and outside of school—have informed your techniques?

Working with clay is like creating a relationship, every time you engage with the material itself, it teaches you volumes, and I am of the mind that you should fail fast and fail often. So trying to build with clay and pushing the limits of the material gives limitless information and technique for future building. My whole life is intertwined in relationship with my artmaking. Every experience that I have, both sleeping and awake, informs my making. And with my work, I am very interested in developing a story and a conversation about that intersection or communication about this experience. A significant amount of communication that I engage with in my studio practice is with the material. The material, often clay, dictates a lot of what can be manifested. And I am very aware that my practice doesn't end in the studio, as an Indigenous person I am aware that we have no deviation between art and culture, or culture and life, it is all part of the material. All of these things are blended together and necessary. And so my everyday experiences always find their way into my art practice and vice versa.

What's an average studio day look like for you?

I probably put in about 12-16 hours a day in the studio during a crunch, which is very often. Due to the nature of ceramic work, the clay itself has dry time. So I tend to work in concept series and have multiple pieces on the workbench at a time. This way I can cycle between pieces and I always have a bunch of work in progress at various stages of development. It is a process of organizing and scheduling really short intervals of time. This is coupled with my everyday experiences being a father, as I have two little boys and a wife who are a major point of inspiration for my practice. I recognize time spent in the studio is time away from my family and so I strive to balance my time out as best as I can, knowing that my artistic practice brings me joy in life and is also what sustains us financially. I recognize the process of making time in the studio is really healthy for me psychologically and spiritually, and so all of these facets have to come together rather than be separate. It is a delicate balance of remembering to live in a whole system approach with your art and life. Nothing can be separate.

Few mediums (if any) outlive ceramics, yet destruction plays a major role in your practice. Can you explain why?

I believe that ceramic speaks about longevity but also transitions. I've only destroyed maybe a few bodies of work, and a lot of the times it's unfired clay that I'll let disintegrate back into the earth. So I wouldn't really consider it destruction as much as a transition. And really I feel that way about everything, I don't feel as though I've destroyed any works in my practice, but simply released them into transition. Like clay becomes rigid once it's fired, it becomes set, and sometimes you have to let go of those things in order for the real idea to be free. I think if there's anything I destroy in my practice it's the invulnerability of an idea. I destroy that every time I work. I recognize that I am transferring this very ethereal material which is a thought or concept into something physical; the transformation of idea to form, which happens through the clay. Another point of transition, which is really interesting when talking about ceramics, is that we can take the form of clay and transform the material at a molecular level into ceramic. This process is a really profound surrogate to our existence in the world. As if we have ideas and we work towards manifesting them but just like everything else in life, the application of time and pressure solidifies it. And I am really interested in taking something that is nearly indestructible, such as an idea, and transforming it into something that that can withstand the test of time but is also the most fragile that it will ever be, such as ceramic. When working with clay you take this very conceptual inspiration or idea and transform it into the physical world through an ecstatic experience which is the process of building, and then by applying tremendous heat to it, that form or idea solidifies and suddenly it has perceived value to any external observer, but at the same time, it is the most fragile it will ever be, from idea to clay to ceramic. There is something in that transformative process which is like art mimicking life mimicking art…

Can you tell me about your recent talk on "art as a means of cultural survival"?

From the lens as a Native artist, for most of the art industry's history, the work itself was dictated externally by collector and market, and which to some degree every aspect of the art world has been subject to; a proprietor deciding what the artwork is as it is transformed into a commodity, or a good for trade. But that is NOT what art is. No matter what background you come from art is a practice of cultural survival. As artists we represent our times, our experience of now, and we represent our cultures. We as artists are charged and almost obligated to maintain culture and be a mirror for it, to reflect upon it and show our current times. I don't think it is even conscious for me personally, and innately every artist who is reflecting the current times is participating in an active process of surviving culture and developing it. Adapting to the times and being able to communicate that through work. Because at the core that's what artists strive to do, communicate. The term cultural survival seems leans towards this idea of tradition, and

within Native communities, we've been stifled by what is considered traditional through a Western lens. Although what i've observed and experienced in my life as a Native person is that adaptation is the ultimate core of any cultural survival. It's not about maintaining old ways, but about developing processes to communicate those old ways into our contemporary time. So the development of material science or accessing different media platforms to engage with community are part of a traditional practice. As artists we have our foot in so many doors that we can engage and record the adaptation as it is happening, yet we are often too close to see what our impact will have on the future.

Finally, is artmaking or art-showing a greater form of resistance?

From a Native perspective, the making of art speaks volumes of our history as a people continuing to exist here in resistance. It allows us to see that it is because of those before us who have sacrificed and made great strides in order to get us to this point. It reminds us that we are only borrowing this place and this time from generations far into the future we may never meet. On a personal level the making is very important to me because as living things we exist in a state of crisis or emergency. That is the rule of life, it is not the exception. Any idea of peace or contentment with our surroundings doesn't speak about resistance and it doesn't speak about true existence in our world. I think about the way we as humans walk, by literally hurling ourselves forward, and if we didn't continue to operate with putting one foot in front of the other, we would fall flat on our faces. So this is the state of emergency or crisis that I speak of, we are constantly catching ourselves from falling down. We are in a subconscious act of maintaining our footing and this is like all of life, we are constantly hurling ourselves forward with the threat of bodily damage, in a state of emergency, and we must react and with intention. The act of making art is also this concept. It's incredibly courageous to be artists because we are operating within an emotive communication stance. We spend a lot of the time by ourselves, and we are processing very emotional states and shaving those bits and pieces off of ourselves and those pieces are being embedded into the work that we make. Art is a perfect example of resistance to our social structures that devalue any emotional response to existence. Because emotions are the tools of the artist, which we share in the showing as the artwork is complete. With that being said i'm not sure where the resistance is the strongest. Could resistance strongest through observation? I personally feel like the work I make is complete at that art-viewing/showing state. It's the process of making that keeps me going everyday in creating the work, knowing that it's going to be out in the world. Maybe it's best to simply remember that bravery and courage doesn't come from fearlessness, they come from recognizing that which you fear most and moving forward anyway. And that idea is important to the artist's role in society, to any human being who is acting with resistance. Recognizing that emotions do not limit us, but create an opportunity to move into that which makes us most uncomfortable. In the end why separate the making and the viewing of art? When what may be most important is the willingness of and by both parts, seizing the opportunity to engage.

NICHOLAS GALANIN

Biography

Nicholas Galanin's work offers perspective rooted in connection to land and an intentionally broad engagement with contemporary culture. For over a decade, Galanin has been embedding incisive observation into his work, investigating and expanding intersections of culture and concept in form, image and sound. Galanin's works embody critical thought. They are vessels of knowledge, culture and technology - inherently political, generous, unflinching, and poetic. Galanin's concepts determine his materials and processes. His practice is expansive and includes numerous collaborations with visual and recording artists, including an ongoing collaboration with his brother and fellow artist Jerrod Galanin, under the moniker Leonard Getinthecar. He is a member of two artist collectives: Black Constellation and Winter Count.

The substance and execution of his work engages past, present and future. Through two- and three-dimensional works, and time-based media, Galanin encourages reflection on cultural amnesia that actively obscures collective memory and acquisition of knowledge. Galanin creates sounds moving in time and animals fixed in space. Splintering apart replica carvings, he destroys the outputs of commodified culture, rearranging the pieces to reflect its nefarious effects. He creates petroglyphs in sidewalks and coastal rock, masks cut from books, ceramic arrows in flight, and repurposes handcuffs, which he engraves, formerly used to remove Indigenous children from their families, naming them children's bracelets.

Galanin has apprenticed with master carvers and jewelers. He earned his BFA at London Guildhall University in Jewelry Design, and his MFA in Indigenous Visual Arts at Massey University in New Zealand. Nicholas Galanin lives and works in Sitka, Alaska.

God Complex, 2016

Nicholas Galanin

Mixed materials, dimensions vary

NICHOLAS GALANIN

Publications/Articles

KTOO Public Media

'Kill the Indian, Save the Man' challenges artistic boundaries in Alaska

By: Zachariah Hughes, KSKA - Anchorage

A few hours before his first solo show at the Anchorage Museum was set to start, Nicholas Galanin walked past workmen and collaborators putting the final touches on an array of installations, ranging from a performance piece to a taxidermic polar bear.

Galanin is a Sitka-based artist behind the provocative new exhibit "Kill the Indian, Save the Man." He stopped in front of a multidisciplinary piece called "A Supple Plunder." A projector shows slow-motion footage of a bullet ripping through ballistic gel. Beneath are nine clear human torsos set to be be stacked on pedestals like classical busts.

"Unanagan men were bound together – 12 were bound together and shot to see how far the bullet would penetrate," Galanin said. "Nine dropped."

The incident is cited as part of the atrocities during Russian colonization in the Aleutian islands in the 1760s.

Galanin's collaborator on the piece was his brother Jerrod, who said it was an emotional experience recreating the grim history the work draws from in the artistic process.

"We set up all nine of these in a line and we took a shot. It was exciting. I think we even laughed," he said. "It's easy to do that with a torso without any head. And I can only imagine the Russian that did this probably laughed, too, and thought it was funny. And I don't understand that. I don't know how you can get to that point where you can do that."

The idea of having collaborators in a solo-show is just one of the confounding gestures Galanin and his partners weave into the exhibit, which has been in the works for about a year. All together, the pieces are an arresting mix of conceptual criticism, technical finesse and beauty that verges at times on the grotesque. One of Galanin's co-creators, interdisciplinary artist Nep Sidhu, said all the works bound together by the show's title and theme.

"Hence the idea of 'Kill the Indian, Save the Man' – it's an impossible notion," Sidhu said.

Sidhu and Galanin are both part of Black Constellation, a collective of artists stretching across the West Coast and parts of Canada. Together the artists dressed four mannequins in an opulent but unsettling mix of garments. One wears a Chilkat robe over a cascade of winter jackets–a comment Sidhu said, on the epidemic of missing indigenous women in Canada.

"Looking at a lot of missing persons reports, you would often come across the one thing that they had in common," Sidhu said. "Winter jackets. You know, 'Last seen wearing a red winter parka.' Winter jackets, over and over."

Using traditional and indigenous artistic forms like a Chilkat robe to make a statement about the present is hardly revolutionary. But the Anchorage Museum is taking big steps to collapse any distinction between those traditional forms and modern art as its long been curated in formal spaces.

"I think those boundaries feel very arbitrary now," said Julie Decker, the museum's director. "Putting all the voices together and saying, 'This is Alaska's media, and these are the arts that are working here,' feels better."

Decker stood in front of works that are part of the the new All-Alaska Biennial, a film projected on a wall behind her, and a wood carving ringed in feathers to her front.

Calling the Biennial new isn't quite accurate. It was created by combining two shows that for decades have been distinct. In the past, the All

Alaska Juried Exhibition was for so-called modern artworks like formal painting and sculpture, and on alternate years the Earth, Fire, and Fibre show assembled masterworks from so-called traditional forms like weaving and ceramics. But the museum is experimenting in how it sees and supports a shifting definition of "modern" within the arts.

"I think art is changing, the way we define media is changing, and all artists are working and experimenting in a lot of different forms," Decker said. "This is a survey of contemporary art of this place at this time."

A third solo show, "Stick and Puck" by Anchorage artist Mike Conti, looks critically at the culture around ice hockey. Together, the new exhibits explore what modern art means today in Alaska. All three are on display at the museum through April 10.

NICHOLAS GALANIN

Publications/Articles

ABQ Journal

In Their Own Image: Museum re-envisions itself with exhibitions committed to here, now

By: MALIN WILSON-POWELL
On the day after Thanksgiving, it seems appropriate to visit the recently renovated and newly christened Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, a branch of the Institute of American Indian Arts. After years of being known as the Institute of American Indian Arts Museum, it has now firmly defined itself as an institution committed to the contemporary with six provocative and challenging contemporary exhibitions. This is a welcome redefinition of their mission after many years of slip-sliding and shifting orientations following its move into the centrally located historic federal building, which was transferred to the institute by a 1991Act of Congress. At a tourism conference here the same year, Ted Jojola, then the director of the University of New Mexico's Center of Native American Studies, quietly and firmly reframed and expanded the notion of tourism by observing that Native peoples were here before the tourist-Conquistadores arrived for booty and souls and would certainly be here after Europeans retreat. He also ventured that after centuries of being courteous to visitors, who heaped mystifying images like the noble savage and the New Age spiritualist on Native Americans, Native people needed to reformulate their own images for themselves. MoCNA clearly proposes to be a key player in this complicated process of selfstereotyping.

Simply describing MoCNA's location in Santa Fe demonstrates how loaded and layered the 400-year onslaught of long-and-short term tourism has been for Native people in New Mexico. MoCNA is just one block from Spain's Palace of the Governors, where Natives sell authentic wares to tourists who bow to them and must kneel to see the goods for sale. These artisans face a Plaza-area replete with a mix of real and fake Native art in curio shops and art galleries. MoCNA is also around the corner from the pueblo-inspired "Fanta Se" or fantasy architecture of Fred Harvey's La Fonda and, is — literally –– across the street from the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi. The building is also on the National Register of Historic Places as a prime example of Pueblo Revival Style! The whole enterprise is nothing if not complicated, and most of the exhibitions address the task of finding one's identity as an artist in this minefield.

The very gifted, multi-media, conceptual artist Nicholas Galanin successfully navigates this shifting, treacherous terrain with masterfully crafted objects made in service to his probing intelligence. The first exhibition one encounters is "Dry Ice: Alaska Native Artists and Landscape,"presenting nine multi-generational Alaskan artists cast in the role of storytellers whose subject is polar region environmental change. Front and center is Galanin's wolf rug sculpture where the pelt of amagnificent wolf rises up from its splayed hindquarters into a fully dimensional, splendid Alaskan predator. This single sculpture is at once a literal and metaphorical metamorphosis of a dead animal on the floor –– something to walk on –– transformed into an image of power and preparedness.

In the adjoining gallery is a solo exhibition of Galanin's work titled "Oblique Drift." Galanin was born in Sitka, Alaska, in 1979 to a family of Native artists. The show is named for "the uncontrollable warm ocean current that gently leads this culture off its intended course." The two series featured –– "The Imaginary Indian" and "The Curtis Legacy" –– are strong reactions to suborning Natives under the presumptions of European invaders. "The Imaginary Indian" series uses manufactured Northwest Coast masks painted and papered over by French toile designs. Toile de jouy fabric and wallpaper depicts 16th century upper-class, country-themed garden parties. In this American version of decadent aristocrats playing at being peasants, Native peoples are covered by stock images of wealth and leisure.

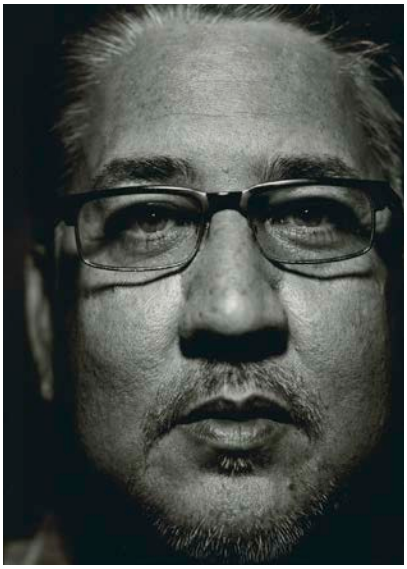
For "The Curtis Legacy" series of large-scale photographs of female nudes in a saturated 1950s porn palette, high-heeled

models pose in Indonesian-made Tlingit masks. They are conflations of globalized images first made possible by the colonial paradigm of photography, Edward Curtis's cultural preconceptions of "The Vanishing Race" and Galanin's refusal to be subjected to selfcensorship. On his website, in an "Artist Statement 2010" Galanin not only acknowledges his impatience with "Indian Art World" institutional attempts to define Native artists' works as they unfold, but his recent affirmation in the "belief that some forms of resistance often carry equal amounts of persistence ... Through education and creative risk-taking I hope to progress cultural awareness both in and out of the Indigenous world." Galanin certainly has the talent and high standards to do just that.

MoCNA, the former IAIA Museum, has truly re-envisioned itself with its six current exhibitions committed to the here and now. They cover a lot of territory and together create a synergistic ambiance that gives the museum a new tenor that is serious and stimulating. Even the hallway prods the viewer with a site-specific graffiti project led by Douglas Miles' Apache Skateboards team. Earthquake calligraphy and stencils of guntoting, tattooed Natives adorn the 35-foot expanse. Hilarious short videos by Torry Mendoza manipulate footage of Hollywood "Indians" including two stuttering and reversed iterations of Kevin Costner's "Dancing with Wolves" hokey dance around the fire titled "Stupid F**king White Man," and two remixes of the master/servant nature of the relationship between Tonto and the Lone Ranger. "Kemosabe Version 2.0" is a gay narrative that captures, repeats, and extends looks of longing between the pair. A three-gallery media installation by a collective of four artists who call themselves Postcommodity is most memorable for their gold-painted gallery that is an interactive "sonic ambush" using the sounds of Pueblo Revolt era weapons. And, in the newly dedicated Vision Project/Gallery, a space for solo exhibitions, Santa Fe-born and educated Rose Simpson inaugurates the gallery with an installation entitled "Matterings." She explores the conflict between her intellect and her intuition using clay, a family medium, to create Alice-in-Wonderland disparities.

MoCNA's strong opening lineup of exhibitions thoughtfully address our current disorienting conditions and sets a high standard for their future programs.

TOM JONES



Biography

Tom Jones Born 1964, Charlotte, North Carolina, is an Assistant Professor of Photography at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He received his MFA in Photography and a MA in Museum Studies from Columbia College in Chicago, IL. Jones' photographs examine identity and geographic place with an emphasis on the experience of American Indian communities. He is interested in the way that American Indian material culture is represented through popular/commodity culture, e.g. architecture, advertising, and self-representation.

He continues to work on an ongoing photographic essay on the contemporary life of his tribe, the Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin. He is critically assessing the romanticized representation of Native peoples in photography through the re-examination of historic pictures taken by white photographers. This reassessment questions the assumptions about identity within the American Indian culture by non-natives and Natives alike. Jones is a co-author on the book "People of the Big Voice, Photographs of Ho-Chunk Families by Charles Van Schaick, 1879-1943. Jones is the collections of the National Museum of the American Indian, Polaroid Corporation, Sprint Corporation, The Chazen Museum of Art, The Nerman Museum, and Microsoft.

The North American Landscape, 2013
Tom Jones

16 digital photographs, all photographs priced as follows, ***unless otherwise noted***:

A Cahuilla Landscape, 2013, Digital Photograph, 25" x 20", edition 2/25

A Hopi Landscape, 2013, Digital Photograph, 25" x 20", edition 2/25

A Maricopa Landscape, 2013, Digital Photograph, 25" x 20", edition 1/25

A Kwaustums Landscape, 2013, Digital Photograph, 25" x 20", edition 1/25

An Arikara Landscape, 2013, Digital Photograph, 25" x 20", edition 2/25

A Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Landscape, 2013, Digital Photograph, 25" x 20", edition 1/25

An Apache Landscape, 2013, Digital Photograph, 25" x 20", edition 1/25

A Southern Yokuts Landscape, 2013, Digital Photograph, 25" x 20", edition 1/25

A Menominee Landscape, 2013, Digital Photograph, 25" x 20", edition 1/25

A Mamalelekala Landscape, 2013, Digital Photograph, 25" x 20", edition 1/25

A Jicarilla Landscape, 2013, Digital Photograph, 25" x 20", edition 1/25

A Choctaw Landscape, 2013, Digital Photograph, 25" x 20", edition 1/25

A Ute Landscape, 2013, Digital Photograph, 25" x 20", edition 1/25

A Seminole Landscape, 2013, Digital Photograph, 25" x 20", edition 3/25

A Klamath Landscape, 2013, Digital Photograph, 25" x 20", edition 3/25

A Ho-Chunk Landscape, 2013, Digital Photograph, 25" x 20", edition 2/25

TOM JONES

Publications/Articles

MOWA: Museum of Wisconsin Art

Tom Jones: I am an Indian First and an Artist Second

PRESS RELEASE:

Madison-based artist Tom Jones is earning a national and international reputation for his powerful and insightful photographs. Jones's work deals with issues of identity within the Ho-Chunk community. This exhibition features two bodies of work: I am an Indian First and an Artist Second and The North American Landscape. The first uses plastic Indian figurines and the genre of abstraction as a metaphor for what Jones perceives as a form of identity genocide. By taking photographic scans of the bases of plastic toy Indians, Jones shows the Indian figures fighting with one another. This unique perspective and limited availability of content helps to render the complexity of the story of Native identity in the 21st century. Jones's second body of work, The North American Landscape, is a contemporary response to the early 20th-century Native American photogravures of Edward S. Curtis, whose work is in a parallel exhibition at MOWA.

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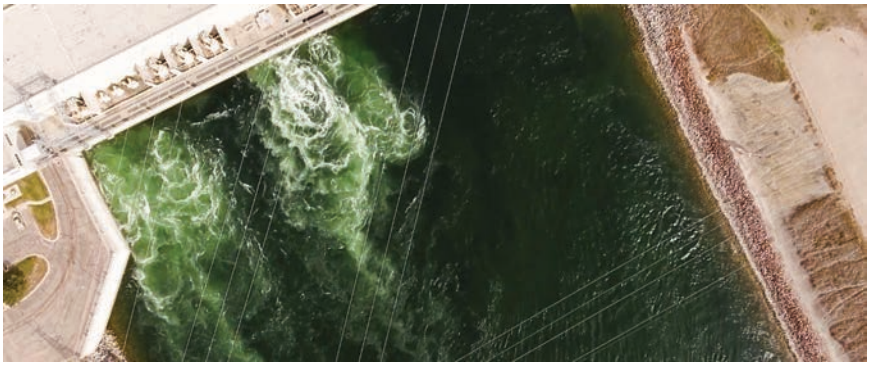
WINTER COUNT

Artists Statement

Winter Count is a union of primarily Indigenous artists cultivating awareness, respect, honor and protection for land and water, for all the living things that have lived here, and for all the living things to come. Due to the imminent threat to water and land in Standing Rock, ND we are currently focusing our collective work around this place. In 2016, we gathered audio and video at the Oceti Sakowin camp, Missouri and Cannonball Rivers, Lake Oahe, the DAPL route, the Bakken oil fields, Lake Sakakawea, and the land holding all these things. 'Today we see natural cycles of life disrupted by the extraction and transportation of what we have come to call resources from the land. The Nations of all living things are being destroyed in this pursuit. We acknowledge that the need to protect water and land is increasing in every part of the world.

As human beings we are responsible to the ancestors and descendants of all living things for how we live. So we bring together our minds as artists to cultivate gratitude and respect for water, land, and the interdependence of all things living in this world. Through our work we bind together our diverse ancestry and cultures, to honor and protect water and land. As artists we tell stories, stories learned from each other, from land, water and all our relatives. We are listening, we are watching, we are holding up reflectors, waving flags, singing the horizon and telling the story of how we are now. As artists we are making visions and asking how we can be, what we can make for our children, and our grandchildren's children.'



Crisis, 2016

Winter Count Collective

Single channel video, 3min 2sec