

PETER BLUM GALLERY

Nicholas Galanin

Art Basel Miami Beach
Galleries Booth F10

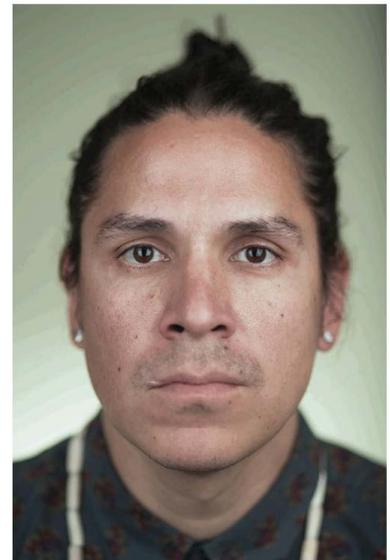


For Art Basel Miami Beach 2021, we are pleased to exhibit a solo presentation of work by Nicholas Galanin in Galleries Sector booth F10. The art fair opens with preview days on November 30 and December 1, and is open to the public December 2-4, 2021.

Examining the complexities of contemporary Indigenous identity, culture, and representation, Galanin works from his experience as a Tlingit/Unangax artist. Embedding incisive observation and reflection into his work, he aims to redress the widespread misappropriation of Indigenous visual culture, the impact of colonialism, as well as collective amnesia. Galanin reclaims narrative and creative agency, while demonstrating contemporary Indigenous art as a continually evolving practice. Galanin unites both traditional and contemporary practices, creating a synthesis of elements to navigate “the politics of cultural representation.” Speaking through multiple visual, sonic, and tactile languages, his concepts determine his processes, which include sculpture, installation, photography, video, performance, and textile-based work. This contemporary practice builds upon an Indigenous artistic continuum while celebrating the culture and its people; Galanin contributes urgent criticality and vision through resonant and layered works.

“My process of creation is a constant pursuit of freedom and vision for the present and future. I use my work to explore adaptation, resilience, survival, dream, memory, cultural resurgence, and connection and disconnection to the land.”

— Nicholas Galanin



Nicholas Galanin was born in 1979 and lives and works in Sitka, Alaska. He participated in 2021 Desert X Biennial, 2020 Biennale of Sydney, 2019 Whitney Biennial, and 2017 Venice Biennale Native American Pavilion. His work is in public collections including The Museum of Modern Art in New York, Art Institute of Chicago, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Detroit Institute of Arts, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, and Princeton University Art Museum, Cornell Art Museum, Art Bridges in Bentonville, among others. He is the 2020 recipient of the Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Award in Art, Academy of Arts and Letters, New York and a 2020 recipient of a Soros Arts Fellowship.



Nicholas Galanin
Static Broadcast, American Prayer Rug, 2020
wool, cotton
60 x 96 inches (152.4 x 243.8 cm)
(NGA20-03)



In Nicholas Galanin's *Static Broadcast, American Prayer Rug*, a woven image of static on a television set offers a critical analysis of contemporary American culture's relationship with white noise. Although prayer rugs typically serve as movable sites of devotion, this one probes American culture's relationship with white noise, an acoustic vibration sometimes used to drown out unwanted sounds. Galanin points out that "whiteness as a construct has been used historically throughout the world to obliterate the voices and rights of generations of people and cultures regardless of complexion." A version of this work was exhibited at the 2019 Whitney Biennial in New York.



Nicholas Galanin

The Imaginary Indian (Totem Pole), 2016

wood, acrylic and floral wallpaper

totem: 80 1/2 x 51 1/2 x 11 inches (204.5 x 130.8 x 27.9 cm)

wallpaper: dimensions variable

(NGA16-05)



In *The Imaginary Indian (Totem Pole)*, Nicholas Galanin juxtaposes the form of a carved totem overlaid with Victorian Era floral designs. He both confronts viewers with their own assumptions about Indigenous art and reflects on the attempted assimilation of Indigenous culture by Europeans, thereby asserting contemporary Tlingit art as continually evolving. He comments, "This is despite the resistance of individuals and institutions that would limit Indigenous culture based on assumptions about Indigenous peoples prior to interaction with Europeans. The fetishization of early contact and pre-contact Tlingit art has resulted in skeletal, ghost-like objects in gallery and museum collections. *The Imaginary Indian* points to the romanticization of these works as a form of colonization of culture, dependent on devaluing current cultural artistic production. The works reflect the attempt to disappear the Indigenous into the European through hand-painting the surface of the pole to match the Victorian era floral wallpaper."



Nicholas Galanin

Things Are Looking Native, Native's Looking Whiter, 2012
giclée

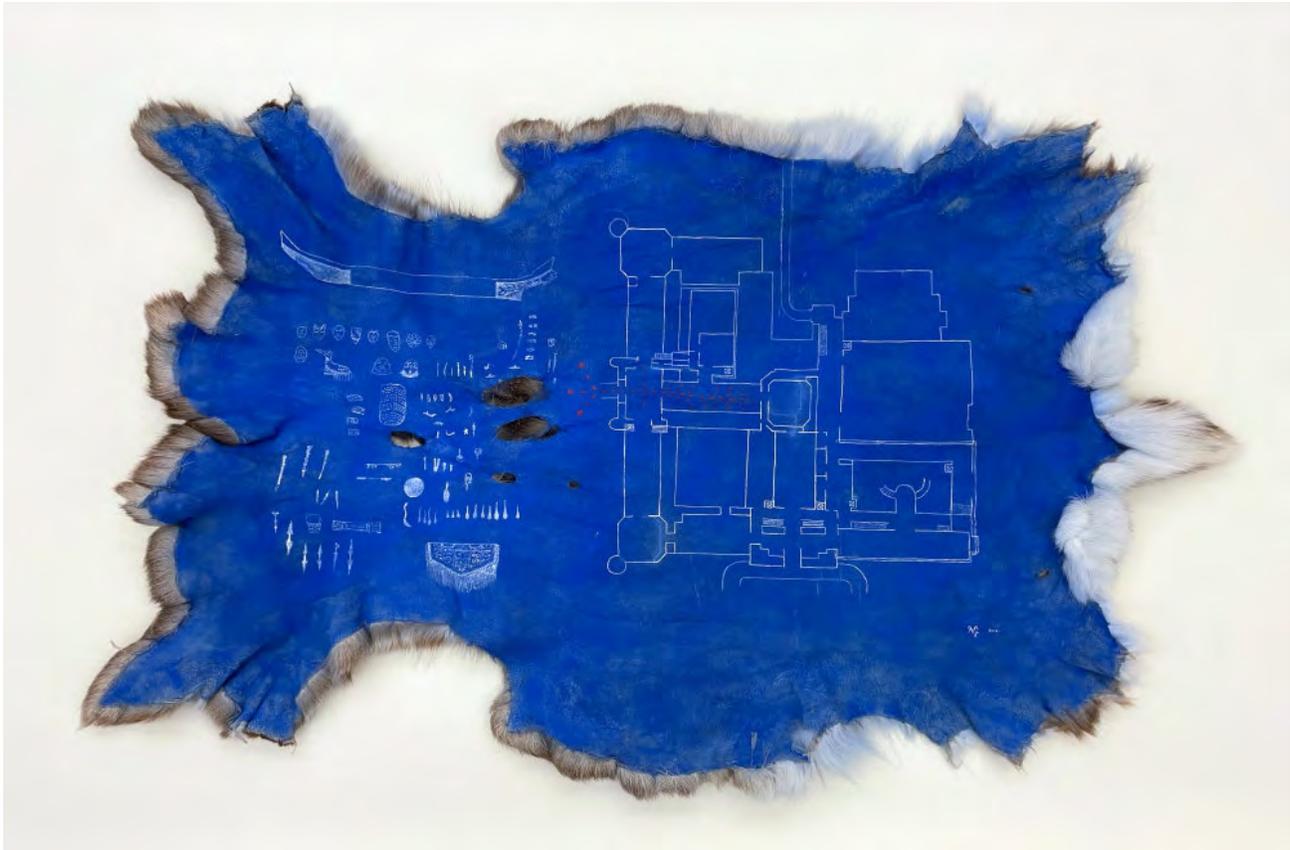
42 x 30 3/4 inches (106.7 x 78.1 cm)

Edition of 5 + 2 AP

(NGA12-026)



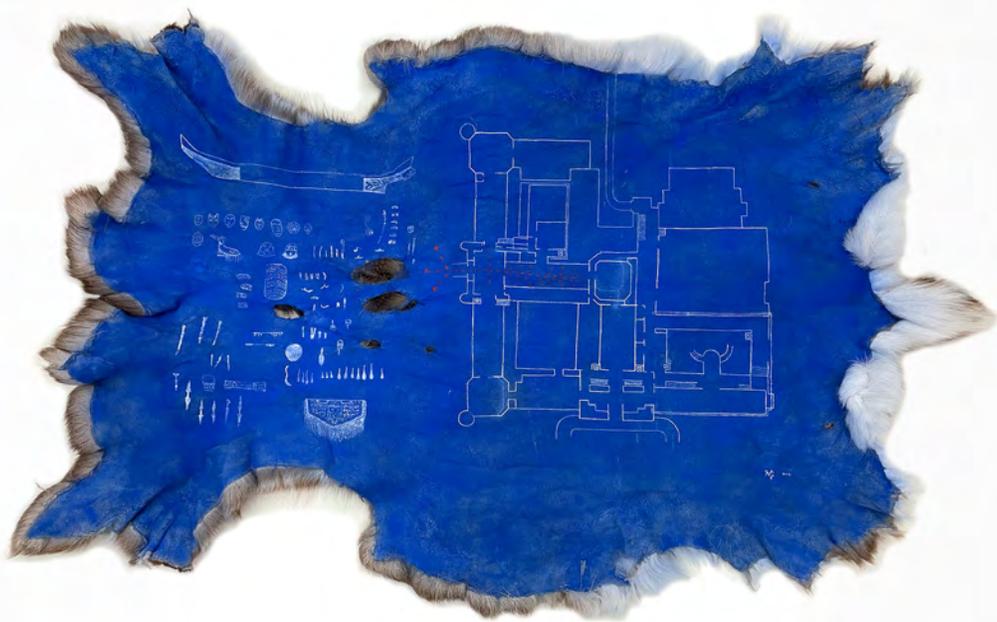
In *Things Are Looking Native, Natives Are Looking Whiter*, Nicholas Galanin juxtaposes two iconic images. One image is of a Hopi woman wearing her hair in the squash blossom, or butterfly whorl style worn by unmarried Hopi women. This Edward Curtis photo documented Indigenous people throughout the West in the early 1900s and supported the false notion that Indigenous people and ways of life were disappearing. The second image is taken from a promotional photo for *Star Wars*, depicting a Caucasian female, science-fiction character wearing her hair in a style mimicking the squash blossom or butterfly whorl. As Galanin asserts, “In borrowing from an Indigenous aesthetic, the image projects settler claims to Indigenous culture into the future. The title speaks to consumer culture’s desire to claim ‘Native inspired’ looks, while simultaneously refusing Indigenous people the agency to define Indigenous culture in an increasingly hybrid world.”



Nicholas Galanin

Architecture of return, escape (American Museum of Natural History), 2021

pigment and acrylic on deer hide
32 x 61 inches (81.3 x 154.9 cm)
(NGA21-15)



This work is from a series of hide paintings for guiding the escape of Indigenous remains and objects in non-Indigenous institutions to their home communities. Entitled, *Architecture of Return, Escape*, the series of hide paintings depict a floor plan referencing a visitor's guide as well as blue architectural blueprints, this example of the American Museum of Natural History in New York. Of the few objects held in display cases, many more (including human remains and ceremonial objects not intended for public view) are held in museum archives. As Galanin asserts, "The cost and processes required for Indigenous communities to travel and visit these archives limits access to cultural knowledge and inheritance and continues the removal of the objects from their land and people. While institutions control the environmental conditions, they are unable to adequately care for these objects in cultural or spiritual ways. The objects themselves are unwilling visitors to the museum, and the work builds an escape route and a vision for reunification of cultural inheritance with community. The work serves as a reminder of the past, and as a plan for a good way forward. Stolen objects, human remains, and works sold under duress can now return home for their own health, for the health of the communities that created them, and for the health of the communities that took them. "In Nicholas Galanin's *Land Swipe*, a deer hide is painted with lines based on the New York City Transit Authority's subway map representing the limited green spaces and subway routes on Lenapehoking, Lenape land, the area that New York City currently occupies. This was a location for trade among thriving Indigenous communities, while hide paintings have been used to record and remember events of significance. The "swipe" refers to the theft of land, hunting, and fishing rights from Indigenous people, while also referencing the "swipe" of land from low-income residents and communities of color in the city. The process of pushing Indigenous people off the land is repeated through the gentrification of the land the city occupies, pushing people of color further from access to employment and educational opportunities, as the cost of living, rent, and commuting increases.



Nicholas Galanin

Never Forget, 2021

C-print mounted on Dibond, walnut frame

51 3/4 x 78 3/4 inches (131.4 x 200 cm)

Edition of 10

(NGA21-01.10)



For Nicholas Galanin, memory and land are inevitably entwined. The 45-foot letters of *Never Forget* reference the Hollywood sign, which initially spelled out HOLLYWOODLAND and was erected to promote a whites-only development. Its timing coincided with a development in Palm Springs that also connected to the film industry: Studio contracts limited actors' travel, contributing to the city's rise as playground and refuge of the stars. Meanwhile, the white settler mythology of America as the land of the free, home of the brave was promoted in the West, and the landscape was cinematized through the same lens. *Never Forget* asks settler landowners to participate in the work by transferring land titles and management to local Indigenous communities. The work is a call to action and a reminder that land acknowledgments become only performative when they do not explicitly support the land back movement. Not only does the work transmit a shockwave of historical correction, but also promises to do so globally through social media.



Nicholas Galanin
Land Swipe, 2019
acrylic on deer hide
44 x 36 inches (111.8 x 91.4 cm)
(NGA19-03)





Nicholas Galanin

Woman, 2016

wood carving and hair

42 x 8 1/2 x 4 inches (106.7 x 21.6 x 10.2 cm)

(NGA16-03)



In *Woman*, Nicholas Galanin splinters a mask in what appears to be a destructive gesture. However, this act is not directed at the cultural production of Tlingit people, the materials are masks made by Indonesians for predominantly non-Indigenous markets. The exclusion of Tlingit peoples as participants in either the creation or collection of these objects is terminated in the act. As Galanin intercedes, he dismantles the masks and forms a new mask from the resulting woodchips, thereby reclaiming agency through this new creation. This narrative is furthered by the title that references the traumatic imprisonment of Indigenous children. In 1879, the United States opened the Carlisle Indian Industrial School under General Henry Pratt's coined slogan, "Kill the Indian, Save the Man." Indigenous children were taken from their families and subjected to forced assimilation programs that included corporal punishment for speaking Indigenous language or practicing cultural rites.



Nicholas Galanin

Welcome, 2009

polar bear hide and sea otter hide
36 x 48 inches (91.4 x 121.9 cm)
(NGA09-01)



Installed on the floor, the mat is polar bear hide with otter sewn in, forming the word "Welcome" in English. As Galanin describes: "The survival of polar bears and sea otters has been endangered through settler hunting practices and human driven climate change. The mat draws attention to the fact that neither the sea otter nor the polar bear is welcome in colonial or settler models of living beyond trophies or sources of trade capital. The welcome extended to Indigenous life in the Americas by colonial and subsequently settler states has been as material and labor in creating the welcome mat itself; an object to be stepped on by who are actually welcomed to enter and participate with full rights and agency. The mat is made using Indigenous technology and materials, and also points to the initial welcome extended by the land and it's peoples during early contact prior to the abuse, violence and oppression extended by colonizing nations. The work speaks to sources of life and sustenance, to land and to respect."



Nicholas Galanin

What Have We Become? Gold, 2017

carved book with gold leaf

8 1/2 x 5 x 4 1/2 inches (21.6 x 12.7 x 11.4 cm)

(NGA17-01)





Nicholas Galanin

What Have We Become?, 2017

carved book

8 1/2 x 5 x 4 1/2 inches (21.6 x 12.7 x 11.4 cm)

(NGA17-02)



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Nicholas Galanin

What Have We Become? Basic assumptions, 2017

carved book

11 3/4 x 19 x 2 1/2 inches (29.8 x 48.3 x 6.3 cm)

(NGA17-03)

By constructing enigmatic sculptures of masklike faces from the pages of 1970s anthropological books, Nicholas Galanin examines the politics of cultural representation and contemporary Indigenous identity. In this series, the materiality of the sculptures is significant pointing to a construct of Tlingit culture by Europeans. Commenting on the outsider's perspective of Tlingit culture, Galanin notes, "I have found myself reading Western literature, often written from a foreign perspective, in which my culture has been digested and recycled back to me." Galanin recognizes the importance of literature as documentation and is also overtly conscious of its biases in presenting "a dilemma in which old and new, customary and non-customary, overlap and collide. It is at this point of collision that a new dynamic and tension is being negotiated."



Nicholas Galanin
Indian Children's Bracelet, 2014-18
hand-engraved iron
3 x 7 1/2 x 1/2 inches (7.6 x 19.1 x 1.3 cm)
(NGA18-14)



In *Indian Children's Bracelet*, hand engravings adorn small handcuffs, like those used to forcibly remove Indigenous children from their families during the Residential School Period in the United States and Canada. Tlingit carvers began engraving copper bracelets to replace clan tattoos when the practice of tattoo was forcibly removed from communities by the church and European colonizers. The practice of jewelry making by Indigenous people of the Northwest Coast is one of cultural preservation, adaptation, and survival. As Galanin states, "These 'bracelets' embody the shared history of European colonization and settlement of the Americas as experienced by Indigenous communities, despite the amnesia of settler states in recognizing history. The work suggests the complexities of the desire for Tlingit art and simultaneous rejection of Tlingit people's realities and experiences by non-native consumers." In engraving these bracelets Galanin claims them as part of his history, acknowledging and honoring the resilience and survival of the generations affected by the weight of wearing these "bracelets".



Nicholas Galanin

Get Comfortable, 2012

C-print mounted on Dibond

32 x 48 inches (81.3 x 121.9 cm)

Edition of 10

(NGA12-07.10)



The photograph *Get Comfortable* was shot in Galanin's home community. As he describes: "The altered sign spray focuses the viewer on LAND, a reminder that the land and people Indigenous to it remain connected regardless of the discomfort this may cause nations and communities built on colonial legacies of attempted genocide. The work raises questions about comfort, pointing to the lack of comfort afforded to Indigenous communities during the invasion of the Americas by colonial states and during the subsequent permanent settlement of the land. The title *Get Comfortable* addresses communities that continue to disenfranchise and disregard Indigenous people, asserting the continued presence of Indigenous life connected to the land. Read by Indigenous communities standing next to the artist, it is a reminder of presence as well, of comfort gained from land, of resistance to erasure, of responsibility to land. The work also acknowledges discomfort, a reminder that Indigenous communities have not been comfortable for generations; that cultural amnesia, and cultural violence are maintained through the renaming of the land. By intervening actively, Galanin encourages presence, resistance and re-Indigenizing our concepts of place."



Nicholas Galanin

The violence of blood quantum, half human (animal), half human (animal) after James Luna, 2019
diptych, portrait of the artist; both halves of torn archival digital print

20 1/2 x 15 1/2 inches (52.1 x 39.4 cm), each

Edition of 10
(NGA19-2310)



This self portrait torn vertically in half, one eye swollen black and blue, reflects multiple layers of violence enacted through religious indoctrination and state enforcement of division between humans and non-human animals and by further dividing humans from each other. Half human (animal) references the dehumanizing language and policies used to justify genocide and violence towards Indigenous and non-European people in the Americas. The work's title asserts all humans as a single type of animal, resisting non-Indigenous epistemologies that espouse human supremacy and false moral division from non-human life. The work specifically targets Blood Quantum, a colonial and settler legislated genocide against Indigenous communities. The policy of tracking and measuring Indian Blood was (and continues to be) a fundamental tool in removing Indigenous people from "legal" claim to live, farm, hunt and fish on ancestral lands throughout North America. Simultaneously African blood was tracked and measured down to a single drop; not to erase the African, but to retain oppressive claims of ownership under colonial and subsequently settler law. The diptych is a record of Galanin's act of tearing his own image in two. The internalization of Blood Quantum legislation by Indigenous people and communities causes Indigenous people of mixed heritage to tear themselves into pieces daily. The work asserts that belief in, and enforcement of, the non-Indigenous concept of Blood Quantum slowly erodes and erases connection to Indigenous Identity and culture and perpetuates violence, while damaging the rights and responsibilities of people descended from Indigenous Nations. (After James Luna's Half Indian/Half Mexican, 1991).



Nicholas Galanin

Let Them Enter Dancing and Showing Their Faces: Shaman, 2018

monotype and gold leaf on paper

21 x 30 inches (53.3 x 76.2 cm)

(NGA18-01)





Nicholas Galanin

Let Them Enter Dancing and Showing Their Faces: Thief, 2018

monotype and gold leaf on paper

30 x 21 inches (76.2 x 53.3 cm)

(NGA18-09)





Nicholas Galanin

Everything We've Ever Been, Everything We Are Right Now - North, 2019

monotype and gold leaf on paper

30 x 22 inches (76.2 x 55.9 cm)

(NGA19-05)





Nicholas Galanin
Dreaming in English (shadow dance), 2021
monotype and gold leaf on paper
30 x 22 inches (76.2 x 55.9 cm)
(NGA21-03)





Nicholas Galanin
Dreaming in English (written in robe), 2021
monotype on paper
30 x 22 inches (76.2 x 55.9 cm)
(NGA21-06)





Nicholas Galanin
Familiar Faces 4, 2013
monotype on paper
12 1/4 x 9 3/8 inches (31.1 x 23.8 cm)
(NGA13-04)





Nicholas Galanin
Familiar Faces 8, 2013
monotype on paper
12 3/8 x 9 1/2 inches (31.4 x 24.1 cm)
(NGA13-06)





Nicholas Galanin
Familiar Faces 10, 2013
monotype on paper
13 3/8 x 9 1/4 inches (33.8 x 23.3 cm)
(NGA13-07)



In Galanin's monotypes, the artist's hand as much as Tlingit culture's history shapes the representation. Each monotype bears the imprint of a story of its creation, not as myth, but as lived experience and through memory—the marks showing the spontaneity of a drawing with the enduring qualities of a print. The imagery is central to Tlingit life and references and mimics visual movements of a customary aesthetic. However, Galanin's contemporary interpretation forms a creative continuum that combines past with present. Monotypes are included in the collections of such museums as The Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Alaska State Museum, Juneau, AK; The Detroit Institute of Fine Arts, MI; Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX.



PETER BLUM GALLERY

Nicholas Galanin
*The Value of Sharpness:
When It Falls*

Art Basel Miami Beach
Meridians Booth M12

Peter Blum Gallery is pleased to exhibit for Art Basel Miami Beach's Meridians Sector the installation by Nicholas Galanin entitled, *The Value of Sharpness: When It Falls*. The work will be on view from November 30 - December 4, 2021 at the Miami Beach Convention Center.

The work of artist Nicholas Galanin (b. 1979, Sitka, Alaska) engages with the complexities of Indigenous identity, culture, and representation. His Tlingit/Unangax background informs a conceptual practice that includes the installation: *The Value of Sharpness: When It Falls*.

Comprised of an arc of 60 porcelain hatchets suspended mid-air, covered in Dutch Delftware faience. Galanin describes the hatchets as fragile, decorative representations of powerful tools. They speak to the restriction of Indigenous sovereignty through colonial/settler violence and legislation tolerant of only fragile and decorative representations of Indigenous people. The blade of each hatchet is edged with gold luster, supposedly another decorative motif. However, this is also a reminder of the value in sharpness, of Indigenous technology, and the capacity to create and destroy. Furthermore, the power of the hatchets is not in their ability to split wood or bone, but in their ability to shatter as decorative representations.”

Delftware patterns date back to the 17th century when Holland began producing less expensive imitations of Chinese porcelain covered in Dutch appropriations of Chinese (and later Japanese) ceramic motifs popular at the time. Galanin's use of material and form layers interwoven histories of theft, violence, and erasure; embedded in objects that speak to the continuing legacies of colonial desires, and their precarity.

Nicholas Galanin (b. 1979) lives and works in Sitka, Alaska. He earned his BFA at London Guildhall University and his MFA at Massey University in Wellington, New Zealand. Galanin participated in 2021 Desert X Biennial, 2020 Biennale of Sydney, 2019 Whitney Biennial, and 2017 Venice Biennale Native American Pavilion. His work is in public collections including The Museum of Modern Art in New York, Art Institute of Chicago, Detroit Institute of Arts, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, and Princeton University Art Museum among others. He is the 2020 recipient of the Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Award in Art, Academy of Arts and Letters, New York and a 2020 recipient of a Soros Arts Fellowship.

The Value of Sharpness: When It Falls was exhibited in 2019 at Open Source in Brooklyn, New York, a non-profit arts organization, and then exhibited in the touring exhibition titled *Art for a New Understanding: Native Voices, 1950s to Now* at both the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, NC (August 29, 2019 – January 12, 2020) and the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, Memphis, TN (February 22 – May 17, 2020).

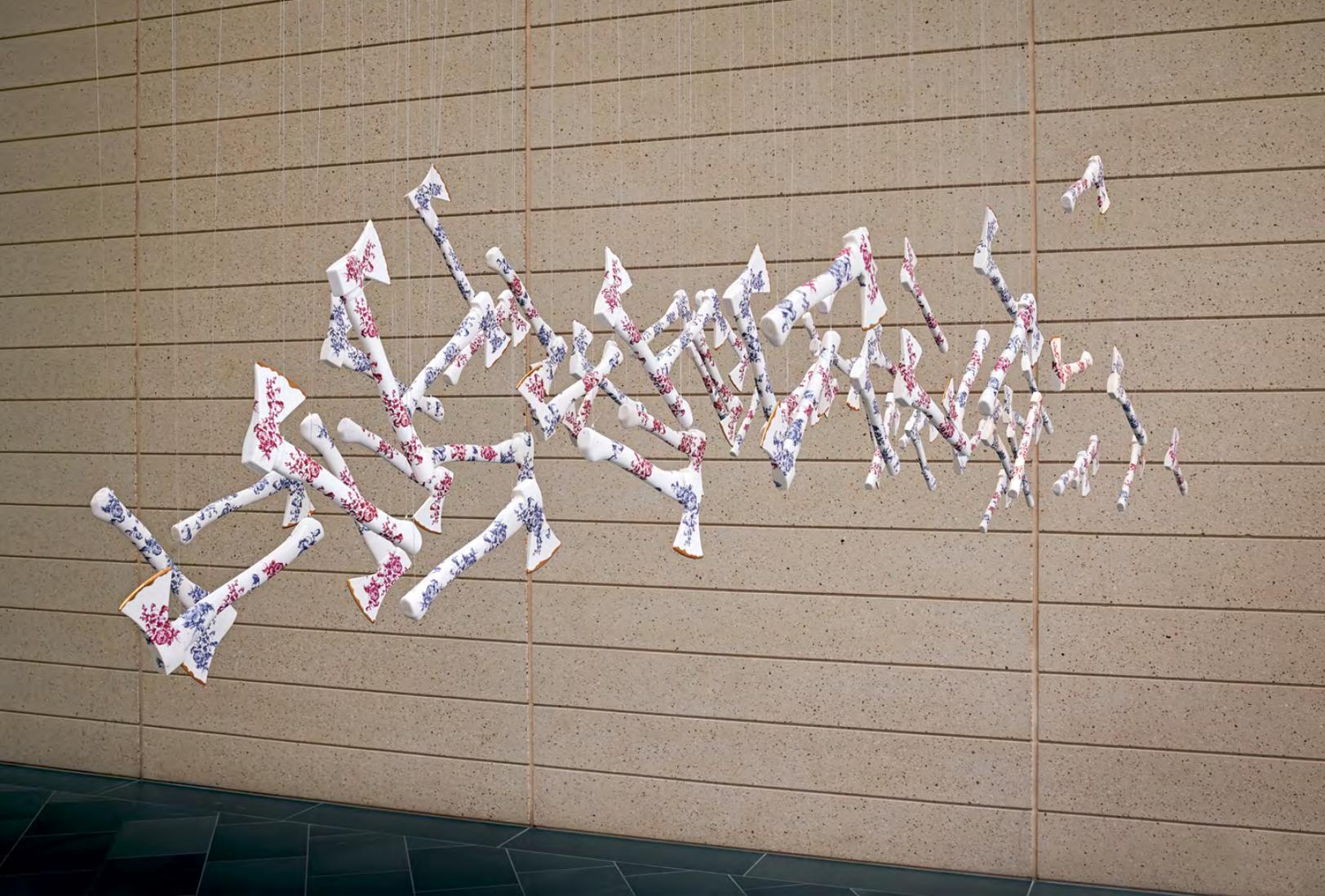


Nicholas Galanin

The Value of Sharpness: When it Falls, 2019

60 porcelain hatchets

13 1/4 x 5 x 1 inches (33.7 x 12.7 x 2.5 cm) each; installation variable



Installation view of *Art for a New Understanding: Native Voices, 1950s to Now*, Nasher Museum, Duke University, NC, 2019-20

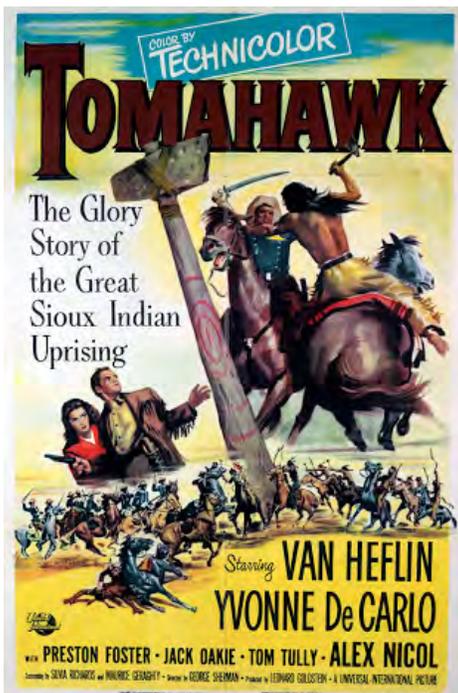
"The capability of the hatchets is not
in their ability to split wood or bone,
but in their ability to shatter."

— Nicholas Galanin



Installation view of *Art for a New Understanding: Native Voices, 1950s to Now*, Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, TN, 2020

60 white porcelain hatchets, patterned with red and blue florals, tumble end over end in a shallow arc. Suspended from the ceiling by threads of clear fishing line, they fly as if thrown. Rising from chest height, the visitor can just barely walk under the peak of their crest before the axes fall and come to a stop at eye level. Their shadows dance on the walls as the hatchets sway on their strings, the angular shades appearing out the corner of one's eye like another crowd of blades thrown from out of sight. Walking around the installation, one cannot help but step directly into the arrested trajectory and look head-long into the drove of spinning earthenware. Staring down the gilded edges, the light shines off their delftware glaze, a glimmering hint at their true fragility.



"The particular style of hatchet was intentionally chosen to evoke the tomahawk, the stereotypical weapon of choice in popular imaginings of the 'Indian.' The ambiguity in the installation between hatchet and tomahawk, tool and weapon, plays on the assumptions, stereotypes, and fetishes that the viewer brings and accordingly must confront from their own position."

— Christopher Green, "Nicholas Galanin: The Value of Sharpness: When It Falls," *The Brooklyn Rail*, March 2019



Installation view of Nicholas Galanin, *The Value of Sharpness: When it Falls, Open Source*, Brooklyn, 2019

"These cultural transmutations, whereby a cheap imitation acquires the status of Indigenous art, are a hallmark of Galanin's practice and are insightful commentaries on the commodification of Indigenous culture. The delaware hatchets are likewise outsourced, made by a non-Native porcelain studio based in Colorado after a commercial hatchet design that provided the mold. Thus Galanin, in a Duchampian move, doubly transforms the non-Native products, the readymade commercial design and the Colorado-sourced porcelain, into a conceptual work of contemporary and 'authentic' Indigenous art."

— Christopher Green, "Nicholas Galanin: The Value of Sharpness: When It Falls," *The Brooklyn Rail*, March 2019

