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NEW MEXICO: THE NEW INDIGENITY
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PENELOPE UMBRICO
JONATHAN FABER

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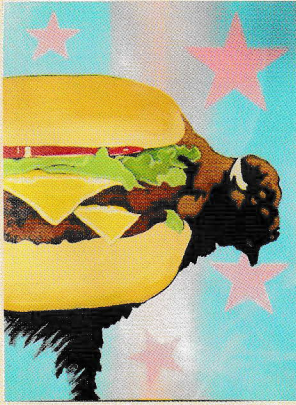


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Santa Fe Summer 2016: The New Indigeneity

Santa Fe's contemporary arts are experiencing a welcome expansion of identity—in the words of Iroquois leader and thinker John Mohawk, "it's about re-indigenizing the peoples of the planet to the planet."

By Jon Carver

The history of Northern New Mexico's rich tradition in the arts stretches back across millennia. The origin of art in New Mexico is part of the history of the Aztecs and the Anasazi, the Mimbres culture, and many others. It resides in the incredible abstract pottery, textiles, jewelry and basketry forms of the Tewa tribes and their many neighbors, among them the Hopi, Dine, Apache and Ute. The role of art in Amerindian cultures is as varied as the hundreds of distinct nations that resided on both continents prior to genocide, but placing a special value on art and ornament in life and ceremony seems to be a pan-indigenous, if not human, constant.

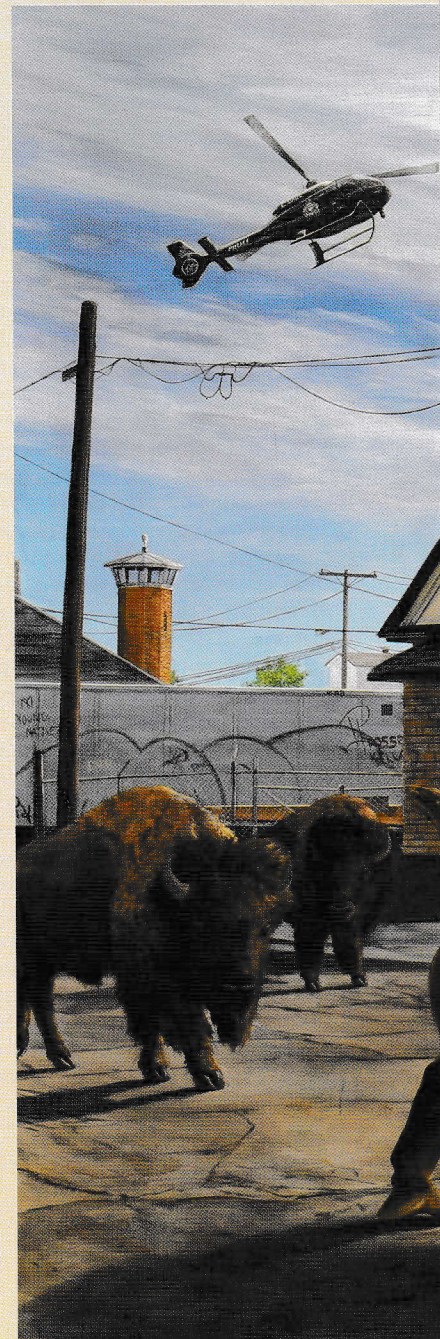
New Spain brought *retablo* painting to the region, a direct descendent of Byzantium's icon tradition, and the carving of *revultos*, or saints, a tradition with roots in Romanesque Saxony, uniquely inflected by Spanish Catholicism, that still flourishes in Chimayo and Taos today. In the early 20th century, Euro-Modernists enchanted by the monumental beauty of the land, light and color arrived in the form of the legendary Taos painters, and Santa Fe's *Cinco Pintores* (see sidebar) who built some of the early adobe homes (now galleries) still standing on and around Canyon Road. Today this is the oldest of the City Different's suddenly proliferating contemporary art centers.

At the galleries, Tansey Contemporary opened the season with a show of sharp, Pop-inflected paintings by Onondaga and Nez Perce artist Frank Buffalo Hyde, while at the sumptuous Peters Projects, "Failure of Modernity" an exhibition of urban narrative paintings inundated with Renaissance and cubist visitations, by Kent Monkman, a Canadian First Nation painter of Cree and Irish ancestry, blew everyone away this spring. The path is becoming

clear: the spiral return of indigenous artists to the center of contemporary creativity within the region is at hand. Or as a Lakota colleague at the Institute for American Indian Arts says, with trickster/teacher slyness, "Time to circle the wagons!"

The 21st century has been described as the century of the American Indian, predicting the Deleuzian bounce-back against the global corporate capitalism that arose with the African slave trade and European imperialism. While Santa Fe's reputation as an art market has long rested upon honest (and not so honest) trade in traditional Native art forms, the sea change that has been happening since Dorothy Dunn's Studio School became the Native-run Institute of American Indian Arts, and which seems to have reached a tipping point this spring and summer (the chrysalis stage is over) is the incredible rise in the number of Native artists spreading their wings in Santa Fe's contemporary art scene, and the energy that is bringing to the region.

An excellent example is the upcoming exhibition by IAIA graduate and Meow Wolf co-conspirator, Cannupa Hanska Luger at the Center for Contemporary Art, opening July first. Conceptualist-sculptor Hanska Luger also shows at Sandy Zane's newly sponsored venture, form & concept, on Guadalupe Street, and if his piece at their packed



"BUFFALO BURGER STUDY," 2014
Frank Buffalo Hyde

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 40" X 30"
PHOTO: COURTESY TANSEY CONTEMPORARY

"SEEING RED," 2014

Kent Monkman

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 84" X 126"
PHOTO: COURTESY PETERS PROJECTS

"The great crime in this land was not that the natives had their language and culture beaten out of them in boarding schools—the great crime was that the people who came here did not adopt the culture of the land."

—Elder as recounted by Mi'kmaq video artist Mike MacDonald





inaugural opening is any indication, the CCA exhibition should be well worth viewing. Hanska Luger's white-washed effigy, levitating "Indian-style" among an array of consumer objects, including various sex toys presented as mock native "artifacts" with highly amusing captions explaining their largely satirical cultural functions. This puts him in the circle with James Luna, Erica Lord, and many other first nation aesthetes who employ a sharpened sense of irony and cultural critique to take aim at the moving target of identity within post-capitalist society.

So what is it to identify as indigenous in 2016? Hanska Luger's work is as much Maurizio Cattelan as it is Mandan, as much Kurt Vonnegut as Hidatsa or Lakota, ethnicities that the artist claims as "genetic elements" in his make-up, along with Norwegian, Austrian and Arikara. Just as Indigeneity is changing the landscape of contemporary art in Santa Fe, so contemporaneity is changing the definition of indigenous as well. This is visible on an institutional level. Opening mid-July, SITE Santa Fe, the *kunsthalle* with it all, has been a leading force behind the growing indigenous presence in the arts internationally and continues through their 2016 biennial. Featuring over 30 artists from 16 countries spanning from Nunavut in northern Canada to the US, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina, as well as 11 new commissions, the show marks the second iteration of SITE's reimagined biennial series, with a special focus on art from the Americas. The exhibition's lovely title—"much wider than a line"—is derived from Nishnaabeg writer Leanne Simpson's account of intertribal borders representing land-based relationship networks between different cultural groups. Thematically, the show addresses the interconnectedness of contemporary pan-American art practice, while acknowledging both the influence of colonial legacies and indigenous vernaculars.

Scholar of Indigeneity, Stephen Wall, an enrolled member of the White Earth Reservation and Chair of Indigenous Studies at IAIA has written eloquently in northern New Mexico's *Green Fire Times* about the need for a "New Indigeneity" in an article titled *Indigenous as a Way of Life*, based in part in his reading of John Mohawk, the great Iroquois leader and thinker on the subject of "re-indigenizing the peoples of the planet to the planet." The word 'indigenous' has traditionally been used to refer to those people who inhabited a region prior to colonization, diaspora, and/or forced migration. It encompasses concepts of sacred natural places, plants and animals, and a reverent connection to ancestral homelands. Wall proposes a new definition that doesn't so much replace the old one, but rather expands upon it. "... *Indigeneity in New Mexico is not defined solely through a racial or ethnic lens but is based on the practices and ethics that flow from the land itself and ensure the sustainability of life. Those who act in a manner attuned to that flow might be considered indigenous.*" He goes on to describe New Indigeneity as "a commitment to place and to the future of our communities in that place."

SITE Santa Fe's relationship with both the International Folk Art Market and Art Santa Fe for their yearly "Trifecta" are examples of the kinds of reciprocity that are indeed much wider than mere lines on a map between territories. The Folk Art Museum houses one of the most astounding collections in the world, and mounts the best world cultural exhibitions in town. Every summer, people flock from around the

OPPOSITE:

Cannupa Hanska Luger

CERAMIC, PAPER, FELT, PRICE TAGS, BANDANA, 65" x 97" x 61"

PHOTO: COURTESY FORM & CONCEPT

LEFT, FROM TOP:

"SISTAH PARADISE GREAT WALL OF FIRE CROCHET REVIVAL TENT"

1993- PRESENT, **Xenobia Bailey**, MIXED MEDIA, DIMENSIONS VARIABLE

PHOTO: COURTESY THE ARTIST AND SITE SANTA FE

"THE MORRIS MINIATURE CIRCUS" (DETAIL), c. 1930s-1970

W.J. "Windy" Morris

COLLECTION MUSEUM OF INTERNATIONAL FOLK ART

"DISEMBODIED," 2016, **Cannupa Hanska Luger**

CERAMIC, WOOL, YARN DIMENSIONS, 20" x 20" x 20"

PHOTO: COURTESY CCA CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS



planet to buy and sell fantastic wares at The International Folk Art Market, running July 8-10. Through what can certainly be described as a “commitment to the future of community” through a global network, the market not only brings amazing culture and art to Santa Fe, but also acts as a source of direct funding—over \$20 million since inception—to indigenous artists, families, and communities worldwide. This year’s fair will feature over 200 artists from 60 different nations.

The Southwestern Association for Indian Arts, or SWAIA—pronounced SWHY-ya—as in “s’why ya going to Santa Fe this summer?” fills up the streets near the downtown Plaza on August 20-21 with Santa Fe’s annual Indian Market, which includes the Contemporary Indian Market and the increasingly popular Indigenous Fashion Show. This longstanding event has been the traditional backbone of both Indian Arts sales in the region, a major source of annual income for some artists and families, and a big reason why New Mexico’s capital city stays on the map as such a robust art market.

With a plethora of participants, alternatives to establishment options inevitably arise. Check out IFAM on August 18-20 behind SITE Santa Fe in the Santa Fe Railyard for a sense of the New Indigeneity in action. This year is the second incarnation of the youthful and eloquently acronym-ed Indigenous Fine Art Market, which is Native-owned, and includes not only work by contemporary visual artists, but encompasses performance and music as well. IFAM is forward-focused on what it means to be Native in the here and now.

Institutional support for Santa Fe’s New Indigeneity in the Arts is rising too. Not surprisingly, MoCNA, or the Museum of Contemporary Native Arts is a bedrock element of the nation’s indigenous art

infrastructure and deserves praise for years of groundwork in the area. The Museum’s extensive permanent collection is housed in a state-of-the-art facility at IAIA and used as a teaching aid for Museum Studies students. The current exhibition, “Lloyd Kiva New: Art, Design, and Influence” (up through July 31) honors the legacy of Cherokee artist and designer, and IAIA Professor and Administrator Lloyd Kiva New for the innovations he brought to Native Art and education. Composed of works taken largely from his personal collection, the exhibition is an excellent opportunity to assess his original contributions to both the histories of Indigenous Art and Modernist fashion design through a wide variety of forms, from beautifully patterned textiles, to leather handbags and cast metal jewelry.

Opening August 19 and running through the end of the year, MoCNA then offers a retrospective of the work of outstanding painter Rick Bartow of the Mad River Band of the Wiyot tribe. Bartow passed this spring at the age of 69. He is known especially for his powerfully expressive, animistically inspired paintings, and his *Cedar Mill Pole* sculpture inspired by his work with Māori artist John Bevan Ford, which had its first showing at the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden at the White House in 1997. His expressionistic shaman’s images are part of a post-modern animism that includes artists like Susan Rothenberg, Kiki Smith, and James Havard.

BELOW:

“CREATION OF CROW,” 2014, **Rick Bartow**, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 36" X 48"

PHOTO: COURTESY THE ARTIST AND FORELOCK GALLERY

OPPOSITE:

“A PORTRAIT OF PITSEOLAK,” 2003-04

Annie Pootoogook (Inuit), PENCIL CRAYON, INK, 26" X 20"

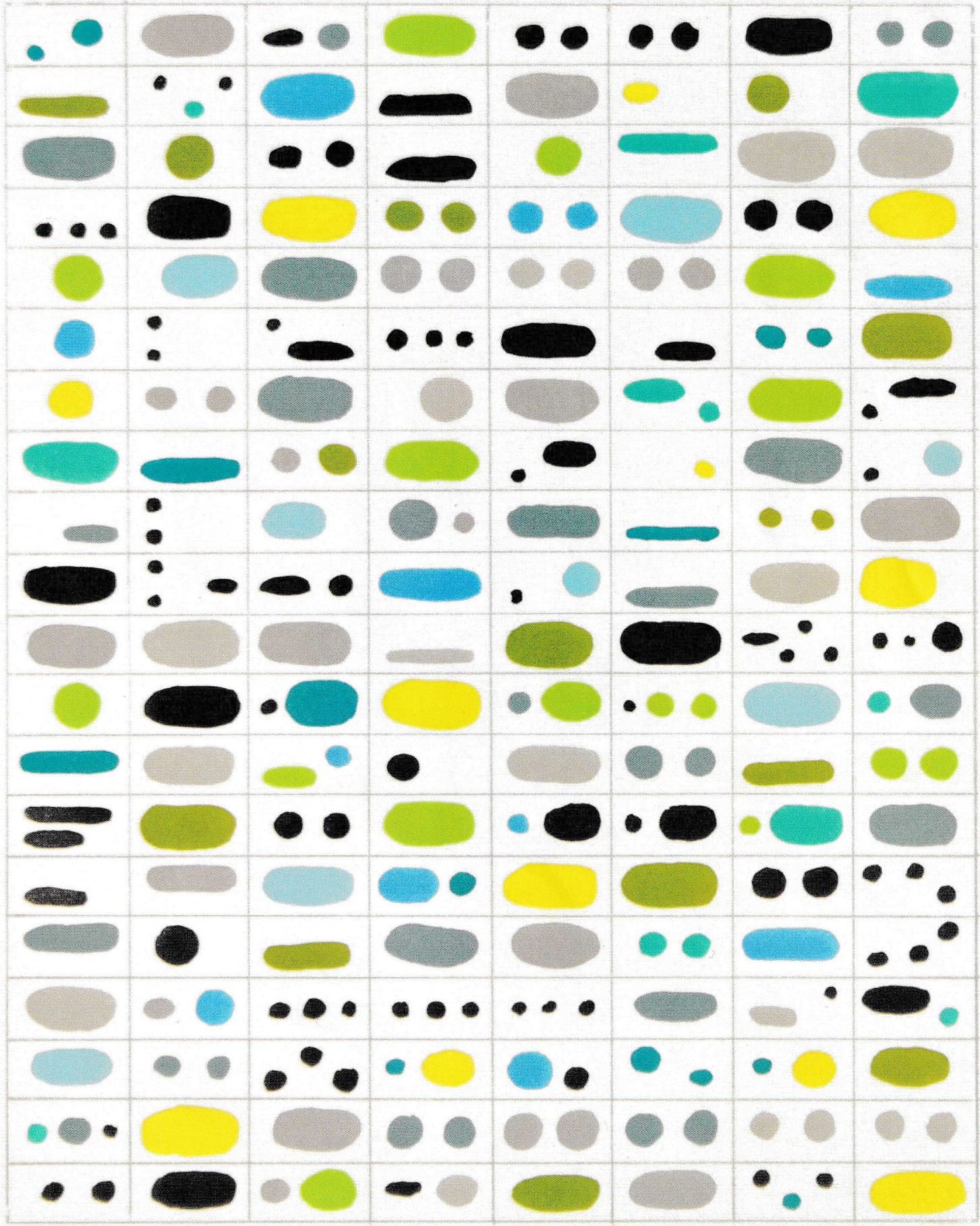
PHOTO: COURTESY EDWARD J. GUARINO COLLECTION





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Also well worth viewing at MoCNA is the small but mighty exhibition, *Akunñittinni: A Kinngait Family Portrait*. This intimate exhibition of prints and drawings by Pitseolak Ashoona, her daughter Napachie Pootoogook, and her granddaughter Annie Pootoogook is curated by Andrea R. Hanley, and movingly charts pivotal and personal moments in the lives of three Inuk women. Traditional elements of native visual languages interact with and absorb outside imagistic influences over three generations in a profoundly satisfying example of the perhaps paradoxical fact that cultural meanings, values and languages (visual or otherwise) last, like everything in the natural world, for only as long as they incorporate and allow change and (r)evolution.

Stephen Wall writes, “... Indigeneity in New Mexico is not defined solely through a racial or ethnic lens but is based on the practices and ethics that flow from the land itself and ensure the sustainability of life. Those who act in a manner attuned to that flow might be considered indigenous.”

Another grand lesson of the New Indigeneity is that identifying as American Indian no longer means being stuck in some anthropologist’s glass box, the prescient point made by James Luna’s strata shattering *Artifact Piece* performance of 1986. In the realm of contemporary art in Santa Fe, and in many other significant arenas nationally, we are witnessing, after five centuries of blazing, blistering suppression, terror, and targeted dehumanization, the original cultural values of the land-based peoples of North and South America emerging as living, vital forces of nature and culture, constructs which are anomalously polarized in the Western mind.

Another example of synergistic spirit within institutions and commitment to place resides an hour south in Albuquerque in the long time collaborative efforts of the Tamarind Institute, an internationally renowned center for fine art lithography in conjunction with the University of New Mexico Art Museum (which houses the Tamarind archives). “Migrations: New Directions in Native American Art” opened in September of 2006 and planted another tent pole of support under the broad canopy of contemporary Indian arts. The accompanying color catalogue by the UNM Press (from which the quote that opens this article was taken) begins with a lucid and energetic essay by Lucy Lippard, ahead of her time on the subject of New Indigeneity. The poem by Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith in Tamarind Institute former Director Marjorie Devon’s introduction is a moving manifesto on the desirability of diversity. Profiles of artists like conceptual Creek-Euchee sculptor Steven Deo, and Tlingit and Nisga’a master printmaker Larry McNeil, whose photo-based image and text prints seamlessly joins biting irony to poignant empathy round out the book.

The current “Color Coded” show at Tamarind, up through the end of 2016, includes artists as diverse as Santa Fe minimalists Susan York, David X. Levine, and Matt Magee who shows at Richard Levy Gallery in ABQ, figurative postmodernists like LA-based conceptualist Enrique Martínez Celaya and Bay Area-painter Hung Liu, who shows regularly at Turner Carroll Gallery in Santa Fe.

Which brings us back to the Santa Fe gallery scene, and Tai Modern, in the Santa Fe Railyard. Quintessentially Santa Fean, in that it makes no distinction whatsoever between concepts of Art versus Craft, the gallery’s focus is balanced between incredible Japanese basket mak-

ers (as indigenous an art practice as ever there was) and contemporary artists. The wonderful failure of the gallery to honor the traditional Western duality in this regard is of course an element of regional style, and concept of art widely influenced by the foundational American Indian Arts of the region where traditionally no such hierarchy ever existed. In the local Native traditions jewelry, ceramics, beadwork, and textiles can be as expressive and profound in meaning and cultural function as any European oil painting. This is also true in Japan, where Shintoism, with its profound ties to land and natural phenomena, is one of the oldest indigenous animistic religions in the world, and bamboo baskets, woven for millennia, have evolved into one of the most sophisticated, most traditional, and simultane-

ously most innovative art forms on the planet. Japanese master basket makers Nagakura Kenichi and Kawano Shoko will open shows of new work on July 8 and July 29 respectively.

In one context, the claim, “we are all indigenous to the planet” can sound incredibly dismissive of the suffering of the colonized, while in another it could represent hope for a future when no peoples are purposefully oppressed, ethnic identities are no longer used to enforce class hierarchies, and environmental justice is a given. Stephen Wall’s message echoes the concerns expressed in the artworks of many Indigenous (and Newly Indigenous) contemporary artists: “*In some ways, indigenization seems to be a pipedream or radical vision. But the inability of our political and economic leaders to come to grips with environmental realities is quickly manifesting a condition in which the complexity and fragility of the planet will converge to bring dramatic and possibly catastrophic change. As rational human beings we should be looking to possible alternatives to our current predominant lifeway.*”

If art is still the vanguard, and there is no indication that it’s not, then the New Indigeneity in Santa Fe’s contemporary art scene, along with a recent rise in collaborative artistic efforts of all types, signals how alive, replete, and sustainable a worldview can be that accepts, respects, and celebrates all ancestries, cultural grounds, genders, sexual orientations, creeds and artistic traditions, when joined in concert with the place we live.



OPPOSITE:

“GRAPHEME III,” 2013, **Matt Magee**
COLLABORATING PRINTER: KELLIE HAMES
TWELVE COLOR LITHOGRAPH, 12" x 10"
PHOTO: COURTESY: TAMARIND INSTITUTE

RIGHT:

“RING OF WATER,” 2016
Nagakura Kenichi
MADAKE BAMBOO, WASHI PAPER, AND MIXED MEDIA, 33" x 35" x 14"
PHOTO: COURTESY TAI MODERN