



Exhibition Review

Reviewing *Carry a Song – Disrupt an Anthem*, Nicholas Galanin solo exhibition at Peter Blum Gallery, New York

Jenna Ferrey | Mar 23, 2020

With his exhibition *Carry as Song / Disrupt an Anthem*, at Peter Blum Gallery, Nicholas Galanin gives the viewer an opportunity to look and to listen. Galanin is multidisciplinary artist of Tlingit and UnangaX heritage. Born in Alaska, Galanin's work has been shown in galleries and museums in Canada, the United States, Japan, and Europe. He has shown at the Native American Pavilion in at the Venice Biennale (2017) and his work is in collections such as the National Gallery of Canada, LACMA, The Denver Art Museum, and many others. Galanin notes, "working with concepts as a starting point tends to allow for diversity in process and medium." It is customary, at present to acknowledge (at conferences, gatherings etc.) that the land we gather on is the ancestral homeland of indigenous North Americans. Indeed, we should acknowledge that Manhattan and the spaces on which our galleries sit occupies Lenape ancestral Homelands. Acknowledgements of something stolen, or taken, however, do nothing to ameliorate the injustice. With that in mind I am compelled to acknowledge that I come to Galanin's exhibition as both an outsider (Canadian) and am connected to the legacy of colonization.



Installation view of Nicholas Galanin's *Carry a Song / Disrupt an Anthem* at Peter Blum Gallery, NY
Courtesy of Peter Blum Gallery, NY

Galanin's multidisciplinary work provokes. His work resonates cross-culturally but does not acquiesce to dominant or nationalist narratives. It can, in some ways, be difficult to discern what Audience Galanin has in mind. In some ways I felt he was showing me (the outsider) our histories. I was able to look at *Indian Children's Bracelet*, a hand engraved pair of iron handcuffs and be confronted with my country's history of Residential Schools. Galanin's *The American Dream is Alie and Well*, a bear skin rug fashioned out of an American flag with bullets serving as its claws seems to speak directly to white mainstream America. *Land Swipe*, however, which depicts the New York City subway lines on a deer hide appears to speak directly to Indigenous American's as if to

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say, “*look what has been taken from us.*” Of course, it is likely that neither of these interpretations are true, and no work is made with just one audience in mind. In many ways the ambiguity adds to the power of the work. They express Galanin’s vision. He is not obligated to educate white America, but if we stop, and listen, we might learn something anyway.



Installation view of Nicholas Galanin's *Carry a Song / Disrupt and Anthem* at Peter Blum Gallery, NY
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Carry a Song / Disrupt an Anthem does just that, it disrupts. It stops you in your tracks. But it also carries something beautiful. Galanin’s works are masterfully executed, exhilarating to look at. *The Imaginary Indian* has a large carved totem pole painted to match the wallpaper behind it. They provoke and inspire. The blues, golds and blacks of Galanin’s monotypes are striking. Even the engraving on the handcuffs *Indian Children’s Bracelet* are beautiful. Galanin manages to use beauty to tell truths and to illuminate realities that are anything but. His works address injustice and they celebrate culture and creativity. If you get a chance to visit Peter Blum Gallery, or via the eazel online tour, allow your anthem to be disrupted. Try to be quiet. To look and listen. Galanin’s song is well worth it.

Carry a Song / Disrupt an Anthem is on view through March 28, 2020 at Peter Blum Gallery, New York.

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