

The New York Times

As Galleries Reopen, Two Critics Find Rewards Eclipse the Angst

By Holland Cotter | Friday, July 17, 2020 | C8



Nicholas Galanin's "Architecture of return, escape (Metropolitan Museum of Art)," from 2020, pigment and acrylic on deer hide. Credit: Nicholas Galanin and Peter Blum Gallery, New York; Jason Wyche

Nicholas Galanin at Peter Blum Gallery, 176 Grand Street; peterblumgallery.com.

A banked anger stokes the work of another 2019 Biennial star, Nicholas Galanin, in his first New York solo at Peter Blum, through July 26. I saw this show, "Carry a Song/Disrupt an Anthem," when it went up in late January. It looked good then and after the mortalities and moral urgencies of the past months, makes an even stronger impression now.

Mr. Galanin is an Alaskan-born Native American of Tlingit-Unangan descent. Much of his art refers to this heritage, and to modern history shaped by dispossession, confinement and violence. In response to a dynamic of sundering, he makes an art of adding, combining. On a deer hide he paints what looks like an M.T.A. map of Native American trade routes through what is now New York City; from pages of white-authored anthropological text on Tlingit culture he molds image of his own face.

His much-noticed woven work from the Biennial, "White Noise, American Prayer Rug," a version of which is here, looks abstract, but isn't. It's an image of a television screen filled with a blizzard of visual white noise: static. For centuries that static has clogged the American air, but in Mr. Galanin's image, it is receding and dispersing. Deeper, intenser colors are coming though.