

(wall text)

**Red River Crossings—
Contemporary Native American Artists
Respond to Peter Rindisbacher (1806-1834)**

The words "Red River" suggest both the time that has passed, and the blood that has been shed, since Peter Rindisbacher, a fifteen-year old Swiss boy, arrived in Canada exactly 175 years ago. The Red River also lent its name to the colony that sprung up along its banks, for several years home to the Swiss immigrants.

"Red River Crossings" presents a selection of watercolors and drawings by the pioneering self-taught 19th-century Swiss painter Rindisbacher—one of the first European artists to document America's indigenous populations—along with ten site-specific installations which respond to Rindisbacher's work by ten contemporary artists of indigenous descent.

Peter Rindisbacher (1806 -1834) was born in Bern, Switzerland, in 1806. His family emigrated to the Red River Colony in present-day Manitoba, Canada, in 1821. Rindisbacher moved along the Mississippi River down to the United States during the turbulent era of westward. In his meticulous style, the young artist documented the indigenous peoples of the Plains in the last stages of their independence long before his contemporaries George Catlin and Bodmer presented their romantic versions of America's native population. The vision of a young man on his first trip abroad, they were painted before a common formula on how to represent "Indians" had been established.

The contributions by the contemporary artists represent a long overdue retort to Rindisbacher's work—as well as all such representations of native peoples. Through irony, visual and contextual quotations, and a diversity of media, the artists make reference to Rindisbacher while questioning many commonly held perceptions of the West and the writing of history. "Red River Crossings" stages what is only the most recent encounter between these two different cultures, continuing the dialogue first initiated in the last century between Native Americans and Swiss artists such as Rindisbacher, Rudolf Friedrich Kurz and Karl Bodmer.

Arthur Amiotte's collages weave a complex fabric of historical texts, newspaper clippings, personal diary entries and reproductions of Rindisbacher's paintings. **Rebecca Belmore** examines the process of compressing lives into singular images, "... images [which are] impossibly reductive." Responding to Rindisbacher's paintings and titles, the artist presents photographs—coopting the Swiss artist's imagery—whose miniature size is contradicted by rich colors and opulent frames. **Brad Kahlhamer's** fragile structure of wood, wire and hair on the floor resemble the forts that Rindisbacher painted in Canada.

Using images from Rindisbacher's work, American pop culture, and references to clichéd representations of Native Americans, **James Luna's** multimedia performance "In My Dreams" sardonically expose stereotypes. **Alan Michelson** launches his "Chippewatches" line of designer time-pieces—the ultimate Swiss icon—each incorporating a fragment of Rindisbacher's imagery. **Joanna Osburn-Bigfeather's** clay impressions of the manhole covers along Broadway connect the Native American Community House—where she is a curator—and the Swiss Institute. The slabs of clay harbor images of the Swiss artist.

In **Jolene Rickard's** photographic installation, the viewer moves from Rindisbacher's world to Rickard's world, travelling in a flash through 175 years of Swiss and Indian history. **Jeffrey Thomas** spent six years in Manitoba documenting the location of the former Red River Colony. **Deron Twohatchet** turns the construction of history around: Using surveillance mirrors instead of a camera, he documents the art on display, the comings and goings of visitors and gallery staff. **Phil Young** (Cherokee) contributes a personalized "portrait" of Rindisbacher, based on the Swiss artist's 1833/34 selfportrait. In reversing Rindisbacher's gaze, Young questions the relationship between artist and subject, and the subjective writing of history.

Perfomance by James Luna

November 2 at 8 PM

Artists' Talk

November 16 at 3 PM

Film "Views of a Vanishing Frontier"

December 3 at 7 PM

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