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Raven Chacon: While hissing

March 24 - October 22, 2023

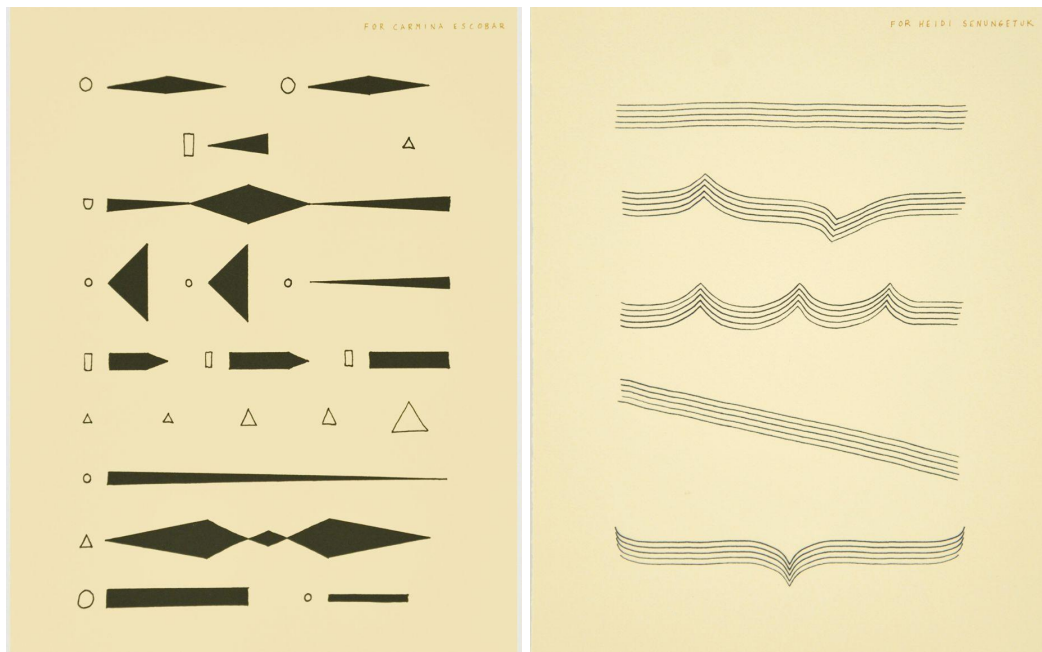


Image (Left): Raven Chacon, *For Carmina Escobar (For Zitkála-Šá)*, 2017–2020. Courtesy the artist and Crow's Shadow Institute of the Arts.; Image (Right): Raven Chacon, *For Heidi Senungetuk (For Zitkála-Šá)*, 2017–2020. Courtesy the artist and Crow's Shadow Institute of the Arts.

TUCSON, AZ—MOCA (Museum of Contemporary Art) Tucson presents *While hissing*, an exhibition by artist, performer, and Pulitzer Prize-winning composer **Raven Chacon** that celebrates sound as a medium for resistance and connection. Through video installation, graphic scores, and performance, Chacon amplifies Indigenous women's voices, centering their leadership and vision both as carriers of memory and authors of culture.

The exhibition features *For Zitkála-Šá* (2018), a collection of thirteen graphic scores dedicated to contemporary Indigenous women making music or other expressive cultural contributions, spotlighting artists like Joy Harjo, Buffy Sainte-Marie, and Laura Ortman. The series is a tribute to Zitkála-Šá, a Yankton Dakota composer, writer, poet, activist, and teacher who wrote *The Sun Dance Opera* in 1913, which is considered the first American Indian opera. Chacon conceptualizes

these scores as portraits, composed of variations of lines, dots, shapes, and symbols, accompanied by poetic written instructions. Each score can be interpreted and performed by their namesake and others, Chacon writes: “Everyone who encounters this set of scores is invited to perform them, to better understand where they have been and where they are headed, and to consider all the sites of conflict they are placed between.”

The exhibition’s title refers to the instructions for performing Chacon’s score for flute and breath dedicated to Barbara Croall, acclaimed Odawa First Nation composer and musician. MOCA Tucson will commission and present a new set of prints of the thirteen scores and stage performances of selected scores in collaboration with local musicians in Tucson.

While Chacon’s graphic scores resonate within the imagination, enlivened periodically by performances, the artist’s three-channel video installation *Three Songs* (2021) are focused on voice and instrument. Filmed on Navajo, Cherokee, and Seminole lands, the videos depict three Indigenous women—Sage Bond (Diné), Jehnean Washington (Yuchi), and Mary Ann Emarthle (Seminole)—each playing a snare drum and singing in her language about the history of the land. Their songs tell stories of sites where a battle took place, or violence or displacement occurred, such as the Navajo Long Walk and the Trail of Tears. Today these lands remain contested and the films bear witness to past and present injustice.

Together, *For Zitkála-Šá* and *Three Songs* use sound—imagined, recorded, and live—to create a space for each woman’s individual contributions to resound. Chacon creates a multidimensional tribute that amplifies stories of survival, resistance, and creativity while opening up new channels for listening.

Raven Chacon: While hissing is organized by Laura Copelin, Deputy Director and Co-Chief Curator and Julio César Morales, Executive Director and Co-Chief Curator, with assistance from Alexis Wilkinson, Assistant Curator.

This exhibition is supported by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Art and Culture Editions, Cameron Keith Gainer and Olga Viso, and MOCA Tucson’s Board of Trustees, Ambassador Council, and Members.

In-kind support provided by The Downtown Clifton Hotel and Exo Coffee Co.

About the artist:

Raven Chacon is a composer, performer and installation artist from Fort Defiance, Navajo Nation. As a solo artist, Chacon has exhibited, performed, or had works performed at LACMA, The Renaissance Society, San Francisco Electronic Music Festival, REDCAT, Vancouver Art Gallery, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Borealis Festival, SITE Santa Fe, Chaco Canyon, Ende Tymes Festival, and The Kennedy Center. As a member of Postcommodity from 2009-2018, he co-created artworks presented at the Whitney Biennial, documenta 14, Carnegie International 57, as well as the 2-mile long land art installation Repellent Fence.

A recording artist over the span of 22 years, Chacon has appeared on more than eighty releases on various national and international labels. In 2022, he was the first Native American composer awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Music for his composition Voiceless Mass. His 2020 Manifest Destiny opera Sweet Land, co-composed with Du Yun, received critical acclaim from The LA Times, The New York Times, and The New Yorker, and was named 2021 Opera of the Year by the Music Critics Association of North America.

Since 2004, he has mentored over 300 high school Native composers in the writing of new string quartets for the Native American Composer Apprenticeship Project (NACAP). Chacon is the recipient of the United States Artists fellowship in Music, The Creative Capital award in Visual Arts, The Native Arts and Cultures Foundation artist fellowship, the American Academy's Berlin Prize for Music Composition, the Bemis Center's Ree Kaneko Award, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grants to Artists Award (2022) and the Pew Fellow-in-Residence (2022).

His solo artworks are in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Smithsonian's American Art Museum and National Museum of the American Indian, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Getty Research Institute, the University of New Mexico Art Museum, and various private collections.

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For more information, installation photos, or to schedule interviews with the curator, please contact Audrey Molloy at: audrey@moca-tucson.org.

MOCA Tucson's Open Hours

MOCA Tucson is open Thursday - Saturday 11:00 am - 6:00 pm & Sunday 11:00 am - 4:00 pm.
Adults \$7, Students and Seniors \$4, Youth Free.

About MOCA Tucson

MOCA Tucson inspires new ways of thinking through the cultivation, exhibition, and interpretation of contemporary art. Established by artists in 1997, MOCA is Tucson's only museum devoted to local and global contemporary art. Housed in a repurposed firehouse, MOCA is a primary resource for arts education in our most vulnerable communities and maintains a full exhibition, public program and artist-in-residence schedule. Now in its 25th year, the Museum cultivates critical dialogue between artists and audiences about today's world; supports artists through the production and presentation of new, experimental work; and educates the artists and audiences of tomorrow.

Accessibility Information

Designated accessible parking with access to a ramp is available on the south side of McCormick Street in front of MOCA. MOCA has an accessible restroom in the lobby and all exhibition and lecture spaces are ADA compliant. There is limited seating available in each of the gallery spaces.

MOCA is committed to providing access to the arts for everyone. For questions or to arrange accommodations for your visit, please call MOCA's front desk at 520.624.5019 or email: info@moca-tucson.org.

MOCA Tucson is located on the lands of the Tohono O'odham and Yoeme (Pascua Yaqui) people.