

# Tanya Leighton

Press Release

Sky Hopinka  
'UNDER THE MOON, BENEATH THE FLOWERS'

9 September – 14 October 2023

Preview: Friday 8 September, 11am–5pm

Outdoor Film Screening: Friday 22 September, 7:30pm

I held an ancestor in my arms, and we spoke of dust.  
It's time to go back to home  
To the mounds away from the missions  
where they denied our heart and our blood.  
Adrift and wandering through prairies and deserts,  
belligerent and captive by borders  
bound by obstacles made of death and shame.  
It's time to go home, and float breathlessly on currents of willow and pine.

—Sky Hopinka, 'Sunflower Siege Engine'

Tanya Leighton, Los Angeles is pleased to announce 'Under the Moon, Beneath the Flowers' by Sky Hopinka, presenting a series of new photographic works, calligrams as well as the artist's recent acclaimed film 'Sunflower Siege Engine'. This is Hopinka's second solo exhibition with Tanya Leighton and his first solo exhibition in Los Angeles.

'Sunflower Siege Engine' opens with a misty landscape sequence of Pacific Redwoods as the above passage crosses the screen in text, accompanied by a sombre soundscape. The film's multi-sensory moment is key to Sky Hopinka's exemplary aesthetic, which is as much aimed at eliciting an emotional tenor in the viewer as it is about holding their attention. The film's disjunctive sensory composition creates unease, summoning the recollections and emotions buried in the pre-populated minds of viewers. In the film, Hopinka weaves and layers multiple narratives and aural and visual experiences to thematise the relationship between contemporary Indigenous experiences and historical, structural and colonial violence.

After its initial footage generates a contemplative mood, the film goes dark. As images return, we see Mohawk activist Richard Oakes on Hopinka's laptop screen. It's a recording of Oakes's 1969 speech addressed to "the Great White Father and All His People" in which he states his reasons for leading the occupation of Alcatraz Island. From 20 November 1969 through 11 June 1971, Native people from a confederation of Indian tribes claimed Alcatraz as Indian land. Hopinka's inclusion of this historical moment of active resistance articulates the artist's disquietude regarding the realities of Natives today. As Hopinka says, "There's no right way to be indin, just a whole bunch of wrong ways."

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Hopinka's calligrams collect historical statements, poetry, dialogue, scholarly essays and recompose them onto gallery walls as single image figures with Native significance. To decipher the text requires a shift in one's attention to the way the image/text flows, breaks and amalgamates. The text depicted in 'Situated at the East End of Devils Lake on Sect 25 THN. R6B on N. Kirks Pleasure Ground' (2018) is an excerpt from Eliot Weinberger's 'The Camera People' (1992) and captures core themes of Hopinka's practice—particularly, the ways in which identity is inextricably bound to place, memory and history.

As a whole, the exhibition captures the manner in which bodies either surrender to the ebb and flow of life experiences or violently contend with them. It considers how we can occupy multiple spaces at once both here and there, present and past, earthly and celestial *and perhaps most acutely how to feel what we think we know.*

Sky Hopinka (born in 1984 in Ferndale, Washington) lives and works in New York. He is a member of the Ho-Chunk Nation/ Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians. In 2022, he received a MacArthur Fellowship for his work in film and video that offer new strategies of representation for the expression of Native worldviews. In 2023, he received the Baloise Art Prize for his participation in Art Basel Statements in Basel, Switzerland.

Recent solo exhibitions include Museu de Arte de São Paulo; Speed Art Museum, Louisville; LUMA, Arles; San José Museum of Art; Broadway Gallery, New York; Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester; Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Block Museum of Art, Chicago; Vorspiel/transmediale, Berlin; VOX Centre de l'image contemporaine, Montréal; Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri; Tate Modern, London; The Green Gallery, Milwaukee, and CCS Bard (curated by Lauren Cornell) at the Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson, just to name a few.

His work is included in the permanent collections of Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; MUDAM, Luxembourg; SFMOMA, San Francisco; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; The Whitney Museum, New York; Kadist,

San Francisco; Milwaukee Art Museum; Minneapolis Institute of Art; Northwestern Mutual, Milwaukee; Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton; and Princeton University Art Museum, amongst others.

Hopinka's work is currently on view at the Georgia Museum of Art in Athens, Georgia until 24 September 2023. In 2024, Hopinka will participate in the group exhibition 'The land describes itself' at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation in St. Louis, Missouri.

For more information, please contact [info@tanyaleighton.com](mailto:info@tanyaleighton.com) or telephone +49(0)30221607770.

The gallery is open Wednesday to Saturday, 11–5pm and by appointment.