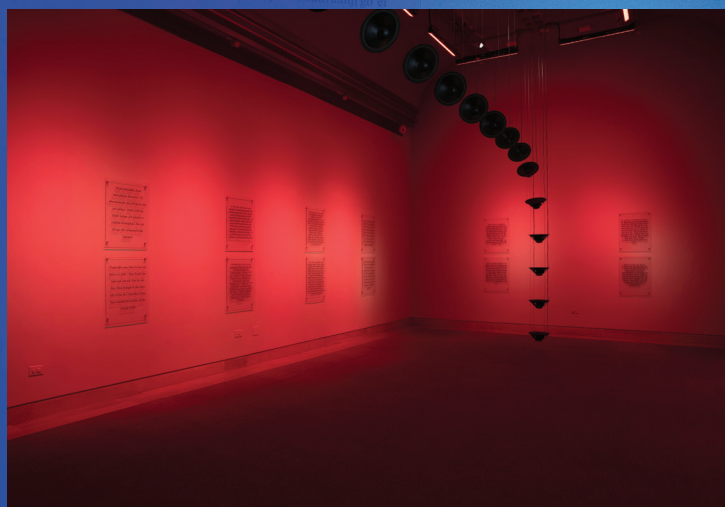


# ARTIST IN PROFILE: RAVEN CHACON

BY ERIN JOYCE | FINE ARTS CURATOR

It is important and thrilling to have the opportunity to bring contemporary works by Indigenous artists to the Heard. On July 5, we are pleased to present a solo exhibition of contemporary composer and visual artist Raven Chacon (Diné).



Chacon was born in Fort Defiance on the Navajo Nation in Arizona in 1977 and was raised primarily in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Currently living and working in Toronto, Ontario, and Albuquerque, Chacon is participant in a variety of modes of artistic production, including visual work, composition, music projects, producing and performance art. Chacon is no stranger to the creative fields. His work has the capacity to illustrate the liminality of sound and image and how they can fuse to impart a narrative to the listener/viewer.

Raven Chacon, *Still Life*, #3, 2015 (detail). Sound and light installation with text. Voice and translation by Melvatha Chee. Collection of the artist. Photo by Joshua Voda, NMAI.





As a solo artist, collaborator or former member of Indigenous collective Postcommodity, Chacon has exhibited or performed his work at the Whitney Biennial, documenta 14, REDCAT, Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal, San Francisco Electronic Music Festival, Chaco Canyon, Ende Tymes Festival, 18th Biennale of Sydney and the Kennedy Center. He has received several awards, including the United States Artists Fellowship in music, the Creative Capital Award in Visual Arts, the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation artist fellowship, and the American Academy's Berlin Prize for Music Composition. Chacon is also director of the Native American Composers Apprenticeship Project (NACAP), in which he travels to schools of the Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe and Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community to work with students to compose original works for string quartet. The finished compositions are then performed at the Grand Canyon Music Festival—and as of 2018, at the Heard Museum in a newly re-formed ongoing partnership.

Chacon's work is varied materially, often dealing with his Indigeneity and the residue of colonialism in the Americas. A work from 2003, "While Contemplating Their Fate in the Stars, the Twins Surround the Enemy," comprised a metal birdcage, two zebra finches, and the expected trappings such as a water/food dish and newspaper liner, accompanied by a high-pitched repeating frequency that discombobulates and creates a dialogue and disturbance with the zebra finches contained within the cage. According to Chacon, this work addresses "people being trapped in a situation, despite any efforts or illusions toward self-determination, where they are forced to defend themselves, and in doing so, must interact with an encroaching presence in any way necessary."

In a 2015 video, a score Chacon wrote in 2001 is brought to life through a performance filmed by Blackhorse Lowe and D.E. Hyde. The work features an ensemble of eight people standing in the New Mexico desert, eight music stands with scores, and eight firearms of various calibers. Chacon counts down at the beginning of the film to start the performance. In timed succession, the players begin to fire their guns off into the desert landscape in timed rhythm. The musical composition's percussive nature is jolting, creating a series of



Photo: courtesy of Raven Chacon

organized explosive sounds with disquieting moments of silence. The piece creates a narrative of what an instrument is, what the agency of the user is, and how, as Chacon puts it, these weaponized technologies can be instrumentalized as a form of "musical resistance."

For his exhibition at the Heard, we will be showing "Still Life No. 3," a singular work that will occupy the entire gallery, which retells the Diné Bahane' ("Story of the People," the Diné emergence story) through a full-room installation composed of sound, speakers, text and timed colored lighting that scrolls through multiple hues over an eight-hour cycle—relating to the colors of light throughout the day. The voice of a Diné woman will be amplified through the speakers, which are set up on a delay, causing parts of the story to overlap. This situates the narrative in a non-linear form, illuminating past, present and future all in one singular moment. The exhibition will create an ambiguous, immersive and metaphysical space within the confines of the gallery to create room for pensive reflection and sense of place and situationality.

### STILL LIFE NO. 3: RAVEN CHACON

On view July 5 through Nov. 3, 2019  
Jacobson Gallery

#### MEMBERS' ONLY RECEPTION AND PREVIEW

First Friday, July 5  
5 to 8 p.m.

MEMBERS'  
RECEPTION