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Garis & Hahn presents *Do Not Dance For Pay*

Hock E Aye VI Edgar Heap of Birds

February 10 – March 10, 2018

Opening Reception: February 10th | 5-8pm



Secrets of Life and Death, 2012, Ink on rag paper 120 x 44 inches

January 25, 2018 (Los Angeles, CA) Garis & Hahn is pleased to present *Do Not Dance for Pay*, a survey of work by the renowned multi-disciplinary Cheyenne and Arapaho artist, Hock E Aye VI Edgar Heap of Birds. Featuring works from six distinct series made over four decades, the exhibition marks Heap of Birds' first Los Angeles show in ten years. The title of the exhibition alludes to indigenous art and its deep-rooted link to tourism and an art market that has been historically driven by the non-Native. Most artists "dance for pay", a reference to the making of apolitical art with the focus on commercial sales--not so with the work of Heap of Birds. This survey is the artist's inaugural exhibition with the gallery and will be on view February 10 through March 10, 2018.

In recent years the post-war art historical narrative has been revised, with artists of color, long-excluded from contemporary art history, finally finding agency for their work. Enter Edgar Heap of Birds, who was featured on the cover of the October 2017 issue of *Art In America*. Throughout his singular four-decade career, Heap of Birds has brandished words as weapons. The words and phrases he scrawls on his paintings and monoprints act as scathing indictments of the odious history of appropriation and violence against indigenous people. His words serve as an effectual counterweight to the biased historical narratives regarding the Native presence.

Through public art pieces, biting political text-based work, poetry, large-scale drawings, monoprints, signs, and more intimate abstract paintings, Heap of Birds purposefully subverts the power dynamics between the privileged and the marginalized, conventional society and the reservation. His multifaceted oeuvre rejects the separation between protest and poetry, taking aim at a history which obscures the Native population. For his "Native Hosts" series (begun in the late 1980s), Heap of Birds manipulates institutional regulatory signs which he then installs in outdoor public spaces. He repurposes these ubiquitous place markers, identifying the tribes that

lived there prior to colonization, explicitly asserting the historical sovereignty of Native nations. Displacing the authority of the state by printing the official name of the site backwards, these slyly subversive works remind the public of an unpleasant history, subtly positioning the Native world in ascendance.

Heap of Birds' series of monoprints, including "Secrets of Life and Death" and "Dead Indian Stories", are text-based works, which express brutal truths about the subjugation of Native Americans in the United States. Other pieces are more personal, proffering reflections of his own subjective Native experience. Relatedly, the continuing "Neuf" series of abstract paintings are derived from his experiential memories of the landscape of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation.

Heap of Birds roots his practice in Cheyenne spirituality and the indigenous way of seeing and being in the world. He asks critical questions about history and identity, time and modernity, social justice and personal freedom, power and the value of contemporary art in today's society-questions he's been asking for decades that currently lie at the center of our national debate. He has compared his art to "sharp rocks", i.e. arrow heads of the past, an apt metaphor for his excoriating critiques regarding the loss of autonomy for the Native American. Focusing on the survival of Native peoples in contemporary society, Heap of Birds intends to honor indigenous citizens of ancient and contemporary communities, while inviting the non-Native public to gain a broader cultural and historical understanding.

About Hock E Aye VI Edgar Heap of Birds

Heap of Birds received his Master of Fine Arts from Tyler School of Art, Temple University (1979) and was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts Degree from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, (2008). The artist has exhibited his works at The Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, National Museum of the American Indian, New York, NY; Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia; Documenta, Kassel, Germany; University Art Museum, Berkeley, California; Association for Visual Arts Museum, Cape Town, South Africa; Hong Kong Art Center, China; Grand Palais, Paris, France; and the 52nd Venice Biennale, Italy as part of the Smithsonian's entry.

About Garis & Hahn

Garis & Hahn is a gallery-cum-Kunsthalle that mounts exhibitions focused on conceptual narratives and relevant conversations in contemporary art. By displaying an array of carefully curated artists, the gallery endeavors to provide accessibility, education, awareness, and a market to the art while engaging both the arts community and a broader general audience.

Gallery Hours:

Tuesday – Saturday, 12 - 6pm

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