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Gallery 1 – *Nayaano-nibiimaang Gichigamiin: The Five Great Lakes*

Exhibit Opening

5:00 pm Wednesday, October 26, 2016

Sudbury, Ontario

The Art Gallery of Sudbury presents ***Nayaano-nibiimaang Gichigamiin: The Five Great Lakes*** by artist Barry Ace.

Drawing inspiration from multiple facets of his Anishinaabe (Odawa) culture, artist Barry Ace creates objects and imagery that utilize many traditional forms and motifs. He then disrupts the reading of these works with the introduction of other elements and technology, endeavouring to create a convergence of the historical and the contemporary. He is a band member of M'Chigeeng First Nation, Manitoulin Island (Ontario), currently residing in Ottawa (Ontario), and he is represented by Kinsman Robinson Galleries in Yorkville (Toronto).

Nayaano-nibiimaang Gichigamiin: The Five Great Lakes presents a brand new series of Anishinaabe honouring blankets with mnemonic recounting blanket strips for each of the Five Great Lakes: the traditional-territory and homeland of the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomi peoples). This textile work replicates traditional Great Lakes' floral and geometric motifs, but they are made from reclaimed and salvaged electronic circuitry (capacitors, microchips, resistors, and diodes) that act as metaphors for cultural continuity (antithesis of stasis), bridging the past with the present and the future. The Hudson Bay trade blankets carry with them a longstanding narrative and response to colonization; acts of self-determination and a complicated economic trade history between the original peoples of the Great Lakes and newly arrived settlers, but these blankets also carry with them significant culture-based signs and semiotics. This body of work explores these aspects of the trade blanket.

The exhibition is further complimented by a generous loan of a recently gifted work by the artist to the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation, entitled ***Bandolier for M'Chigeeng***. Ace's contemporary animated Anishinaabe bandoliers are generously embellished works with complex bead and electronic component floral motifs. Embedded in the front of this bandolier bag is a new media digital tablet streaming the transformation of the sacred thunderbird and underwater panther, acknowledging the significance of cultural continuity of traditional knowledge and the on-going confluence between the historical and contemporary in Anishinaabeg culture.

Also presented in the exhibition is a selected précis from ***Memory Landscape***, a suite that consists in its entirety of 30 digital prints, honouring the passing of a very close friend in early 2014. The works are photographic diptychs printed on archival canvas superimposed over a simulated birch bark ground, referencing this supple and unique bark as the tableaux utilized for the sacred Midéwiwin scrolls that record sacred Anishinaabeg information, songs, origin stories and medicines. The photographic images presented in ***Memory Landscape*** capture the beauty of the landscape and reference the land as an imperative mnemonic signifier and sense of place in Anishinaabeg territory. These sensitive and personal diptychs simultaneously capture a presence and absence of a life that once was and that has now passed, and are beautifully embellished with beaded medicine flowers and iconography as honouring tributes.

A digital component completes the exhibition with the screening of a 14:30 minute silent film sourced from Archives Canada entitled ***Indian Pow Wow***. The film was produced by the Ontario Motion Picture Bureau and filmed in Wikwemikoong, Manitoulin Island (Ontario) in 1925. The film is significant, for it depicts visiting bureaucrats from Southern Ontario who are hosted by the Anishinaabe community. Although it documents oratory, dance performances and historical re-enactments, the irony of this film lays in the fact that in 1925 it was illegal for Indigenous people to dance in traditional regalia or participate in ceremonies on or off reserve, as enforced by the federal Indian Act legislation. The exception to the law, as the film clearly depicts, is when it was for visiting government bureaucrats. This film is an extract from a contemporary bandolier work by Barry Ace that screens this film on an embedded video screen entitled a ***Bandolier for Manidoo-minising (Manitoulin Island)***.

The exhibition opens with an artist talk on Wednesday, October 26th following the Art Gallery of Sudbury's Annual General Meeting at 5:00 pm.

The exhibition will be on display at the Art Gallery of Sudbury from October 26, 2016 – January 22, 2017. The exhibition was presented at the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation, M'Chigeeng, Manitoulin Island (August to October, 2016) and curated by Anong Beam.

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