

sky

hopinka

SUBTERRANEAN

CEREMONIES

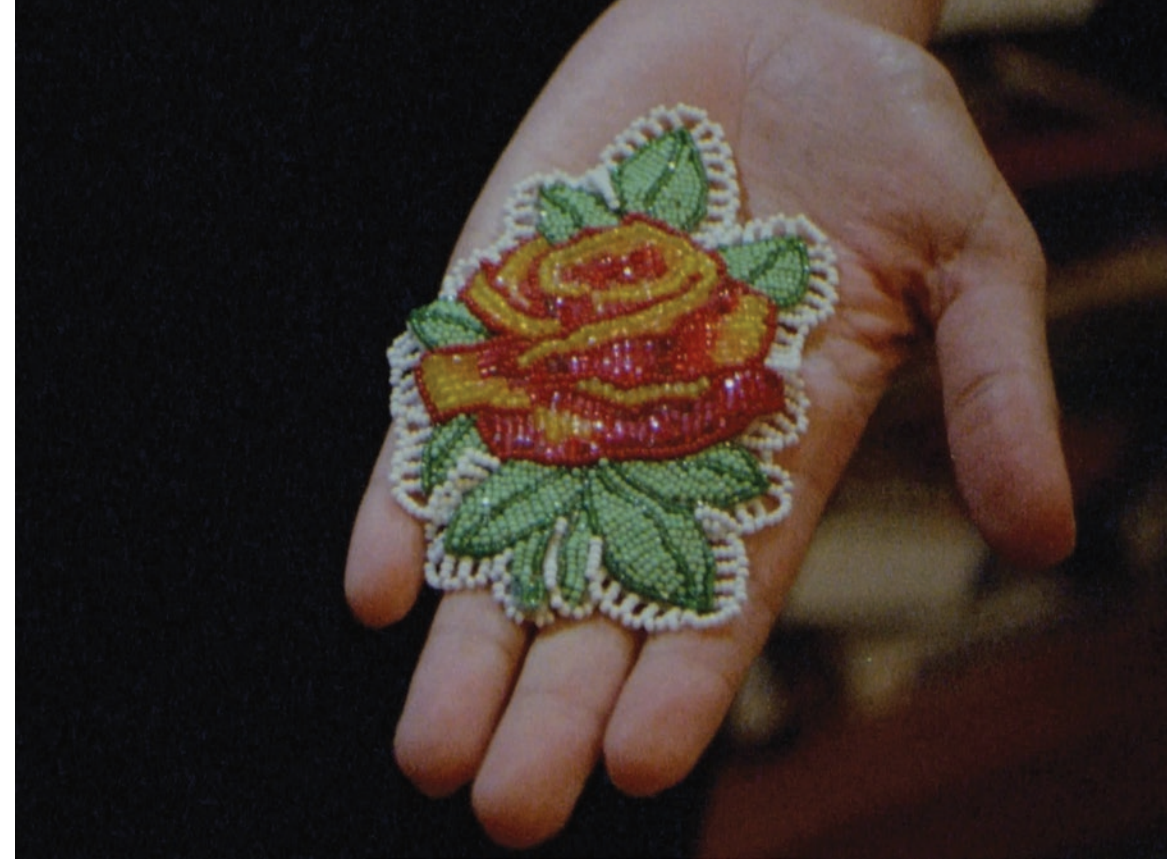
*February 17–May 26, 2024*

**FRYE** / Art Museum

Sky Hopinka (Ho-Chunk Nation/Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians, born 1984, Ferndale, Washington) layers imagery and poetic prose to foreground relationships between communities, landscape, and language. His artwork intermingles English and Indigenous dialects such as Chinuk Wawa, a revived Chinookan creole of the Pacific Northwest, to consider how language shapes perception of place and acts as a container of culture. Centering personal and political notions of Indigenous homeland, this presentation features four of the artist's recent films and a new suite of photographs.

Growing up in Washington State, far from his ancestral tribal lands in Wisconsin and Southern California, Hopinka traveled the western powwow circuit with his parents. These early experiences of itinerancy and, as the artist describes it, making a “home nonetheless” continue to influence his artistic practice. The films in *Subterranean Ceremonies* revolve around transit and life on the road, a liminal zone Hopinka embraces as a space of community and knowledge production. For instance, *Mnemonics of Shape and Reason* (2021) interweaves scattered landscapes filmed from a moving car to ruminate on the spiritual implications of colonial plunder.

The photographs in the exhibition offer glimpses of disparate locations linked through the artist's travels. Drawing from stories, songs, and his own poetry, he etched phrases on the photographic prints using a rotary tool. Together, the works reflect an ethos of wandering—an approach that allows Hopinka's work to resist static depictions of Indigenous cultures and move fluidly between past and present.



The Frye Art Museum commissioned the following writing by Dylan Robinson, a Stó:lō scholar and artist and member of the Skwah First Nation. His curatorial work includes *Soundings*, a touring exhibition that features an ever-growing number of art-scores by Indigenous artists. Other work includes “Caring for Our Ancestors,” a project that seeks to reconnect kinship with Indigenous life incarcerated in museums. His book *Hungry Listening* examines Indigenous and settler colonial practices of listening. Robinson notes:

The text seeks to translate the temporality of *sqwálewel*—*thought-feeling*—in response to Sky Hopinka's work. The text traces attention. Its moments oscillate focus. It seeks parallel materialities. It desires direct, galvanized kinds of sense. Occupying space between Halq'emeylem—Salishan cousin-dialect, language spoken by xwélmexw (Stó:lō)—and xwelítemqel English, it plays. It interrupts, to convey its terms.







1. lúwe gas ta'áltha eséthetalha kw'átsetlha	it's you and me come closer look at it	as you might look out a window
kw'átset te	look	
gas		then don't
selchím te qétxmels?	how does it feel how did it feel?	as you pass it?
2. kw'ókw'etsel te	I'm looking at the	form unburdening
		it hangs in the air, awaiting response
		3. it's for me
		and for me it's assembling a distance
tsel we qátxelsó	I'm feeling around	inside this space between love and alienation, I'm practicing a kind of refusal without refusing I'm practicing ways of feeling your lines I'm practicing ways to unravel the terms

4. líchxw wekw'ákw'etset? gas tíméthet kw'étslexw?	are you looking at it?  look harder do you see it?	if you   or
li ta' siwel pelhpélhetcha?	do your senses crowd it out?	
kw'étslexw lhálheq'?	would you see it lying on the ground?	if  if
li chexw xwelala:m ta' slhákw'em? ye lhálheqems? te slhémxel lá:telh?	listening to your breath? to the whisperings? to the morning dew?	
qw'oqweltsel skw'áy kw'as kw'étslexw ta' skw'áts	you can't see it your sight	5. with an expectation of formal anchors, of text as an anchoring point telling you the context yet
6. éy kws hákw'elestset te s'í:zest e siyolexwálh ts'á	so they say	
		7. perceptual orientations are only as good as the wanderings that beget them

li chexw p'átl'et?

	<p>15. listen to where the language comes from where exactly in the river, in the grasses, in the winds listen to the sense these words transfer</p>				
	<p>to be fallow, then slow the germination we tend it together work through it in branches</p>	<p>16. you offer your attention you give time</p>			<p>20. to oscillate between strata of attentional positionality is not entirely up to you</p> <p>these words interrupt, they try to stop your sense</p> <p>I'm using my words to tell you you can't get too close</p> <p>I'm also telling you, you can't change this you can't change my words into other words even though they mean different things</p>
<p>li chexw totí:lt kw'a's là:m áyel?</p>	<p>17. if I ask you are you trying to go away,  would you tell me?</p>			<p>21. te xálh, tetha ta' xálh ewe tel xálh</p>	<p>this road, is not a road I feel underfoot</p> <p>your road, winding its way through, it says what you see is written around an edge its direction asks that we look around</p>
<p>19. lhó:yel kw'etslometsel</p> <p>yú:wqwlha</p>	<p>it's getting dusk, and I see you extracting a portion of daylight</p>	<p>18. look out the window and back look toward the land and back</p> <p>when the walls continue what will you use as your window?</p>		<p>tsel sasetáλέqep</p>	<p>22. after everything, after all the words, imperatives, interruptions, after all the distant sound carried by the wind after this time I began to feel it change</p>

23.  
it displaces me  
and draws me in

I'm placed alongside  
powwow temporality  
alongside this sense  
sometimes used  
as a mark and measure,  
that measures  
Indigenous knowing

then  
I'm reminded of  
a gathering  
I'm reminded of  
a room  
and a Nish poet speaking  
about powwow  
I'm reminded of  
Anishinaabe kwe and  
Haudenosaunee laughter  
overflowing the room,  
spilling through

in that room,  
with that laughter  
I had no way finding  
through the crass poetics  
of powwow grounds

24.  
naming aspects of  
positionality is a way to  
notice our noticing  
to noticing *how* we  
notice

the work of  
positionality—as the  
work we do to reflect on  
our habits and biases of  
noticing—is undertaken  
with the hope of moving

us toward different, non-  
normative forms  
of noticing

we learn to see, hear and  
sense police orders that  
structure how we  
perceive,  
orders that are often  
not felt through an  
authoritative sense of  
restriction  
but instead as sense's  
smoothing out  
of sensate abrasion

noticing otherwise  
involves more than  
attending to the  
punctum's singular prick,  
or glancing awry

giving and taking notice,  
together, are practices  
that shift the normative  
time and terms  
of your attention

25.  
xwlaá:  
sqwalewel

“tl'o tem wiyóthtset”  
- Lumlamelut  
WeeLayLaq

what I heard

what I felt-thought  
was a moment  
of pulling away,  
then pushing up against  
“Indian time”—  
“Indian time”  
written twice like this  
with scare quotes,  
removed, then replaced—

I felt an  
awkwardness of relation  
I felt a sense of  
*I'd rather not*

*Sky Hopinka: Subterranean Ceremonies* is co-organized by Georgia Erger, Associate Curator, and Amanda Donnan, Chief Curator and Director of Exhibitions.

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All works by Sky Hopinka and all images of those works courtesy of the artist. Cover: *Mnemonics of Shape and Reason* (still, detail), 2021. Digital video (color, sound); 4:12 min. Interior right panel: *Kicking the Clouds* (still), 2021. 16mm film transferred to digital video (color, sound); 15:36 min. Interior spread, from left to right: *I still wonder about when it'll be time to say it's okay*, 2023. Inkjet print, etching. 39 3/4 x 39 3/4 in. Photo: Jueqian Fang. *And who calls me by name as I'm sitting on the grass*, 2023. Inkjet print, etching. 39 3/4 x 39 3/4 in. Photo: Jueqian Fang. *We were at a loss of language, except for what we could speak*, 2023. Inkjet print, etching. 39 3/4 x 39 3/4 in. Photo: Jueqian Fang. *Saith the ghost, dream, oh, dream again*, 2023. Inkjet print, etching. 39 3/4 x 39 3/4 in. Photo: Jueqian Fang