The artist’s process, grounded in materiality and gesture, is an extension of the relations and knowledge creation that has existed in Indigenous communities since we learned what we know from the First People, from a thousand lessons coded in the places that share life with the peoples who are made for them, the knowing of cumulative duress, limitless resilience, the space between shared breath, and free and easy laughter. It is a poetics of place, articulating routes of removal and return as easily as that to which we are eternally connected, entwined, and inseparable. It is a story within a story, a joke, a scathing critique, a portrait, a mirror, a map.

It also emulates coded ways of interacting that have protected people and place while also lending itself to practiced indirection in the world as it exists today, resonant in the changed subject or redirecting “I don’t know” in an anthropological record. It mirrors ignorance back to those who think they know the world but know nothing, making sure that “when they leave they take only what belongs to them.”

Despite the arrogance of settler colonialism, many stories are not and never were for everyone. This kind of abundant agency, in myriad situations meant to foreclose upon it, is an example of our power as Indigenous peoples. We are stubbornly vibrant and full of life.

We create the world with our work, in the face of constant, attempted undoing, expressing a clarity in narrative for those who know how to listen.

Mom met my Dad. I mean, when my Ancestors met my Ancestors. I mean, when a Lace Front met Smoked Skin self-defined whole, naming relation, place, and responsibility.

They assert sovereignty.

Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings (2018) refuse to be knowable in fixed or oversimplified perspectives, existing as a multi-faceted and

This outlines a practice of world-making that continually transgresses borders, county lines, relocation routes, customs or material form. It intimates a small facet of the possibilities of unfolding resistance: to erasure, to taxonomical lies, to the violence of continued occupation, to the poison of colonial thought. The fullness of our being is not determined by blood quantum, recognition by occupying state, a legal text, palatable cultural performance, legibility or uninvited guest.

Our existence is affirmation.

tsʔimɨyiʔ, it is true.

Natalie Ball (Modoc, Klamath, Black) makes art as proposals of refusal, without absolutes, to complicate an easily affirmed and consumed narrative and identity. Her work uses materiality and gesture to create power objects that refuse the spectacle in relation to American history of settler colonialism, and her communities.

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