



## Chris Pappan:

My ex-husband and I owned a building on 16th Street in Phoenix called The Hive. We had space set aside for a gallery and community space. From 2010 until February of 2020 when Covid shut us down, we exhibited the work of a different artist or group each month from September through June.... close to 100 shows in all.

Having never been gallerists before, we showed the work of artists who walked in the door, and we were grateful for that. Consequently, most of the the artists shown at The Hive in the beginning were creatives local to the area...many were street artists looking for a first-time gallery opportunity and almost all were white and male. When I realized this and made a concentrated effort to seek out the work of women and people of diversity, that dynamic changed.

One artist, Thomas Breeze Marcus (Akimel, Tohono O'odham), had a studio for a couple years in our building and began a tradition of curating a group show at The Hive that ran concurrently with the Heard Museum Indian Fair and Market. His intent was to give alternative wall space to young Native artists whose work was not yet recognized or legitimized by The Heard, one of the Southwest's preeminent institutions for the

showcasing of “American Indian” art and culture.

It was at this show, Multi-verse in February 2014 that I saw the work of Chris Pappan (Kanza/Osage, Lakota) for the first time. I was drawn immediately and initially to the compelling images that were at once startling and seductive. The soft round pencil feel and the contrasting bright color accents mixed with familiar images in unfamiliar contexts were magnetic. Some of the images looked as if they were springing from the wall and then, underneath it all, the ledger book paper. I knew a bit about traditional ledger book art and strained to see the old cursive writing on pages of the old, repurposed accounting and record books. I was fascinated by the effect the work had on me. It signaled me to stay back and come closer at the same time.

I have never met Chris but enjoyed working with him during that show. One of his works was purchased by the North American Native Museum in Zurich, Switzerland, a first for The Hive, but not for Chris, and he guided me a bit through the process

I am not an academic scholar of art. I cannot put into context the work of one creative with the rest of art history. I do not know, I cannot pretend to know or understand with any depth, the artwork of another anymore than I can know or understand their lived life.

I do believe that an artist conveys their essence through their work. I came to know this because I made a habit of walking through a show with the artist before an opening, asking them to tell me the story of their art.

As a result of that experience, I came to understand that the work of Native artists I have known portray not just a personal, but also a collective essence in all its many facets: tragedy, rage and loss as well as freedom, beauty, strength and endurance; their own lives and their ancestry. Words do not, cannot express this essence.

I read a book once that suggested that an historic event such as The Holocaust was so singular and so incomprehensible that we should create new vocabulary in order to discuss it.

In this country, multiple genocides have occurred, and they are ongoing. The majority of Americans are only at the surface level of recognition or even acknowledgment.

Take a good look at this show, please. Read the text written by Chris about his work, then look again.

Maybe just take a few minutes to look closely and carefully at the contour, layer, and detail of one piece a second time.

If you really want to dive deeper into our shared American history, I might suggest taking a break from Hamilton back slapping and look at some Indigenous art.

It is lush and profound. It is the story, it is protest, it is outrage.

It might be the best language with which to convey atrocity.

- Julia Fournier, phICA Guest Curator  
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