SOCIAL MEDIA TAKEOVER: RYA HUESTON

August 10, 2020
Yáát’ée! My name is Rya and I have taken the helm of social media for @fiveoaksmuseum this week!

I am Diné and Hopi from Naatsis’aan, which is a holy mountain on the Navajo Reservation in between Page, AZ and Tuba City, AZ. It is a very remote community at the base of the mountain, rich in layers of history and ancestors. Walking around my house it’s common to find painted pottery and cliff dwellings of the Anasazi people who lived there before us. The Diné (Navajo) were moved to the site of Naatsis’aan at the start of the US colonization of the western United States, and it’s important to recognize the lands are of the Hopi and Paiute people.

This multifaceted narrative of identity and place has a huge influence on my practice. This week, I look forward to digging into how to use personal history as a tool to uncovering non-white centric historical narratives, and de-colonize gender as we know it.

Due to the nature of events in history my work explores I’m slapping a huge content warning on this post specifically, re: racism towards indigenous people if you keep reading:

I identify as two-spirit, which is a specifically indigenous identity. Historically, queer identifying ppl were a part of family life and had special roles in many indigenous communities. A lot of this was intentionally eradicated in a complicated mix of forced assimilation to non-indigenous culture through religious boarding schools, who forcibly kidnapped children from their families, cut their hair and tortured them if they practiced their culture or spoke their language. My grandfather was one of the last children in my family to undergo this experience of the boarding school, and that trauma is felt today on the reservation amongst the elders and their children. My research uncovers these histories of my grandfather and many others who went to the Indian Boarding School in Tuba City, as well as the small one in our community at Navajo Mountain.

Indigenous communities are in a movement of reclaiming and healing from these traumas, reclaiming queerness and culture. I’m excited for you all to join me as we explore this!!

@gender_euphoria_art
August 11, 2020

My work centers around creating narratives through object and assemblage. Through personal and found artifacts, as well as materials gathered from my reservation (soil, juniper, cedar, sage, water) I strive to make each piece about reconciling and establishing queer indigenous identity with the detritus of a failed colonialist world. The work is about recreating, healing and breathing life into the self, using the resources available to you. I have a people, including myself, unlearning over one hundred years of internalized racism and forced cultural and cis-gendered assimilation. Queerness and culture are so, so entwines. I have a reservation, a land that is also finally being able to heal and continue to provide good water to her people (read: uranium cleanup on the reservation) hence references to nesting, to nurturing with materials and natural features that to some may seem hostile, barren, inaccessible but is truly one of the most beautiful places in the United States. The sweeping red rocks, ancient gnarled pines that drip medicine sap, the deep ravines that surprise you with spring water if you hike close enough to the mountain; the sweetest smells of the juniper, gathering pinyon, helping shímásání chop the wood for the fire. It means family and community. It’s unnatural and unfamiliar for me to handle anything without a patina of age because everything is reused. Our fence gate to the sheep corral is a metal bed frame and pieces from my grandfathers first truck and it is as much art as anything in a museum. My body of work here is trying to reconcile these histories and create autobiographical portraits and an archive of artifacts from my family in the context of these colonialist narratives, to paint a portrait of indigenous survival and resourcefulness.
August 12, 2020

Today for the takeover I'd like to create a challenge for you all. My practice uses object to relay identity and history. I would like this to be a self portrait, to tell a story about you and/or your family. Incorporate elements of gender, culture, whatever you have around your house but it has to be about **you**.

Here I've arranged a selection of items on my baby blanket. On the left are my own shoes, on the right my mothers winter moccasins. In the middle is my squash blossom, a tube of lipstick, and my 1930s necklace, all crowned with a braid of my sisters sweet grass.

How can you use object as poetry? How can you challenge yourself to be personal and universal with your arrangement?
August 13, 2020
For my takeover today I am sharing my cultural context for my work! If you’ve been following along in the stories you will recognize these videos from Monday. Luckily this was for today’s prompt! Please enjoy me attempting to explain difficult and complex topics through cartoons and oral storytelling. If you’re interested in exploring some of these topics in depth, search for information on: 1) the Indian Boarding School System in the United States and 2) Uranium Mining and it’s history on the Navajo Reservation 3) coal mining on Black Mesa and its history on the Navajo Reservation 4) the flooding of Glen Canyon and accompanying holy sites for hydroelectric power that didn’t benefit the Navajo Reservation. These are all topics that are crucial to be in public knowledge. In order to heal we must remember what we are healing from!

watch videos at this link: https://www.instagram.com/p/CD2mEYfhFDx/
August 14, 2020
Hi! It’s @indigenous_fatale again, from the @gender_euphoria_art show!!! For the takeover today I wanted to talk about my artistic process! I either start with a concept, or are inspired by an object that I find. In this case, I had a concept and was waiting for the perfect artifact to work with. I found this fragment of an 1880s-1890s Victorian architectural decoration which was too broken to be incorporated into a building as restoration. I wanted to make a piece about indigenous identity being reclaimed post boarding school system, which would have been of the same era as the salvage. The physical infrastructure of the boarding school system exists today, mostly all abandoned. There’s one in most major cities and communities around the reservation. I wanted to paint, referencing the rock formations and traditional weaving without being too specific re: Diné design because patterns are specific and sacred to the weavers clans and physical space and it’s important to be respectful of that. After some painting, I cooked some mutton stew because self care is important while working. Then, I have the piece as shown! I will take some distance from it, then revisit it in a little bit to tighten it up exactly. I’ll think about things like; what could I add to make the message clearer? I want to consider how the piece will be displayed, who the audience is, and if it will eventually be a part of a larger piece. Perhaps it will be a study FOR a larger, and more complex piece! Experimentation and reinvention/learning is crucial with my practice. There’s always new things to discover and I want to make space for anything!

watch videos at this link: https://www.instagram.com/p/CD5LrjflhIx/
August 15, 2020
It’s the final day of the takeover for @gender_euphoria_art! Thanks for having me and following along this week! For the final day we will be having a guest collaborator @jooliefiveash who will be sharing ways to access public library archives and find primary sources; as well as address the need for the start of compiling queer indigenous history! I’m posting a Questions sticker in the stories here, so please come at us with questions about anything! We will be answering them later this afternoon; thanks everyone!
August 15, 2020 (continued)
Queerness, Culture and the Archive Q and A

Final engagement with archivist and library sciences graduate student at UCLA Julie Fiveash (Diné) and guest artist Rya Hueston (Diné/Hopi) for the Gender Euphoria show at Five Oaks

watch video Part 1 at this link: https://www.instagram.com/p/CD7rn9Ehc8W/

watch video Part 2 at this link: https://www.instagram.com/p/CD7sGOoh6c6/