

# NORD NORSK KUNST MUSEUM

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Raven Chacon: *A Worm's Eye View from a Bird's Beak***

Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum/Davvi Norga Dáiddamusea is delighted to present *A Worm's Eye View from a Bird's Beak*, the first solo exhibition in Europe of artist and musician Raven Chacon. On view from 16 March through 1 September 2024, *A Worm's Eye View from a Bird's Beak* presents newly commissioned works, alongside important pieces from the last 25 years of Chacon's outstanding career.

**A recipient of a MacArthur Genius Grant in 2023 and the first Native American to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2022, Chacon works across composition, notation, installation, film and performance to highlight Indigenous resistance and empower Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing.**

The exhibition in Tromsø/Romsa is orientated along a vertical axis, starting from the ground floor and reaching up into the attic, a space hitherto unknown to the public. This spatialisation of the works echoes a pivotal notion to Navajo and Sámi philosophies, which points to the vertical neighbours that exist across concurrent worlds above and below us. The works presented in the exhibition draw connections between the experiences of Indigenous resistance across different continents, emphasizing the shared struggles and the potential for empowered Indigenous futures that can be realized through building networks of solidarity. Chacon's practice generates alternative forms of making community, with and across sound, beyond Western staff notation and beyond the reach of colonialism.

Chacon has a long-standing friendship with the Sámi communities, and the exhibition premieres several new works made with Sámi peers resulting from stays in the area as well as a residency at Lásságammi, the home of the legendary Sámi artist, musician and land-guardian Áillohaš (1943–2001). *For Four (River Valley)* (2024), *Manoeuvring the Apostles* (2024), and *...the sky ladder* (2024), emerged from dialogues and collaborative undertakings with Sámi filmmakers/land guardians Marja Bål Nango and Smávut Ingir (and their relatives in the reindeer-herding Bål Nango family) and with joikers Ingá-Máret Gaup-Juuso, Risten-Anine Gaup, Ánde Somby, and Niko Valkeapää. The beating heart of these new works lies in their connection between community and land, between notation and relation. The artworks exist beyond the video and sculptural installations found in the museum galleries. They exist as possible alternative ways of being by joining in community, sharing knowledge, listening to each other and the land, and claiming the indivisibility from the land and each other.

Chacon's commitment to family, both blood relations and chosen family, is striking in *For Zitkála-Šá* (2017-2020), a series that draws its name from a Yankton Dakota woman who blazed a pioneering path as a composer, writer, translator, musician, educator and activist at the turn of the 20th century. The series features twelve musical scores, each paired with a corresponding text that honours Native American, Indigenous, Mestiza or First Nation women whom Chacon knows personally and whose practice in sound, performance, composition and music struck the artist as an essential contribution to a decolonial theory of change. The prominence of women, not only in Chacon's own life, but in the history of Native resistance to colonisation, recurs in several pieces in the exhibition.

Chacon's work invites the audience to listen deeply beyond the recognisable sound of the voice to the spaces and relations in between people (often mistakenly perceived in the Western canon as silence). *Silent Choir (Standing Rock)* (2016/2022) relays the tension of the resistance led by the Standing Rock Sioux community that brought together hundreds of people (some of them Sámi) during the No Dakota Access Pipeline Protest. The work encourages one to listen to the mere weight of their presence, to acknowledge their resistance and confrontation.

Surveying his practice as an empowerment of Indigenous ways of thinking and living, *A Worm's Eye View from a Bird's Beak* provides an overview of the powerful approach Chacon has developed across a variety of media to resurge community and explore the depth of Indigenous kinship to ancestral land.

Chacon's Pulitzer Prize-winning orchestral composition, *Voiceless Mass*, will be performed in Bodø/Bådådđjo/Buvvda (during its year as European Cultural Capital) on 7 June 2024 in collaboration with the Arctic Philharmonic, and Bodø 2024. The concert will also feature Chacon's orchestral compositions, *Biyán* (2011), as well as performances by the Sámi composer, Elina Waage Mikalsen. A conversation at Stormen Concert Hall will take place earlier that day, between Raven Chacon and Patricia Marroquin Norby, Associate Curator of Native American Art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY.

The exhibition at NNKM is curated by Katya García-Antón, Director and Chief Curator of Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum/Davvi Norga Dáiddamusea.

*A Worm's Eye View from a Bird's Beak* is organised by Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum/Davvi Norga Dáiddamusea and the Swiss Institute, New York.

The exhibition is accompanied by a limited edition from the series *Field Recordings* (1999), Chacon's recordings of Navajo landscapes that unsettle the colonial myth of *terra nullius*. The recordings are amplified to maximum volume and printed onto postcards that function as vinyl records.

The first monograph dedicated to Raven Chacon's practice is edited by Katya García-Antón, Stefanie Hessler and Alison Coplan, with texts by Raven Chacon, Aruna D'Souza, Eric-Paul Riege, Dylan Robinson and Patrick Nickleson, Anthony Huberman, Lou Cornum, Marja Bål Nango, Smávut Ingir, Sigbjørn Skåden, Candice Hopkins, Stefanie Hessler and Katya García-Antón. The publication is designed by Stoodio Santiago da Silva and distributed by Sternberg Press.

### **About Raven Chacon (Short BIO)**

Raven Chacon is a composer, performer, and installation artist born at Fort Defiance, Navajo Nation. A recording artist over the span of 22 years, Chacon has appeared on over eighty releases on national and international labels. He has exhibited, performed, or had works performed at LACMA, The Whitney Biennial, Borealis Festival, SITE Santa Fe, The Kennedy Center, and more. As an educator, Chacon is the senior composer mentor for the Native American Composer Apprentice Project (NACAP). In 2022, he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Music for his composition, *Voiceless Mass*, and in 2023 was awarded the MacArthur Fellowship.

### **About Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum (NNKM)**

Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum (NNKM) serves the regions of Troms, Finnmark and Nordland, as well as Svalbard. The museum plays a significant role in Norway, the Nordic, circumpolar and the international art world. Central to the museum is the care, research and activation of a collection of over 2,225 works by artists from

the 1600s to the present day. There is a growing presence of Sami daiddars and duojár in our collection. We are committed to social/climate justice and transformation.

The museum has programming responsibility for the newly established Nordover Kunstsenter and is a key partner in the artist residence Artica Svalbard (Longyearbyen, Svalbard) which makes NNKM exceptional when it comes to operating so close to the North Pole. NNKM already has offices in Bodø and will open NNKM Bodø in 2024.

**Photocredit:**

*Raven Chacon, For Four (River Valley), 2024, 4-channel video installation with sound.*

*Portrait image Raven Chacon, photographer: Adolphe Pierre-Louis*

*Portrait image Katya García-Antón, photographer: Marta Buso, OCA.*

**Contact information for NNKM**

Director and Chief Curator Katya García-Antón

Email: [katya@nnkm.no](mailto:katya@nnkm.no)

Phone: +47 469 74 036