

**CASEY KAPLAN**  
121 WEST 27TH STREET  
NEW YORK NY 10001  
TEL +1 212 645 7335  
FAX +1 212 645 7835  
WWW.CASEYKAPLANGALLERY.COM  
INFO@CASEYKAPLANGALLERY.COM

*Brian Jungen: Drawings*  
January 28 - March 6, 2021  
Press Release

Casey Kaplan is pleased to announce "Brian Jungen: Drawings," the artist's fifth solo exhibition with the gallery. The show debuts a selection of recent works on paper that function as a semiotic map through which the viewer can trace a multitude of personal, historical, and pop-cultural referents. An artist of Indigenous Dane-zaa heritage, Jungen's poetic drawings reflect his ongoing exploration of memory and identity, within a broader context of globalization, ethnocentrism, and commodity culture.

Jungen's recent works on paper transpose line drawings, loose brushwork, and colorful ink markings in meandering compositions. A member of the Doig River First Nations of Northern B.C., he began drawing as a child and developed his skills while attending art school in Vancouver and during a brief period living in downtown Manhattan in the early 1990s. During this time, Jungen produced hundreds of drawings that he often distributed via DIY methods, including wheat-pasting throughout the city. By inserting his works in the street, Jungen bypassed traditional institutions and independently bridged the gap between private practice and public consumption. One such intervention is the 1997 artist zine *Brown Finger*, republished both digitally and in print for the first time to coincide with this exhibition. The zine appropriates clichés of queerness and Indigenous people rendered as caricature, to challenge the Western gaze and the sexual politics of colonialism.

In contrast to his process-oriented sculpture practice, Jungen utilizes automatic drawing as a means for unmediated, creative expression through which to engage various aspects of cultural memory - both personal and collective. This continuity is illustrated in the work, "Ogopogo," (2020) where a scaled serpent is represented alongside other human / animal hybrids, ambiguous green ovals, and glowing yellow orbs. The title refers to a popular mythological water-being, originating from Indigenous lore and demonized as *Ogopogo* the lake monster by colonial European fur traders in the 19th century. In his drawing, Jungen collages different symbols of the *Ogopogo* among graphic, abstract elements, in an exuberant cacophony of color, line, and form. The work conjures not one definitive narrative of the *Ogopogo*, but rather engages the rich lineage of oral tradition and sublimation of indigenous histories. A more personal exploration is evident in "My Mother Enduring Harassment" (2021). In this artwork, Jungen portrays his mother as a winged angel, depicted alone but moving with confident determination. As a child, Jungen's mother adamantly encouraged his predilection for drawing. At the age of seven, Jungen tragically lost both of his parents in a house fire. Jungen draws his mother in mid-step, approaching a circular formation of cartoonish male figures. Collectively, these characters symbolize one of many oppressive forces that the artist's mother had to confront throughout her lifetime. Here, Jungen demonstrates the power of drawing to explore not only personal memories, but also to reimagine the life experiences of others, executed with unwavering empathy, tenderness, and grace.

Many of the drawings employ a new stamping technique achieved by cutting shapes from scraps of leather and buckskin. Jungen drags the graphic cutouts through ink and presses them directly onto the paper, creating crude, stamped figures that are interwoven with playful renderings of nature, folklore, pirouetting figures, and cultural emblems. Instead of creating an illusion of depth through shading, Jungen stacks his line drawings such that the viewer is confronted with a palimpsest of symbols, challenging the two-dimensional flatness of drawing. "Fever Dream" (2020), as an example, depicts a bus traveling through a psychedelic forest of mushrooms, rendered in warm ochre tones. The touristic scene emerges through lyrical red lines of varying density that form bulbous, heart-shaped curves. As with all of the artworks in this show, the composition is indeterminate; a drawing in the present tense. The viewer perceives suggestions, subtle implications, and questions with no definite answers or visual resolve - each form a potential cipher within channels of coded information.

Cohesively, the artworks in the exhibition celebrate drawing as a limitless imaginative plane where disparate ideas and modes of existence can be explored without restraint. Loose and gestural, the ink drawings offer an intimate look into the artist's creative psyche and new windows of perception. While rife with cultural critique, the drawings speak not only to the transgressions of humanity, but to the fundamental aspects of human nature that unite us. Jungen recently reflected on his hope for viewers' experience, stating: "Perhaps these drawings can share a little of the loneliness, humor and reverie that resides in us all."

Brian Jungen (b. 1970, Fort St. John, B.C.) lives and works in the North Okanagan region of British Columbia. In 2019, his work was the subject of a major survey exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto with a fully illustrated color catalogue published on the occasion. Additional solo exhibitions include: Casey Kaplan, New York; Hannover Kunstverein; Bonner Kunstverein; Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; The Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.; Museum Villa Stuck, Munich; Witte de With, Rotterdam; Tate Modern, London; Vancouver Art Gallery; Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal; New Museum, New York and CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco. Recent group exhibitions include: The Weatherspoon Art Museum, UNC Greensboro, NC, Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AK, The 2018 Liverpool Biennial, UK; Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, NV; Rennie Collection, Vancouver and Vancouver Art Gallery. Jungen is included in the permanent collections of the AGO, Toronto; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Crystal Bridges Museum of Contemporary Art, Bentonville, AK; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Seattle Museum of Art; The Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.; Tate Modern, London; and Vancouver Art Gallery, B.C., among others.