

BORTOLAMI

Natalie Ball

Shed a Tear, Running Deer

The Upstairs

June 24 – August 26, 2022

Bortolami Gallery is pleased to present a new exhibition by Oregon-based, Black, Modoc, and Klamath artist Natalie Ball, her first with the gallery. The exhibition features three new large-scale wall hangings and two sculptures. Ball's work is assembled from materials that are highly symbolic, personal, American icons, which are specific to her communities. Stitched and fused together, these animal hides, quilts, pieces of wood, neon, and clothing are often sourced from the site where the artist lives and works, on her ancestral homeland in the rural community of Chiloquin, Oregon.

Ball's most recent works, on view here, have widened the story-telling dynamic at play in the artist's practice, by employing the character of Deer Woman, an avatar for the artist. According to the artist, this embodied persona is self-determined and is acknowledged by most Tribes of North America. And yet, like Ball, she has recently been elected to Tribal council, and is asked to be acknowledged by her Tribe and the US government by quantifying her blood. It is nevertheless within this new official role and through these artworks that she explores self-determination, new authority, and collective responsibility, taking on no less than the federal government in her waged fight to regain the rights to the water on which the Klamath Tribe's survival depends.

Ball's work invites the viewer to reconstruct the hybridity of signs which populate her objects. In *Sheriff's Hat*, the brim of the titular object is elongated through a quilted star motif. The fabric's pattern doubles as the symbol of the officer's badge, so that the latter's authority is usurped as a symbol for Indigenous self-determination. Lightning bolts and stars populate the intricate surfaces of Ball's work, calling to mind ancestral knowledge and the celestial forces which are always already written into the fabric of life. These recurring symbols are borrowed from ancient surfaces, from basket weaving to petroglyphs, and secure the artist with a language with which she inscribes her narrative onto a larger shared history.

Natalie Ball (b. 1980 Portland Oregon, lives and works in Chiloquin, Oregon) received a bachelor's degree with a double major in Art and Indigenous, Race & Ethnic Studies from the University of Oregon. She furthered her studies with a master's with a focus on Indigenous contemporary art at Aotearoa (NZ) at Massey University and an MFA in Painting & Printmaking from Yale School of Art. She is the recipient of the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2019), the Joan Mitchell Painter and Sculptors Grant (2020), and the Ford Foundation's Hallie Ford Foundation Fellow (2020), among other prestigious awards. Solo exhibitions by Ball have been mounted at the Rubell Museum, Miami in 2020, and the Seattle Art Museum, Seattle in 2019. Her work has been exhibited at venues including Oregon Contemporary, Portland (2021); UTA Artist Space, Los Angeles (2021); Berkeley Art Center, Berkeley (2020); Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver (2019), and SculptureCenter, New York (2019). Her work can be found in institutional collections including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Seattle Art Museum, Seattle; the University of Oregon, Eugene; the Hallie Ford Museum of Art, Salem, Oregon, and the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany.