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— SHANNA KETCHUM (DINÉ [NAVÁJO])
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University of New Mexico, Albuquerque

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*Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds* is a participant in Continuum 12 Artists, an exhibition presenting new work by twelve contemporary Native artists in a series of six paired shows at the National Museum of the American Indian’s George Gustav Heye Center from April 2003 to November 2004.

**Cover Photo:** Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds

**November 22, 2003 — February 15, 2004**
Merging his public artworks with studio maquettes and marker drawings, Hock E Aye Vi (Hachivi Edgar Heap of Birds [Tsistsistas [Cheyenne]]) has re-contextualized Wheel, his outdoor sculpture project for the Denver Art Museum, through Diary of Trees, an indoor installation for the Continuum 12 Artists exhibition. The original Wheel tree forms have been modified to manifest the artist's confluence of the official and private for an intimate gallery space. The images and texts synthesize historic events experienced by Native people of the Colorado region with marker drawings containing the artist's diary-like passages. As such, the interior placement of Diary of Trees mediates a site of convergence for the social and political discourse of past and present issues concerning Native self-representation in Neo-Colonial urban settings.

The conceptual framework and circular design of the project were inspired by the Bighorn Medicine Wheel, a sacred site constructed as a circle of stones measuring eighty feet in diameter with twenty-eight spokes or radials, located near the crest of the Bighorn Mountains in north central Wyoming. In Wheel, Heap of Birds will arrange ten archetypal tree-like forms in a solstice circle to reference this earth renewal site, which is visited by many Native people to obtain strong spiritual vibratory powers. In addition, the particular aesthetic details and sources drawn on the tree forms, in both Wheel and Diary of Trees, offer a historical dialogue on the constructive and destructive politics of Native daily life. In the Diary of Trees installation, Heap of Birds has included four full-size plywood tree maquettes and two clear overlays whose design and themes are the basis for Wheel. The maquettes, which are spaced across the center of the gallery floor, are titled Indian Religious Freedom Act, Federal Government Acronyms, Indigenous Global Allies, and Cheyenne and Arapaho Massacres. The two clear overlays shown on the north and south gallery walls are titled Petroglyph And Time Spirals and Rez Life Bison to Beef. Four marker drawings on rag paper are hung on long walls to complete the gallery installation.

This newly imagined space for the Diary of Trees conceptually merges public and private domains because the Trees are formally re-positioned indoors to complement the diary-like passages. By juxtaposing seemingly diverse objects, Heap of Birds encourages an analysis of the metaphysics of outside versus inside, public versus private. The full significance of this process is rooted in the implicit configuration and understanding of the formal oppositions of “outside” and “inside.” The ensuing dialogue in Diary of Trees is a combination of metaphors of the Native American experience in modern society. At the site of convergence, two domains unite in a visual language saturating each Tree with images of alienation and hostility but balanced by a closed script in the diary passages. These metaphors of protest against social and political oppression are the curving and floating symbols in Indian Religious Freedom Act or the sutured lines of the railroad penetrating the earth in Cheyenne and Arapaho Massacres. In Indigenous Global Allies, written words and dates signal massacres, while flags and the lines of bordering countries represent the unification of indigenous peoples worldwide. The forced relocation of Native nations is shown in Rez Life Bison to Beef where Heap of Birds acknowledges the pictorial language utilized by other Native artists, such as Kiowa political prisoner Wohaw, whose memory is honored in the installation, and in a bison image—a figure which these artists have drawn throughout their lives.

The four black marker drawings on heavy rag paper included in this exhibition are linguistic and pictorial declamations of the privacy of individuals who volunteer meaning, or spirit, by choice. Although this mode of presentation is visually available in the public domain, the diary-like passages move and curve along the walls as text becomes image, but whole meaning cannot be inferred from the words alone. Heap of Birds’ wall lyrics take form in the immense domain of the imagination, as concrete poetical words with endless verses about existence in a gesture of complete self-representation. The marker drawings Check Stub Chalk and Monetish reflect this highly personalized approach to art as a protest for privacy that finds its source in diary writings while offering a lesson in solitude. The wall drawings deliver a number of invertible dynamisms and spiraling forms to interact and mirror imagery on the Trees: everything becomes circuitous, recurrent, and constantly re-imagined.

In Diary of Trees, Heap of Birds allows the viewer to experience an intimacy, an engagement of the imagination that seems to move in all directions before another experience is shaped by the descriptive use of his black marker line. It is evident that the cyclical form of the Medicine Wheel functions to
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