

## SOVEREIGN ACTS



James Luna, *Ishi Speaks*, 2011, digital inkjet prints

Galerie d'art Louise-et-Reuben-Cohen presents *Sovereign Acts*, a touring exhibition organized by the Art Museum at the University of Toronto and curated by Wanda Nanibush. **The opening will be held on Wednesday, May 22 from 5 to 7 pm.**

The history of Indigenous Peoples performing cultural dances and practices for international and colonial audiences is an important part of Indigenous art, generally, and performance art, specifically. The Indigenous performers known as "Indians" faced the conundrum of maintaining traditional cultural practices by performing them on stage while also having that performance fulfill the desires of a colonial imaginary. In *Sovereign Acts*, the artists Rebecca Belmore, Lori Blondeau, Dayna Danger, Robert Houle, James Luna, Shelley Niro, Adrian Stimson, and Jeff Thomas, contend with the legacy of colonial representations. Drawing on the depiction of the imaginary "Indian" – the ahistorical, pre-contact "primitivism" in popular and mass culture – they recover and construct new ways of performing the complexity of Indigenous cultures for a contemporary art audience. Their work returns to the multi-levelled history of "Performing Indian" to recuperate the erased and objectified performer as an ancestor, an artist, and an Indigenous subject.

Wanda Nanibush is an Anishinaabe-kwe image and word warrior from the Beausoleil First Nation. She is currently the assistant curator of Canadian and Indigenous art at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

*Sovereign Acts* is organized and circulated with the financial support of the Ontario Arts Council and Canada Council for the Arts. The exhibition will be presented until July 21, 2019. Admission is free and is open to all.

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