

DIAZ CONTEMPORARY

Joseph Tisiga

A Sacred Game: Escape is Perpetual

16 October to 22 November 2014

Opening 16 October from 7 to 9

Diaz Contemporary is pleased to present the first solo exhibition of works by Joseph Tisiga. With a series of watercolours, collages on canvas and sculpture, Tisiga reflects on his impressions of indigenoussness within the modern world. He cites a range of influences to his approach, from the philosophy of Paulo Freire, whose work served to acknowledge and empower the disenfranchised and oppressed; to Carl Jung for his articulation of archetypal images as emerging from the collective unconscious; and Samuel Beckett for the minimal and bleak environments that characterized his writing.

Tisiga's investigations into the complication of identity culminate in works with disjunctive, cultural iconographies woven into one narrative field. Incorporating depictions of ritual and seemingly randomized symbols, Tisiga builds scenes with complex but ambiguous objectives. For Tisiga, the drawings and paintings began with the consideration of a state of "aimless ambition," in which the figures or inhabitants of this fictional space could be understood to be compelled into action, though without a discernible motive to that action. Whether absurd spiritualism, trivial creation or simple makework, the inhabitants appear unable to know how to casually exist, persisting instead to awkwardly feel out solutions. Here, Tisiga equates Beckett's barren landscapes to the worn and makeshift states of many First Nation communities, or settled, indigenous communities worldwide, and sees the tragic monotony of Beckett's world aligning with the insistent survival of the "indigenous soul".

Tisiga grapples with the idea of "a supernatural banality which conceals the criticality of our contemporary condition, effectively muting any singular history's (perspective's, memory's, culture's) ability to translate reality. Perhaps it is that the 'supernatural banality' is a kind of magic that dilutes particularities and reduces culture and time to one continuum that in turn must be reworked on an individual basis, returning everything to pure narrative in which everything and nothing are happening." This viewpoint can be perceived throughout the work, particularly in the collaged material, with its interplay of social, cultural and historical reference.

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Joseph Tisiga was born in 1984 in Edmonton, Alberta and is a member of the Kaska Dene Nation. He is currently based in Whitehorse, Yukon. He studied at Nova Scotia College of Arts and Design and has been a finalist in the RBC Painting Competition (2009) and was longlisted for a Sobey Art Award (2011). His work was included in the recent *Oh, Canada*, an exhibition curated by Denise Markonish for MASS MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts



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