



DAKOTA MACE

Diné Bé' liná

(The Diné Lifeway)

May 6 - June 25, 2022

BRUCE SILVERSTEIN

DAKOTA MACE

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May 6 – June 25, 2022

Opening reception with the artist: May 6, 6-8 pm

Bruce Silverstein Gallery is pleased to announce the representation and first solo exhibition of Diné Artist Dakota Mace. The exhibition, *Diné Bé' liná (The Diné Lifeway)*, opens May 6 – June 25, 2022, with a reception on May 6, 2022, from 6-8 pm. *Diné Bé' liná* will feature chemigrams, beaded cyanotypes, weavings, and editioned prints that will explore Mace's chemistry based and multi-faceted processes that focus on translating the language of Diné (Navajo) history and beliefs.



Choosing materials deliberately, Mace reinterprets the symbols of creation stories, cosmologies, and social structures. She states, "The materials I use, both traditional and non-traditional, are connected to the places they reside, the memories they hold, and the complexities they share to our lineage."

Mace utilizes design elements from her heritage, most often incorporating the motif of Na'ashjéii Asdzáá, Spider-Woman, who is one of the most important deities to the Diné. Spider-Woman played an integral part in preserving the lives of the Diné by guiding the earliest weavers so they could provide for themselves and teach ways of balance within the mind, body, and soul.

"It is through materials that a visual language is expressed; through the calm resonance of Hózhó Nahasdlíi (living within balance)."

Mace creates works in four colors, focusing on one color at a time. Her "blue period" includes cyanotypes that feature the symbols Na'ashjé'íi Asdzáá (Spider-Woman), Dził (Mountain), Tsił nó'okí' (Whirling Log), and Dii (Four). Several series in the show include Nihá (for us), which explores Diné traditions and their relationship to memory and land. Mace expands, "Through the color łichíí (red), I explore the past, present, and future with forms inspired by Kinétah (land)." The deep red of the dyed prints references the earliest Diné weavers' relationship to the resource cochineal, which provided medicine and protective powers, and was often used in woven works.

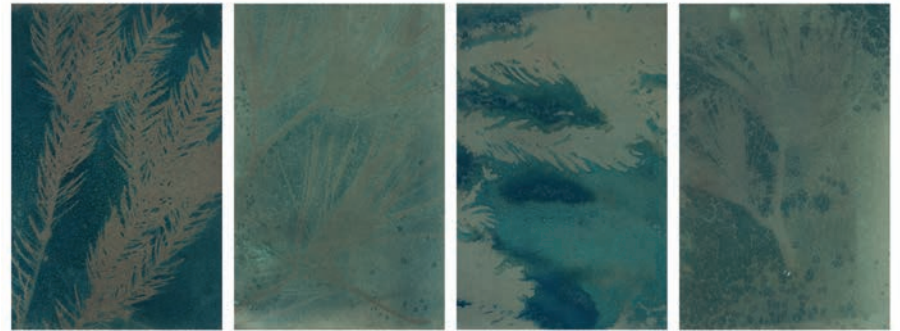
Included in the exhibition are Mace's most recent works, Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places). Often arranged in diptychs and triptychs, Mace pairs images of different objects, landscapes, or memories selected by the subjects she includes. The textual element of storytelling informs what we are looking at and the histories of these places, materials, and connections to the land and origin stories.

DAKOTA MACE

Diné Bé' liná (The Diné Lifeway)

Also included in the exhibition are works from her series *Tó éí iiná* which translates to "water is life," an essential aspect for all Indigenous people. Mace expands, "It encompasses the importance of nature and recognizing Indigenous people as the original caretakers of the land that they reside on. Water is an essential part of understanding the land and preserving the history & memory it carries. Nothing can exist without water and many Indigenous communities today still struggle for access to water.

This series focuses on understanding the changes happening to waterways here in the United States and the many Indigenous people who continue to fight for its protection. Current situations such as the Enbridge Energy Line 3 oil pipeline and access to clean water for over thirty tribes in the southwest are just a few examples of the ongoing fight to protect water and land. Water is an essential part of many Indigenous practices, and respect is needed for what it continues to provide for all. Each piece is a dedication to our ancestors, the land we reside on, and the memories that exist within."

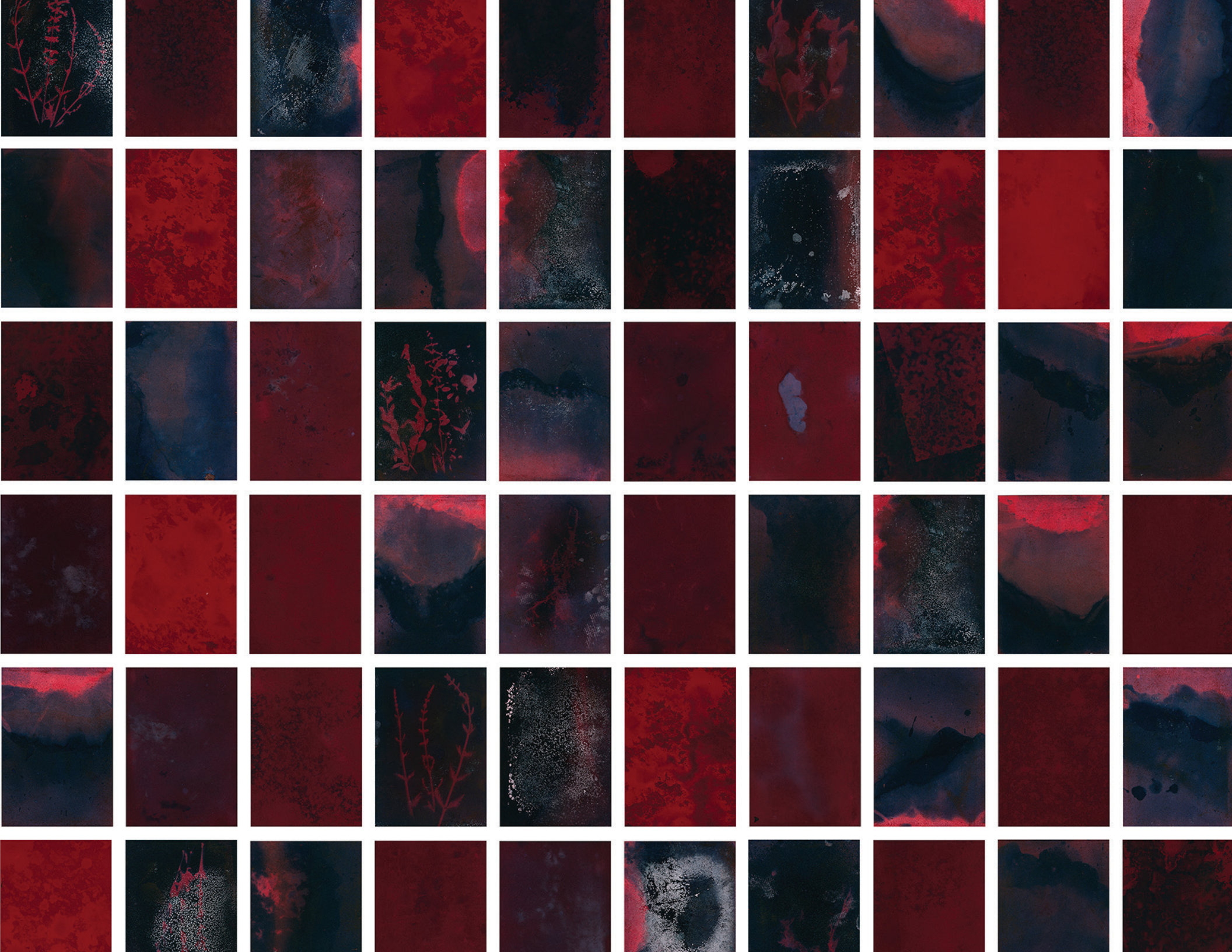


Within the context of artists who have been championed throughout history, Mace joins the roster at Bruce Silverstein Gallery, where she uses her art as a platform to preserve the legacy of the Diné.

Dakota Mace (Diné) is an interdisciplinary artist whose work focuses on translating the language of Diné history and beliefs. Mace received her MA and MFA degrees in Photography and Textile Design at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and her BFA in Photography from the Institute of American Indian Arts. As a Diné (Navajo) artist, her work draws from the history of her Diné heritage, exploring the themes of family lineage, community, and identity. In addition, her work pushes the viewer's understanding of Diné culture through alternative photography techniques, weaving, beadwork, and papermaking.

She has also worked with numerous institutions and programs to develop dialogue on the issues of cultural appropriation and the importance of Indigenous design work. She is currently a grad advisor in painting and drawing at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the photographer for the Helen Louise Allen Textile Center and the Center of Design and Material Culture.

Her work as an artist and scholar has been exhibited nationally and internationally at various conferences, collectives, museums, and galleries, including Textile Society of America, Weave a Real Peace, Indigenous Photograph, 400 Year Project, Wright Art Museum, Contemporary Arts Center, Kemper Museum of Art, Boston University and the Wallach Art Gallery.





Dakota Mace (b. 1991)

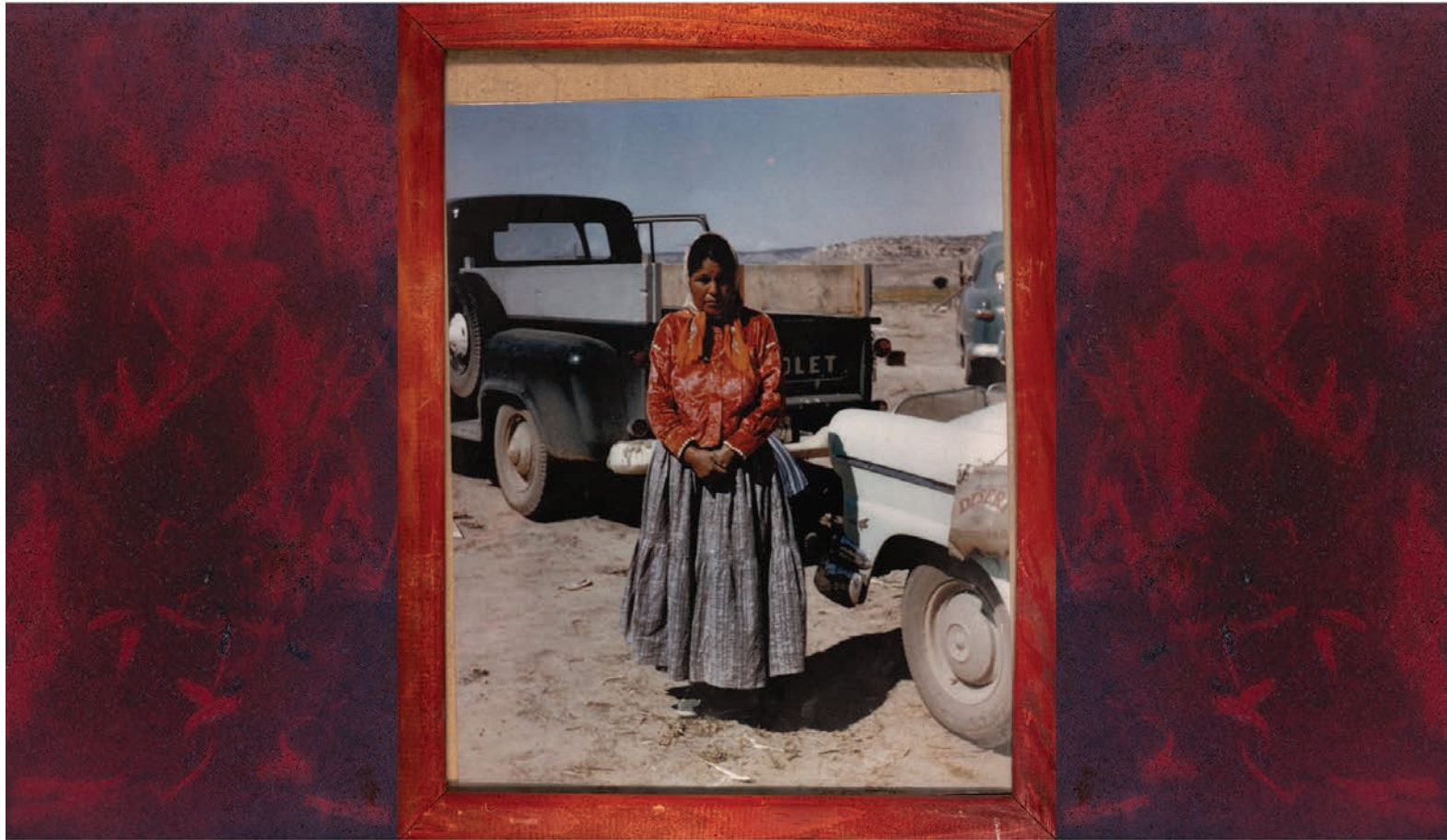
So' (Stars), 2019

Unique arrangement of 40 chemigrams

24 x 40 in. (61 x 101.6 cm)

Each 6 x 4 in.

DMA-00007-SP



I asked each person I interviewed to select a memory, object, or landscape which has become a place of healing - a Sacred Place. Chester Otero is a Diné elder from Torreon, NM. He is my great uncle, my grandmother's older brother.

The sacred memory he chose to offer was the only photograph he has of his mother. Within the Diné culture, our identity and kinship are passed down from our mothers. We introduce ourselves by our mother's clan, and we, as children, take their family name. Diné women are the center of the family; they are the keepers of our ancestral teachings.

Dakota Mace (b. 1991)

Chester Otero-Diné Elder Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places), 2021

Digital archival print

24 x 30 in. (61 x 76.2 cm)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

DMA-00010-SP



In this cyanotype, I selected plants and flowers along the route of The Long Walk, that represent the lost stories of our ancestors, stories that were never recorded. Many elders chose not to share their memories, believing that they could create further harm. Despite cultural taboos, there is a need to carry forward these stories of resilience.

It wasn't until the passing of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act in 1978 that my own people were allowed the freedom to practice our ceremonies, collect sacred materials, and visit our sacred sites that have existed long before the birth of the United States. This is just one reminder of how very recently it was that America's Indigenous people were granted this most basic freedom guaranteed by the Constitution!

Through the camera, traditionally seen as an oppressive weapon, I challenge the documentation of Indigenous people by decolonizing the violent visual history of colonialism. Through my photography, I provide the opportunity to heal and allow the land and its natural materials to tell our stories.

Dakota Mace (b. 1991)

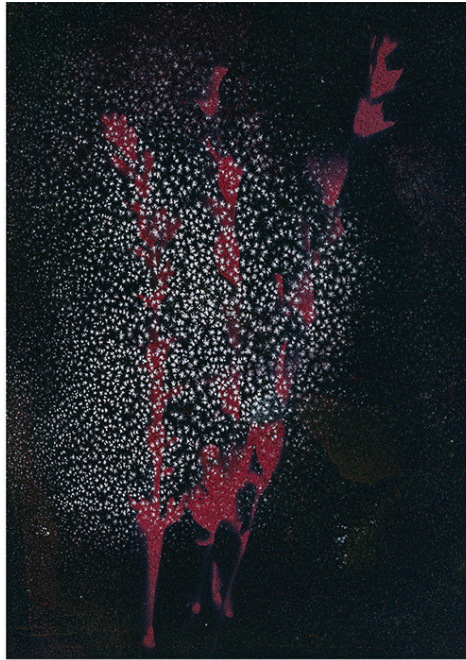
Tozodizin (Prayer) Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places), 2021

Digital archival print

24 x 30 in. (61 x 76.2 cm)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

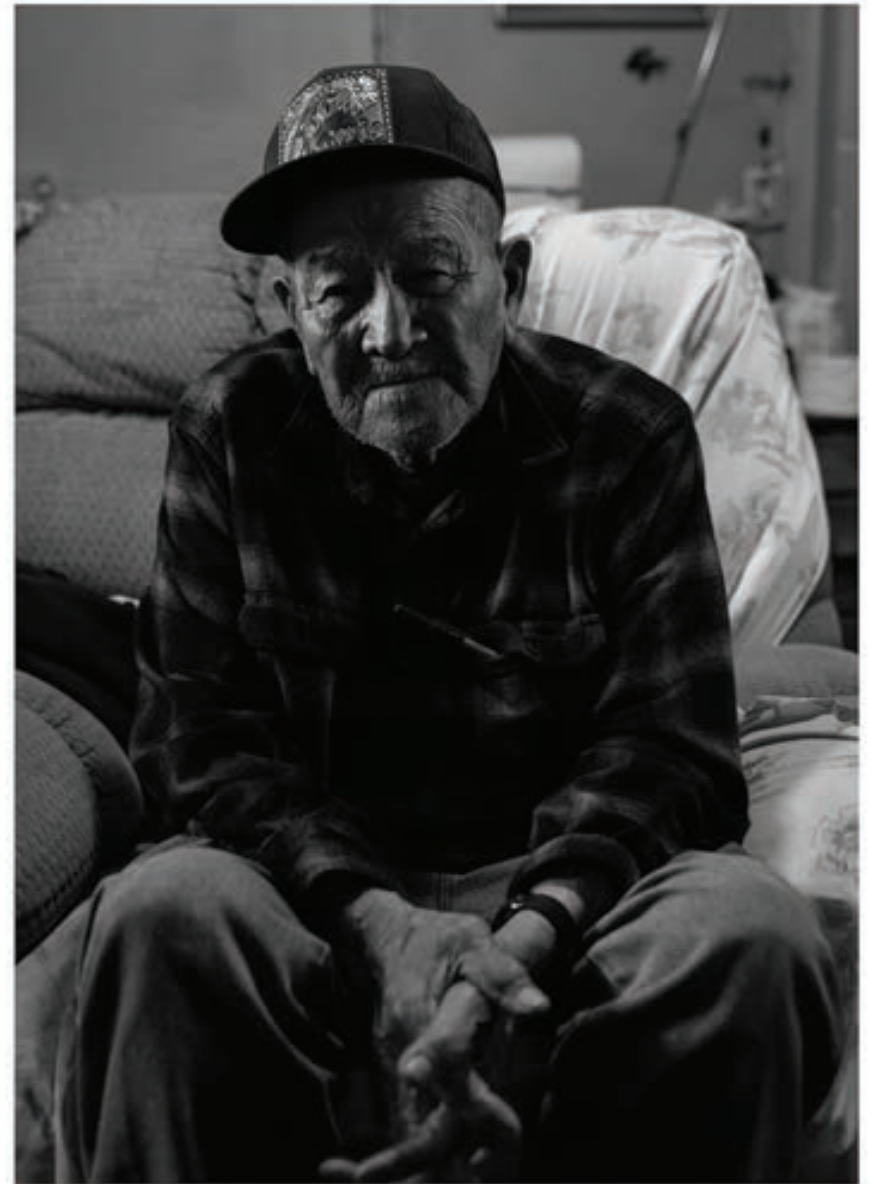
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Dakota Mace (b. 1991)
Tozodizin (Prayer) Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places), 2021

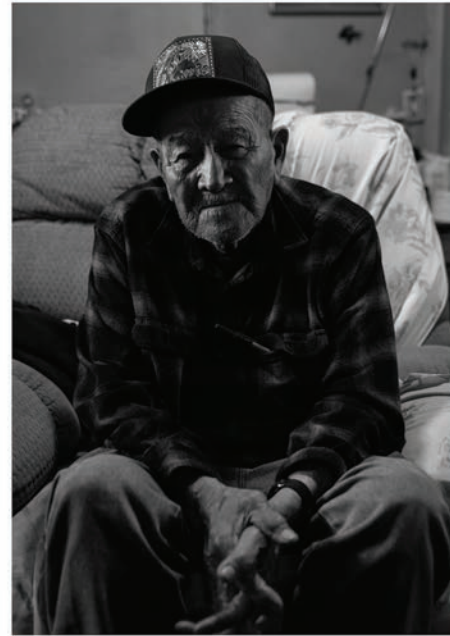
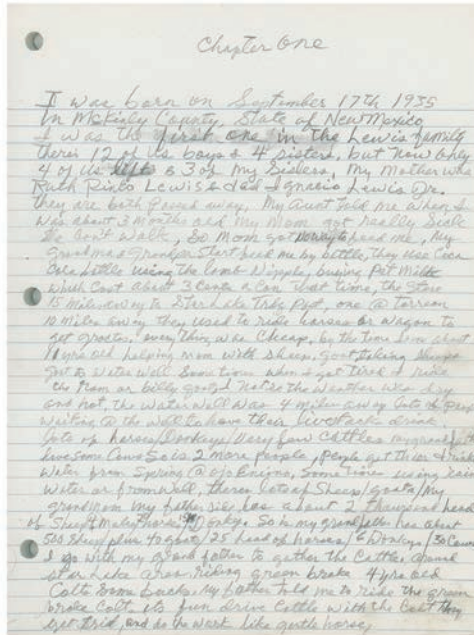
Chapter One

I was born on September 17th 1935
in McKinley County, State of New Mexico
I was the first one in the Lewis family
there 12 of us boys & 4 sisters, but now only
4 of us left & 3 of my sisters, my mother who
Ruth Pinto Lewis & dad Ignacio Lewis Jr.
They are both passed away, my Aunt told me when I
was about 3 months old my Mom got really sick
she can't walk, so Mom got brought to bed, my
Grandma & Grandpa start feed me by bottle, they use Coca
Cola bottle using the Lamb Wipple, buying Pat Miller
which cost about 3 cents a can that time, the store
15 miles away to Star Lake they put, one @ Terreon
10 miles away they used to ride horses or wagon to
get spectra, every thing was cheap, by the time I was about
14 yrs old helping mom with sheep, goat, taking sheep
out to water well. Some time when I get tired I ride
the Ram or Billy goat, notice the weather when day
and hot, the water well was 4 miles away into the people
waiting on the well to have their livestock drink
lots of horses/Donkeys/very few cattle (my grandpa had
two some cows so is 2 more people, people get their drinking
water from Springs @ Star Lake, some time using rain
water or from well, there lots of sheep/goats/my
grandpa my father, he has about 2 thousand head
of sheep/making horse/Donkey. So in my grandpa he has about
500 sheep plus 40 goats/25 head of horses/2 Donkeys/30 cows
I go with my grand father to gather the cattle, Grand
star Lake area, riding green broke 4 yrs old
Colt from back, my father told me to ride the green
broke Colt, its fun drive cattle with the best they
get tried, and so the work like gentle horse,



Dakota Mace (b. 1991)

Herbert Lewis-Diné Elder Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places), 2021



Herbert Lewis is from Ricon Marcus, New Mexico, close to Torreon, New Mexico. He was born in 1935. Herbert's mother told him that he was born in Mickinley County but didn't know the exact location due to a lack of records. Herbert wasn't officially recognized by the US until later in his life. He was treated as if he was an immigrant on his ancestral land.

For this project, we spoke in Navajo; however, he felt more comfortable writing in English and wanted to write his story down as his contribution for a sacred object. He shared his biography — the story of his birth and early life in chapter one with the hopes that his children, who don't speak Navajo, could read it.

Herbert had a hard childhood. Families moved seasonally, and he herded sheep for his paternal grandmother from November to June at a camp in the desert. He often didn't have enough to eat and would either sneak food or take game hunted by the sheepdogs. Finally, he ran away and made it back to his maternal grandfather's home. His grandfather was well off; he had many sheep and cattle. While there, he was told to go to a residential boarding school to learn how to write, read, and understand English - that this would benefit him in the future.

Dakota Mace (b. 1991)
Herbert Lewis-Diné Elder Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places), 2021
Digital archival print
24 x 30 in. (61 x 76.2 cm)
Edition of 3 + 2 AP
DMA-00013-SP



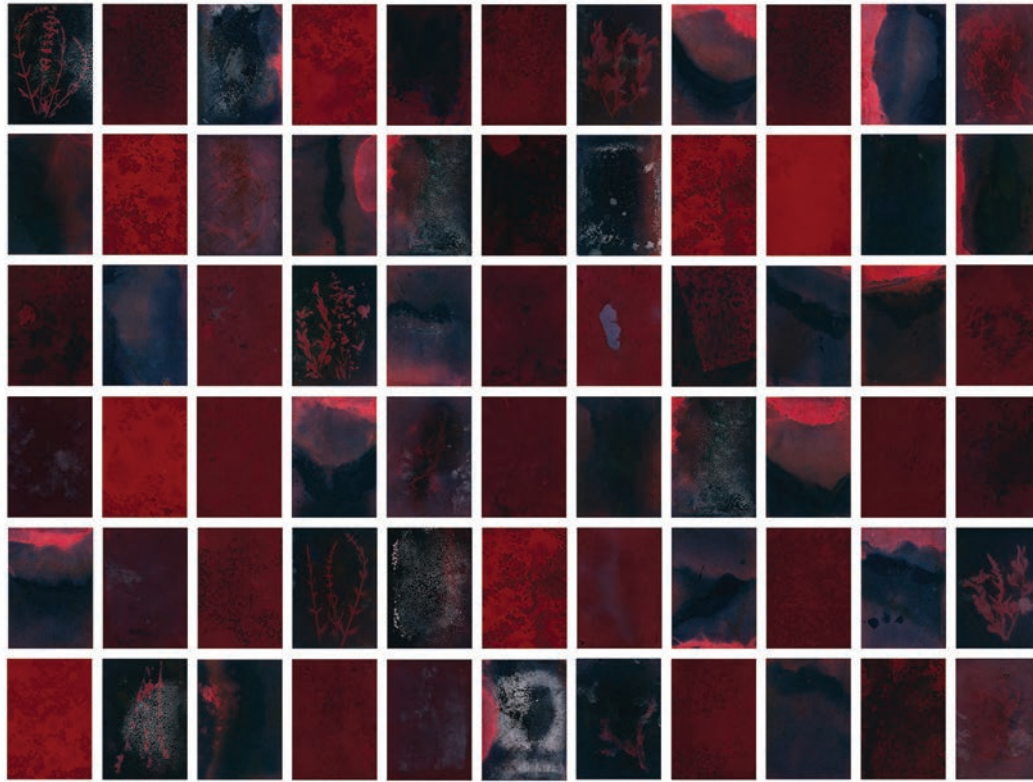
Dakota Mace (b. 1991)
Ruth Lewis-Diné Elder Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places), 2021



This is another piece made by Herbert Lewis' memories. He was married to his wife, Ruth, for 59 years before her death in 2018. She often looked out the window at this tree in the NM landscape of their yard. The cyanotype was made from the earth near that exact location, and the deep cochineal red signifies the importance of this color to Diné people. It is a color used in our medicines and used to protect those who are traveling.

While on the Long Walk, many Diné would seek shelter under juniper trees, like the one pictured here, and share stories beneath them. These stories were often prayers offered to lives lost.

Dakota Mace (b. 1991)
Ruth Lewis-Diné Elder Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places), 2021
Digital archival print
24 x 30 in. (61 x 76.2 cm)
Edition of 3 + 2 AP
DMA-00014-SP



This project honors the importance of land and natural materials. It is believed that to understand the Diné, you must place yourself into the world of Diné tradition. Art is essential to our beliefs and is a lifeline to our culture, land, and the histories that are a part of our identity. With each connection, tradition remains central to the fundamental understanding of the Diné, a line between one generation to the next.

I have created small-scale cyanotype prints of abstracted locations seen as sacred for the Diné along the trail to Bosque Redondo. I allow the landscape to create the photograph, letting the earth and its materials create abstract forms of the memories that it holds. Each cyanotype is made to remember my ancestors, who went unnamed or unrecognized, and their identity embedded within the land itself.

Dakota Mace (b. 1991)
Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places), 2021
Digital archival print
24 x 30 in. (61 x 76.2 cm)
Edition of 3 + 2 AP
DMA-00017-SP



Helen Nez is an elder from Blue Gap, Arizona, situated in the center of Navajo Nation. She was born in 1938 and is related to me by maternal clan, Redhouse.

On the left, the cyanotype features wildflowers naturally growing near her home, one of the few natural plants that has survived in that area which has been mined for uranium since 1944. Yet, much like the flower, Helen continues to persevere, and each of the flowers represents one of Helen's 11 children who died from exposure to uranium.

Diné women are taught that they are sacred. Through her hands, she carries her children, picks traditional plants, tends to livestock, and practices ceremonies. You can see her history etched within her hands and her silver jewelry - a true matriarch preserving her culture and homeland, and protecting her family.

Dakota Mace (b. 1991)

Helen Nez-Diné Elder Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places), 2021

Digital archival print

24 x 30 in. (61 x 76.2 cm)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

DMA-00017-SP



Dakota Mace (b. 1991)
Joe Mace-Diné Elder Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places), 2021



This is Joe Mace, a Diné elder from Ojo Encino, New Mexico. He's my grandfather and was the main Diné translator for the project. He is deeply connected to the communities surrounding Torreon, New Mexico, and works to provide outreach for Diné youth on their culture and identity.

This piece represents my grandfather's childhood, one of hardship and continued survival. The spoon on the right is a remnant of his childhood home, a place that today is controlled by the Bureau of Land Management. On the left is the only existing photograph of Joe as a young man. It was taken in front of Fort Wingate, the residential boarding school he attended for four years. Fort Wingate is notorious for being the starting point for the forced removal of the Diné during the Long Walk to Bosque Redondo. This led to the loss of culture, language, and the historical trauma that still affects many Diné people today.

Dakota Mace (b. 1991)

Joe Mace-Diné Elder Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places), 2021

Digital archival print

24 x 30 in. (61 x 76.2 cm)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

DMA-00011-SP



This is Elsa Otero. She was born in 1948 in Torreon, New Mexico.

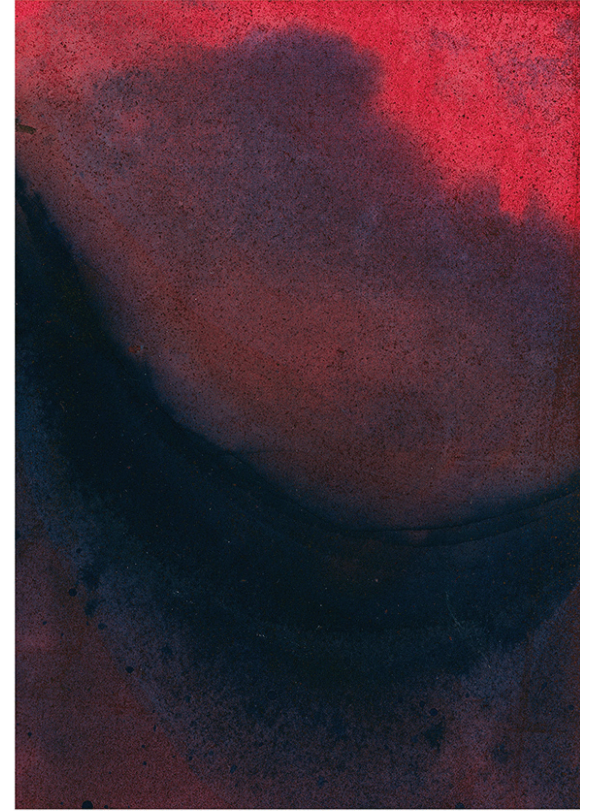
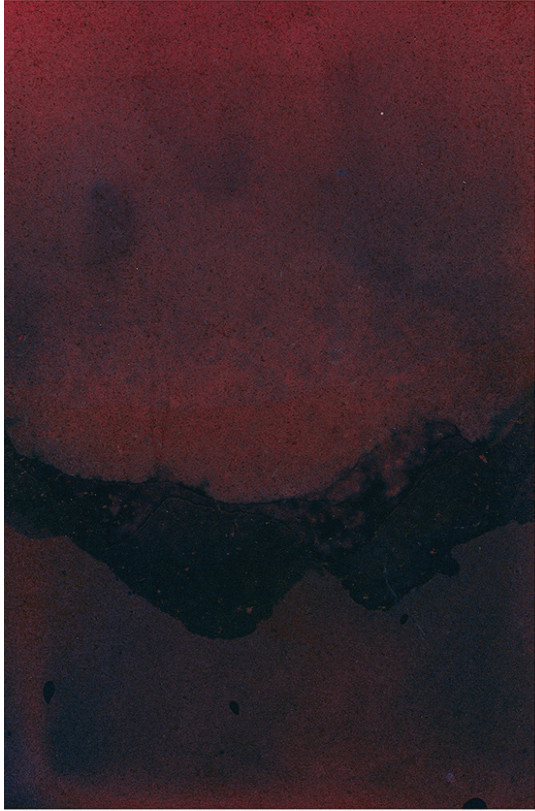
This photograph of Elsa at a residential boarding school is a scan of a scan with her name written on it in a ballpoint pen. The quality of the image contradicts how precious it is since it is the only photo she has of herself as a child.

In the background are cyanotypes created near Elsa's home, where details, like those in her photo, have been layered and obscured. The deterioration of this piece represent the U.S. government's repeated attempts to eliminate Diné ways of life through residential boarding schools, Christian missionaries and forced assimilation.

Dakota Mace (b. 1991)

Elsa Otero-Diné Elder Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places), 2021

Digital archival print
24 x 30 in. (61 x 76.2 cm)
Edition of 3 + 2 AP
DMA-00017-SP



Dakota Mace (b. 1991)
Louise Badoni-Diné Elder Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places), 2021



Louise Badoni was born in 1943 in Blue Gap, Arizona. She is related to me by my maternal clan, Redhouse.

Louise is seated in her yard, where she is often surrounded by her children and grandchildren, who listen to her stories about the creation of our people, the importance of family, and the continuation of our traditions. For Louise, it is a special time because very few Diné children gather this way anymore.

The cyanotypes were created near her home, and the wind created these abstracted images. For us, the land is our record keeper, giving us the knowledge and strength to carry on our traditions. If you listen carefully, you can hear the stories of our ancestors being carried across the land.

Dakota Mace (b. 1991)

Louise Badoni-Diné Elder Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places), 2021

Digital archival print

24 x 30 in. (61 x 76.2 cm)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

DMA-00016-SP



Hwéeldi (Bosque Redondo) is the site that was the final stop in what was known as the Long Walk for the Diné, a painful removal of my ancestors from their homelands by the U.S. Government. Hwéeldi is the Diné name for Fort Sumner, located in central New Mexico and pictured on the left. On the right is a cyanotype made on the grounds of Ft. Sumner. It is a place of extreme hardship where many of my Diné ancestors were imprisoned from 1864 to 1868. It is estimated that 2000 Dine died walking this route.

I take an indigenized approach to storytelling, collapsing the past, present and future. While the Long Walk happened to Hwéeldi more than a hundred years ago, it is still with us, and we must remember what happened. This moment in our history defined a new era of sovereignty, one of resilience and survival, and reminds us of the struggles for the rights of our land, natural resources, and freedom.

Dakota Mace (b. 1991)

Hwéeldi (Bosque Redondo) Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places), 2021

Digital archival print

24 x 30 in. (61 x 76.2 cm)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

DMA-00009-SP



Dakota Mace (b. 1991)

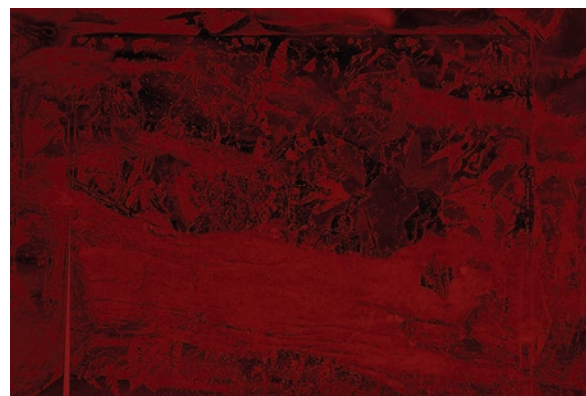
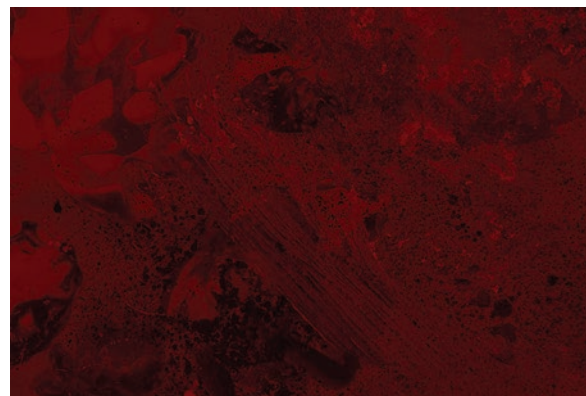
Łichii III (Red), 2020

Digital archival print of scanned chemigram, dyed with cochineal

24 x 36 in. (61 x 91.4 cm)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

DMA-00005-SP



“E’e’aahjigo, Dook’o’ooslííd sida.”
(This is how they were placed for us.) -Luci Tapahonso

These works explore Diné traditions and their relationship to memory and land. Diné beliefs built upon narratives and symbols that teach us hózhó, the balance within ourselves. Through the color *lichíí* (red), I explore the past, present, and future with forms inspired by *Kinétah* (land). The materials I use, both traditional and non-traditional, are connected to the places they reside, the memories that they hold, and the complexities that they share to our lineage. Art is essential to our beliefs and can be seen as a lifeline within our culture, our land, and the histories that are a part of our identity. With each connection, tradition remains central to the fundamental understanding of the Diné, a line between one generation to the next. It is *Nihá* (for us).

Dakota Mace (b. 1991)
Łichíí I-IV (Red), 2019-2020
Digital archival prints of scanned chemigrams, dyed with cochineal
Each 24 x 36 in. (61 x 91.4 cm)
Edition of 3 + 2 AP



Dakota Mace (b. 1991)
Lichii IV (Red), 2020

Installation view, Bruce Silverstein Gallery



Diné (Navajo) culture is centered on wool, the landscape, and the concept of Hózhó (balance). Within Diné (Navajo) culture, there is a symmetry that exists within fours; four sacred mountains, four cardinal directions, four sacred colors and the Na'ashjéii Asdzáá (Spiderwoman) motif with four points. The importance of Kinetáh (land) relies on a grid to weave a sacred intersection of threads that connects Dinétah (Navajo people) through Naalyéhé (materials) and Dji(four). My own work centers on this concept by essentializing certain aspects of Navajo weaving traditions and translating it through handmade paper, beadwork, and weaving.

Na'ashjéii Asdzáá (Spiderwoman) is the sacred origin of forms and symbols that exist within the process of working materials. The symmetrical designs of my work are physical representations of Hózhó (balance). This is a reminder to the way our mind and Níłch'í (spirit) weave a connection to the land that the Naalyéhé (materials) emerge from.

The essence of Na'ashjéii Asdzáá (Spiderwoman) exists within each piece as it focuses on abstracting Dji(four) and reinterpreting the physical representation of weaving itself. For the Dinétah (Navajo people) there is a special relationship to the land and the natural materials that it provides. My work takes the importance of natural materials by mimicking the tones, vegetation, animal hides, and stones found within the land. It is through materials that a visual language is expressed through the calm resonance of Hózhó Nahasdlíi (living within balance).

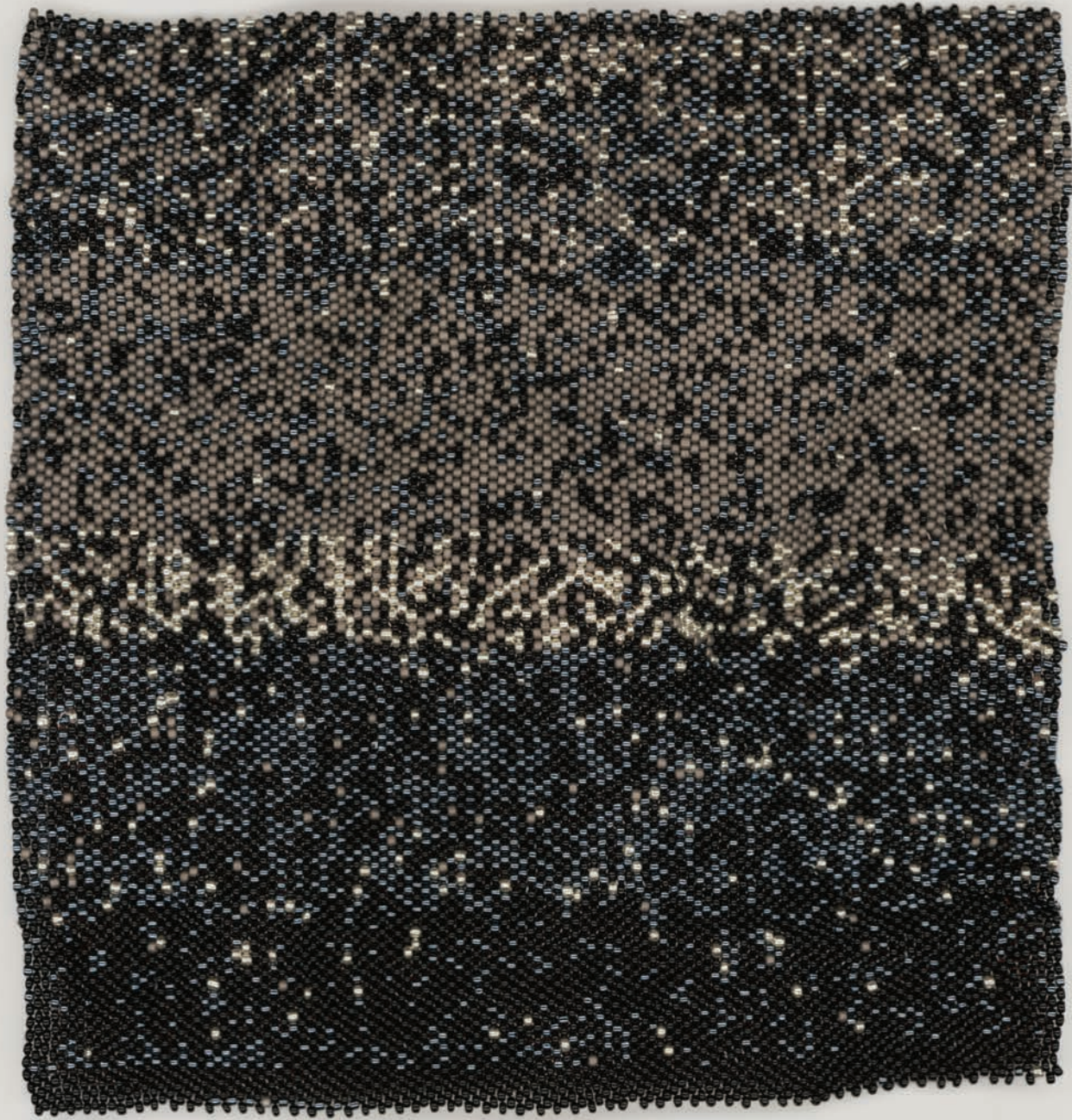
Dakota Mace (b. 1991)

Kéyah (Land) III, 2018

Glass beads hand-sewn onto cotton

14 x 16 in. (35.6 x 40.6 cm)

DMA-00019-SP



Dakota Mace (b. 1991)
Kéyah (Land) III, 2018





Diné (Navajo) weaving is more than technique and craftsmanship; it is a connection to the Diné concept of Hozhó (balance) within nature. My weavings focus on re-interpreting the symbolic abstractions of our creation stories, cosmologies, and social structures, using a combination of traditional and nontraditional materials. Each hidden narrative is represented by every bead within each piece and speaks to the tradition of weaving in a contemporary sense. I have taken certain elements from my culture and have presented them in a way that translates to the deeper meaning behind Diné weavings. The abstract approach to my work gives my audience a window into the world of the Diné, while also introducing new techniques on design and color.

This starts a dialogue between traditional vs. fine art and the way that the western world continues to perceive Diné weavings as utilitarian objects and not works of art. I have approached this conversation by subtly introducing western forms of weaving in combination with Diné beliefs. By doing so, I am creating an entirely new concept that translates the language of Diné weavings through the understanding of the fine art world. This serves as a different approach to cultural reclamation and preservation and the importance of the meanings of the motifs used in my weavings.

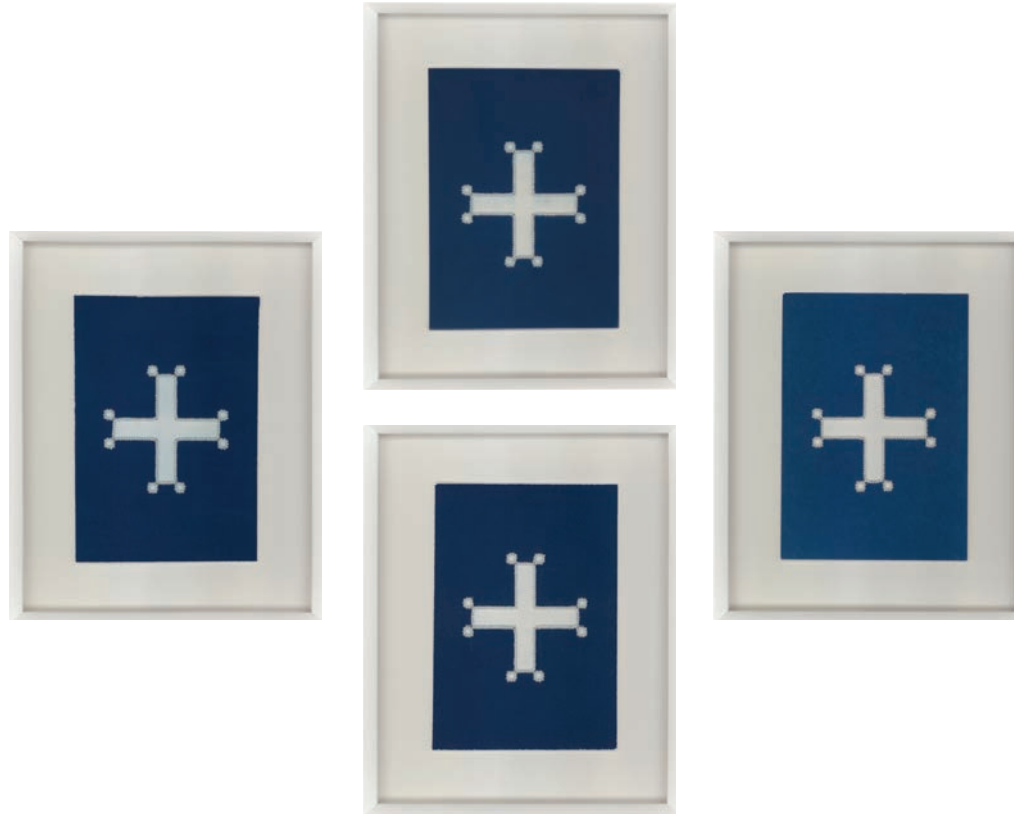
Dakota Mace (b. 1991)

Náhookos Biko' (Northern Fire), Náhookos Bi'áadii (Northern Female), & Náhookos Bika'ii (Northern Male), 2017

Unique natural white cotton and wool with glass beadwork

Overall: 67 1/2 x 42 in. (171.4 x 106.7 cm)

DMA-00018-SP



Na'ashjéii Asdzáá (Spider Woman), who taught the ways of weaving, is one of the most important deities to the Diné and is the most prevalent motif used in my work. She was the first to weave her web of the universe while spreading Hózhó Náhásdlíí' (Beauty Way) teachings of balance within the mind, body, & soul. This narrative formulates an understanding of certain aspects of Diné Bahané (creation story) as well as bringing Na'ashjéii Asdzáá into the fine art world.

The vastness of Diné Bikéyah (the Diné homeland) is rich with the narratives that exist within the landscape. It is believed that to understand the Diné, you must place yourself into the world of Diné tradition. There is a poetic understanding of our weavings and the importance of the sacred ideologies woven into every piece, which has a quiet voice that resonates deep within the object. A weaving is more than a pattern between warp and weft; it serves as a reminder of the importance of tradition and the belief of *hajisí dígíí dahiistłó biihji nilx* (we weave what we see.)

Dakota Mace (b. 1991)
Na'ashjéii Asdzáá I-IV, 2021
Cyanotypes with glass beadwork
Each 7 x 5 in.



[detail]

Dakota Mace (b. 1991)
Na'ashjéii Asdzáá III, 2021
Cyanotype with glass beadwork
7 x 5 in.
DMA-00022-SP

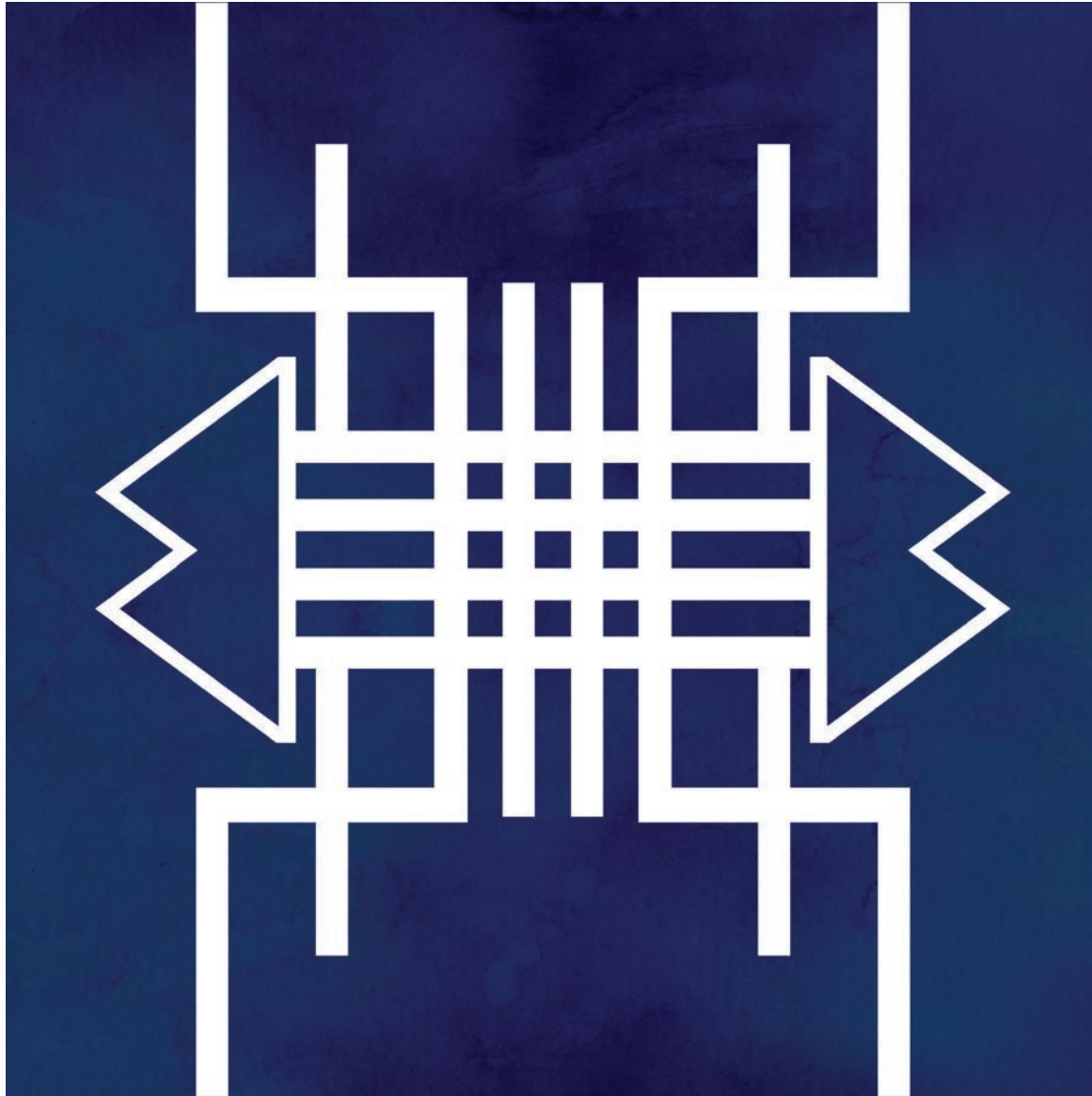


“The land that may appear arid and forlorn to the newcomer is full of stories which hold the spirits of the people, those who live here today and those who lived centuries and other worlds ago”
-Luci Tapahonso

The Dinétah (Navajo homeland) holds the memories and narratives of Diné (Navajo) ancestors within the land. To unfold these narratives, we must listen with all our senses, and the nááda’iinihgóó (place) that surrounds us. The yákaashbąąh (horizon) and keyáh (land) are never separate entities, they always meet in the distance, when hayíłką (dawn) brings the white light of the morning and hiłi- ijji (dusk) brings the deep blues of night.

This body of work is an abstraction of keyáh (land) through meditative processes of traditional and non-traditional art forms. What is depicted is the essence of power within keyáh (land), to be united with Dinétah (Navajo homeland), and what it means to be Diné (Navajo). Through this immersion, I recall the relationship as well as spiritual connection to the sacred, a representation of my ancestors through symbolic design elements. These symbols are Na’ashjé’íí Asdzáá (Spider Woman), Dził (Mountain), Tsił nó’olí’ (Whirling Log), and Dji(Four) which are inherently embedded within the land while also constantly shifting.

Yákaashbąąh (horizon) is the essence of Dinétah (Navajo homeland) through minimized lines and the period between daylight and darkness. This is a line into understanding my Diné (Navajo) identity through the material presence of my work as well as a window to land, memory, and culture that is situated in nááda’iinihgóó (place).



Dakota Mace (b. 1991)

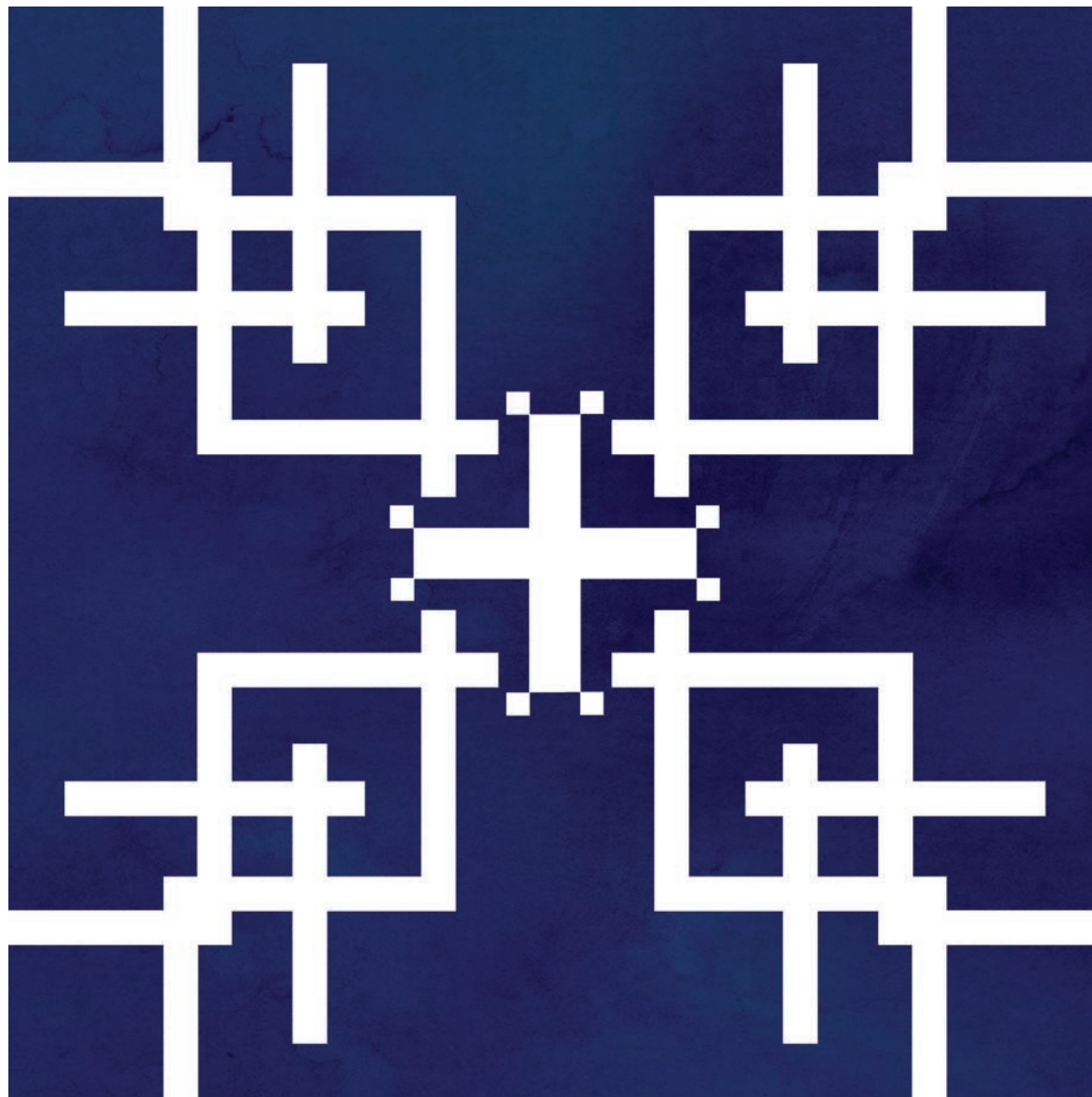
Na'ashch'aa' IV, 2018

Digital archival print of scanned cyanotype

24 x 24 in. (61 x 61 cm)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

DMA-00002-SP



Dakota Mace (b. 1991)

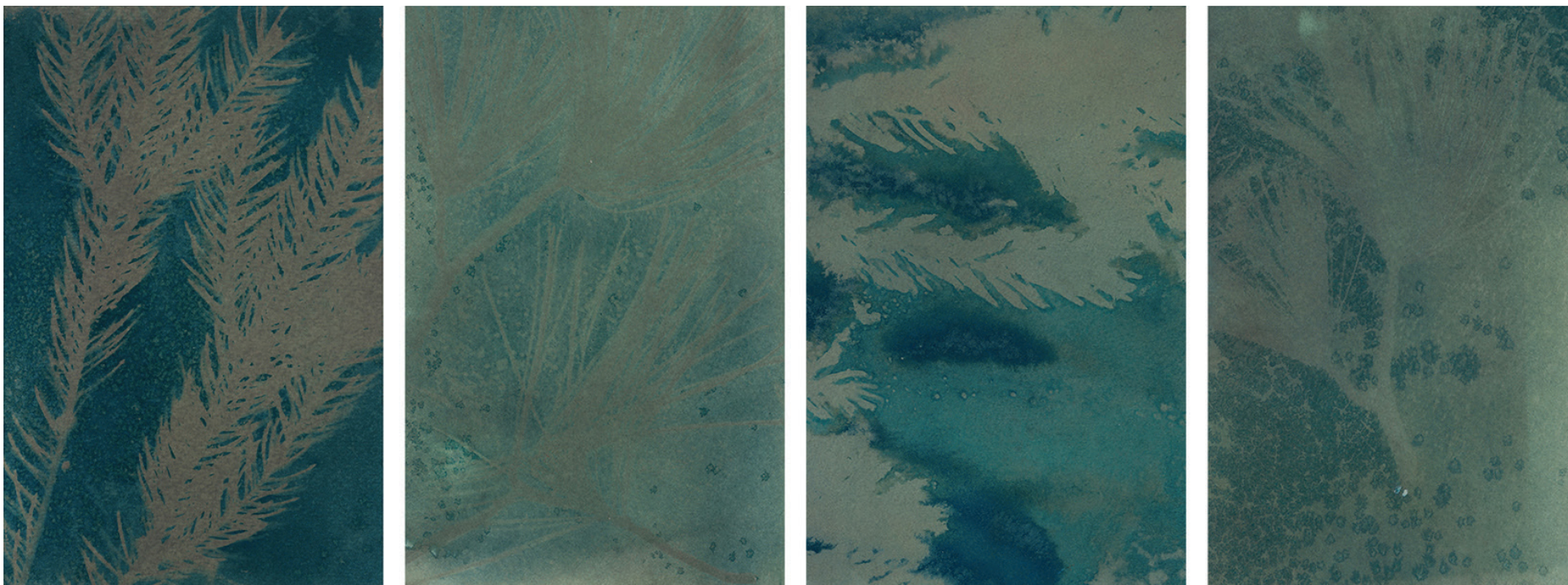
Na'ashch'aa' III, 2018

Digital archival print of scanned cyanotype

24 x 24 in. (61 x 61 cm)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

DMA-00001-SP



Tó éi iiná which translates to “water is life,” an essential aspect for all Indigenous people. It encompasses the importance of nature and recognizing Indigenous people as the original caretakers of the land that they reside on. Water is an essential part of understanding the land and preserving the history & memory it carries. Nothing can exist without water and many Indigenous communities today still struggle for access to water.

This series focuses on understanding the changes happening to waterways here in the United States and the many Indigenous people who continue to fight for its protection. Current situations such as the Enbridge Energy Line 3 oil pipeline and access to clean water for over thirty tribes in the southwest are just a few examples of the ongoing fight to protect water and land. Water is an essential part of many Indigenous practices, and respect is needed for what it continues to provide for all. Each piece is a dedication to our ancestors, the land we reside on, and the memories that exist within.

Dakota Mace (b. 1991)

Tó (Water) I-IV, 2021

Digital archival prints of scanned cyanotypes

36 x 24 in. (91.4 x 61 cm)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP



Dakota Mace (b. 1991)

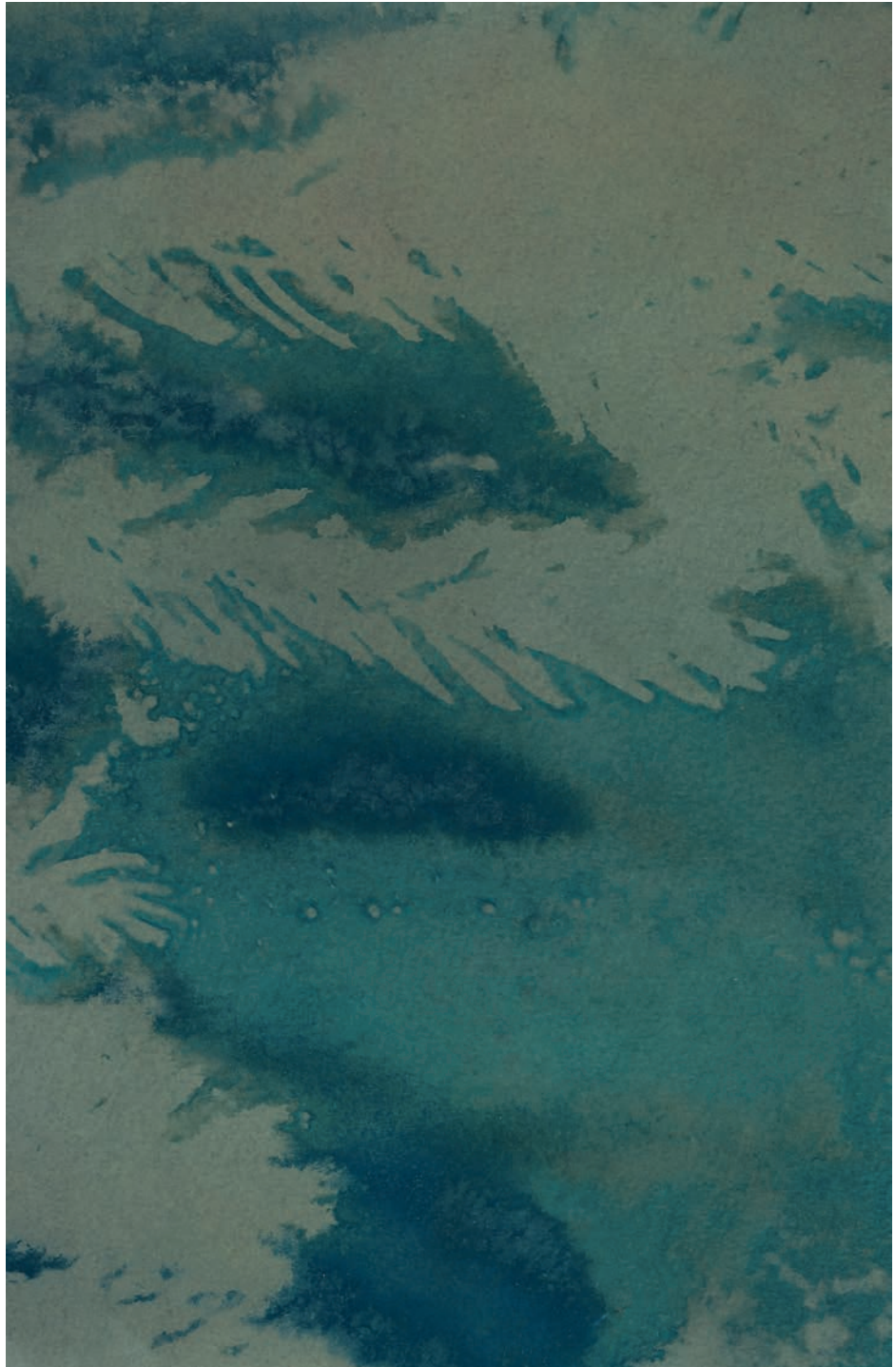
Tó (Water) II, 2021

Digital archival print of scanned cyanotype

36 x 24 in. (91.4 x 61 cm)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

DMA-00024-SP



Dakota Mace (b. 1991)

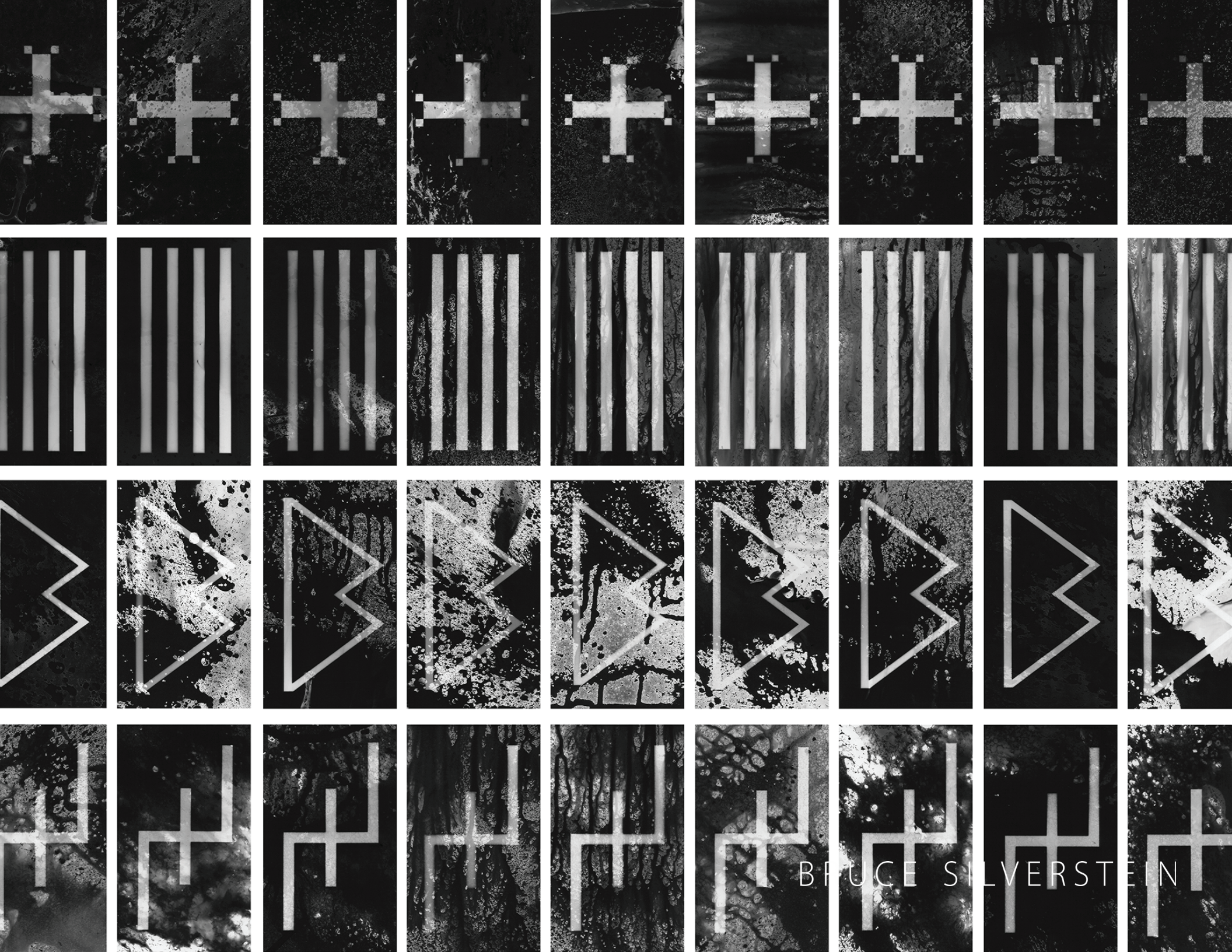
Tó (Water) III, 2021

Digital archival print of scanned cyanotype

36 x 24 in. (91.4 x 61 cm)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

DMA-00026-SP



BRUCE SILVERSTEIN