



Open Source Gallery, Inc - 501(c)(3) Organization
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Edgar Heap of Birds and Keith Christensen: *IN UNION*

February 11- March 24, 2023

Opening Reception: February 11, 6-8pm

Opening Hours: Wed+Thur: 4-6pm, Sat+Sun: 2-6pm

Open Source Gallery presents *IN UNION*, a project by Edgar Heap of Birds and Keith Christensen highlighting the native role in a union strike, union families, and environmental protests.

Most tribal communities traditionally operate as collectives, treasuring the group over the individual. This organizational method holds contemporary ties to the priorities of labor unions supporting all of the members. Through *IN UNION*, Edgar Heap of Birds and Keith Christensen work collaboratively to create powerful and transformational work about the involvement of natives in labor protests, the development of union families, and the environmental protest movement.

Focusing on the Minneapolis Truckers' Strike of 1934, a struggle that changed the course of the country, if only for a little while, *IN UNION* highlights native involvement in labor activism and the role of unions as leadership and protection. Connecting threads to this momentous event, Heap of Birds explores his family's reliance on labor union support in Kansas. *IN UNION* draws parallels between unions and the native workers who were integral to their success, such as Ray Rainbolt and Emmanuel (Hap) Holstein, with families and tribal councils working for the greater good of the collective.

Within the installation, large banners merge the expressive and assertive monoprint letterforms of Heap of Birds with portraits and pictorial images by Christensen. Posters and informational materials, including a publication, accompany the exhibition and provide context. The publication shares insights by activist artist Mike Alewitz who knew several of the 1934 Minneapolis strike participants and features photographs by Keri Pickett, who documented the birth of the water protector movement led by Winona LaDuke, as well as related protest graphics used to confront the oil pipeline intrusion on native lands. Finally, insights by art historian Yates McKee, author of *Strike Art*, illuminates connections between art and activism.

Edgar Heap of Birds (Cheyenne name: Hock E Aye VI) is a multi-disciplinary artist. His art contributions include public art messages, large scale drawings, Neuf Series acrylic paintings, prints, and monumental porcelain enamel on steel outdoor sculpture. He lives in Oklahoma City, OK. Keith Christensen is an artist and designer. His work includes a focus on social justice issues. He created *Game Turn, Learning from the Minneapolis Truckers' Strike of 1934*, a book and board game installation. He recently authored the book *See & Say Time* on his paintings. He lives in Minneapolis, MN.

For press inquiries, please contact us at contact@opensourcegallery.org

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