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ARTFORUM

EDGAR HEAP OF BIRDS TO RECEIVE HONORARY DOCTORATE FROM CALARTS

May 03, 2018



Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds, CalArts's honorary doctorate recipient for 2018. Photo: Ted West.

The California Institute of the Arts announced that multidisciplinary artist Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds will be awarded an honorary doctorate of arts degree at its commencement ceremony on May 11.

“At CalArts, we educate our students to be Citizen Artists,” said CalArts president Ravi Rajan. “Throughout his long and distinguished career, Edgar Heap of Birds has powerfully embodied that ethos. Using the vocabulary of contemporary art to advocate for indigenous peoples in the US and beyond, he has taught us all how art is an essential component in the fight for social justice.”

Edgar Heap of Birds will become the first Native American recipient of an honorary degree from CalArts. He is of Cheyenne and Arapaho descent and remains an active member of both tribes. Comprising text-based paintings, site-specific installations, prints, and abstract compositions, his work often engages in trenchant critiques of the violence and displacement North American indigenous peoples have faced at the hands of the United States government. Over the course of

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his career, which has spanned more than four decades, the artist's work has been an enduring platform for protest.

"Since the 1980s, Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds has been a key figure in the art world grappling with notions of identity, cultural hegemony, the impact of the past on the present, and a true sense of what it is to be American," said retired curator Lowery Stokes Sims, the former executive director and president of the Studio Museum in Harlem. "His challenges in this work have been formidable . . . he has had to deal with his own concerted effort to take a stand in this society and assert his actuality as a Native American, artist, activist, cultural leader, and family man."

Edgar Heap of Birds's work has been shown internationally in exhibitions such as Documenta and the Venice Biennale, and at various institutions, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the National Museum of the American Indian, New York; the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. Since 1988, he has taught Native American studies at the University of Oklahoma and has served as a visiting professor at Yale University and the Rhode Island School of Design.