

## **Artist Statement for *The Potlatch Punk World Tour Exhibition***

Until recently, I worked as the curator for grunt gallery, a position I held for five years and had the heady privilege of working with many artists to help shape their vision. Every artist brought an entire world to our small space. And at some point before their openings, I've had conversations with each of them about how difficult it is to make art when horror is live-streamed into our lives through the screens in our hands while serious and thorough journalism has been replaced with bought-and-paid-for gaslighting mouth-pieces promising us that everything is okay. Or if it isn't okay, to insist that the problem is far away and not ours to fix, but that of mealy-mouthed politicians and their tech oligarch overlords and extraction industry empires. So how do you make art from the place of a splintering heart? Why does art matter, and how do you take responsibility in your work?

My answer to every artist has also had to be the answer I give myself; that we aren't looking for an army of soloists; your art is you being a part of a growing chorus. You're not taking up space that you don't deserve, it's just your sections turn to sing. I've stopped caring if it's corny to believe that love is what can break through the cacophony of calamity. To remember and assert both our own humanness and the humanity of strangers against the disaffected cruelty of power telling us to hunker down and shut the fuck up while those who "know how the world actually works" speak for us *is the fight*.

Being in the chorus means stepping away from the self-flagellation of perfection. It means trying new tactics, and making unexpected alliances. I come from an experience of having the immeasurable luck of growing up with my family who never provided formal lessons on the inherent values of our people, but who imprinted our ways of being through including me in the structure of our clan systems and potlatches, fractured though they may have been by the Potlatch Ban (1885 - 1951). As an adult, I come from the experience of lurking around art and punk spaces, protests, blockades and being both accountable and forgiving by showing up even after I've fucked up or been fucked over.

This exhibition, my world that I am inviting you into, is an expression of these communities I come from; queer, trans, Indigenous, anarchist. It is the ecstatic, embodied joy I've felt in being pulverized in mosh pits where no one hits the ground because as violent as it may look, everyone is ready to dive and catch you before you crack your damn head on the beer-soaked concrete. It's a crowd screaming "FREE PALESTINE", singing the Women's Warrior Song and holding one another despite the rage and grief of losing our loved ones.

I was at an artist talk by Cheryl L'Hirondelle last summer, a self-described Cree/Halfbreed; German/Polish artist whose work leads with deep love. A leading question came from the audience that tried to get her to answer to who she affiliates herself with politically. They wanted to hear "anarchist", but what I loved was her answer, her gentle refute of being placed into a perspective identity; *"I just want to know what rules to break to make sure everyone gets what they need."* And that is exactly the spirit that I hope comes through this exhibition.