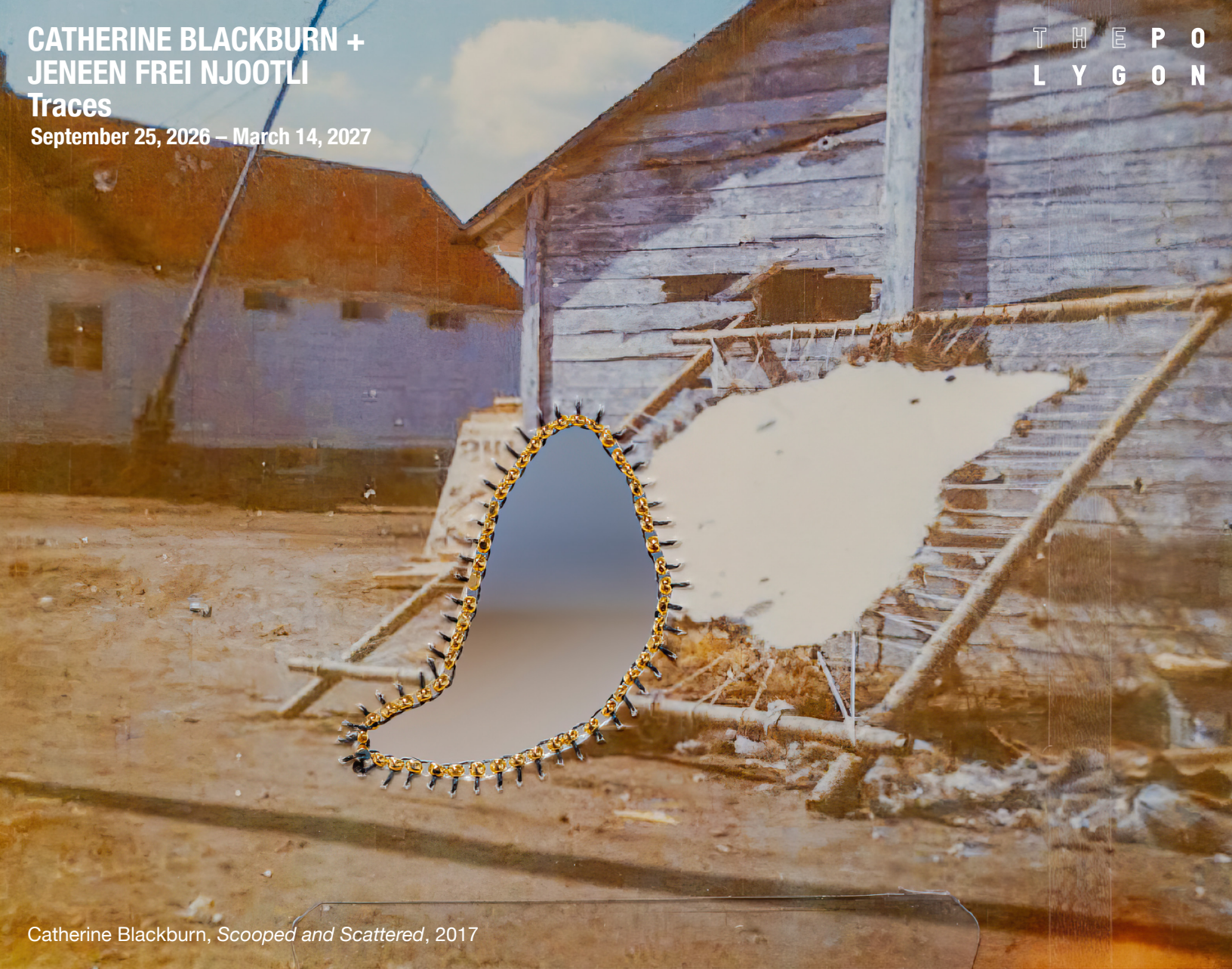


CATHERINE BLACKBURN +
JENEEN FREI NJOOTLI
Traces

September 25, 2026 – March 14, 2027

T H E P O
L Y G O N



Catherine Blackburn, *Scooped and Scattered*, 2017

Jeneen Frei Njootli’s works are brought together around their grandmother. In *Knowledge Transference IV*, the impression of their grandmother’s beadwork is pressed into Frei Njootli’s skin. Traces of the original shapes remain, but aspects such as colour and pattern are left untranslated. The close framing on the skin conceals details about the person in the photograph, offering no clear identifiers such as age or gender. Similar methods are utilised in *Joanne* and *Condor*, sharing references to beadwork and the body without explicitly giving anything away.

Each time *Knowledge Transference IV* is mounted, it is later altered in a performance titled *when the one to author the cut is gone, a small hole in the shape of a portal forms*. The Polygon Gallery hosts the fifth iteration of this performance, modified for this particular context to reflect the artist’s shifting relationship to Vuntut material culture, knowledge, and the self.

Portal is a photograph of Frei Njootli in Vuntut Gwitchin territory, harvesting their first caribou. The paper is incised with the pattern of their grandmother’s bible bag. By removing large sections of the image, these cuts question who should have access to the land, the animal, and this important first experience.

About the Artist

Jeneen Frei Njootli lives and works in their Vuntut Gwitchin homelands, outside of Old Crow, Yukon. There is an industrial- and photo-adjacent lean in their practice, through which they work with culturally intimate materials that manifest in sculpture, regalia, performance, and sound. They have worked with many mentors and knowledge holders over the years, in addition to holding an MFA from the University of British Columbia and a BFA from Emily Carr University of Art + Design. Represented by Macaulay + Co. Fine Art in Vancouver, Frei Njootli’s work has been presented in many galleries, museums, and artist-run centres around the world. Recent exhibitions include *Jeneen Frei Njootli: The skies closed themselves when we averted our gaze* at The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto, ON (2025); *Indian Theatre: Native Art, Performance, and Self-Determination Since 1969* at the MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, SK (2025); *Makeshift Memorials, Small Revolutions* at KADIST, San Francisco, USA (2024); and *Noise of the Flesh: Score for Gina Pane* at the FRAC (Fonds régional d’art contemporain), Carquefou, France (2023).

List of Works

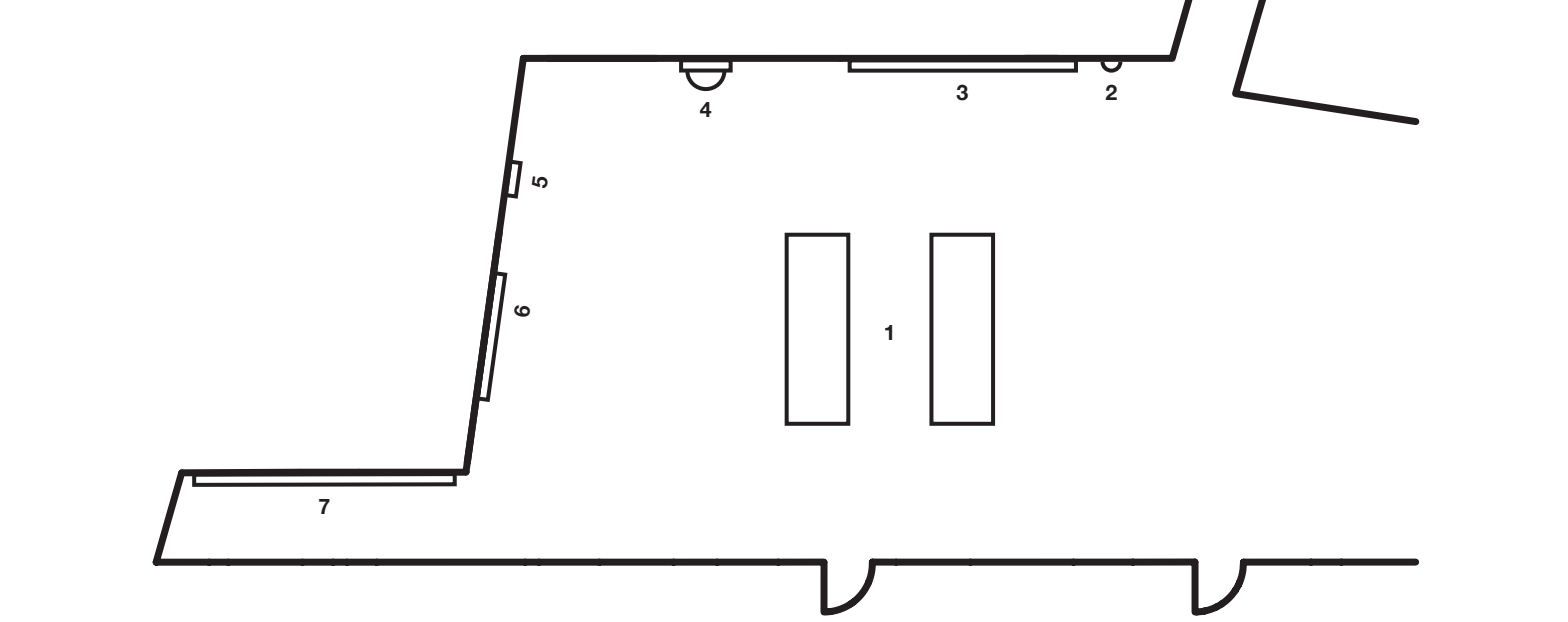
1	Catherine Blackburn <i>Scooped and Scattered</i> , 2017 7 inkjet prints, 24-karat gold-plated beads, thread, glass cases Sizes variable	4	<i>Portal</i> , 2013-2016 Somerset paper archival inkjet print 39" x 27"
		5	<i>Condor</i> , 2024 Hot rolled steel, epoxy 31" x 21"
2	Jeneen Frei Njootli <i>when the one to author the cut is gone a hole in the shape of a portal forms</i> , 2020 Performed during <i>Àbadakone</i> at the National Gallery of Canada Audio, 24:40 minutes	6	<i>Joanne</i> , 2017 Vinyl, aluminum rod 40" x 60"
3	<i>Knowledge Transference IV</i> , 2018 Vinyl 64" x 192 ¼"	7	Catherine Blackburn From the series <i>Scooped and Scattered</i> , 2017 SEG Mural (inkjet on fabric)

Catherine Blackburn’s *Scooped and Scattered* series comprises photographs from her family archive. The title refers to the Sixties Scoop, a large-scale removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities throughout the 1960s. These children were often adopted into non-Indigenous families to disconnect them from their culture and history, part of the colonial effort to assimilate Indigenous people into the settler population.

Blackburn reckons with this history of forced removal by rupturing these images on her own terms. She cuts and conceals with the intention to hold close those who should have been protected. The subjects have been removed through precise incisions, leaving an absence in the shape of their bodies. Looking through the open space against the remaining background emphasises the emptiness that has been created. The edge of the cuts are stitched with 24-karat gold-plated seed beads to honour the missing figures and place value on the space that they should be occupying.

About the Artist

Catherine Blackburn was born in Patuanak, Saskatchewan and is a member of the English River First Nation (Denesųliné). She is a multidisciplinary artist and jeweller, whose narrative work often addresses Canada’s settler-colonialism. Her work grounds itself in the Indigenous feminine and is bound through the ancestral love that stitching suggests. Through stitchwork, she explores Indigenous sovereignty, decolonisation, and representation. Her work has been exhibited in notable national and international exhibitions, including *Making Kin* at the Humbolt Forum, Berlin, Germany (2025); *Radical Stitch* at the MacKenzie Art Gallery, Saskatchewan, AB (2022); *Àbadakone* at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, ON (2019); *Santa Fe Haute Couture Fashion Show* at the Santa Fe Indian Market, Santa Fe, New Mexico (2019); and *Indigenous Fashion Arts*, Toronto, ON (2018). She has received numerous awards for her work, including the Sobey Art Award longlist (2019, 2023), a Forge Residency Fellowship (2022), and an Eiteljorg Fellowship (2021).



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