

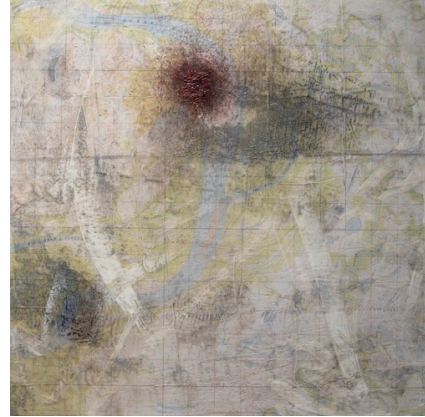
# M - N U S S P A C E

**SONYA KELLIHER-COMBS**  
**MARK**

**November 2 – December 21, 2019**

*Opening: Saturday, November 2, 4-6pm*

*Artist Talk: Saturday, November 2, 3pm*



## **MINUS SPACE**

16 Main Street, Suite A, Brooklyn, NY 11201

[www.minusspace.com](http://www.minusspace.com) | [info@minusspace.com](mailto:info@minusspace.com) | 718.801.8095

Hours: Thursday-Saturday 11am-5pm + by appointment

DUMBO | corner of Main + Water

A/C to High Street | F to York Street | 2/3 to Clark Street

MINUS SPACE is honored to present the solo exhibition *Sonya Kelliher-Combs: Mark*. This is the Anchorage, Alaska-based artist's first solo exhibition at a NYC gallery and it will premiere works from her new *Credible* and other series.

*Mark*, the title of Kelliher-Combs's exhibition, is defined as *a visible impression or trace on something, as in a line, cut, dent, stain, or bruise*. A mark can also be *a kind of badge, a brand, or other visible sign that is assumed or imposed*. For the artist, it specifically speaks to the endangered state of the natural environment of Alaska, her home state, and the persistent struggles of its indigenous peoples.

Renown for her urgent, deeply personal mixed media paintings, sculpture, and installations about abuse and marginalization, Kelliher-Combs's exhibition will present works from her new series *Credible*, which addresses the Catholic Church's appalling record of abuse in the state of Alaska. Begun in 2005, the paintings in this series reflect the 35 villages that have credible claims of abuse at the hands of those that were sent there to help. Research for this series was provided by the Anchorage Daily News, which was sourced from Jesuits West and supplemented by a report from the Catholic Diocese of Fairbanks, listing "*all known individuals, including priests, religious, lay employees and volunteers against whom a complaint of sexual abuse has been filed by one or more individuals*" and against whom the abuse has been proven, admitted, or "*credibly accused*."

About her probing artistic practice, Kelliher-Combs writes, "*I am an artist of mixed decent: Iñupiaq from the Alaska North Slope community of Utqiagvik, and Athabaskan from the interior village of Nulato. My family, cultures, and relationship to the land influence all that I do. Because of this, I choose to live and work in Alaska. Growing up in a rural community, I was taught that the land and sea would provide resources, spiritual and physical, necessary to sustain a healthy life. We have unspoken truths: honor all that you harvest; respect the natural world that provides for you, your family and community; take care of one another; and do not take more than you need. Nothing is more beautiful than growing up on the land, harvesting with your family and understanding that you are a part of this place.*"

*As a child I spent summers at our camp where we worked, hunted and gathered food and supplies for the winter. It was there I learned to listen, learning from family, community and nature. Through the observation and practice of time-honored traditions – skin sewing, beading, and food preparation – I realized my role as Woman, Daughter, Sister, Wife, and Artist. Traditional women's work taught me to appreciate the intimacy of intergenerational knowledge and material histories. These experiences and*

*skills have allowed me to examine the connections between Western and Indigenous cultures, and to investigate notions of interwoven identity through my work.*

*Through the use of synthetic, organic, traditional, and modern materials and techniques, I build upon the traditions of my people. I am inspired by our ancestors and their relationship to their environment embodied in their use of skin, fur, and membrane in material culture. The subjects of my work are patterns of history, family and culture. Personal and cultural symbolism forms the imagery. These symbols speak to history, culture, family, and the life of our people. They also speak about abuse, marginalization, and the historical and contemporary struggles of Indigenous peoples.*

*I live in a modern world, but I still depend on the cultural traditions and values of our people, including respect for land, animals, the sea, and fellow humans. I strive to create works that carry on these values and address the persistent importance of traditional knowledge."*

For further information about Sonya Kelliher-Combs, her exhibition, and available artworks, please contact the gallery. Available artworks can also be viewed on our Artsy page: [www.artsy.net/minus-space](http://www.artsy.net/minus-space).

### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Sonya Kelliher-Combs (b. 1969 Bethel, Alaska; lives Anchorage, Alaska) is an artist of mixed descent: Iñupiaq from the Alaska North Slope community of Utqiagvik, and Athabascan from the interior village of Nulato. Her work has been shown in numerous individual and group exhibitions at museums and galleries across the country, including *Sakahān* (National Gallery of Canada), *HIDE: Skin as Material Metaphor* (National Museum of American Indian), and *SITELINES: Much Wider Than a Line* (SITE Santa Fe).

She is a recipient of the prestigious United States Arts Fellowship, Joan Mitchell Fellowship, Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art, and Rasmuson Fellowship, as well as the 2005 Anchorage Mayors Arts Award and 2010 Alaska Governor's Individual Artist Award. Her work is included in the collections of the IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Art, Anchorage Museum, Alaska State Museum, University of Alaska Museum of the North, Eiteljorg Museum, and National Museum of the American Indian. She received her BFA from University of Alaska, Fairbanks, and MFA from Arizona State University, Tempe.

### **ABOUT MINUS SPACE**

Founded in 2003, MINUS SPACE presents the past, present, and future of reductive art on the international level. The gallery's sixteenth season is focused on living women artists and will feature solo exhibitions by Leslie Roberts, Sonya Kelliher-Combs, Gabriele Evertz, and Joan Witek.

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Image:

Sonya Kelliher-Combs

*Holy Cross*, 2019, from the series *Credible*

Paper, acrylic polymer, human hair, nylon thread

#sonyakellihercombs