

3 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now



An installation view of New Red Order's major exhibition at Artists Space, titled "Feel at Home Here." Artists Space; Filip Wolak

The first time I saw a New Red Order (N.R.O.) video, I laughed — and then wondered if it was OK to laugh. The actor Jim Fletcher, calling himself a “reformed Native American impersonator,” was recruiting viewers to become informants for the N.R.O., an art collective that’s also a kind of secret society. The video was a pitch-perfect parody of a promo for something like a weight-loss program, only the goals were decolonization and the cultivation of Indigenous futures. It felt like a brilliant joke whose punchline was a genuine appeal to someone like me, a white person living on land taken from the Lenape.

The N.R.O. — whose core contributors are the artists Adam and Zack Khalil and Jackson Polys — now has a major exhibition at Artists Space, titled “Feel at Home Here.” The zany upstairs installation includes two semisatirical videos, graphics on the walls, branded beach products, and an imitation real-estate office for land repatriation. It also delves into two points of history: New York City’s seal, which features an amiable “Native American of Manhattan,” and the Improved Order of Red Men, a nationalistic secret society founded in 1834 by and for white men, who structured it based on their fantasies of Native society. Downstairs, lightboxes and videos take serious aim at well-known, stereotypical portrayals of Native Americans by the sculptor James Earle Fraser.

Although this is the N.R.O.’s largest show yet, the nature of the group remains elusive — which is precisely the point. Its gift is shrewd mutability. Using a mash-up of strategies and styles, the N.R.O. illuminates pervasive violence against Native Americans, but then, instead of letting perpetrators off the hook, urges us to do something with our guilt.

— JILLIAN STEINHAUER