

ART

T.C. Cannon's work reflects still-current conflicts

T.C. CANNON'S impressive body of work that explored his American Indian cultural identity, primarily during the tumultuous backdrop of the 1960s and '70s, is on display in an exhibition, "T.C. Cannon: At the Edge of America," at the Peabody Essex Museum (PEM) in Salem, Mass., from March 3 to June 10. The exhibition moves to Tulsa, Okla., in July and New York in March 2019.

Drawing on his experience as a Vietnam War



THOSH COLLINS

T.C. CANNON'S 'HIS HAIR FLOWS LIKE A RIVER'

veteran, Cannon infuses his work with personal and political themes that still resonate. The exhibition features almost 90 pieces, including paintings, poetry, and music. "Through Cannon's figurative work, he rejected the accepted, expected representations of Native ritual life and instead chose to

surface issues of the brutal traumas wrought by colonialism and power dynamics," Karen Kramer, PEM's curator of Native American and Oceanic art and culture, said in a statement.

The poignancy and tension that run through Cannon's art speak to a larger discussion going on today. As the United States grapples with thorny questions of ethnic identity, land rights, and cultural heritage, American Indian stories and activism are at the center. 2017 saw the release of "Wind River," a film about the murder of a local woman on a Wyoming Indian reservation, and "Tribal Justice," a documentary about tradition-based tribal courts. Both films won awards from the American Indian Film Institute. Meanwhile, the acclaimed book "Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI," by David Grann, recounts how members of the Osage tribe were cheated out of their oil-rich land and killed. And tribes have protested the incursion of the Keystone XL pipeline and the Dakota Access pipeline on or near their lands, while others are suing the Trump administration over its decision to reduce federally protected land at Utah's Bears Ears National Monument.

Although separated by decades, Cannon's art and the work of modern storytellers are inextricably tied to the historical saga of American Indians.

— Robert Leroose / Correspondent