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## Scenic Design for Pure Native

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**Etudes:** an online theatre & performance  
studies journal for emerging scholars

## Scenic Design for *Pure Native*

By Christopher Scott Murillo

*Pure Native* by Vickie Ramirez

Originally scheduled performance dates: April 30-May 3, 2020

Rasmuson Theater, National Museum of the American Indian and Native  
Voices at the Autry

Director: Randy Reinholz

Set Design: Christopher Scott Murillo

Costume Design: E.B. Brooks

Lighting Design: R. Christopher Stokes

Projection Design: Tom Ontiveros

Photo Credits: Craig Schwartz

Site <https://www.dithepi.gr/el/events/4638/>

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For the last 5 years, Native Voices has been one of my artistic homes. I have served as one of their resident scenic designers and collaborators. My collaborations with their resident artists and playwrights have allowed me to be a designer that not only designs inaugural productions of contemporary Native plays, but has also given me the opportunity to be involved with the workshoping of these plays from the beginning. *Pure Native* by Vickie Ramirez, formerly known as *Corn Soup* (in an earlier draft) is a script that I have helped shape since its early days of workshops. This story takes place on a Native American reservation and tells the story of life on the REZ and the struggles Native Americans and their governments face when protecting their Native heritage, resources, and land. This set design evolved out of the idea of being connected with one's heritage and the land in which you live. The sacred land and its natural resources are major parts of Native American culture and are a main focus of this script.



DESIGN RENDERING: *PURE NATIVE* by Vickie Ramirez, directed by Randy Reinholz, Set design by Christopher Scott Murillo. Rasmuson Theater, National Museum of the American Indian. 2020



DESIGN RENDERING, suggesting projection design: *PURE NATIVE* by Vickie Ramirez, directed by Randy Reinholz, Set design by Christopher Scott Murillo. Rasmuson Theater, National Museum of the American Indian. 2020

There is also an additional layered reality for Native communities and how they balance their Native heritage and the effects of modern day American culture and capitalism. This abstract set blends natural elements and clean lines that evoke both indoor spaces, as well as two sides of a rocky river bank. The layering of projection design and strategic lighting enhance the scenic design to shift dynamically from scene to scene as the story unfolds. Minimal props have been selected as a means to tell the story smoothly and to allow for minimal scene changes and shifts.

This production of *Pure Native* was to be a remount of the original production presented in Los Angeles, CA at Native Voices at the Autry. The design was reimaged for the Rasmuson Theater at National Museum of the American Indian. The production stills included are from the inaugural production at Native Voices.



Production Photo from Original Production of *PURE NATIVE* by Vickie Ramirez, directed by Randy Reinholz, Set design by Christopher Scott Murillo. *NATIVE VOICES* at the AUTRY MUSEUM of the American West. Photo © Craig Schwartz Photography.

From L to R: Kalani Queypo as Brewster White, Kyla Garcia as Connie Smoke, and Darrell Dennis as Gary Smoke.

Production Photo from Original Production of *PURE NATIVE* by Vickie Ramirez, directed by Randy Reinholz, Set design by Christopher Scott Murillo. *NATIVE VOICES* at the AUTRY MUSEUM of the American West. Photo © Craig Schwartz Photography.

From L to R: Tonantzín Carmelo as Karen Farmer and Joseph Valdez as Art Farmer



## **CONTRIBUTOR**

Christopher Scott Murillo is a scenic designer, artist, and educator based in Los Angeles, CA. Most recently, his work has been seen at The Kirk Douglas Theatre, International City Theatre, The Chance Theater, Skylight Theatre Company, East West Players, New Village Arts Theatre, Native Voices at the Autry, The El Portal Theatre, and the Getty Villa (to name a few). Currently, he is an associate artist with Playwrights' Arena serving as their resident scenic designer. Christopher is a member of the Television Academy and United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829. He holds an MFA from the UCSD Department of Theatre and Dance, and a BA from the UCLA School of Theater, Film, and Television. Christopher is an Assistant Professor of Theatre Arts at Loyola Marymount University teaching courses in scenic design, stagecraft, and the collaborative process. He is a 2016 recipient of the Princess Grace Foundation Theater Fellowship-Pierre Cardin Award.