An Indigenous Artist Collective that Raises the Bar

By offering a space for projects like R.I.S.E, Recess vitally promotes the idea of creation as a necessarily social process.

In a social media landscape overflowing with brands that co-opt the language of social movements to appeal to hyper-conscious consumers, R.I.S.E. offers a heartening alternative: dissident cultural activism that leverages the immediacy of online sharing culture to give voice to Indigenous resistance. R.I.S.E., which stands for Radical Indigenous Survivance and Empowerment, is an initiative founded by Demian DinéYazhi´, an Indigenous Diné transdisciplinary artist and poet, and “dedicated to the education, dissemination, and evolution of Indigenous art and culture.” After initially gaining momentum on Tumblr, R.I.S.E. now makes use of an active Instagram account that posts decolonial agitprop for the digital age, promotes the work of Indigenous creators and activists, and advertises t-shirts and tote bags sold through their Etsy page.
R.I.S.E. has been given the opportunity to inhabit a physical space during a five-week long session at Recess called R.I.S.E.: COLLECTIVE FURY, “explor[ing] how outrage and anger can be mobilized not as tools of division, but as a means to solidarity and empowerment.” Recess’s sessions are process-oriented residencies that invite artists to come in and use the nonprofit’s space to create work, while also keeping the doors open for the public to view and participate in the artist’s process through workshops and events.
R.I.S.E.: COLLECTIVE FURY is a perfect example of how Recess’s uniquely open-ended sessions support artists whose practices center on community engagement and resist easy categorization within the art world. R.I.S.E. is unlike a typical ‘artist collective,’ and is more accurately described as a highly adaptable network of individual Indigenous creators, with DinéYazhi’ serving as an organizing locus.