

## Gallery to Display Work of Artist Who Documented Dakota Pipeline Protests



By [Maya Rajamani](#) | December 30, 2016 5:24pm | Updated on January 2, 2017 10:56am



#NoDAPL

**GARMENT DISTRICT** — When [James Mikhel Emerson](#) heard that protesters of the Dakota Access Pipeline were seeking paint and art supplies to create demonstration materials, he jumped in his car and drove from upstate New York to North Dakota.

For a month, the artist lived in the [Oceti Sakowin Camp](#) at Standing Rock, North Dakota, where he crafted signs, prayer staffs and sculptures used during protests at construction sites there.

Emerson also captured scenes in watercolor and colored pencil from the camp and the protests.

“My work has always been about the intersection of money, politics and culture, and when I found out about this, I just had sort of an instant feeling that going and applying my artwork...

for this was more important than staying home and working on the projects I had going on,” he said.

An [exhibit called “#NoDAPL,” at the chashama 266 gallery at 266 W. 37th St.](#) will showcase the pieces he created during his time in North Dakota.

Most of the works are renderings of the camp, but the show also includes a “medicine wheel” with portraits of the people Emerson met during his stay.

“My aim with a lot of the work was to simply document it, so that people on some small level know it happened,” he said. “I believe in the power of art to make people stop and pay attention to something they otherwise wouldn’t.”

When the Army Corps of Engineers [denied a permit needed to build the controversial pipeline earlier this month](#), Emerson said he felt “very conflicted.”

“I was happy for the symbolic importance of that decision, but I think... it was very clear that this was not the end result — that it was not an absolute end to the issue,” he said.

Like Emerson, many of the Standing Rock protesters dropped everything to rush to North Dakota, he said.

“That was something a lot of people said — as soon as they found out, they just had to get out there,” he said. “It just resonates somewhere inside a lot of people.”

*“#NoDAPL” will be on view 24/7 through the storefront window of [chashama 266](#) at 266 W. 37th St., between Seventh and Eighth avenues, from Friday, Jan. 6, to Friday, Jan. 27.*

<https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20161230/garment-district/dakota-access-pipeline-gallery-show-james-mikhel-emerson>