

LOUDER THAN WORDS

INDIGENOUS AMERICAN
ART & ACTIVISM

**Native American Arts Festival
Invitational Exhibit**

June 26 – July 8, 2017

Parks Exhibition Center

 **IdyllwildArts™**

Louder than Words: Native American Art and Activism

To be a Native American is to be political. From a young age, Native people in the United States and Canada learn about sovereignty, significant court cases, and laws upheld and not upheld by federal governments. Louder than Words explores how Indigenous artists use visual arts in activism, ranging from direct action to education to envisioning possible futures.

Native activism has evolved and adapted over the centuries. Indian Wars gave way to legal battles. The recent Idle No More movement used public round dances to bring communities together instead of confrontational tactics. Occupations such as at Alcatraz and Wounded Knee captured the world's attention, as did the nonviolent Standing Rock encampments whose presence was spread by social media while mainstream media ignored them for months. Native people at Standing Rock used the name "water protectors" instead of "protestors," to emphasize their lifelong commitments to the environment rather than simply reactions to single environmental threats. To be effective, activism must be creative, and art is the ideal vehicle for surprise and open-ended exploration of ideas.

This exhibit brings together artists from diverse tribes, regions, and artistic media to provide introduction to the issues Indigenous peoples face and different strategies to address challenges and threats. While flyers and posters are fundamental to activism, visual art can be more complex, evocative, and ambiguous. Art can raise questions and show how a seemingly simple issue has multiple causes and ramifications. These artists use beauty, humor, history, and cultural knowledge to further their causes. Louder than Words shares their diverse approaches with a wider audience who may see how these issues and solutions relate to their lives as well, in our increasingly globalized societies.

— *America Meredith*
Guest Curator



Treaty Graffiti Top Hat
2017

Birch bark, sweetgrass, sinew, etching, copy of 1836 Treaty with the Ottawa, tobacco in cloth.

KELLY CHURCH
(Odawa-Ojibwe-Potawatomi)

I am a member of the Match-e-be-nash-she-wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians of Michigan. I am the mother of a beautiful daughter Cherish, and I am a full time artist and work in many media. I have a passion for painting, photography, sculpture, black ash baskets, and birchbark bitings.

I graduated from the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, with an AFA in 1996. I receive my BFA from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in 1996. I did one year of graduate studies before leaving school to care for my grandparents. While caring for my grandparents, I was able to hear many stories about their lives growing up. While caring for them that I began weaving black ash baskets, a cultural art form that has been passed down among our people for hundreds of years. I am a fifth-generation basket weaver, and my daughter represents the sixth generation of weavers in our family. My daughter and I harvest our own trees and process all of the materials by hand.

The black ash trees in Michigan are under threat by the invasive Emerald Ash Borer. It is predicted that we will lose the entire ash resource in North America due to this insect in upcoming decades. Being Native is about your blood and family ties, as well as your culture. Each tribe in the United States has many customs that make them unique, such as different languages, ceremonies, materials used for basketry, etc. But we are all similar in our fight to survive as Native people and retain our cultures in this uniquely blended society we call America.



Survivors
2015

Hand-sewn quilt, glass beads.

CARLA HEMLOCK
(Kanienkehaka Mohawk)

Despite everything we have been through, we are still here.



fashion STATEMENT: Native Artists Against Pebble Mine
2011

Tee shirt art.

ANNA HOOVER

(Unangax̂)

The fashion STATEMENT exhibit spawned from a need to heighten awareness about the threat of the potential Pebble Mine and the effects it would have on Bristol Bay's thriving salmon rivers. Native artists were approached for anti-Pebble Mine tee shirt designs. Anna Hoover was the organizer and creator of the red tee shirt. The EPA had ruled the mine too much of a risk to move forward, but now under the current political regime, the Pebble Mine is an ever current topic. Long Live Bristol Bay Salmon.



Iron Type 10/25
2017

Monoprint using cyanotype layering, screen print and chine collé with mirrored paper laser cut into shape of the Missouri River on 300-pound, archival printmaking paper.

CANNUPA HANSKA LUGER

(Mandan-Hidatsa-Arikara-Lakota)

As living beings, we all have myths and tales that describe our lives being abused by monsters. These monsters are out of natural order and heroes rise from their torment to defeat them. Monster Slayers found in every culture set out and sacrifice their life for the continuation of existence. Today, we are once again plagued by monsters. It is time to be the hero, each of us must be aware of what we can do in the place that we stand. So that a far future that remembers this era of monsters can sing the songs and dance the stories of our mystic ability to come together and become Monster Slayers.



***Blessings From Oceti
Sakowin Camp***
2017

Color photography.

PAMELA J. PETERS

(Diné)

I was born and raised on the Navajo Reservation. I am born to the Tachii'nii (Red Running into the Water clan) and born for the T'laashchí'í (Red Bottom People clan). As an Indigenous photographer and a storyteller, I develop photographic narratives that illustrate the real stories of American Indians within the environments and communities that they live in. I capture the emotions, the beauty, and the modern reality of American Indians.

My work has been featured in *Indian Country Today Media*, *Reuters News*, *Navajo Times*, *American Indian Quarterly Magazine*, and many bloggers, online publications, and news outlets. Additionally, my photography has been exhibit at 118 Winston Street—These Days Gallery, Venice Arts Center, LACDA, and the Los Angeles Center of Photography.

My fascination with photography comes from the catchphrase "capture the moment." As a child living on a tribal reservation, I recall my parents having a Yashica camera that I was intrigued by. I would pretend to take images of my friends even though there was no film loaded in the camera. I would look into the mirror of the camera, direct images, and click. To me it was a game and a memory only I could capture, and it was something I enjoyed. I loved using my imagination. Now, my imagination takes flight and I am capturing them all on film.



Black Snake
2017

Buffalo horn spoon inlaid with pipestone, sandstone, lapis lazuli, coral, and mother-of-pearl.

KEVIN POURIER

(Oglala Lakota)

I believe that my work reflects who I am as a human being. Being fully aware of what it means to be human and having the ability to make the things I do is an empowering experience. I love creating my images so that they may make the viewer think, grow, and also educate, hopefully, so there will be change in a world of misunderstanding. I try to pull the viewer in by putting them in Native peoples shoes. My hope is that my work will also bring about healing by creating discussion.

Native art has stereotypically been thought of as only portraying or replicating old designs and images from the past. I work hard to show that we are contemporary people living here today and that we have a voice. This challenges me everyday to step out of that "box" that native art has been put in and create art that speaks and has power to change.



Dollhouse III: Sugar Heaven
2017

Tin dollhouse, plastic furniture, moss, plastic tree, walker and crutches, ceramic plates, digital prints of hearts, and curtains.

C. MAXX STEVENS (Seminole-Mvskoke)

In the past decade I have created a series of installations focusing on the issue of diabetes in the Native community. In 2007 I built a site-specific installation as a commentary of how food we are eating today is making a negative impact on the Native community. Diabetes has become an epidemic in the Native nations as well as a factor in the health and death of many of my tribal members, family members and friends. A current statistic is that one out of six Native people will develop diabetes; however, based on my family history the number seems to be low. The Native community is re-educating ourselves and changing how we are eating to live a healthier lifestyle. But change is double handed. Due to economics this isn't so easy, nor is changing what many Native families see as traditional foods. The food tribal government gives out is processed food and traditional food is now loaded with salt and grease, creating a generation of Native people with heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Currently I am rebuilding some of these installations in miniature format inside of 1950's tin dollhouses. I decided to rebuild the installation *Sugar Heaven* for this show as it reflects on this disease as a visual reality and also as a visual wake up call.



Darth Chief
2015

Cast aluminum, slumped glass.

RORY ERLER WAKEMUP (Bois Forte Anishinabe)

"Kill the Idiot Save The Fan" is a play off of Colonel Henry Pratt's 1891 mission statement, "Kill the Indian Save the Man." "Kill the Idiot Save the Fan" is the mission statement of my alter ego, Darth Chief Mascot Hunter. The mission is to use satire as a means of peaceful protest against offensive sports mascots and inappropriate use of Native American cultures in mass media. Is Darth Chief an oxymoron or a true hero? Only time will tell.



Rabbit Hunter

2014

Traditionally processed clay from Jemez Pueblo, acrylic paint with clay, sand, mica, and mineral pigments.

KATHLEEN WALL

(Jemez Pueblo)

Harvesting Tradition is a study of Native American traditional knowledge of food ways expressed in paintings and clay sculptures. I explore the way Native Americans used to—and still do—harvest, gather, grow, and hunt their food in a customary manner. Reflecting on this traditional knowledge in food ways gives an opportunity to acknowledge the difference in how we practice our diet today.

Many aspects of being Native American, such as celebrating ceremony, or everyday goings-on, involve traditional food, although many of the foods we now call *traditional* are introduced by Western society.

Introduction of flour in an invasive way through commodities or rations has affected our perception of traditional food. Making do with what they had shows the resilience of Native people.

Our bodies were created hundreds, thousands or even millions of years ago and the food we had during that time was gathered or hunted. Our bodies have not changed much since then, but our environment has changed immensely.

Harvesting Tradition looks at what Native traditional foods were, and the knowledge it took to gather, hunt, and harvest them. How did they harvest food? When did they harvest? And what was the reasoning for gathering or collecting certain types of foods? Maybe in this discussion, we can come up with ideas of compromise in traditional foods, in order to be a healthier people.

Most figures in this series were made with traditionally processed clay from Jemez Pueblo. My materials are extremely important to me. I dig my clay in a pit shown to me as a young girl by my mother. I dig volcanic ash in the same spot that I have been collecting ash through my entire career. I always begin my creative process with the same actions as my mother, my grandmother, and my grandmother before her.

I hand mix the acrylic paint with clays, sands, mica, and different pigments that I find in my surroundings. My palette reflects the high desert that I live in. The colors around me are as much a part of me as they are a part of the earth.

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