

Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists

This exhibition is a tribute to all Native women artists, families, and nations throughout all time and space. It is their minds, hearts, and hands that have birthed their worlds, and this exhibition, into being.

“Hearts of Our People” began with a question: Why do Native women make art? We chose to respond within three core themes: Legacy, Relationships, and Power. Legacy examines the ways in which Native women artists acknowledge their lineage, making works that simultaneously embody the experience of previous generations, address the present moment, and speak to the future. Relationships explores the concept that bonds exist beyond the human world to include animals, the “natural” world, the earth, and other entities the Western world does not often recognize as having volition and agency. Power encompasses works created for diplomacy and influence, to empower others, and for the empowerment of oneself.

You will see similarities across cultures and communities, but you will also see many differences. Native Americans are not one monolithic group, and each

tribe, nation, or community has its own unique culture, history, and present. Perhaps most important, each Native artist, like artists the world over, brings her own life experience, skill, and individual style to her art.

The co-curators of this exhibition are Jill Ahlberg Yohe, associate curator of Native American art at Mia, and Teri Greeves, Kiowa artist and scholar. During each step of the curatorial process, they worked closely with the Exhibition Advisory Board. The board provided knowledge and insights from a wide range of Native nations and is composed of 20 Native women artists and Native-art scholars. The board first met in November 2015 at Mia for two days of open discussion that set the tone and clarified intentions for the exhibition. Since then, the board has worked collaboratively to develop the major themes of the exhibition and advise on object selection. Its members were also instrumental in determining the structure and content of the exhibition catalogue and related programming.

The Exhibition Advisory Board was an essential part of the curatorial process. Input from these advisers helped inform all curatorial decisions. Their collective voices will bring greater depth to our audiences’ understanding of this art.

Exhibition Advisory Board

heather ahtone, Choctaw/Chickasaw, senior curator, American Indian Cultural Center and Museum

D. Y. Begay, Navajo artist

Janet Berlo, professor of art history and visual and cultural studies, University of Rochester

Susan Billy, Pomo artist

Katie Bunn-Marcuse, director and managing editor, Bill Holm Center for the Study of Northwest Coast Art, Burke Museum

Christina Burke, curator, Native American and non-Western Art, Philbrook Museum of Art

Kelly Church, Ottawa/Pottawatomi artist and educator

Heid Erdrich, Ojibwe writer and curator

Anita Fields, Osage artist

Adriana Greci Green, curator and assistant professor, University of Virginia

Carla Hemlock, Mohawk artist

Graci Horne, Dakhóta, independent curator

Nadia Jackinsky-Sethi, Alutiiq art historian

America Meredith, Cherokee, artist and editor of *First American Art Magazine*

Nora Naranjo Morse, Santa Clara artist

Cherish Parrish, Ottawa/Pottawatomi artist and educator

Ruth Phillips, Canada research professor and professor of art history, Carleton University

Jolene Rickard, Tuscarora, artist and associate professor of art history and visual studies, Cornell University

Lisa Telford, Haida artist

Dyani White Hawk, Lakǰóta artist and curator

Special recognition goes to Dakota Hoska (Lakǰóta), “Hearts of Our People” research assistant, for her four years of invaluable research, curation, editing, programming, and support.