

Legacy

Legacy provides for the transmission of knowledge and skills from one generation to the next and is intrinsic to the artistic process of Native women. Legacy offers intergenerational continuity. It encapsulates the past, present, and future. It interconnects aesthetics and knowledge systems—ways of understanding the mutual links between one's existence and the world specific to each Native nation—transcending time and place. Native women's work keeps alive important techniques, aesthetic principles, and social protocols; it is steeped in Native modes of thinking, acting, and being.

Because of legacy, artistic patterns and techniques can be faithfully re-created for all time. But legacy also allows artists to change, adapt, re-form, and reimagine art forms. Each artwork in this exhibition demonstrates the continuity and resilience of legacy.

Relationships

The theme of relationships aligns with the Indigenous concept of connectivity and reciprocity. Everything in the world—people, animals, plants, places, and living and nonliving elements—is interconnected. Vast webs connect Native people, the physical and metaphysical worlds, and time and space.

Relationships also involve collaboration among generations, genders, materials, and nations. In Native worldviews, all beings engage in acts of reciprocity in order to maintain balance. This reciprocity requires humans to take responsibility for these relationships, and part of this responsibility is protecting and providing for others. Creating works of art, in part, protects and provides for the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of others.

Power

In Native worldviews, the ability to create life holds sacred power; women, therefore, are considered inherently powerful. The power held by Native women among their own people is spiritual, social, and political. It is contained in knowledge that is both shared and withheld. Native women artists, through their creations born of self-expression, hold power within and outside their nations.

Women's personal power is expressed in the values of honor, grace, and balance. These values include the belief that to be honored is to honor others; respect must be given to the ones that came before and the ones that come after. In order to be truly human is to show generosity through gift giving and hospitality, to be grateful for all things, and to live in harmony with the world by striving for balance.