

Self-Guided Tour

Queer Art & Artists in *In Our Hands*



A World of Relations

Ryan Young (Lac du Flambeau Ojibwe, born c. 1991)
We Define Ourselves, 2018

Ryan Young is a two-spirit Native artist but was told at a young age to choose either a Native or two-spirit identity, as it would be too difficult to be both. It wasn't until they came upon the Ojibwe expression *niizh mandioowag*, meaning "two-spirit," that Young realized that queerness and gender fluidity are deeply rooted in their history and culture. Since the 1990s, the term "two spirit" has been the pan-Indigenous phrase for queer Native artists. In this work, "We Define Ourselves" appears to be stitched, with bright red beads, into the back of a two-spirit person. As such, the work is an act of defiance against those who told Young's childhood self how to identify.

—Jaida Grey Eagle



A World of Relations

Nadya Kwandibens (Animakee Wa Zhing #37 First Nation Anishinaabe, born 1978)
Tee Lyn Duke (née Copenace) Toronto, ON, March 2010

Nadya Kwandibens is a young storyteller from the northern bush country of Ontario, Canada. She carries her camera like an extension of her body. As evidenced by her prolific photo works, Kwandibens is committed to showing her community to the world: their faces, their livelihoods, and their continued love for their culture. In this photo, we see Tee Lyn Duke as she stands on a subway platform in Toronto, wearing her traditional jingle dress. As the subway commuters move around her, leaving their blurred impressions, Duke stands like a statue. She reminds me of the Indigenous female presence that has walked in this landscape, hunted these forests, and still can be seen and felt in this highly commodified environment known as Tkaronto, now Toronto.

—Shelley Niro

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A World of Relations

Kali Spitzer (Kaska Dena/Jewish, born 1987)

Erena Arapere and Daughter Parekohatu Arapere, 2018

“I think that Indigenous women, trans, and nonbinary people, as well as people of color, the Black and brown and queer community, that we are often not seen or heard. And there’s so much violence committed against our communities, so part of my idea, part of my hope, is that by making beautiful, intense, loving images that are so large . . . I’m hoping to make a deep, human connection.”

—Kali Spitzer



Always Leaders

Hulleah Tsinnahjinnie [Seminole/Muscogee/Diné (Navajo), born 1954]

When Did Dreams of White Buffalo Turn into Dreams of White Women?, 1990

Hulleah Tsinnahjinnie has said that the disparate elements in *When Did Dreams . . .* illuminate “policies and politics that would favor white skin [and] the tenacity of Native thought and survival.” To that end, she organized a trove of symbols: Images of a Nez Perce woman, Idelia (wearing her grandmother’s buckskin dress), a white female movie star, and an unidentified Native American man seem to spill down the right side of the collage. In the foreground, the artist’s friend Carol, a Nez Perce artist and educator, sits on a midcentury-style sofa surrounded by her beadwork. The confluence of these elements presents a chaotic, dreamlike, and confrontational vision of a world fractured by colonialism and pieced together again by Native women.

—Casey Riley

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Always Leaders

Jenny Irene Miller (Inupiaq, born 1988)
Cam, 2016
From the series Continuous, 2015–18

Jenny Irene Miller's series of portraits considers the ways in which "Indigenous people decolonize our sexualities, gender identities, and the way we treat individuals who identify outside of the pervasive binary of male or female." Miller, herself one of the subjects of the series, says she hopes that "this project will inspire dialogue within our communities on how to make those spaces safer and more welcoming for our Indigenous LGBTQ2+ relatives."

—Casey Riley

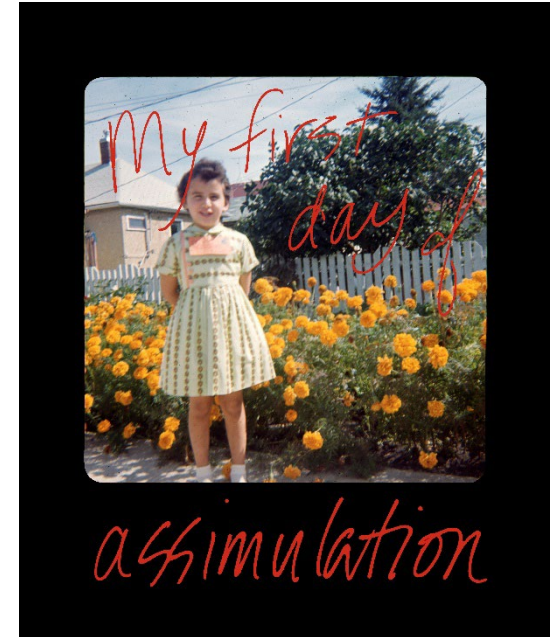


Always Leaders

Dayna Danger (Métis/Saulteaux/Polish, born 1987)
Siostra, 2013
From the series Sisters

Dayna Danger created the Sisters series to address the complexities of familial relationships. It provided Danger, who is two-spirit and uses they/them pronouns, an opportunity to use themselves as a subject for the first time. Danger used this photography project to reconnect with their sister after living apart for a few years.

—Jaida Grey Eagle



Always Present

Rosalie Favell (Metis, born 1958)
my first day of assimilation, 1996/2022

For this series, Rosalie Favell returned to images of her childhood from her family's color slides from the 1960s. Here, the artist revisited and rephotographed an image of her first day of kindergarten, in which she stands in a starched white dress before a glowing patch of marigolds and a white picket fence. Scrawled red text, added by the artist, surrounds her small body. The words conjure sinister, suppressed histories of cultural genocide propagated by Canada's residential school system, which sought to assimilate Indigenous students.

—Emily Voelker

Gallery Maps

Second Floor: Target Galleries

