Commonly accepted ideas about the American West are often based on a past that never was and frequently diminish, if not overlook entirely, the experiences of Indigenous and Black people and people of color. For some, “The West” can conjure images of rugged colonial settlers, gun-toting-cowboys, or scenic expanses of vacant land. These stereotypical associations took hold since the eighteenth century, as the U.S. government aggressively expanded westward across the continent. Over this period, the United States, fought and displaced Indigenous people, stripped the region of its natural resources, and seized lands through treaties and wars.

*Many Wests: Artists Shape an American Idea* offers counterviews of “the West” through the perspectives of forty-eight modern and contemporary artists. Their artworks question old and racist clichés, examine tragic and sidelined histories, and illuminate the multiple communities and events that contribute to the past and present of this region. The exhibition’s three sections—Caretakers, Memory Makers, and Boundary Breakers—highlight the various ways artists challenge mythic conceptions of the American West, often demonstrating the resilience of marginalized communities. They reveal that “the West” has always been a place of many stories, experiences and cultures.

This exhibition is the culmination of a multi-year Art Bridges + Terra Foundation Initiative organized by the Smithsonian American Art Museum that aims to expand access to and experiences of American art. Since 2019, SAAM has partnered with four Western-region museums—the Boise Art Museum (Boise, Idaho), the Utah Museum of Fine Arts (Salt Lake City, Utah), the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art (Eugene, Oregon), and the Whatcom Museum (Bellingham, Washington). *Many Wests* brings together artworks from the permanent collections of all five museums and shows how art can help us reflect on history and envision a more inclusive future.

*Many Wests* was organized by:

Amy Chaloupka, Curator of Art, Whatcom Museum

Melanie Fales, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer, Boise Art Museum
Anne Hyland, Art Bridges + Terra Foundation Initiative Curatorial Coordinator, Smithsonian American Art Museum

Danielle Knapp, McCosh Curator, Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon

E. Carmen Ramos, former Acting Chief Curator, Curator of Latinx Art, and Art Bridges + Terra Foundation Initiative Project Director, Smithsonian American Art Museum

Whitney Tassie, Senior Curator and Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Utah Museum of Fine Arts

Credit Line

This is one in a series of American art exhibitions created through a multi-year, multi-institutional partnership formed by the Smithsonian American Art Museum as part of the Art Bridges + Terra Foundation Initiative.

Land Acknowledgment

Note: See partners’ full statements, included for reference only at the end of this document]

The subject of this exhibition makes us especially cognizant of the Indigenous people who are the original stewards and protectors of this continent. The Boise Art Museum, the Jordan Schnitzer Museum, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, and the Whatcom Museum collectively acknowledge and honor the tribal communities upon whose homelands our institutions reside today.

Doeg
Goshute Tribe
Kalapuya tribe
Lhaq’temish—Lummi People
Nuxwsá7aq—Nooksack People
Nacotchtank
Paiute Tribe
Piscataway
Shoshone Tribe
Shoshone-Bannock Tribe
Shoshone-Paiute Tribe
Ute Tribe
Caretakers

Through their work, artists can redefine what it means to take care of themselves, their communities, and their futures. The artistic choices they make are often influenced by commitments to the stewardship of land, history, language, and culture. Artists have tremendous power as the custodians of their own truths. They draw upon their personal narratives, communal ties, and collective experiences in the American West to honor the past and shape legacies for generations to come. Works made in response to urgent political, social, or environmental needs are often calls to action. For many, the act of creation is personally therapeutic and life-affirming. As caretakers, artists bridge past and present and work toward better futures.

[Awa Tsireh object labels for Boise and Whatcom]

Awa Tsireh, also known as Alfonso Roybal
(San Ildefonso Pueblo)
born San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico, 1898;
died San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico, ca. 1955

*Buffalo Deer Dance*
ca. 1930–1940
ink, watercolor, and pencil on paperboard

*Eagle Dancers*
ca. 1917–1925
watercolor, ink, and pencil on paperboard

Awa Tsireh created stunning works depicting the daily and ceremonial life of Pueblo communities in the Southwest. During his life, the U.S. government, under an assimilationist mandate, attempted to stamp out ritual Pueblo practices even as white anthropologists and patrons, believing in preservationist ideas, supported his work and in a sense, defended the value of Native culture. Awa Tsireh’s work emerged out of his careful negotiation of these forces and his efforts to resist cultural oppression and protect Pueblo sacred knowledge. Pueblo culture reserves sacred knowledge to groups of initiates who are trained to protect it and understand its uses and power. Rather than paint scenes of rituals meant only for the initiated, Awa Tsireh chose to portray aspects of public ceremonies that were acceptable for outsider eyes.


Awa Tsireh, also known as Alfonso Roybal
(San Ildefonso Pueblo)
born San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico, 1898;
died San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico, ca. 1955

*Buffalo Man, Buffalo Dance*
ca. 1920–1925
gouache and pencil on paperboard
For decades, scholars attributed Awa Tsireh’s use of blank backgrounds to time he spent painting Pueblo pottery when he was younger and his interest in modern elements that would make his work relevant in the art market. But according to recent scholarship, Tsireh avoided portraying esoteric aspects of Pueblo rituals, like ceremonial settings and specific objects, to safeguard sacred meaning. Secrecy around important cultural knowledge is important to Pueblo people. This knowledge is best conveyed orally to those who are trained to use it and not through recordings like drawing or photography, which can easily circulate in a wider context. Tsireh’s art upholds Pueblo values and ultimately helped safeguard cultural knowledge from indiscriminate circulation.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Corbin-Henderson Collection, Gift of Alice H. Rossin, 1979.144.23

Awa Tsireh, also known as Alfonso Roybal
(San Ildefonso Pueblo)
born San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico, 1898;
died San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico, ca. 1955

Sparring Antelopes
ca. 1925–1930
watercolor and ink on paper

In the 1920s, Awa Tsireh experimented with compositions that combine animal figures and abstract designs. The semicircular form seen here represents a rainbow, which in Pueblo cosmology is the demarcation between terrestrial and extraterrestrial worlds. The thin black lines that descend from its center signify rain, and the stepped forms at its base, mountains. The circular form in the sky is the sun. Tsireh shows only enough to reference elements of Native culture, while conveying deeper information and meaning to Pueblo people with the necessary ritual knowledge to understand the interrelated meaning of these symbols. Tsireh’s strategy is a clear instance of how people living side by side, in the same landscape, had vastly different experiences and understanding of “the West.”

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Corbin-Henderson Collection, Gift of Alice H. Rossin, 1979.144.29

[Bawa Tsireh object labels for JMSA and UFMA]

Awa Tsireh, also known as Alfonso Roybal
(San Ildefonso Pueblo)
born San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico 1898;
died San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico ca. 1955

Buffalo Man, Buffalo Dance
ca. 1920–1930
watercolor and pencil on paperboard

Awa Tsireh created stunning works depicting the daily and ceremonial life of Pueblo communities in the Southwest. During his life, the U.S. government under an assimilationist mandate, attempted to stamp out ritual Pueblo practices even as white anthropologists and patrons, believing in preservationist ideas, supported his work and in a sense, defended the value of Native culture. Awa Tsireh’s work emerged out of his careful negotiation of these forces and his efforts to resist cultural oppression and protect Pueblo sacred knowledge. Pueblo culture reserves sacred knowledge to groups of initiates who are
trained to protect it and understand its uses and power. Rather than paint scenes of rituals meant only for the initiated, Awa Tsireh chose to portray aspects of public ceremonies that were acceptable for outsider eyes.


Awa Tsireh, also known as Alfonso Roybal  
(San Ildefonso Pueblo)  
born San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico 1898;  
died San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico ca. 1955

Deer Dancers  
ca. 1930–1940  
ink and colored ink on paperboard

For decades, scholars attributed Awa Tsireh’s use of blank backgrounds to time he spent painting Pueblo pottery when he was younger and his interest in modern elements that would make his work relevant in the art market. But according to recent scholarship, Tsi reh avoided portraying esoteric aspects of Pueblo rituals, like ceremonial settings and specific objects, to safeguard sacred meaning. Secrecy around important cultural knowledge is important to Pueblo people. This knowledge is best conveyed orally to those who are trained to use it and not through recordings like drawings or photography, which can easily circulate in a wider context. Tsireh’s art upholds Pueblo values and ultimately helped safeguard cultural knowledge from indiscriminate circulation.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Corbin-Henderson Collection, Gift of Alice H. Rossin, 1979.144.25

Awa Tsireh, also known as Alfonso Roybal  
(San Ildefonso Pueblo)  
born San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico 1898;  
died San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico ca. 1955

Black Mountain Lion and Black Fox  
ca. 1925–1930  
watercolor, ink, and pencil on paper

In the 1920s, Awa Tsireh experimented with compositions that combine animal figures and abstract designs. The semicircular form seen here represents a rainbow, which in Pueblo thought is the demarcation between terrestrial and extraterrestrial worlds. The thin black lines that descend from its center signify rain, and the stepped forms at its base, mountains. The circular form in the sky is the sun. While using symbols from Pueblo culture, Tsireh shows only enough to intrigue the uninitiated, while conveying deeper information and meaning to Pueblo people with the necessary ritual knowledge to understand the interrelated meaning of these symbols. Tsireh’s strategy is a clear instance of how people living side by side, in the same landscape, had vastly different experiences and understanding of “the West.”

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Corbin-Henderson Collection, Gift of Alice H. Rossin, 1979.144.48
Awa Tsireh, also known as Alfonso Roybal
(San Ildefonso Pueblo)
born San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico 1898;
died San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico ca. 1955

Mounted Warriors
ca. 1925–1930
watercolor and ink on paperboard
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Corbin-Henderson Collection, Gift of Alice H. Rossin, 1979.144.27

Dog Dancers
ca. 1917–1925
watercolor and pencil on paperboard

Hunting Priest and Mountain Sheep Dancers
ca. 1917–1920
watercolor and pencil on paperboard

Buffalo Mother, Buffalo Dance
ca. 1930–1940
watercolor and ink on paper

Awa Tsireh created stunning works depicting the daily and ceremonial life of Pueblo communities in the Southwest. During his life, the U.S. government, under an assimilationist mandate, attempted to stamp out ritual Pueblo practices even as white anthropologists and patrons, believing in preservationist ideas, supported his work and in a sense, defended the value of Native culture. Awa Tsireh’s work emerged out of his careful negotiation of these forces and his efforts to resist cultural oppression and protect Pueblo sacred knowledge. Rather than paint scenes of rituals meant only for the initiated, Awa Tsireh chose to portray aspects of public ceremonies that were acceptable for outsider eyes.


Awa Tsireh, also known as Alfonso Roybal
(San Ildefonso Pueblo)
born San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico, 1898;
died San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico, ca. 1955

Basket Dancers
ca. 1930–1940
ink and colored ink on paperboard
For decades, scholars attributed Awa Tsireh’s use of blank backgrounds to time he spent painting Pueblo pottery when he was younger and his interest in modern elements that would make his work relevant in the art market. But according to recent scholarship, Tsireh avoided portraying esoteric aspects of Pueblo rituals, like ceremonial settings and specific objects, to safeguard sacred meaning. Secrecy around important cultural knowledge is important to Pueblo people. This knowledge is best conveyed orally to those who are trained to use it and not through recordings like drawings or photography, which can easily circulate in a wider context. Tsireh’s art upholds Pueblo values and ultimately helped safeguard cultural knowledge from indiscriminate circulation.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Corbin-Henderson Collection, Gift of Alice H. Rossin, 1979.144.41

Awa Tsireh, also known as Alfonso Roybal  
(San Ildefonso Pueblo) 
born San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico 1898;  
died San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico ca. 1955

*Ram and Antelope*  
ca. 1925–1930  
watercolor and ink on paper

In the 1920s, Awa Tsireh experimented with compositions that combine animal figures and abstract designs. The semicircular form seen here represents a rainbow, which in Pueblo thought is the demarcation between terrestrial and extraterrestrial worlds. The thin black lines that descend from its center signify rain, and the stepped forms at its base, mountains. The circular form in the sky is the sun. While using symbols from Pueblo culture, Tsireh shows only enough to intrigue the uninitiated, while conveying deeper information and meaning to Pueblo people with the necessary ritual knowledge understand the interrelated meaning of these symbols.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Corbin-Henderson Collection, Gift of Alice H. Rossin, 1979.144.50

Marita Dingus  
born Seattle, Washington, 1956;  
active in Auburn, Washington

*Untitled Bowl*  
ca. 2005  
wire and found objects

This delicate vessel, made of wire, strands of old Christmas tree lights, and other found objects, is a metaphor for the treatment of enslaved people of African descent. By using materials that are normally discarded, the artist celebrates the resilience and beauty of spirit in people who have had to overcome the harsh realities of colonialism.

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Gift of Ben and Aileen Krohn
Marita Dingus  
born Seattle, Washington, 1956;  
active Auburn, Washington

*Green Leaves*  
2001  
mixed media

Between college and graduate school, Marita Dingus spent a summer working with a road crew in Washington state, picking up trash along highways. The experience sharpened her commitment to environmentalism and made the re-use of materials a central component of her work. Here, bottle caps, telephone wire, fabric scraps, bells, and aluminum cans have been salvaged and repurposed to create an exuberant composition that expresses growth and rebirth. Dingus says, “My art draws upon relics from the African Diaspora. The discarded materials represent how people of African descent were used during the institution of slavery and colonialism, then discarded, but who found ways to repurpose themselves and thrive in a hostile world.”

Whatcom Museum Permanent Collection, Gift of the Washington Art Consortium through gift of Safeco Insurance, a member of the Liberty Mutual Group, 2010.53.18

Rubén Trejo  
born Saint Paul, Minnesota, 1937;  
died Spokane, Washington, 2009

*Roots*  
1982  
steel, wood, metal, and wood shavings

In *Roots*, Rubén Trejo blends elements of abstraction with recognizable objects. The work’s title is evocative of his personal story, suggesting the struggle and reward of exploring familial and cultural ties. Trejo began a teaching position at Eastern Washington University in Cheney, Washington, in 1973. Over the next thirty years, he nurtured a vibrant and welcoming community for Chicanx students there and committed his art practice to cultural reclamation. Trejo was deeply influenced by the artistic legacy of Mexico, which informed his identity as a Chicano man living in the Pacific Northwest: “In all of my works I feel like I am trying to be conscious of history, of our multiple histories, where they intersect and where they divide,” he explained in 2001. “I am acutely aware of how language, quite literally, shapes who we are.”

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon, Museum purchase

James Lavadour  
(Walla Walla)  
born Pendleton, Oregon, 1951

*Fire and Bones*  
1990–1991  
oil on linen
James Lavadour learns about the land by walking it, internalizing its rhythms and curves. His work reflects both external and hidden elements of the landscape. In this two-panel painting, a skeletal figure rises out of the ridge, revealing the bones of the mountain. The left panel refers to natural occurrences of fire as well as the passion that the artist feels for his home terrain in eastern Oregon's Blue Mountains. Lavadour states, “A painting is a structure for the extraordinary and informative events of nature that are otherwise invisible.”

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase, 1993

Marie Watt
(Seneca)
born Seattle, Washington, 1967

*Canopy (Odd One)*
2005
salvaged industrial yellow cedar and steel rebar

Marie Watt uses symbolically charged materials to explore ideas related to her First Nations heritage. In the Seneca Nation and other Indigenous communities, blankets are given to honor people who attend important events, such as weddings and other ceremonies. In *Canopy (Odd One)*, Watt salvaged an old-growth timber once used as a beam in a warehouse and had it carved to represent a stack of folded blankets. She intentionally kept the steel rebar intact, reclaiming the beam’s history, reaching back through its use as industrial infrastructure to its origin in a forest now destroyed, and offering it a contemporary life.

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Gift of Driek and Michael Zirinsky

Marie Watt
(Seneca)
born Seattle, Washington, 1967

*Witness (Quamichan Potlatch 1913)*
2015
reclaimed wool blankets, embroidery floss, and thread

A Hudson’s Bay point blanket is the backdrop for Marie Watt’s embroidered scene of a Coast Salish nation’s potlatch. The Canadian and U.S. governments banned these gift-giving ceremonial feasts from 1885 until the 1950s. Unlike the original 1913 photograph of this event (shown below), Watt’s version shows a group of figures with fists raised in protest. Watt also appears with her two small daughters on the right side of the blanket. The younger one peeks over her mother’s shoulder to meet our gaze. A tall stack of blankets behind her refers to the great displays of generosity at potlatches, as well as Watt’s own sculptural and installation work.

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon. This work was acquired with the assistance of the Ford Family Foundation through a special grant program managed by the Oregon Arts Commission, and additional support from the Hartz FUNd for Contemporary Art
Michael Brophy
born Portland, Oregon, 1960

Beaver Trade
2002
oil on canvas

Brophy’s paintings explore the dramatic changes that have occurred in the Northwest landscape across time, while reflecting on the complex relationship between humans and nature. Human destruction is indicated in the painting by footprints embedded in a large totem and leading to a figure dressed in eighteenth-century colonial clothing. A white flag bears the Latin phrase PRO PELLE CUTEM, meaning “a pelt for a skin,” the motto of the fur-trading Hudson’s Bay Company. Felled branches and a flooded landscape further allude to the environmental harm caused by human actions. “I'm not interested in a romanticized or sanitized vision of nature,” the artist says, "but one in which the marks of civilization are given their due. I like the idea of nature on the edge, with people pressing against it."

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Collectors Forum Purchase, 2008

Laura Aguilar
born San Gabriel, CA, 1959; died Long Beach, CA, 2018

Nature Self-Portrait #11
1996
gelatin silver print

Laura Aguilar’s identity as a queer Chicana informed her work as an artist throughout her career. In the Nature Self-Portrait series, Aguilar uses her own nude body as both sculptural object and photographic subject, juxtaposing the soft folds in her flesh with the harsh elements of the natural landscape surrounding her. The duality of her introverted posture and the extroverted vulnerability of her nude body invite the viewer to reconsider conventional notions of beauty and body politics in relation to the female form in art and photography. Aguilar’s effortless existence within this landscape also reinscribes the American Southwest by a person of Mexican descent for her community. She has said, “My photography has always provided me with an opportunity to open myself up and see the world around me. And most of all, photography makes me look within.”

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase through the American Women's History Initiative Acquisitions Pool, administered by the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative, 2021.27.4
Laura Aguilar’s identity as a queer Chicana informed her work as an artist throughout her career. In the *Nature Self-Portrait* series, Aguilar uses her own nude body as both sculptural object and photographic subject, juxtaposing the soft folds in her flesh with the harsh elements of the natural landscape surrounding her. The duality of her introverted posture and the extroverted vulnerability of her nude body invite the viewer to reconsider conventional notions of beauty and body politics in relation to the female form in art and photography. Aguilar’s effortless existence within this landscape also reclaims the American Southwest by a person of Mexican descent for her community. She has said, “My photography has always provided me with an opportunity to open myself up and see the world around me. And most of all, photography makes me look within.”

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase through the American Women’s History Initiative Acquisitions Pool, administered by the Smithsonian American Women’s History Initiative, 2021.27.3

Fritz Scholder  
(Luiseño)  
born Breckenridge, Minnesota, 1937;  
died Phoenix, Arizona, 2005  

*Indian and Contemporary Chair*  
1970  
oil on linen  

Fritz Scholder undercuts nostalgic stereotypes that confine Native people to long gone landscapes and points to the complexities of living in a modern world. Throughout his life, Scholder struggled with his dual identity as a Native American and white man. He rejected the label of ”American Indian artist” and instead found his inspiration in mid-twentieth century artists such as Wayne Thiebaud. Later in his career, Scholder began creating images of Indigenous people in direct response to what he perceived as the “over-romanticized paintings of the ‘noble savage.’” In the past, white artists have often depicted Indigenous subjects in natural settings, grounding their identity within the landscape. In *Indian and Contemporary Chair*, Scholder’s choice to place his subject indoors, in a mid-century modern chair, undercuts stereotypes that confine Native people to nostalgic landscapes and points to the complexities of living in a modern world.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Judge and Mrs. Oliver Seth, 1983.111

Ka’ila Farrell-Smith  
(Klamath Modoc)  
born Ashland, Oregon, 1982  

*Enrollment*  
2014  
oil on canvas  

Ka’ila Farrell-Smith painted this androgynous figure, wrapped in a Hudson’s Bay point blanket, after she received her tribal enrollment number as a citizen of the Klamath Tribes. Citing Indigenous aesthetics as influential, she makes work that honors ancestral lineage. She has explained, “*Enrollment* is a painting that visually explores the complexities of Tribal enrollment rules like blood quantum and the trendiness of
Hudson Bay Company’s wool blankets that were historically used to spread smallpox disease to Indigenous communities, and navigates contested terrains that inform contemporary Indigenous identity.”

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon. General Acquisition Fund purchase made possible with support from Native American Studies, University of Oregon

Rick Bartow
(Mad River Wiyot)
born Newport, Oregon, 1946;
died Newport, Oregon, 2016

*Buck*
2015
acrylic on canvas

Rick Bartow spent most of his life on the Oregon coast but also traveled widely, and wove imagery and influences from around the world into his art. He served in the Vietnam War and, following his recovery from PTSD and alcoholism, frequently made images of himself to express his thoughts about culture and identity. He called art-making his “affordable therapy.” Bartow painted *Buck*, his final self-portrait, two years after suffering a stroke. He included his wheelchair in a rare depiction of his physical vulnerability. The three-chevron insignia refers to Bartow’s rank as a non-commissioned Sergeant, or “Buck,” during the war. The words “Indian Hero” prompt viewers to consider his veteran status, his Native American and European heritage, and contemporary Indigenous or Native American identity as a subject for art.

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon. Gift of the Estate of Rick Bartow and Froelick Gallery.

[Object label for Boise, Whatcom, JSMA]

Patrick Nagatani
born Chicago, Illinois 1945;
died Albuquerque, New Mexico, 2017

*National Atomic Museum, Kirtland Air Force Base, Albuquerque, New Mexico*
1989

*Cow Pie/Yellow Cake, Uranium Mine, Homestake Mining Company, near Mt. Taylor, Milan and Grants, New Mexico*
1989

*Missile Display, Robert Goddard High School, Roswell, New Mexico*
1990

*Japanese Children's Day Carp Banners, Paguate Village, Jackpile Mine Uranium Tailings, Laguna Pueblo Reservation, New Mexico*
1990/1993
As a Japanese American born just thirteen days after the U.S. bombing of Hiroshima, Nagatani was fascinated with New Mexico’s nuclear weapons industry. As he studied the contaminated sites of uranium mines, he also learned about the oldest continuous culture in North America, the Pueblo Indians, whose land and people were disproportionately impacted by U.S. atomic ambitions.

The surreal scenes of Nagatani’s Nuclear Enchantment series use elaborate sets, hand coloring, and printing techniques to weave together images of toxic test sites, schools, atomic monuments, radioactive waste dumps, and sovereign Native lands. The artist exposes the abuses of the New Mexican landscape and its inhabitants perpetrated by the mining industry and the military in answering the government’s thirst for atomic power.


[Object label for UMFA, SAAM]

Patrick Nagatani
born Chicago, Illinois, 1945;
died Albuquerque, New Mexico, 2017

Trinity Site, Jornada Del Muerto, New Mexico, 1989/1993

A7-D, 150th TAC Fighter Group, New Mexico Air National Guard, Kirtland Air Force Base, Albuquerque, New Mexico 1989

Radon Gas, Elementary School Classroom, Albuquerque, New Mexico 1990

Uranium Tailings, Anaconda Minerals Corporation, Laguna Pueblo Reservation, New Mexico 1990 & 1993

Golden Eagle, United Nuclear Corporation Uranium Mill and Tailings, Churchrock, New Mexico 1990/1993

Contaminated Radioactive Sediment, Mortandad Canyon, Los Alamos National Laboratory, New Mexico 1990 & 1993
from the series *Nuclear Enchantments*, 1988–1993
chromogenic prints

As a Japanese American born just thirteen days after the U.S. bombing of Hiroshima, Nagatani was fascinated with New Mexico’s nuclear weapons industry. As he studied the contaminated sites of uranium mines, he also learned about the oldest continuous culture in North America, the Pueblo Indians, whose land and people were disproportionately impacted by U.S. atomic ambitions.

The surreal scenes of Nagatani’s *Nuclear Enchantment* series use elaborate sets, hand coloring, and printing techniques to weave together images of toxic test sites, schools, atomic monuments, radioactive waste dumps, and sovereign Native lands. The artist exposes the abuses of the New Mexican landscape and its inhabitants perpetrated by the mining industry and the military in answering the government’s thirst for atomic power.

Memory Makers

Artists act as transmitters of cultural memory as they give form to neglected histories. Using documentation, reconstruction, portraiture, and manipulation of archival imagery, they bring the past vividly into the present. This group of artists explores Black, Indigenous, Asian American, Latinx, and gendered experiences in the American West, going beyond the familiar accounts of European colonizers, bringing lived histories and identities that are essential to a truthful history. Indigenous artists often remind us that these memories are made on their ancestral homelands and represent living cultures, despite a history of government policies designed to make Indigenous people forget culture, language, and identity. By bearing witness to the traumas of the past through visual storytelling, artists express resistance and ensure that cultural memory lives on.

Miguel A. Gandert
born Española, NM, 1956; active Santa Fe and Albuquerque, New Mexico

*El Comanche David, Talpa, NM*
1996

*Los Cautivos, Talpa, NM*
1995

digital exhibition prints made from the original gelatin silver prints

Miguel Gandert’s photographs of *genízaros* add levels of complexity to our understanding of Native heritage in New Mexico. *Genízaros* are descendants of de-tribalized Indians from various tribes—the Utes, Apaches, Comanches, Kiowas, Navajos, and Pawnees—whose ancestors were taken captive during the Spanish colonial period. Many were forced into indentured servitude, where they adapted to Spanish culture while passing elements of their Native traditions and beliefs to their descendants. Gandert captures their present-day ceremonies, like *Los Cautivos* (or *The Captives*), which dramatize aspects of their history. Gandert’s photographs are a testament to *genízaro* resilience in the face of adversity.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase through the Smithsonian Latino Initiatives Pool, administered by the Smithsonian Latino Center, 2016.20.8 and 2016.20.7.

Al Rendón
born San Antonio, Texas, 1957

*Horse reining rayar*
1986, printed 2015

*Charreada Warm Up*
1981, printed 2015

*Adelita*
1987, printed 2015
digital exhibition prints made from the original gelatin silver prints

In the 1980s, Al Rendón began documenting the elaborate performances and dress of the San Antonio Charro Association in Texas (est. 1947), which was the first established organization of competitive Mexican American horsemen and women in the United States. He captures the traditions of charros and charrías, whose equestrian feats are rooted in Spanish and Mexican ranch culture, which emerged in the sixteenth century when the Spanish introduced horses and cattle to the Americas. U.S. cowboy culture is an outgrowth of this history. Hints of our contemporary world creep into Rendón’s photographs, suggesting how these traditions live in the present. Some photographs undermine Mexican “bandito” stereotypes common in racist “cowboy and Indian” films. His photographs assert charro customs as fixtures in the U.S.–Mexico borderlands.


Roger Shimomura
born Seattle, Washington, 1939

American Infamy #2
2006
acrylic on canvas

American Infamy #2 portrays Camp Minidoka in Idaho, where Roger Shimomura and his family were incarcerated from the spring of 1942 until summer 1944. This painting is made in the style of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Japanese Muromachi era byobu screens and details living conditions under the camp’s armed guards. The artist exposes the racial conflicts during World War II, when 120,000 Japanese Americans were unjustly imprisoned as a result of Executive Order 9066, and surfaces the internment camp in Idaho. Though Camp Minidoka is designated as a national historic site, its history remains relatively unknown, even among descendants of the people who were imprisoned there.

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Purchased with donations to the Roger Shimomura Acquisitions Fund

Wendy Maruyama
born La Junta, Colorado, 1952

Minidoka, from the Tag Project
2011
paper, ink, string, and thread

Wendy Maruyama began the Tag Project when she was conducting research about Executive Order 9066, which gave the U.S. military broad powers during World War II to incarcerate Japanese Americans. The project consists of ten paper sculptures, each representing a U.S. camp built to confine citizens and legal residents. Each sculpture consists of thousands of paper tags printed with the name and identification number of a person incarcerated at one of the camps. Maruyama and a team of volunteers painstakingly
recreated the tags using information from government archives. This sculpture represents detainees at Camp Minidoka in Idaho and serves as a visual reminder of the devastating impact this unjust policy had on tens of thousands of people and their descendants who continue to reside in this region.

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Collectors Forum Purchase, 2015

Christina Fernandez  
born Los Angeles, California, 1965

*Maria’s Great Expedition*  
1995–1996  
digital exhibition prints and bilingual narrative  
Exhibition prints are made from the original five gelatin silver prints, one chromogenic print, and one inkjet print.

Fernandez’s installation mimics the kind of museum display that tells the stories of European conquistadors or white U.S. expansionists in the Southwest. Rather than focus on these dominant histories, Fernandez turns to the story of her great-grandmother María González, the first member of her family to migrate to the United States from Mexico. The artist photographed herself in the guise of her relative and paired these images with detailed stories that relate her family history to larger accounts of the trials and milestones of Mexican migration and settlement in the early twentieth century. Fernandez pointedly adopts photography’s evolving techniques from Depression-era documentary-style black-and-white prints to mid-century color snapshots—to highlight how Chicanx experiences have consistently been omitted from histories of the West.


Ken Gonzales-Day  
born Santa Clara, California, 1964;  
active Los Angeles, California

*Erased Lynchings*  
2006  
fifteen inkjet prints

These fifteen photographs are digitally altered reproductions of lynching postcards, which were widely circulated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Such postcards, meant to instill fear in targeted communities and often inscribed with racist language, were sometimes kept as macabre souvenirs. While lynching is historically associated with the murder of Black people in the American South, this work is based on postcards that come from Western states, where the lynching of Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinx populations has been largely erased from memory. By removing the victims from these images, Ken Gonzales-Day forces the viewer to focus on the white perpetrators of this violence, made mundane through repetition. He challenges us to consider lynching as a widespread trauma and acknowledge its destructive legacy and connection to Western expansion.

Tony Gleaton
born Detroit, Michigan, 1948;
died Palo Alto, California 2015

Selections from Manifesting Destiny, An Illustrated History Of Lesser Known Facts And Occurrences Utilizing Text and Landscapes, Chronicling The African Diaspora In The Territories West of the 96 Meridian (In The Sovereign Lands of Mexico, The United States and the Dominion of Canada) From The Years 1528 To 1918
circa 1999–2011
digital silver gelatin prints

Tony Gleaton’s expansive landscapes and quiet views of man-made structures across the American West construct a history that is largely unknown. In 1999, Gleaton began traveling west of the Mississippi River to continue his career-long quest to research and document the experiences of the African diaspora across the Americas. Pairing evocative images with descriptive text that details events that transpired in specific places, Gleaton reveals how Black people participated in historical events that made the American West, from the Indian Wars, to The Texas Revolution, the Gold Rush, Mid-West homesteading, and beyond. Gleaton’s motivation was not only to document this forgotten, epic history, but to “undermine perceptions of the genesis of "the West" [as we've come to see it].”

[Object label for BAM, WMA, JSMA]

The North Platte River, looking west towards the Rocky Mountains. George Washington Bush crossed the North Platte near here on his journey to the northwest along the Oregon Trail. Bush was one of the first African American (Irish and African) Non Amerindian settlers of the Pacific Northwest.
2011, printed 2021

Goliad Mission, Goliad Texas. McCulloch, Samuel, JR or McCullock (1810–1893) A Free Black man, a soldier in Texas. On October 9, 1893 he fought at the Goliad and was severely wounded during the storming of the Mexican officers' quarters. He was the only Texan wounded in the battle and became known as the first Texan casualty of the revolution.
2011, printed 2021

Leased cornfield, Nicodemus, KS. One of a number of unsuccessful Black towns. Nicodemus was a Black pioneer town.
2011, printed 2021

[Object label for UMFA, SAAM]

2011, printed 2021

Julian, San Diego County, CA. America Newton was a free woman, likely a former slave who traveled west after the Civil War. She settled in Julian in 1872. She washed clothes received a homestead in 1891 and remained in Julian the rest of her life. Today Julian commemorates Newton with a local gift shop named after her.
Pecos River just north of its’ [sic] confluence with the Rio Bravo de Norte, with Mexico in the distance, Val Verde County, Texas. Seminole Negro Scouts John Ward and Pompey Factor were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for saving the life of Lt. John Bullis while under hostile fire in this river bottom.

Juan de Dios Mora
born 1984, Yahualica, Mexico;
active Laredo and San Antonio, Texas

Montado a la Escoba Voladora (Riding the Flying Broom)
2010

Bien Arreglada (All Decked Out)
2010
linocuts

Juan de Dios Mora’s prints emerge from his close observation of immigrant life in the border town of Laredo, Texas. His scenes of vaqueros (or cowboys) riding flying brooms or driving exaggerated, powerful motorcycles, combine fantasy and realism to honor how Mexican immigrants make do and affirm their culture against the odds. The artist’s father, who routinely repaired things with discarded scraps of metal and wood, inspired Montado a la Escoba Voladora (Riding the Flying Broom). “Even when you don’t have the right tools or technology,” the artist said, “you can still be clever and creative.” Mora’s works also reconceive representations of the cowboy, showing how Southwest ranch culture is indebted to Mexico.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase through the Frank K. Ribelin Endowment, 2019.35.2 and 2019.35.5

Jacob Lawrence
born, Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1917;
died, Seattle, Washington, 2000

The Builders
1980
gouache on paper

Lawrence’s African American heritage and expression of Black identity are fundamental to his work. He made portraits of historical figures such as Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman and painted scenes of the Great Migration. A careful observer and storyteller, he also focused on scenes of the everyday.

Lawrence returned to the subject of builders over half a century. This theme refers to his own migration to the West and his time working with the WPA and New Deal programs, as it tells stories of aspiration,
Barbara Earl Thomas was a student of Jacob Lawrence at the University of Washington and, like him, is a narrative storyteller. In this work, as in many others, she incorporates themes of human connection and rituals of survival in her visual allegories as she draws on her family’s migration from the American South to the Pacific Northwest in the 1940s.

These prints come from a series of eight linocuts titled *The Book of Fishing*, which elaborates the fisherman’s story as Thomas has lived it. The artist shares that while fishing methods vary across cultures, the act of fishing is a common and eternal custom. She recalls that growing up, her family fished for bottom-feeding fish, which was a very different method of fishing from the salmon fishing of the Scandinavians and Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest. She says, “Bottom-fish people are a special kind of people because they are living off of what nobody else wants.”

NATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON THE TRAIL,
A Contemporary American Indian Art Portfolio
Commissioned by the Missoula Art Museum
2004–2005

On the occasion of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commemoration in 2004, the Missoula Art Museum in Wyoming invited fifteen Native American artists to participate in a limited-edition print project. Three of the fifteen prints created for the portfolio are on view here. On the screen to the [right/left] you will find images of the entire portfolio.
The Lewis and Clark Expedition (1803–1806), also known as the Corps of Discovery Expedition, was commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson. The Corps was a group of U.S. Army and civilian volunteers, under the command of Captain Meriwether Lewis and Second Lieutenant William Clark, who were charged with exploring the western portion of North America by traveling across the Continental Divide to the Pacific Coast and back. Their objectives included mapping the newly acquired Louisiana Purchase, finding a practical route across the western half of the continent, and establishing U.S. ownership over the land occupied by many Indigenous tribes along the Missouri River before European countries tried to claim it. Sacagawea, a member of the Lemhi Shoshone tribe, was a valued member of the Corps. She advised Clark on optimal routes through difficult terrain, served as an interpreter and, through her presence, conveyed the peaceful intent of the group when encountering Indigenous people.

Corwin Clairmont, a Salish and Kootenai tribal member who was a co-curator of the project, noted that the portfolio provided “an opportunity to present a point of view that is often overlooked and may be in direct contrast with the celebratory mood of many Lewis and Clark admirers.”

Joe Feddersen
(Colville)
born Seattle, Washington, 1953;
active Omak, Washington

*Untitled (mother and child)* from *Native Perspectives on the Trail*
2004
lithograph, edition 10 of 25

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith
(Flathead/Cree/Shoshone)
born Flathead Reservation, Montana, 1940;
active Corrales, New Mexico

*I See Red* from *Native Perspectives on the Trail*
2005
stencil print, edition 10 of 25

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Gail Tremblay
(Mi’kmaq, Onondaga)
born Buffalo, New York, 1945;
active Olympia, Washington

*A Note to Lewis and Clark’s Ghosts* from *Native Perspectives on the Trail*
2004
Linocut

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009
Corwin Clairmont
(Salish, Kootenai)
born St. Ignatius, Montana, 1946;
active Ronan, Montana

*Indian Land Passage Denied* from *Native Perspectives on the Trail*
2005
collagraph with chine collé, edition 10 of 25

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Lillian Pitt
(Wasco, Yakama, Warm Springs)
born Warm Springs Reservation, Oregon, 1944
active Big River (Columbia River) region of the Pacific Northwest

*Living with the Ancient Stories* from *Native Perspectives on the Trail*
2004
etching, edition 10 of 25

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Jeneese Hilton
(Blackfeet)
born Browning, Montana, 1942;
active St. Ignatius, Montana

*1803 to 1806 to 2004 (à la GW Bush)* from *Native Perspectives on the Trail*
2004
etching on paper, edition 10 of 25

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Molly Murphy
(Oglala/Lakota Sioux)
born Great Falls, Montana, 1977;
active Tulsa, Oklahoma

*Market Imperialism* from *Native Perspectives on the Trail*
2004
hand-colored linocut, edition 10 of 32

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Neil Parsons
(Southern Pikuni)
born Browning, Montana, 1938;
active Blaine, Washington

Meriwether’s Dilemma from Native Perspectives on the Trail
2004
lithograph and monoprint, edition 10 of 25

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Ramon Murillo
(Shoshone-Bannock)
born Pocatello, Idaho, 1956;
active Bellingham, Washington

Dancing on the Lewis and Clark Trail from Native Perspectives on the Trail
2004
etching, edition 10 of 25

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Dwight Billedeaux
(Blackfeet)
born Dillon, Montana, 1947;
active Ronan, Montana

Lewis and Clark Back to Earth from Native Perspectives on the Trail
2004
monoprint

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Melanie Yazzie
(Navajo/Diné)
born Ganado, Arizona, 1966;
active Boulder, Colorado
Honoring Her from *Native Perspectives on the Trail*
2004
screen print, edition 10 of 25

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Damian Charette
(Crow)
born Crow Agency, Montana, 1960;
active San Antonio, Texas

*Strokes of Truth* from *Native Perspectives on the Trail*
2004
collagraph, edition 10 of 25

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Neal Ambrose-Smith
(Salish)
born Texas, 1966;
active Corrales, New Mexico

*Now That’s a Coyote Story / sêy lu pn sqwllu* from *Native Perspectives on the Trail*
2004
monotype and screen print, edition 10 of 24

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Melissa Bob
(Lummi)
born Bellingham, Washington, 1982;
active the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla

*Ways of Seeing, Ways of Being . . . Then and Now* from *Native Perspectives on the Trail*
2004
collagraph, serigraph, and collage, edition 10 of 25

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Jason Elliott Clark
(Algonquin, Creek, Swiss, Scottish)
born Panorama City, California, 1967;
active Missoula, Montana
Jefferson’s Saints Surveying the Real Estate from Native Perspectives on the Trail
2004
relief print with gold leaf

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Joe Feddersen
(Colville)
born Seattle, Washington, 1953;
active Omak, Washington

Untitled (mother and child) from Native Perspectives on the Trail
2004
lithograph, edition 10 of 25

Feddersen’s untitled print draws on the geometric patterns and artistry of traditional American Indian baskets, blankets, and parflêches (rawhide carrying bags, usually painted and incised). He contrasts images of contemporary logging and construction with a photograph of a mother and child clothed in ancestral Plateau dress to comment on the survival of Indigenous people in a changing environment.

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith
(Flathead/Cree/Shoshone)
born Flathead Reservation, Montana, 1940;
active Corrales, New Mexico

I See Red from Native Perspectives on the Trail
2005
stencil print, edition 10 of 25

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith’s depiction of a red snowman points out the gap between white and Native American world views. Just as viewers must adjust their expectations that snowmen should be white, Native Americans must adjust daily to prevailing cultural expectations. The artist includes symbols important in the Flathead Salish belief system: four snowballs represent the cardinal directions used in daily prayers; the black hat, a turn-of-the-century trade item, is still worn for special occasions; and the green tree signals respect for nature.

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Gail Tremblay
(Mi’kmaq, Onondaga)
born Buffalo, New York, 1945;
active Olympia, Washington

A Note to Lewis and Clark's Ghosts from Native Perspectives on the Trail
2004
linocut

In A Note to Lewis and Clark's Ghosts, Gail Tremblay portrays Sacagawea, the Lemhi Shoshone woman whose deep knowledge of the region helped the Lewis and Clark Expedition complete its mission. She knew the difficult terrain and was a skilled translator. The image is striking in its graphic simplicity. Within the black field of the woman’s robe, Tremblay has printed in bold silver ink, “When you have such a good woman for a guide, why was it that all I wanted is for you to get lost, get lost, get lost . . . .”

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

[Object labels for WMA]

Corwin Clairmont
(Salish, Kootenai)
born St. Ignatius, Montana, 1946;
active Ronan, Montana

Indian Land Passage Denied from Native Perspectives on the Trail
2005
collagraph with chine collé, edition 10 of 25

Indian Country Passage Denied questions the objectives of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The Expedition leaders were commissioned to explore and map the newly acquired Louisiana Purchase territory but also to establish the United States government’s sovereignty over the Indians, claim their “discovery” of the lands, and set up trade agreements with the Indians. Lewis and Clark did not proceed as guests in a foreign land, but as conquerors. Though the expedition paid lip service to the independence of the Indian nations, Clairmont’s print leads us to ask: what if Lewis and Clark had needed passports, and what if their passage had been denied?

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Lillian Pitt
(Wasco, Yakama, Warm Springs)
born Warm Springs Reservation, Oregon, 1944;
active Big River (Columbia River) region of the Pacific Northwest

Living with the Ancient Stories from Native Perspectives on the Trail
2004
etching, edition 10 of 25

Lillian Pitt’s print, Living with the Ancient Stories, illustrates her love of the mystery and sacredness of ancient pictographs and petroglyphs. “The stories are rock paintings that were painted up to 10,000 years
ago,” she explained. “No one knows the exact meanings of the pieces.” For Pitt, these stone stories reveal the history and continuity of a culture extending far back in time, long before the written records of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Jeneese Hilton
(Blackfeet)
born Browning, Montana, 1942;
active St. Ignatius, Montana

1803 to 1806 to 2004 (à la GW Bush) from Native Perspectives on the Trail
2004
etching on paper, edition 10 of 25

Environmental health is the key theme in Hilton’s print, 1803 to 1806 to 2004 (à la GW Bush). An upside-down flag is the backdrop for images of Lewis and Clark who, while heroic to some, were to others the omens of dark days ahead. Superimposing images of smokestacks and pollution on a map of the country, her etching points to the consumerism and a disposable society that followed Lewis and Clark into the West and persists to this day.

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Molly Murphy
(Oglala/Lakota Sioux)
born Great Falls, Montana, 1977;
active Tulsa, Oklahoma

Market Imperialism from Native Perspectives on the Trail
2004
hand-colored linocut, edition 10 of 32

Murphy’s print, Market Imperialism, appears to be a traditional Native American parflêche (a rawhide bag, usually painted and incised) design. A closer look reveals that ancestral patterns have been replaced with commercial logos: Nike, Pepsi-Cola, Tommy Hilfiger. Murphy writes, “Advertising and lifestyle branding are the keys to contemporary market expansion in contrast to the historic need for physical control over a geographic area. Now instead of the cavalry fighting for land, we have cola companies fighting for brand loyalty.”

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Neil Parsons
(Southern Pikuni)
born Browning, Montana, 1938;  
active Blaine, Washington

*Meriwether’s Dilemma* from *Native Perspectives on the Trail*  
2004  
lithograph and monoprint, edition 10 of 25

*Meriwether’s Dilemma* is a mixed-media example of Parsons’s abstract expressionism. The haunting mystery of the image mirrors the conflicts and questions surrounding Meriwether Lewis’s death in 1809, three years after his return from his expedition to the Pacific Coast. Lewis’s personal and political problems began with the Corps of Discovery journey and ended with his death from multiple gunshot wounds at age thirty-five. His death was listed as suicide at the time, but experts since have questioned that conclusion.

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Ramon Murillo  
(Shoshone-Bannock)  
born Pocatello, Idaho, 1956;  
active Bellingham, Washington

*Dancing on the Lewis and Clark Trail* from *Native Perspectives on the Trail*  
2004  
etching, edition 10 of 25

In *Dancing on the Lewis and Clark Trail*, Murillo uses a montage of tribal symbols and modern images to portray Native American culture before and after the Lewis and Clark journey. He demands space for Native culture in the contemporary landscape by contrasting two maps (nineteenth- and twenty-first-century); historical markers and modern signs; contemporary native dancers with a still from Edward Curtis’s film of Kwakiutl in a hunting canoe; an Indian woman and child; and a building crane. By juxtaposing historical and contemporary images, the artist underscores Indigenous people’s ability to survive by retaining cultural teachings while adapting to new environments.

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Dwight Billedeaux  
(Blackfeet)  
born Dillon, Montana, 1947;  
active Ronan, Montana

*Lewis and Clark Back to Earth* from *Native Perspectives on the Trail*  
2004  
monoprint
Lewis and Clark Back to Earth is an extension of Billedeaux’s experimental and tactile artistic practice. He created the figures of Lewis, Clark, and Sacagawea in wire and used the figures as elements on the birch bark printing surface, crushing the figures in the run through the press, which resulted in embossed lines. Each of the twenty-five prints in the edition is unique.

Billedeaux’s interpretation contradicts romantic depictions of Lewis and Clark pointing into the distance as though they knew exactly where they were going. Billedeaux represents Sacagawea in the foreground, leading the party. She knew the difficult terrain and was a skilled translator. The print pays homage to an unacknowledged leader, suggesting that, without Sacagawea, Lewis and Clark would have been lost.

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Melanie Yazzie  
(Navajo/Diné)  
born Ganado, Arizona, 1966;  
active Boulder, Colorado

Honoring Her from Native Perspectives on the Trail  
2004  
screen print, edition 10 of 25

Honoring Her depicts Sacagawea as a gingerbread doll with a curvilinear motif decorating her body. Around this figure are written the words, “A Woman with a party of men is a Token of Peace, William Clark.” The year “1812” and the word “Shoshone” refer to conflicting beliefs about Sacagawea’s origins and fate. While historical documents state that Sacajawea died in 1812 at age twenty-four of an unknown sickness, Native American oral tradition says that she died in 1884 at the age of ninety-five. She was born in the Lemhi River Valley in Idaho and was later held captive in a Hidatsa village before being sold to become a bride to a Canadian trapper.

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Damian Charette  
(Crow)  
born Crow Agency, Montana, 1960;  
active San Antonio, Texas

Strokes of Truth from Native Perspectives on the Trail  
2004  
collagraph, edition 10 of 25

To create this collagraph print, Charette used a printing plate built up with collaged elements, a method developed by his late teacher, Don Bunse. Strokes of Truth pays homage to the spirit of the Indian artist through time. The Native artist in the print is surrounded by images ranging from abstract pictograph symbols to realistic renderings of buffalo. A large can of paint is placed next to a “Big Chief” drawing pad as reminders of the interplay between traditional and contemporary artistic expressions and the long history of cultural appropriation.
Neil Ambrose-Smith
(Salish)
born Texas, 1966;
active Corrales, New Mexico

*Now That’s a Coyote Story / sèy lu pn sqwllu* from *Native Perspectives on the Trail*
2004
monotype and screen print, edition 10 of 24

In *Now That’s a Coyote Story / sèy lu pn sqwllu*, Ambrose-Smith relates the traditional Native American character to modern “trickery.” Indian teaching stories often feature Coyote, a trickster who can change shape and form to teach a lesson. In this print, alongside images of corn and a food nutrition label, we see Coyote wearing a winking mask. Ambrose-Smith weaves a traditional warning into his visual story. “Coyote knows the importance of corn for the people. He sees that GMO corn can be trickery, but how is it that the people come to accept it? He sees that someone else is also crafty in his or her ways. Coyote sees all.”

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Melissa Bob
(Lummi)
born Bellingham, Washington, 1982;
active the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla

*Ways of Seeing, Ways of Being . . . Then and Now* from *Native Perspectives on the Trail*
2004
collagraph, serigraph, collage, edition 10 of 25

*Ways of Seeing, Ways of Being . . . Then and Now* contrasts two worlds — one before and the other after contact with Europeans. The upper portion of the print reflects a natural existence with green, forested land. The lower portion depicts the post-colonial landscape as a dull, gray, over-developed mass. The red lifeline of pre-contact tribal life is vigorous and dynamic while, in the artist’s view, post-contact Native culture is flat-lining. The lifeline does continue, however, as Bob signifies the passage of time through the changed landscape, perhaps implying that while Native culture has been largely absorbed into the dominant society, it has not completely died away.

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009

Jason Elliott Clark
(Algonquin, Creek, Swiss, Scottish)
born Panorama City, California, 1967;
active Missoula, Montana

*Jefferson's Saints Surveying the Real Estate* from *Native Perspectives on the Trail*

2004

relief print with gold leaf

Using dark humor, *Jefferson’s Saints Surveying the Real Estate* addresses the Corps of Discovery Expedition and its consequences. The expedition leaders wear spacesuits, signifying that they are not merely out of place, but in a land profoundly distant and different from their home. These explorers, sent by President Jefferson, wear golden halos even as they stand on sacred Native burial grounds. The image and its title suggest that Lewis and Clark, though revered by many historians, were in the West as glorified real-estate agents for the government to claim lands already "discovered" and long occupied by Indigenous people.

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Museum Purchase with a Grant from the Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Committee, 2006.009
Boundary Breakers

Artists unsettle common beliefs that inform the popular understanding of the American West. They remind us that the West is not simply a geographic region; those living there have complex identities and histories that transcend political borders. Using maps and documentary photography, some artists address physical borders and consider their impact on people and cultures. Others rely on poignant symbols to re-envision the movement of people across the land and water. They break down simplified notions of personal identity, affirm their lived histories, and refute romanticized imagery. They all consider form, process, and subject; question previous perspectives; and invite new ways of understanding the American West.

Gail Tremblay
(Mi'kmaq and Onondaga)
born Buffalo, New York, 1945

An Iroquois Dreams That the Tribes of the Middle East Will Take the Message of Deganawida to Heart and Make Peace
2009
16mm film, leader, rayon cord, and thread

Since the 1980s, artist, writer and activist Gail Tremblay has woven baskets using scraps of 35mm and 16mm film. She culls the film from a variety of sources, including old movie trailers and outdated educational documentaries. To add variations of pattern and color, Tremblay incorporates lengths of leader film, inserting white, black, blue, green, or vibrant red tone. The titles of her works sometimes point toward the content of her film sources. Of this series the artist writes, “I enjoyed the notion of recycling film and gaining control over a medium historically used by both Hollywood and documentary filmmakers to stereotype American Indians. I relished the irony of making film take on the traditional fancy stitch patterns of our ash and sweetgrass baskets.”

Whatcom Museum Purchase, 2010.54.1

V. Maldonado
born Changuitiro, Michoacán, Mexico, 1976

The Fallen
2018
acrylic on canvas

V. Maldonado’s art and performances “take up space”—physically and philosophically—in white-majority spaces. Maldonado uses the imagery and cultural significance of lucha libre wrestlers, especially masks, to represent double-consciousness and how marginalized groups and individuals often feel both seen and invisible. They begin creating large, vibrant paintings inspired by the concept of freedom in 2018. In exploring and celebrating their complex identity, Maldonado rejects the impositions of gender, race, and settler-colonial myths.

Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon
This work was acquired with the assistance of The Ford Family Foundation through a special grant program managed by the Oregon Arts Commission, 2019:22.1

George Tsutakawa
born, Seattle, Washington, 1910;
died Seattle, Washington, 1997

North Cascades
n.d.
sumi ink on rice paper

With an economy of calligraphic line and form, George Tsutakawa’s bold Sumi-e (brush and ink) painting captures a distinctly Pacific Northwest landscape. As the artist uses an Asian painting style to render an American scene, he demonstrates that the Pacific Northwest and the Far East, linked by a land bridge in the distant past, can be joined again in the present through artistic style and cultural reference.

Tsutakawa was a sculptor and painter, acclaimed for creating dozens of public fountains in both the United States and Japan. He frequently described his experience as a Japanese American and as an artist influenced by both Eastern and Western art as living “between cultures.” When asked, “Are you American or Japanese?” he would respond, “I’m neither, I’m both.”

Whatcom Museum Permanent Collection, Gift of the Washington Art Consortium through gift of Safeco Insurance, a member of the Liberty Mutual Group, 2017.16.36

Angela Ellsworth
born Palo Alto, California, 1964

Seer Bonnet XI and XII
2010
pearl corsage pins, fabric, and steel

In this series, Ellsworth refers to a group of white settler women who donned homemade sunbonnets as they arrived in Utah in the middle of the nineteenth century. The artist, a fifth-generation Mormon and self-identified feminist and queer artist, envisions her bonnets as representing each of the thirty-five wives of Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon faith. According to Mormon theology, Smith received prophetic powers from “seer stones” to translate the Book of Mormon, but in Ellsworth’s reimagined history, the sparkling Seer Bonnets endow Smith’s wives with their own visionary and revelatory powers. In her work, Ellsworth highlights relationships of love that have been overlooked or feared and, these bonnets, with their sharp, menacing interiors, reveal the struggles and the resilience of a unique community of women.

Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Purchased with funds from the UMFA Young Benefactors and the Phyllis Cannon Wattis Endowment for Modern and Contemporary Art, UMFA2010.16.2 and UMFA2010.16.3

Marcos Ramírez ERRE
born Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico, 1961
David Taylor
born Beaufort, South Carolina, 1965

Delimitations Portfolio
2016
48 archival pigment prints and Adams-Onis broadsheet

In this photographic series the artists document their epic effort to mark and photograph the never-before-surveyed 1821 border between the United States and Mexico. It presents the beautiful diversity of landscape and settlement in the American West while drawing our attention to the constructed and fluid nature of man-made borders. “Before this was Mexico or the U.S.,” Ramirez points out, “this whole land was Native American.”

In the 1819 Adams-Onís Treaty between the United States and Spain, which was ratified by the newly independent Mexico in 1821, the U.S. renounced “forever all their rights, claims, and pretensions” to the lands south of the treaty line. Yet, today those lands are known as the U.S. states of Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Texas, Colorado, Kansas, Wyoming and Oklahoma. The artists offer the treaty text to visitors to underscore the fallibility of promises and the force of U.S. westward expansion.

Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Purchased with funds from The Phyllis Cannon Wattis Endowment Fund, UMFA2019.9.1

Hung Liu
born Changchun, China, 1948

Mandarin Ducks
2005
oil on canvas

Hung Liu was trained as an artist in China during the Cultural Revolution, which forced her to conform to a constrained, academic style. She immigrated to the U.S. in 1984. Through her images, she shows resistance to being assimilated into the stereotypes often imposed upon her subjects. The painting’s dripping appearance is Liu’s unique style that bears no resemblance to the rigid academicism of the Chinese Socialist Realist tenets in which she was trained.

This painting portrays Polly Bemis, the most renowned Chinese woman in the West. She is wearing her 1894 wedding dress and is surrounded by traditional Chinese motifs associated with marriage, including Mandarin ducks and water lilies. Polly became a heroine, especially among women and people of Chinese descent in Idaho, because she overcame domination and subjugation to forge her own independence and success as a business woman. She married a local saloon owner to escape deportation and remained with him until his death in 1922.

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Gift of Anita Kay Hardy in Loving Memory of Her Parents, Earl M. and LaVane M. Hardy
Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Gift of Anita Kay Hardy in Loving Memory of Her Parents, Earl M. and LaVane M. Hardy
In the 1950s, Raphael Montañez Ortiz began exploring destruction as the basis for his art making. To create *Cowboy and "Indian" Film*, he used a tomahawk to chop up several copies of Anthony Mann’s classic Western, *Winchester ’73* (1950). He then placed the hacked strips of film in a medicine bag, shook them while singing a war chant, and reassembled the snippets, boldly jumbling their narrative, visual, and sound elements. Ortiz used this shaman-like process to suggest and honor his Yaqui Indigenous heritage. Through his invented ritual, Ortiz sought, in his words, to “redeem the indigenous wound” of European colonialism. This work disrupts the familiar cowboy versus Indian narrative common in Western films.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Gary Wolkowitz, 2011.31

Alfredo Arreguín
born Morelia, Mexico, 1935; active Seattle, Washington

*Bitterns*
1980
oil on canvas

Ecology, nature and the preservation of the environment are pressing themes for Arreguin. Birds are often metaphors for fleeting memories of childhood, communion with and reverence for nature, and references to travel and migration.

Alfredo Arreguín immigrated to Seattle from Morelia, Mexico, in the late 1950s. Shortly after, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and served in Korea. While in Asia, he visited Japan and was introduced to the work of Hokusai, the Edo-period *ukiyo-e* (woodblock) master. These intricate prints have been as strong an influence on Arreguin’s work as the patterned mosaics and baroque architecture of his native Mexico. Over the last fifty years, he has developed a lyrical and decorative painting style, which he employs to explore ideas of interconnectedness, often using what he describes as a lace-like screen to overlay his compositions. [In his graceful combinations of Asian and Chicano themes and elements, we can trace his journey across cultural borders and barriers.]

Whatcom Museum Permanent Collection, Gift of the Washington Art Consortium through gift of Safeco Insurance, a member of the Liberty Mutual Group, 2010.53.1

Wendy Red Star
(Apsáalooke/Crow)
born Billings, Montana, 1981

*Four Seasons: Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer*
2006
archival pigment print, edition of 27
In this series of photographs, Wendy Red Star depicts herself in traditional Crow dress within four fabricated, majestic landscapes—one for each season. Inflatable animals, plastic flowers, Astroturf, and other artificial materials reference and make fun of the diorama settings in which Native people are often depicted in natural history museums. Panoramic images of the Western landscape, commercially produced in the 1970s, hang in the background. By picturing herself in a natural history museum display, the artist comments on the false assumption that Native American culture is frozen in the past. Through her presence, she counteracts this destructive “vanished people” stereotype.

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection, Collectors Forum Purchase, 2019

Delilah Montoya
born Fort Worth, Texas, 1965

*Desire Lines, Baboquivari Peak, AZ*
2004, printed 2008
inkjet print

Delilah Montoya’s work focuses on the rich and complex histories of the landscape and communities of the borderlands between Mexico and the United States. *Desire Lines: Baboquivari Peak, AZ* shows the Tohono O’odham Reservation, which straddles the border of Arizona and the Sonora region of Mexico. The mountains seen in the distance are the site of the Tohono O’odham creation story. In having to travel between these regions, the people of the O’odham community become both migrants and natives within their own ancestral homeland. Scattered throughout the landscape are water jugs, placed along the reservation border to provide water to migrants on their journey. Montoya explicitly rejects the doctrine of Manifest Destiny and the misconception that these lands were unexplored terrain prior to the invasion of white settlers and the creation of borders between two nations.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of the Gilberto Cardenas Latino Art Collection, 2011.52.1

Sandra C. Fernández
born New York, New York, 1964;
active Austin, Texas, and Marlin, New Jersey

*Cruzado (Settled In)*
2015
etching, chine collé, thread drawings, and blind embossing on paper

Fernández’s layered print brings the poignant history of the U.S.–Mexico border to life. Before the European conquest of North America, this area was home to Indigenous communities who have lived in the Southwest for hundreds of years. Later it was claimed by several colonial and national powers—Spain, Mexico, and the United States. Fernández’s linear forms evoke these shifting boundaries and the paths of migrants through the land and water. The artist’s needle pokes holes in the paper, suggesting wounds, while her stitches seem to tie the regions together. Embossed on the print itself is text written during the Spanish conquest. This historical reference raises the specter of colonialism as the origin of current crises like perilous migrations and political strife.
Sandra C. Fernández  
born New York, New York, 1964;  
active Austin, Texas, and Marlin, New Jersey  

_Mojádose II (Crossing)_  
2015  
etching, relief, chine collé, thread drawings, and blind embossing on paper  

Fernández’s layered print brings the poignant history of the U.S.-Mexico border to life. Before the European conquest of North America, this area was home to Indigenous communities who have lived in the Southwest for hundreds of years. Later it was claimed by several colonial and national powers—Spain, Mexico, and the United States. Fernández’s linear forms evoke these shifting boundaries and the paths of migrants through the land and water. The artist’s needle pokes holes in the paper, suggesting wounds, while her stitches seem to tie the regions together. Embossed on the print itself is text written during the Spanish conquest. This historical reference raises the specter of colonialism as the origin of current crises like perilous migrations and political strife.

Angel Rodríguez-Díaz  
born San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1955  
active San Antonio, Texas  

_The Protagonist of an Endless Story_  
1993  
oil on canvas  

Known for his richly textured and painterly style, Angel Rodríguez-Díaz has spent the last several decades painting portraits of important cultural icons of San Antonio and the Southwestern United States. The “protagonist” of this painting is renowned Chicana novelist and poet Sandra Cisneros, best known for her debut novel, _The House on Mango Street_. Cisneros stands before a fiery sunset, dressed in a traditional Mexican skirt embroidered with sequined imagery that refers to her profession as a writer. Her commanding pose, reminiscent of Old Master portraits, proclaims that she will endure in her native landscape. In the work’s title, as well as its composition, the artist asserts that Chicanx culture will not be erased.
Partner Museum’s Land Acknowledgement Statements for Editorial Reference

The Boise Art Museum
The Boise Art Museum extends our gratitude and acknowledges that we gather on the homelands of the Paiute, the Shoshone, and the Shoshone-Paiute and Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, who have lived in the Treasure Valley region for thousands of years. The Museum honors our relationship with all of our Indigenous neighbors and our shared responsibilities to the land and people who live here today.

The Whatcom Museum
The Whatcom Museum acknowledges that we gather on the traditional territory of the Lhaq’temish—Lummi People—and the Nuxwá7aq—Nooksack People—who have lived in the Coast Salish region from time immemorial. The Museum honors our relationship with all of our Coast Salish neighbors and our shared responsibilities to their homeland where we all reside today.

UMFA
We acknowledge that this land, which is named for the Ute Tribe, is the unceded, traditional, and ancestral homeland of the Shoshone, Paiute, Goshute, and Ute Tribes. The University of Utah and the Utah Museum of Fine Arts (UMFA) acknowledge the significance of place and the continued existence and contributions of indigenous people who have lived on and cared for this land for thousands of years. We respect the sovereign relationship between tribes, states, and the federal government, and we affirm the University of Utah’s and UMFA's commitment to a partnership with Native Nations and Urban Indian communities through research, education, and community outreach activities.

JSMA
The Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art is located on the traditional lands of the Kalapuya tribe. We pay respect and thank the Indigenous people for being the original stewards and protectors of these lands. We give gratitude for their continued work and we acknowledge their enduring perseverance and resilience across generations. This calls us to commit to continuing to learn how to be better stewards of the land we inhabit, and understand and challenge the past and current practices of colonialism in the communities we call home.

SAAM
We gratefully acknowledge the diverse and vibrant Native communities who make their home here in Washington DC, the Native peoples on whose ancestral homelands we convene, and the labor of people who were enslaved as they constructed the historic building that is home to the Smithsonian American Art Museum.