
Fall 2022

Contemporary Indigenous Perspectives

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Recommended Citation

Brown, Sally; Stahlman, Joe; Brown, Bonnie M.; Toren, Beth; Sherwin, Michael; Anderson, Richard; and Zafar, Maryam Marne, "Contemporary Indigenous Perspectives" (2022). *Indigenous Appalachia*. 26. <https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/indigenous-exhibit/26>

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INDIGENOUS APPALACHIA

Contemporary Indigenous Perspectives

Contrary to the gap in art history texts and institutional collections, Indigenous peoples have preserved their culture through the centuries by passing down knowledge to their descendants through story and other means of expression, notably, by crafting works with their hands. As previously noted, there is not a Native word for “art,” even though Indigenous people have always created what colonial language labels as such. Generally, Indigenous perspective on art is integrative, inclusive, practical, and constantly evolving. There is no past or present terminology that can define Indigenous art.

The Diversity of Indigenous Art

Traditional Indigenous handmade creations vary among and within individual tribal cultures, from beadwork and clothing design to silversmithing, pottery, basketry, gourd painting, quill-work, and so on. Today, Indigenous artists continue their traditions while also expanding individual and cultural expressions through both traditional and contemporary media, for example, quilting, sculpting, cornhusk doll-making, filmmaking, writing, comedy, painting, drawing, digital work, and more. Explore the diversity of Indigenous creative work today through the artists featured in this exhibit.

Note: Indigenous gender traditions are typically complementary and balanced rather than hierarchical. However, Native women are responsible for most of the Native work held in national collections, yet Native women artists have been largely unrecognized elsewhere. This tokenized female bias in American institutionalized exhibits reflects the way women’s cultural expressions have been categorized and discussed in North American museums as collecting practices expanded in the 19th century. Thus Indigenous Appalachia intentionally centers women’s perspectives.



Native Artists: Traditional & Modern

Experience the traditional. Embrace the modern. Enjoy the differences.
Most important, learn about what inspires these 15 contemporary artists.

- Nadema Agard Lakota/Powhatan, Painting/Mixed Media
- Connor Alexander Cherokee Nation, Game Design/Writer
- Erin Lee Antonak Oneida Indian Nation, Sculpture/Drawing/Painting
- Kayln Fay Barnoski Cherokee, Fabric/Mixed Media/Interdisciplinary
- Ethan Brown Pamunkey, Gourd Design/Painting
- Annette Saunooke Clapsaddle Cherokee, Writing
- Robert D’Alimonte Tuscarora, Woodworking/Carving
- Brent Michael Davids Mohican, Composer/Musician
- Benjamin Harjo, Jr. Absentee Shawnee, Drawing/Painting
- John Gritts Cherokee, Drawing/Painting
- Yonavea Hawkins Delaware, Beadwork/Fashion
- April Branham Monacan, Painting/Photography
- Antoinette (Toni) Scott Iroquois-Seneca Nation, Cornhusk Dolls
- Rosy Simas Seneca Nation, Transdisciplinary Art/Dance
- Amelia Winger-Bearskin Seneca-Cayuga, NFT/Digital

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