

# Many Wests: Artists Shape an American Idea



# **Many Wests: Artists Shape an American Idea**

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Ideas about the American West, both in the popular imagination and in commonly accepted historical narratives, are often based on a past that never was, and fail to take into account important events that actually occurred. At once, “The West” can conjure images of rugged colonial settlers, gun-toting-cowboys, or vacant expanses of natural beauty. *Many Wests: Artists Shape an American Idea* offers multiple views of “The West” through the perspectives of forty-eight modern and contemporary artists. Their artworks question old and racist clichés, examine tragic and marginalized histories, and illuminate the many communities and events that continue

to form this region of the United States. The exhibition explores the specific ways artists actively shape our understanding of the life, history and myths of the American West.

## **National Tour**

Many Wests features artwork from the permanent collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum and four partner museums located in some of the fastest-growing cities and states in the western region of the United States. The collaborating partner museums are the Boise Art Museum in Idaho; the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art in Eugene, Oregon; the Utah Museum of Fine Arts in Salt Lake City; and the Whatcom Museum in Bellingham, Washington. It is the culmination of a multi-year, joint curatorial initiative made possible by the Art Bridges Foundation.

*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 Initiative.*

# Gallery 1

## **Land Acknowledgment**

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 of Art, 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 Tribe

Goshute Tribe

Kalapuya Tribe

Lhaq'temish—Lummi People

Nacotchtank Tribe

Nuxwsá7aq—Nooksack People

Paiute Tribe  
Piscataway Tribe  
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. Artworks 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.



## **Laura Aguilar**

born San Gabriel, CA, 1959;

died Long Beach, CA, 2018

***Nature Self-Portrait #12***, 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 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.*



**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*



## **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 Chicana 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*



## **Patrick Nagatani**

born Chicago, Illinois, 1945;

died Albuquerque, New Mexico, 2017

***Nuclear Enchantments series***, 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 Mexico landscape and its inhabitants perpetrated by the mining industry and the military in answering the government's thirst for atomic power.

*Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of  
Dr. Mark Reichman*

top row (left-right)

***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***

bottom row (left-right)

***Japanese Children's Day Carp Banners, Paguete Village, Jackpile Mine Uranium Tailings, Laguna Pueblo Reservation, New Mexico, 1990/1993***

***Trinitite, Ground Zero, Trinity Site, New Mexico, 1988–1989/1993***

***Radium Springs, New Mexico, 1989***

from the series *Nuclear Enchantments*, 1988–  
1993

chromogenic prints

*Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of Dr.  
Mark Reichman*





## **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*

## **Many Wests: Artists Shape an American Idea**

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 in 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 counterintuitive views 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 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 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 Initiative Project Director, Smithsonian American Art Museum

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

*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 Initiative.*

*Sponsored at the Boise Art Museum by*

THE HARDY FOUNDATION

Kay Hardy and Gregory Kaslo



**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*



**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*



## **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*

## **Art and Inclusion**

Boise Art Museum is committed to accessibility and inclusion. We believe that exhibitions designed with the needs of a range of people of varying abilities enrich the experiences of all visitors. New learning and engagement affordances to welcome people with low or no vision, no or low hearing, and other differences of ability are being piloted within this exhibition.

Throughout the exhibition, you will see icons indicating the affordances we have created, including Tactile Representation Models and an Audio Guide with Label Text, Visual Descriptions, and Artist Comments being read aloud.

## **Audio Guide: *Label Text, Visual Descriptions, Artist Comments***

Access the Audio Guide with your cell phone. A black rectangle at the bottom of the artwork label provides the phone number and artwork sequence number on the left overlaid with braille, and a QR code on the right overlaid with tactile relief corners. Call the number to listen to the Audio Guide, or scan the QR code with your smartphone to access accessibility offerings located on BAM's website.

## **BAM's Website**

BAM's website includes audio and text transcripts that are accessible to those using assistive technologies such as a screen reader and zoom.

## **Large-Print Labels**

Large-Print copies of wall labels are available at the admissions desk for use in the Museum. You can also access large-print texts on BAM's website for use on your own device.

## **Tactile Representation Models**

Touchable, three-dimensional reproductions of select artworks in the exhibition are available during select programs.

It is our goal to welcome the widest possible audience, and we would love to hear from you to know how we can make your experience more comfortable and enjoyable.

Welcoming everyone to the Boise Art Museum as a place to come together and learn requires a continuous focus on

inclusivity as integral to everything we do. We are grateful to the funders who are helping us to meet this goal.

*Generous support provided by Art Bridges. This program is supported in part by a grant from the Idaho Humanities Council, a state-based program of the National Endowment for the Humanities.*



## Gallery 2



### **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

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.

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



## **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

top

***Buffalo Man, Buffalo Dance***, ca. 1920–1925  
gouache and pencil on paperboard

bottom

***Eagle Dancers***, ca. 1917–1925  
watercolor, ink, 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 through speech 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*



## **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 signify 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 who have the necessary ritual knowledge to

understand the interrelated meaning of these symbols. Tsireh's strategy is a clear example of people living side by side, in the same landscape, having vastly different experiences and understandings of "the West."

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



**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*



**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 in 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*

## Gallery 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-Onís  
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.,” Ramírez 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*



**Roger Shimomura**

born Seattle, Washington, 1939;  
active Lawrence, Kansas

***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 byōbu

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 incarceration 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;

active San Diego, California

***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 incarcerated people 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*

## Gallery 4

### **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.



## **Al Rendón**

born San Antonio, Texas, 1957

left to right

***Don Socrates***

1998, printed 2015

## ***Adelita***

1987, printed 2015

## ***Charreada Warm Up***

1981, printed 2015

## ***Horse reining rayer***

1986, 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 *charras*, 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.

*Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase through the Smithsonian Latino Initiatives Pool, administered by the Smithsonian Latino Center*



## **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.

*Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase through the Luisita L. and Franz H. Denghausen Endowment*



## **Juan de Dios Mora**

born 1984, Yahualica, Mexico;  
active Laredo and San Antonio, Texas

top

***Montando a la Escoba Voladora (Riding the Flying Broom), 2010***

bottom

***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 *Montando 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*



## **Barbara Earl Thomas**

born Seattle, Washington, 1948

left

***Nightcrawlers and Earthworms*, 2006**

linocut

right

***Fish Eater*, 2006**

linocut

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."

*Whatcom Museum Permanent Collection, Gift of the Washington Art Consortium*

*through gift of Safeco Insurance, a member of the Liberty Mutual Group*



## **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, cooperation, and equality. The dynamic scene highlights the hard work and perseverance of the laborers rather than focusing on the completed building.

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



## **Christina Fernandez**

born Los Angeles, California, 1965

***María'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 Chicana experiences have consistently been omitted from histories of the West.

*Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase through the Luisita L. and Franz H. Denghausen Endowment*



**Miguel A. Gandert**

born Española, NM, 1956;

active Santa Fe and Albuquerque, New Mexico

left

***El Comanche David, Talpa, NM, 1996***

right

***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. *Genizaros* 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*



## **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*

# **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 Montana 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 monitor, 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

Feddersen's untitled print draws on the geometric patterns and artistry of traditional American Indian baskets, blankets, and parflēches (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*



## **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*



## **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*

## Gallery 6



### **Raphael Montañez Ortiz**

born New York City, 1934

***Cowboy and “Indian” Film***, 1957–1958

16mm film; black and white, sound

6:30

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*

## Gallery 7

### **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]."

*Smithsonian American Art Museum*



## **Tony Gleaton**

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

top left

***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

bottom left

***Goliad Mission, Goliad Texas. McCulloch, Samuel, JR or McCulloch (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

right

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

2011, printed 2021

*Smithsonian American Art Museum*



Gail Tremblay

(Mi'kmaq, Onondaga)

born Buffalo, New York, 1945;

active Olympia, Washington

***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 tones. 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*



## **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*

## **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 here 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.



## **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 Chicana culture will not be erased.

*Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase made possible in part by the Smithsonian Latino Initiatives Pool and the Smithsonian Institution Collections Acquisition Program*



## Gallery 8



### **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*



## **Sandra C. Fernández**

born New York, New York, 1964;

active Austin, Texas, and Marlin, New Jersey

***Mojándose 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.

*Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase through the Frank K. Ribelin Endowment*



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*



## **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*



## **Hung Liu**

born Changchun, China, 1948;

active Oakland, California

***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*



## **Wendy Red Star**

(Apsáalooke/Crow)

born Billings, Montana, 1981

***Four Seasons: Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer***, 2006

archival pigment prints, 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*



## **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 Arreguín. 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 Arreguín'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.

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