The Art of Jean LaMarr

January 28 - June 11, 2023

Large Print Labels
The Art of Jean LaMarr

Jean LaMarr is an internationally recognized artist, activist, and educator. For five decades, her work has inspired important dialogue about cultural stereotypes, Indigenous feminisms, and legacies of colonialism. She has dedicated her life and her art to rejecting the myth of the “vanished American Indian.” As she explains, “I try to show that we are still here, that we’ve survived, and that we have something to communicate.”

LaMarr was born in 1945 in Susanville, California, in the northern Sierra about ninety minutes north of Reno. Her mother was descended of Wada Tukadu Numu (Northern Paiute) ancestry, with family ties to Wadsworth, Nevada, near Kooyooe Panadu (Pyramid Lake). Her father was from Dixie Valley, near Fall River
Mills, California, and was descended of *Illmawi, Aporige, and Atsugewi* (Pit River) ancestry.

Growing up in Susanville, LaMarr and her five sisters lived in a forested area near a prominent overlook known as Inspiration Point. The beautiful setting, however, did not make up for the racism and discrimination they endured in their small rural community. These experiences later informed LaMarr’s artistic development at the University of California, Berkeley, inspired her involvement in activist politics, and eventually influenced her teaching at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe. After living and practicing in California and New Mexico for many years, LaMarr eventually returned to her homelands to establish the Native American Graphic Workshop in Susanville.
This exhibition was organized by the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno, Nevada.

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Land Acknowledgement

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 Nevada Museum of Art acknowledges the traditional homelands of the Wa She Shu (Washoe), Numu (Northern Paiute), Newe (Western Shoshone), and Nuwu (Southern Paiute) people of the Great Basin. This includes the 27 tribal nations that exist as sovereign nations and continue as stewards of this land. The Museum appreciates the opportunity to live and learn on these Indigenous homelands.
Jean LaMarr

*One Numa Guy*, 1974
acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist

**U.C. Berkeley: Finding Her Voice**

“I didn’t learn I had a voice until I went to Berkeley and watched another student question a professor.” —Jean LaMarr

In 1974, LaMarr was the only Native American art student enrolled at the University of California, Berkeley. Although she’d already received degrees from San Jose City College and Philco-Ford Technical Institute in Santa Clara, LaMarr was drawn to Berkeley’s emphasis on fine art and research.
Even though the university was undergoing a period of progressive change and reorganization in the early 1970s, LaMarr found herself in an art department clinging to a Euro-centric art historical tradition with an emphasis on modern abstract styles. Her professors highly discouraged her from incorporating cultural, social, or political content into her artwork. “They said if you include anything representing your cultural background, it’s not art anymore. They called it folk art,” LaMarr explains.

The uncomfortable politics of the art department were constant during LaMarr’s time at U.C. Berkeley, but they did not deter her from challenging the biases of professors and honoring her culture. In so doing, her art became part of a larger activist strategy to deliberately resist and challenge the
Jean LaMarr

**Going Back to the Rez**, 1974
oil on canvas
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, purchased with funds from deaccessioning

*Going Back to the Rez* is one of LaMarr’s most significant early works. As a student at U.C. Berkeley, she was frequently told by her instructors to not refer to her Native American culture in her paintings. *Going Back to the Rez*
is a metaphor for LaMarr’s personal journey and transformation. It represents the moment that she gave herself permission to embrace her culture and her community in her artmaking.

The painting depicts her relatives piled into the back of an old, green pickup truck headed to a family gathering, known as a “Big Time,” not far from her home in Susanville.

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Jean LaMarr

Green Shawl, not dated
oil and enamel on canvas
Collection of the artist
Jean LaMarr

**Lena, 1922 and Now**, 1985
photo etching
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Orchard House Foundation

While researching in the photographic archives in U.C. Berkeley’s Kroeber Hall, LaMarr discovered a photograph of her great aunt, Lena Joaquin Calvin, from 1922. The field anthropologist Edward Gifford (1887-1959) photographed Lena as part of his ethnographic study purporting to infer racial differences based on physical attributes such as cranial measurements.

LaMarr made this work in an effort to rescue her great aunt from the archival filing cabinets.
where her image was stored away and catalogued as a specimen. LaMarr combined Gifford's historical photograph (on the left) with a personal family photograph of Lena as an Elder (on the right). Then LaMarr surrounded the images with lavender, pink, and red roses—the colors she once saw Lena wearing.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 8#
Jean LaMarr

*California Dance Skirt*, 1974
etching
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Orchard House Foundation

Among the archaeological artifacts in U.C. Berkeley’s Kroeber Hall, LaMarr discovered a fringed, apron-like dance skirt that would have been worn over a longer skirt as part of a woman’s ceremonial regalia. Inspired by the design of the object, she photographed it numerous times and used it as the basis for this etching. This print is a precursor to LaMarr’s later interests in non-Native appropriation of traditional Indigenous attire and regalia.

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Reclaiming Her Cultural Ancestry

When LaMarr was a student at U.C. Berkeley, the art department was located in Kroeber Hall—the same building that housed the anthropology department’s vast ethnographic and photographic research collections. The building was named after Alfred Kroeber (1876-1960), an anthropologist who collected Native American human remains and other artifacts to study, and who argued that some Native American tribes had become extinct.

While taking art classes upstairs in Kroeber Hall, LaMarr became interested in the Native American collections housed in the basement. At first, archivists were reluctant to grant LaMarr access to the materials, but after a friend with a Ph.D. vouched for her, LaMarr spent hours researching among the shelves,
drawers, and display cases. She found hundreds of woven baskets and textiles, many of which had been unearthed and looted from sacred sites in the Sierra Nevada and Great Basin homelands of LaMarr’s ancestors. The items became the basis for LaMarr’s early printmaking experiments with texture, patterning, and geometric design.

Alfred Kroeber’s name was removed from the U.C. Berkeley anthropology building in 2020.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 10#
Jean LaMarr

top, left - right:

*Untitled*, 1977
etching

*Untitled*, 1977
etching

bottom, left - right:

*Basket Design Series No. 3*, 1977
etching

*Basket Design Series No. 2*, 1977
etching

All collection of the artist
Princess Pale Moon

Jean LaMarr

*Princess Pale Moon* from the series *Minnehaha Lives!*, 1995
acrylic with mixed media
on wood
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Orchard House Foundation

LaMarr has dedicated much of her research to the fictional female character Minnehaha, who appears in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s epic 1855 narrative poem *Song of Hiawatha*. Over many generations, Longfellow’s character Minnehaha helped to firmly establish sexist stereotypes of Native American women in popular culture.
One widely circulated calendar print by F.R. Harper, from the late 1920s, depicts an anonymous longhaired Native woman dressed in fringed buckskin alongside a placid, moonlit river. Disgusted by images like Harper’s, that objectify Native women as objects, LaMarr decided to make the image the basis of her interactive installation titled *Princess Pale Moon*.

Set to the music of Slim Whitman’s *Indian Love Call*, LaMarr invites visitors to “dress up as Indian princesses.” The invitation, however, is a ploy that tricks participants into an act of reverse cultural appropriation. No longer does the viewer gaze upon the “Indian maiden,” but rather it is LaMarr who gets to gaze upon the participant. While serious in intent, the installation also reveals LaMarr’s penchant for employing trickster humor. After all, watching
hundreds of people dress up like Indian princesses can be quite entertaining. “Humor is our savior,” LaMarr says sarcastically of watching them "play Indian."

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F.R. Harper
*Indian Maiden Nokomis* *(Daughter of the Moon)*
late 1920s
calendar print
9 x 7 inches
Jean LaMarr

left - right:

**West: The Sierras**, 1998
acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist

**South: Round House**, 1998
acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist

**East: Cortez Mountains**, 1998
acrylic on canvas
Collection of the artist

Looking east from LaMarr’s homelands in Susanville are the Cortez Mountains. LaMarr closely followed the environmental tragedy that unfolded in central Nevada, when Newe
(Western Shoshone) sisters Mary and Carrie Dann fought the Bureau of Land Management in an effort to protect their homelands in the Cortez Mountains from large-scale gold mining operations. LaMarr interviewed the sisters and produced a video of them telling stories about their sacred lands.

This painting depicts the sacred Cortez Mountains overlaid with jagged, zigzag shapes representing the mining industry. “The earth is piled up in huge mounds and sprayed with cyanide and water to leach out the gold.”

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 12#

North: Mt. Shasta, 1998
acrylic on canvas with handmade paper
Collection of the artist
Native People, Sacred Lands

These four large paintings feature sacred sites and ceremonies in LaMarr’s homelands that she considered in jeopardy due to ongoing resource extraction, corporate influence, mismanaged tourism, and lack of government protection. If one were standing in LaMarr’s home in Susanville, each canvas in her series represents a view in a different direction. To the north is Mt. Shasta, to the South is the Round House in Janesville, to the West are the Sierra, and to the east are the Cortez Mountains.

“Throughout the world sacred lands are being destroyed for the sake of economic development. The Supreme Court continues to allow the destruction of sacred lands in the
United States,” LaMarr argues. “If a religious site does not have stained glass windows, it cannot be a ‘real’ religion. This policy continues to deny freedom of religion for Native people.”

When LaMarr’s canvases are displayed on the wall, their size and color overwhelm the viewer producing an effect that is not unlike standing before stained glass. However, LaMarr does not intend to evoke the feeling of a church. Rather she reminds us that it is the land that is most sacred to Native People.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 13#
LaMarr is the middle child in a family of six girls, who were all born and raised in Susanville. Her siblings include: Phyllis (born 1943), Patricia (born 1944), Jean (born 1945), June (born 1947), Janet (born 1949), and Cynthia (born 1951). She attended Washington Elementary School, where she and her siblings were the only Native American children enrolled at the time.

LaMarr was inspired to be an artist by relatives and family members dedicated to beadwork and other traditional arts and recalls her grandmother weaving and sewing blankets out of reclaimed fabrics and other materials. She also has fond memories of her uncle, Joe
Ruize, a talented artist who she’d watch draw stories of Coyote during visits at her family home on Saturday nights.

LaMarr graduated from Lassen High School in 1963, where she excelled in art classes, was elected to the student council, and was president of the high school art club. She also performed in the school play, *Curious Savage*, and was typecast as the antagonist because of her Native ancestry.

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A Burgeoning Activist

Before enrolling at U.C. Berkeley, LaMarr lived for a short time in Sonoma, and then San Pablo, California, before enrolling at San Jose City College and Philco-Ford Technical Institute. Her son, Rory Keith Shaw, Jr. was born in 1965. While navigating school, motherhood, and working as a product painter at a Treasure House, LaMarr was the student coordinator of the Native American student club at San Jose City College, where she organized and participated in protests during the American Indian Occupation of Alcatraz in San Francisco. She also followed the efforts of the San Francisco State College Third World Liberation Front Strike calling for reform of the state educational system and participated in
protests during the Pit River Occupation in Shasta County.

In 1969, LaMarr met Leroy “Spence” Spencer at Philco-Ford, who she later married. Spencer served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War from 1967-69 and worked for Philco-Ford following graduation. Eventually he worked for Pacific Gas & Electric as an electromechanical design engineer.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 40#
1. Jean LaMarr, 1946

2. Leonard and Esther LaMarr with daughters Phyllis, Patricia, and Jean

3. Jean, Phyllis, and Patricia LaMarr

4. Patricia, Jean, and Phyllis LaMarr

5. Phyllis, Jean, and Patricia LaMarr

6. LaMarr’s elementary school class at Washington Elementary School in Susanville, California (top row, third from the right)

7. Medallions designed and beaded by LaMarr, 1975

8. High School graduation, 1963
9. LaMarr rides bareback in an annual parade in Susanville

10. Rory Shaw, LaMarr’s son, 1965

11. Cindy, Jean, and Esther LaMarr, with Jean’s son Rory Shaw at Philco-Ford Technical Institute graduation, 1970

12. LaMarr’s husband, Leroy “Spence” Spencer, in 1969


14. American Indian Music Festival poster designed by LaMarr, 1982

15. Support Wounded Knee poster designed by LaMarr, 1973
Murals: Art for the Community

While living in the San Francisco Bay Area, LaMarr befriended many artists and professors within the Chicanx community who were engaged with political causes and activism. At this time, she became committed to making public murals. “That’s where I started learning about how art should be for everyone,” she said. She especially admired “the idea that the art was for the community…not just for one person.”

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 41#
Lassen School District Mural

Susanville, California

In 1999, LaMarr worked with students between the ages of eight and twenty-one to complete a multi-panel, portable mural dedicated to the Maidu and Paiute people of the region surrounding Susanville. The initiative was not only a mural project, but an undertaking designed to encourage youth to interact with their elders and to record their oral histories. While at first many elders were reluctant to share, the students persisted and were rewarded with hours of interviews.

For many weeks, thirty-five participants gathered Creation and Coyote stories, Bear
Dance traditions, basket histories, and information about other Native American ceremonies from their elder family members and friends.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 42#

Our Ancestors, Our Future

Susanville, California

LaMarr was invited to design and paint a mural on the corner of Lassen Street and Main Street in downtown Susanville, which was unveiled for the city’s centennial celebration in 1987.
She undertook the project with Jack Malotte, an artist of Newe (Western Shoshone) and Wa·šiw (Washoe) ancestry.

After significant research, LaMarr selected seven past and present Paiute and Maidu people and worked with local youth to incorporate their likenesses into the mural. “I want to show the faces of Indians, to get beyond the stereotypes of Indians.”

Against a backdrop of petroglyphs and three large seasonal mountain landscapes, LaMarr and Malotte depicted: Tommy Tucker (1894-1921), a Maidu man and the first soldier from Lassen County killed in World War I; Wilis-Kol-Kold also known as Susie Evans-Jack, a
matriarch, storyteller, basket weaver and medicine woman of the Maidu people; Maude Sailors, a traditional Maidu storyteller with many descendants in Susanville; Grace Mike Gutiérrez, a lifelong Susanville resident who was active in Susanville Rancheria tribal government; Gladys Servillican Mankins (1912-1985), who carried on the Bear Dance tradition in Janesville for many years; Sau-Weep “Old Man Joaquin” (1825-1935), the chief of the Wada Tukadu Numu (Paiute); and Chief Winnemucca (1820-1882), a Numu (Paiute) leader during the Pyramid Lake War of 1860 who brokered a peace treaty with Nevada Governor Isaac Roop.

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The American Indian and the U.S. Constitution

In 1987, LaMarr traveled to New York to participate in an exhibition called *We the People*, organized on the occasion of the bicentennial of the signing of the first draft of the U.S. Constitution. She contributed a large temporary mural featuring a map of the United States demarcated by various treaty borders showing how Native American people were forcefully and systematically removed from their land. Fighter jets, military tanks, and barbed wire flank the edges of the map. LaMarr’s trip to New York led to her renewed interest in America’s political history.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 44#
Preparatory sketch
1997
mixed media

*Coyote’s New Hairdo*
handmade book (select pages)
Written and illustrated by Jean LaMarr
Janesville Bear Dance

Jean LaMarr

top, left - right:

**Bear Dance**, 1981
**Bear Dance**, 1984
**Bear Dance**, 1987

bottom, left - right:

**Bear Dance**, 1980
**Bear Dance**, 1982
**Bear Dance**, 1983
**Bear Dance**, 1985
**Bear Dance**, 1986

posters

All collection of the artist
One way that LaMarr stayed connected to her family and cultural traditions while living in the San Francisco Bay Area during the early 1980s, was to regularly make the 400-mile round-trip drive for different gatherings and ceremonies. This included the annual Bear Dance that took place the second weekend of June, in the mountain community of Janesville, just south of Susanville.

The spring ceremony recognizes the new year, signifies new beginnings, and is a time for all people to come together to make peace—not only with animals like the bear and the rattlesnake—but also with people from different tribal communities. For eight consecutive years, LaMarr designed posters for the gathering that were sold to support the Bear Dance. “LaMarr respects the Bear
Ceremony and created the posters to raise money for the cost of feeding people who attend the ceremony, and for other expenses associated with the celebration,” artist Frank LaPena said.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 14#
LaMarr’s aunt Gladys Mankins revived the Bear Dance in 1953, and was largely responsible for organizing it each year. It was held annually in the small community of Janesville, just south of Susanville, California. The two-acre ceremonial grounds included a cedar round house, a grass game ramada, and a communal dance area. The Bear Dance was last held in Janesville, in 1990, two years after Mankins passed away.

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Jean LaMarr

Youth Growing Up in Rural California
circa 1980s
Created with students from the IFH Youth Empowerment Program, Oakland, CA
oil on canvas
Collection of the artist

While LaMarr was teaching in the Bay Area, she also began working part time at the Intertribal Friendship House (IFH) in Oakland, one of the first urban American Indian community centers in the nation founded by the American Friends Service Committee. The organization supported the needs of Indigenous People who had been relocated to the Bay Area.
LaMarr set up a print studio there, and for over a decade, she contributed graphics for posters, flyers, t-shirts, and other printed materials. As part of the IFH Youth Empowerment Program, LaMarr helped to organize an exchange involving Susanville and Bay Area youth. The result was a movable mural for the IFH dining/meeting room depicting scenes from her homelands—including familiar landmarks, dances, and ceremonies. The San Francisco skyline is in the background.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 16#
1995, LaMarr was invited to design a large mural dedicated to sharing the legacy of the Ohlone people, who were the first peoples of the Bay Area. During the process she worked in collaboration with Ohlone community members. The Berkeley land where the mural is located was dedicated as an official park in 1979 and renamed Ohlone Park, inspired by the 1978 publication of Malcolm Margolin’s book *The Ohlone Way*. The project was undertaken with support from the City of Berkeley’s Civic Arts Commission, the Department of Public Works and City Council, the Alameda Civic Arts Council, and the LEF Foundation.
Each wall of the four-sided mural celebrates different stories—both past and present—as told by the Ohlone tribal communities of the Muwekma, Amah-Mutsun, and the Costanoan Esselen Nation.

1. Preparatory drawing for *The Ohlone Journey*

2. East Wall: *The Coyote Creation Story* tells of the region’s abundance that sustained Indigenous People for millennia.

3. North Wall: The Ohlone people dancing in elaborate regalia as they initially welcomed *European Entry into the Bay.*

4. West Wall: *Modern Life Transitions*, honors individual Ohlone people based on historical photographs passed down through generations. Portraits include
depictions of Muwekma elder Angela Colos, as well as Ascencion Solarsano de Cervantes (died 1930) and her mother Barbara Serra. The anthropologist C. Hart Merriam collected their baskets in the early 1900s.

5. South Wall: *The Strong Walk Back to the Future* depicts the Ohlone people’s determination to thrive without sacrificing their traditions or cultural identity. Among the people depicted are Rosemary Cambra, the former chair of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, and her mother Dolores Sánchez.

6. Preparatory drawing for *The Ohlone Journey*

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Urban Relocation: Art of Resistance

LaMarr was relocated away from her rural ancestral homelands in Northern California to the San Francisco Bay Area as part of the 1964 Indian Relocation Act. The federal program was designed to move young Native American people into urban areas and to assimilate them into the dominant American culture. Many found companionship and community at places like the American Indian Center in San Francisco or the Intertribal Friendship House in Oakland, California, where relocated Native Americans gathered to socialize and network.

Many of LaMarr’s artworks and murals from this time tackle challenging and complicated issues related to assimilation and acculturation. In time, she became respected for her vision of
empowering non-white artists and communities of color. While at U.C. Berkeley, LaMarr forged alliances within the Chicanx community. “They took me under their wing. That’s where I started learning about how art should be for everyone,” LaMarr recalls. She admired how Chicanx artists adopted silk-screening, and the practice of creating outdoor murals to engage, educate, and empower their community. She liked “that the art was for the community…not just for one person.”

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 19#
Jean LaMarr

*Just Wanna Dance*, 1983
mixed media
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Orchard House Foundation

*Just Wanna Dance* portrays a young Native American woman contemplating her identity and whether to embrace the Powwow traditions of her ancestors or the conventions of Western society. Her sunglasses reflect two choices: she can lace up her moccasins and return to traditional ways, or she can throw on her red high heels and embrace a new way of life. Her ancestor waits patiently for her decision.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 17#
Jean LaMarr

*Urban Indian Girls*, 1982
etching
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Orchard House Foundation

*Urban Indian Girls* reflects the “spirit of survival,” LaMarr witnessed among hundreds of young women living in government-run boarding houses in big cities as a result of the 1964 Relocation Act.

“Their identity as Native American is so strong, even though they’re in the urban area. They wanted to ‘whitenize’ us. We blend in…but we were still identifying as Indians,” LaMarr explains of the two young women who are dressed and ready to go out dancing.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 18#
Ms. Coyote: Humor and Survival

Jean LaMarr

Ms. Coyote Invites Junipero Serra over for Dinner, 2015
full-size mannequin sculpture
Collection of the artist

LaMarr frequently uses satire in her work to criticize or reveal contradictory narratives, noting that humor is often employed by Native American artists as a strategy for coping with trauma. She credits the artist Warrington Colescott, whose work she first encountered as a student at U.C. Berkeley, for introducing her to the idea that satire could bring levity to the serious cultural and political issues she wanted to address.
This life-sized sculpture offers a cheeky—yet scathing—critique of Junipero Serra, the Franciscan priest associated with establishing the Spanish mission system that led to colonization of what is now the state of California. Critics charge that the mission system forced Native Americans into slavery and introduced disease that killed thousands of Native people.

LaMarr has dressed Ms. Coyote in sultry attire designed to entice Serra (a miniature monk-like figurine) over for dinner. Little does Serra know that Ms. Coyote is outfitted with weapons and bullets to overtake him. “The Gold Rush and the Mission system... decimated our population by approximately 90%,” says LaMarr, “but that part of the story is rarely told.” Ms. Coyote regains control of
the popular historical narrative and encourages people to see it in a different light.

“Humor helps ease the pain from racism,” she says. “Opening the door to this part of our lives brings a different light to the dialogue, which may bring a better understanding between different worlds.”

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Jean LaMarr

Minnehaha Lives: Boxes, Indian Women, 1995

top, left - right:  
Dolly Dingle  
Wild West Princess  
Knott’s Berry Farm Maiden

bottom, left - right:  
Our Feathered Friends  
Datsolalee  
Minnehaha

mixed media
All collection of the artist

By 1994, LaMarr’s research led her to amass enough images of Native women from Anglo-
American popular culture for her to undertake an entire series of box assemblages featuring misappropriated images of Native American people.

“I kept postcards, so I did a lot of imagery off of crazy postcards from the era when they didn’t even know who Indians were,” LaMarr explains. “Most of the time, popular film and culture represents Native Americans through the lens of the Plains Indians, ignoring the differences and subtleties of different Indigenous cultures.”

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Cover Girl: Reversing the Gaze

LaMarr’s Cover Girl series began with her discovery of an 1867 photograph by William Soule, the official photographer for the United States Army post at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. During his lifetime, Soule photographed hundreds of images of Chiricahua Apache people (today known as the Fort Sill Apache Tribe), who were uprooted and imprisoned by the U.S. military in the late 1800s.

Soule’s four-year ethnographic study resulted in photographs such as the one LaMarr saw of a partially nude woman reclining on a buffalo hide. LaMarr was appalled when she first laid eyes on the photograph. “He photographed [her] naked and he would make them pose like that, in a boudoir sexual way,” she said. Soule printed and sold images like this to American soldiers fulfilling their demand for exotic representations of “the other.”
Seeking to reclaim the unnamed woman’s dignity, LaMarr re-appropriated Soule’s photograph for her *Cover Girl* series, carefully adding clothing and jewelry to cover her nude body. In doing so, LaMarr refused to let the woman’s nude figure become the object of the viewer’s gaze. The series title, *Cover Girl*, is a humorous play on words, referring at once to the act of “covering up” the woman, as well as to the term commonly used to describe a woman featured on a magazine cover.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque **208.269.7051** y presione **22#**
In Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s epic 1855 narrative poem *Song of Hiawatha*, he writes of the fictional character Minnehaha. He conceives of Minnehaha as the beautiful, beloved, and subservient wife of the Native American leader Hiawatha (who is also fictional). Longfellow associates Minnehaha with the natural world, describing her as a “dark-eyed…maiden,” named after a waterfall with “moods of shade and sunshine…feet as rapid as the river…and tresses flowing like the water.”
In Longfellow’s poem, Minnehaha eventually dies from “the famine and the fever,” referring to the hunger and disease introduced by American settlers. LaMarr returns Minnehaha to life in her series *Minnehaha Lives!* In this vibrant etching, LaMarr’s Minnehaha appears center stage—a resilient survivor who is full of life.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque **208.269.7051** y presione **23#**
Jean LaMarr

**Sun Kiss**, 1994
monotype
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Orchard House Foundation

Throughout the 1990s, LaMarr collected commercial package labels that exploited images of Native American women. *Sun Kiss* is her attempt to rescue the unnamed young Native woman whose face was, for years, plastered on boxes of Sunkist Kaweah Maid-brand lemons as a nostalgic marketing gimmick. The word *Kaweah* is taken from the ancient Yokuts language meaning “raven cry,” (which has little to do with growing or selling lemons). In *Sun Kiss*, LaMarr inserts the
image of the young woman upon a background of delicate handmade paper surrounded by swatches of purple lace that envelop her in a protective embrace.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 24#
Jean LaMarr

*Untitled (Cover Girl)*, 1989
offset lithograph
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, Gift of the Brandywine Workshop and Archives, Philadelphia, PA

This 1989 lithograph is one of the first times LaMarr incorporated William Soule’s 1867 photograph of a nude Native American woman into her *Cover Girl* series. LaMarr clothed the woman in traditional regalia to give her back her dignity. LaMarr surrounded the woman with protective layers of textured fabrics, while a U.S. military jet flies overhead.

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Jean LaMarr

**Cover Girl #15**, 2015  
mixed media and monoprint  
on canvas  
Collection of the artist

Jean LaMarr

**Ni yak way (DOWN)**, 2012  
acrylic on canvas with mixed media  
Collection of the artist

LaMarr recalls watching her Elders and family members play the popular gambling game known as “hand game” over the years. She especially loves the way the tradition brings together people of different generations.
“I used to go with my grandmother all the time to the Reno Indian Colony. We’d go gamble there. There’s a big ravine where everybody gambled, a big hand game, and card games.” 

*Ni yak way* is the term for hand game in the Northern Paiute language.

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*Purple Flower Girl*, 2021

A Documentary on Jean LaMarr

Produced and Directed by Tsanavi Spoonhunter

**Video** - 16:21 minutes
Jean LaMarr

Now and then In Nixon, Nevada, 1983
etching and aquatint
with collage
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Orchard House Foundation

This print combines two found photographs. One is an historical image depicting four Wada Tukadu Numu (Northern Paiute) war chiefs from Pyramid Lake, Nevada; LaMarr describes them as protecting and preserving their homelands from white settlers. The second image is derived from a contemporary snapshot of young Native people socializing
near an industrial gravel excavation pit on the outskirts of Pyramid Lake Paiute Reservation. Seeing the images side-by-side, according to LaMarr, reveals how younger generations have become disconnected from sacred lands as a result of relocation and forced assimilation.

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Jean LaMarr

*Vuarneted Indian Cowboy*, 1984
etching with hand coloring
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, Museum purchase

*Vuarneted Indian Cowboy* honors Native American men who challenge stereotypes by competing on the Indian Rodeo circuit. LaMarr describes these men as “new warriors,” respected for their strength and skill, but also for how they have adopted and subverted the Anglo-American rodeo tradition by claiming it for the Indigenous community. With a bright purple bandanna, a wide-brimmed black hat, and modern Vuarnet sunglasses (a popular 1980s brand), LaMarr’s Native cowboy is a modern-day hero. “He’s wearing Western
attire, but he is a very modern Indian. His lenses reflect images of an eagle and two fighter jets. He’s aware of what is happening to our Earth. I call it spiritual power versus manmade power,” LaMarr says, reflecting on the warrior tendency these men carry into their contemporary lives.

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**Purple Chaps**, 1986
monoprint
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Orchard House Foundation
LaMarr has long focused on issues related to stereotypes and representations of Native American women, however, she also works to acknowledge and honor Native American men. “I hate to see how they have been treated and stereotyped themselves,” LaMarr says.

She often describes Native American men as “new warriors,” who combat cultural stereotypes—especially the “cowboy and Indian” myth of the American West that perpetuated the idea that Native American men were inferior to Euro-American men or “cowboys.”

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Jean LaMarr

**Gangster Indian**, 1985
screenprint
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Orchard House Foundation

Jean LaMarr

**Other Warriors**, 1992
mixed media, monoprint
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Orchard House Foundation
Jean LaMarr

*Some Kind of Buckaroo*, 1990
screenprint
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, The Robert S. and Dorothy J. Keyser Foundation Art of the Greater West Collection Fund

This striking graphic screenprint depicts a Native American buckaroo standing alongside barbed wire as two fighter jets pass overhead. (The Spanish term *vaquero*, which eventually evolved into the word buckaroo, was generally used to describe cowboys of the Great Basin and West Coast before the word cowboy came into widespread use.)

“He’s standing on the Earth and I made that out of lace...because Mother Earth is very
delicate compared to the barbed wire. He’s kept in, or caged in, or caged out, however you see it,” LaMarr explains.

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America’s Dark Side

In 1987, LaMarr was invited to travel to New York to participate in an exhibition called *We the People*, organized on the occasion of the bicentennial of the signing of the first draft of the U.S. Constitution. The trip renewed her interest in America’s political history.

After her return to Santa Fe, LaMarr began a series of large-scale monoprints on black paper critiquing American capitalism and questioning the nation’s founding values. Traditional symbols of American freedom and hope, such as the Statue of Liberty, an eagle, and the American flag, appear alongside potential threats to those values. Her choice of black paper, enlivened only by subtle fields of blue and purple ink, signifies the dark message and mood she intended to convey.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 31#
Jean LaMarr

etching and found shoes
Collection of Lynne Fenderson

*Seven from Hell* is LaMarr’s scathing indictment of colonization in the Americas. She first got the idea for the piece from an Elder with whom she was discussing issues of colonization and the subjugation of Native American people. The Elder explained to LaMarr that all cultures have their own version of the "seven deadly sins." (The seven deadly sins are the Christian vices of pride, greed, wrath, envy, lust, gluttony, and sloth—which
are contrary to heavenly virtues.) The Elder proceeded to share the "Indian version" of the Seven Deadly Sins.

LaMarr’s satirical illustration of the seven deadly sins in Seven from Hell was inspired by the story the Elder told her. In her version, Christopher Columbus is followed by Jesus (the priest), Marilyn Monroe (the harlot), John Wayne (the pimp), U.S. Commander George Custer (the murderer), U.S. President Andrew Jackson (the thief), and finally, the Devil himself.

Beneath each portrait, LaMarr places a pair of bloodstained shoes suggesting they are all complicit when it comes to oppression and genocide of Indigenous People in the Americas. While Marilyn Monroe is assigned a pair of high heels and John Wayne is given
cowboy boots, LaMarr leaves a pair of black tennis shoes for Columbus, who she notes sarcastically, “had to wear comfortable footwear on his long journey.”

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 33#
Jean LaMarr

*I Heard the Song of My Grandmother*, 1990
screenprint
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Orchard House Foundation

This screenprint honors the wisdom of Indigenous Elders across the Americas. It includes images of three Native American women based on historic photographs LaMarr located during her research. Seated on the left is Lucy Norman, a *Wada Tukadu Numu* (Northern Paiute) and *Hammawi* (Pit River) woman nicknamed “Old Lucy,” who purportedly lived to be 125 years old. To the far right, an unnamed *Hammawi* (Pit River) woman from Dixie Valley wears a beaded
sash signifying she is a person of great honor.

LaMarr remembers working on this piece about her ancestors while at Self Help Graphics & Art Center in downtown Los Angeles. One night, helicopters circled overhead spraying insecticides to eradicate crop-destroying medflies that had invaded the area during the summer of 1990. To mark the incident, LaMarr incorporated a fleet of helicopters transformed into human skulls. She recalls that the intrusion felt like an attack, and she remembers bonding with other Chicanx artists working alongside her at the time.

Many of her Chicanx friends, at the time, were looking to strengthen connections to their own Indigenous roots. One of them told LaMarr the story of the mythical Aztec goddess Coyolxāuhqui, who is associated with the Moon
and the Milky Way. LaMarr included a reference to the Aztec deity into her own print. She was impressed by the story of how, after Coyolxāuhqui’s death, her brother tossed her head into the sky to become the Moon. LaMarr took comfort in this story, just as she did the stories or songs of her own Indigenous ancestors and blended it into her visual narrative.

“Even with all the chaos, we must find our peace,” LaMarr says of the message this screenprint is intended to send. “We can’t become part of the chaos; we must remain one with the land.”

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 32#
Jean LaMarr

*Prisoners of War*

*Nelson Mandela and Captain Jack*, 1990

mixed media, monoprint on canvas

Collection of the artist

In February 1991, Nelson Mandela, the leader of the movement to end South African apartheid, was released after twenty-seven years in prison. LaMarr’s mixed-media piece, *Prisoners of War*, commemorates the historic moment, while also comparing Mandela to the Modoc leader Kintpuash, who was known as “Captain Jack.”

In 1865, the Modoc people were forcibly removed from their ancestral homelands near
Tule Lake, California, and moved by the U.S. Army to the Klamath Reservation in southwestern Oregon. In 1872-73, Captain Jack led a band of Modoc people to reclaim their lands but met resistance from the U.S. Army.

Like Nelson Mandela, Captain Jack hoped for a peaceful resolution for his people, but unfortunately, he never lived to see that outcome. He was charged with war crimes and executed in 1873. LaMarr’s painting honors both men who stand side-by-side in solidarity against a field of heavy artillery.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 34#
Jean LaMarr

*Only in America, No. 3*, 1988
monoprint
Collection of the artist

Jean LaMarr

*Sacred Places Where We Pray, No.2*, 1994
mixed media on canvas
Collection of the artist
LaMarr relocated to Susanville permanently in 1994, where she established the Native American Graphic Workshop, a non-profit organization for elders, youth, and Native artists to learn and experiment with printmaking, papermaking, painting, video and new forms of experimental art.

Housed in a new studio that her husband Spencer built on the rear of their property on the Rancheria, the Graphic Workshop became a dynamic social hub that brought a community together to make art.

With support over the years from the California Arts Council, the Fund for Four Directions, the
Seventh Generation Fund, the Vanguard Fund, and the Lassen County Arts Council, LaMarr hosted numerous groups at the workshop, often providing food and overnight accommodations to her guests. While enjoying lots of laughs with her visitors, LaMarr channeled her talents as an educator to teach different printmaking processes.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 46#
1. *Coyote and Cousin Stump*, handmade book by youth at Native American Graphic Workshop

2. LaMarr, circa 1990s, image courtesy Judith Lowry

3. LaMarr and her niece Regina Ruiz Ellenwood with the 1981 Bear Dance poster

4. LaMarr, circa 1991

5. LaMarr’s husband, Leroy “Spence” Spencer

6. LaMarr in her studio, 2017, image courtesy Susan Mantle

7. Native American Graphic Workshop, Susanville, 1994
8. LaMarr works in the Native American Graphic Workshop, Susanville, 1994

9. Jean LaMarr in the studio

10. Jean LaMarr in the studio

11. LaMarr’s family

12. *Coyote’s Curiosity*, handmade book by youth at Native American Graphic Workshop
Jean LaMarr

Me y Tu, 1992
silkscreen/serigraph
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Orchard House Foundation

Christopher Columbus’s arrival in the Americas launched centuries of European exploration and colonization of the Western Hemisphere. LaMarr laments how Spanish contact and the arrival of Christianity divided Indigenous communities of the Americas and pitted them against each other. Her screen print, Me y Tu, (which translates to “me and you”) illustrates this division.

“The Spanish came over and divided all of the Indigenous People up. One is an American
Indian, and one is a South American Indian… the cross has blood all over it. It’s a sword, cutting them, and splitting us up.”

The border of LaMarr’s print is adorned with plants and shells representing the natural abundance the land once offered.

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Rewriting the Colonial Narrative

While living and working in Santa Fe, New Mexico from 1990 to 1992, LaMarr produced a number of works in response to current events, historical milestones, and the untold history of racist oppression and colonialism in America. One of the milestones to which LaMarr responded was the 1992 quincentenary, or 500th anniversary, of the arrival of Christopher Columbus on land that would become known as the Americas.

LaMarr’s works from this time directly confront America’s founding story and colonial history, calling into question the state-sponsored violence and Native American lives that were lost to establish the United States. “We have it easy compared to what they went through,”
LaMarr says when comparing her own life experiences to those of her ancestors.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 36#
Jean LaMarr

**Yankie Doodle Dandy**, not dated
mixed media
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Orchard House Foundation

Jean LaMarr

**Some Kind of Buckaroo**, No. 3, 1991
mixed media with handmade paper on canvas (diptych)
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Orchard House Foundation
Jean LaMarr

**Domestic Science Class at Stewart Indian School**, 1999
mixed media
Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Orchard House Foundation

*Domestic Science Class at Stewart Indian School* shows a picture of young girls from Stewart Indian School in Carson City, Nevada, dressed proudly in their best clothes. Next to them, LaMarr affixes a product label, featuring “Indian Queen”-brand brooms, that was used to advertise Hamburg Broom Works.

The irony of this commercial packaging was not lost on LaMarr, who points out that most of
the young girls at Stewart were required to study “domestic science,” which frequently led to work as a domestic servant.

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Jean LaMarr

*Sweat for Healing*, 2022
acrylic paint and image transfers on muslin, rocks, cord, willow branches, sage, brown painted tarp, battery operated lights, orange fabric strips, and sedar branch pieces
Collection of the artist
Beginning in 1890, thousands of Native American children were sent to Stewart Indian Boarding School in Carson City, Nevada, as part of the U.S. government’s policy of forced assimilation. This practice was not unique to Nevada. Across the United States and Canada, over 500 boarding schools were in operation beginning in the late nineteenth century. Intergenerational trauma continues to haunt families whose ancestors and relatives were forced to attend these schools.

LaMarr’s mother and four aunts were taken from their family in 1924, and sent to Stewart Indian Boarding School. LaMarr created this new sculpture—a traditional willow sweat—as a place to begin the process of cleansing and
healing from this trauma. The sweat is covered with photos of children at boarding schools throughout North America and tied with orange fabric. In Canada, the color orange is worn annually on September 30—otherwise known as National Day for Truth and Reconciliation—acknowledging the lingering impacts of residential boarding schools.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 208.269.7051 y presione 38#