

WOVEN:

THE ART OF CONTEMPORARY NATIVE BASKETRY

MARCH 1—APRIL 23, 2016

ARCHER GALLERY



The IMNDN Exhibition Series

THERE is often a preconceived notion of what Native art is: romantic imagery of Native artists practicing their craft, unchanged for hundreds of years, frozen in time in a historic photograph.

The IMNDN exhibition series hopes to expand visitors' horizons with works by a variety of contemporary Native artists who are reinventing the concept of what Native art is. Exploring Native mythologies, colonization, and identity, with clear vision and lacking romantic overtures, these artists embody the idea of what it means to be a Native artist in the 21st century.

Why focus on contemporary Native art?
Much time, effort and funding has been dedicated to rebuilding Native arts, language and traditions in order to heal cultural wounds, but less attention has been given to the continued growth, expansion and future of Native arts and culture.

The past and tradition are important, but we must look to the future in order to assure that Native culture continues to evolve and flourish. In conjunction with the efforts of

other organizations focusing on relearning and reviving Native culture, IMNDN is dedicated to healing cultural wounds by focusing primarily on contemporary Native art and artists. It is from here we will be able to assure the continuation and growth of Native cultures.

IMNDN's primary mission is to proactively advocate for Native artists by exposing their work to and engaging with the public to help Native artists achieve greater recognition, respect, and ultimately a place in the mainstream art world. Native artists, especially contemporary Native artists, do not have the same opportunities to gain recognition, respect, support, or economic viability that non-Native artists do. Artists need the exposure generated by exhibition openings and events. And, artists need consumers in order to generate income from sales of their work, for recognition and acceptance, and for the development of a following of admiring collectors.

Todd Clark, Curator
IMNDN.org



About the Exhibition

THE Woven exhibit examines selected works of thirteen contemporary Native artists, each with their own unique and modern approach to the age-old craft of weaving. The works in this exhibit will explore themes ranging from the basket as a vehicle to confront difficult issues to the use of traditional techniques and materials to express 21st century ideas and influences.

From the 1890s to the Great Depression, thousands of tourists and collectors flocked to Native communities, particularly in the west, to collect Native artwork. Native artwork was considered pure and wholesome, the work of a "vanishing race." Often these baskets became part of ethnographic collections, both public and private, where there is rarely any acknowledgement of the artists who created them. This exhibition will honor and highlight the artists and their work in a much more personal manner.

Woven will also pay tribute to and honor the weavers of the past, both known and unknown. To establish context the exhibition's introduction gallery will include a selection of baskets from the curator's family collection of Pomo baskets, as well as a local historic Chinook family's basket.

This exhibition's focus is not on historic baskets. While each of the artists has researched, practiced and even mastered their traditional forms of basket weaving, some use their art to tackle political and often uncomfortable social issues, others combine traditional weaving skills with contemporary materials and imagery to create works that pay respect to tradition but represent the work of a 21st century artist.

BASKET

PEOPLE have been making baskets for thousands of years, using them primarily for practical purposes. Over time, many weavers began adding personal touches and artistic embellishments to their basket creations and these utilitarian items started to become more intricate, complex and beautiful. Nowhere in the world is this more evident than in the woven work of the Indigenous tribes of North America.

Museums and private collectors feverishly collected Native basketry for decades, reaching “fad” status during the Victorian era, when collecting Indian baskets was all the rage. This popular pastime spurred a “made for sale” basket market and exhibitions, expos, magazine articles and travel posters promoted the basket craze. To have an “Indian corner” in your home, piled high with baskets, was the pinnacle of chic.

This rabid phase of collecting paid little, if any, attention to the individual artists who created the baskets. To this day, the most common attribution for a Native-made basket on a museum label is “Unknown Artist.”

Native basketry became an iconic image used to represent Indians. Like the tipi, the headdress and turquoise jewelry, the basket has become a symbolic, generic stereotype of a highly diverse people. Like these other iconic objects, baskets have deep meaning and depth to the people who make and use them.

Among Native people, baskets are still used, given as gifts, traded, collected and cherished. Each basket, though not typically signed or attributed to the artists, is identifiable, unique and represents the weaver, as well as the time and dedication it took to create it. Each basket tells its own creation story, a story of process, weaver, family, friend or special occasion. So important is this connection of the basket to its maker or owner that it was tradition for the Pomo people to be buried with their baskets. It is this personal connection between object and artist, basket and weaver that is highlighted in the Woven exhibition.



Cha'isht's clamming basket



Cha'isht (Catherine Hawks George)

MY BASKET STORY *Remembering Cha'isht*

One day while I was visiting my Auntie, Lois Burke, I found myself admiring the many baskets that had been handed down through our family. There were spruce root goblets, coil baskets made of sweet grass and gathering baskets, all of them treasures.

My Auntie asked if I would like to have one of these baskets and I chose a wonderful cedar root clamming basket that was made by my great, great, great grandmother Cha'isht (Catherine Hawks George) of the Willapa Chinook. This basket is very similar to the one seen in the Curtis photo of her standing on the beach at Willapa Bay. Knowing that she used this basket to gather food for her family makes it very special to me.

I have been blessed over the years to learn more every day about Cha'isht. Her first husband, Thomas Huckwelt (my great, great, great grandfather and a Lower Chinook headman), was one of the signers of the Anson Dart treaty at Tansy Point in 1851.

Cha'isht was the matriarch of the Hawks family. She was a leader (head woman) in our Chinook community. It makes me feel good to read her words and learn from her wisdom. It comforts me to know that Cha'isht and all of our ancestors travel with us as we move along our traditional waters by canoe.

I raise my hands in thanks to Cha'isht for all she has done for the Chinook people.

—Sam Robinson

*Photograph of Cha'isht by Edward S. Curtis, courtesy of the Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon
Gift of Henrietta E. Failing*

WEAVER

THE ARTISTS in this exhibition recognize the importance of the weavers who came before them. Master weavers and teachers, known and unknown, have directly influenced all those who have followed. Whether taught by an elder or by painstakingly studying the work of past weavers, there is always an acknowledgement and link to the past. Today, as we continue to evolve into the 21st century, we owe a great gratitude to the weavers of the past who had the vision and have worked diligently to keep the art of weaving alive—even if it meant breaking with tradition. This exhibition is dedicated to current, past and all the “unknown” artists.

One of the most important lessons passed on from weaver to weaver, generation to generation is that weaving is all about process. Traditionally, the weaving process begins months or even seasons before any actual weaving takes place. The processes vary by region and tribe, but always begin with the gathering and harvesting of materials. This not only provides the weaver with the raw materials needed to create a basket, but establishes a strong connection between the weaver and the land. Gathering

is followed by the time consuming tasks of drying and preparing these materials. The process reaffirms the weaver’s connection to land and place, and creates an intimate understanding and familiarity with the materials, making the final product a very personal expression of the artist.

Contemporary weavers who use non-traditional materials follow a similar and somewhat parallel process. Hours and days spent harvesting materials from the earth, have been replaced with long days of research in the vaults of the Smithsonian, for artists like Shan Goshorn. Likewise, Gail Tremblay spends hours sifting through piles of film, discarded from libraries and archives, in order to harvest just the right piece that helps tell the basket’s story.

Ranging from apprentice to master weaver, each artist in this show has created a work of art that comes from a deeply personal place, expressing who they are, where they came from and how they got here. The Woven exhibition is about the weaver as a person and as an artist.



ELSIE COMANCHE ALLEN *Master Pomo Weaver and Visionary (1889–1990)*

After returning home from the Round Valley Reservation boarding school at the age of thirteen, Elsie Allen started to learn basket weaving. Elsie’s teachers were her mother, Annie Burke, and her grandmother, Mary Arnold, who were taught by Elsie’s great grandmother, Gunsisse.

Elsie spent many hours learning the process of creating a traditional Pomo basket, from gathering and harvesting to preparing and weaving. But by the age of eighteen Elsie left home for San Francisco for work, bringing her weaving to a halt. Between working and raising children she had no time for the labor-intensive art of weaving.

It wasn’t until the age of fifty that Elsie made a conscious decision to return to weaving and she began to share her love and knowledge of Pomo basketry on a larger scale. She and her mother Annie Burke compiled a large collection of baskets and traveled with them to county fairs throughout the United States.

As was tradition among the Pomo people, many of Elsie’s grandmother’s and mother’s baskets were buried with deceased relatives. Even Elsie’s newer baskets were being buried. She had a troubling premonition, envisioning a day when the art of Pomo basketry would be forever lost, and she dedicated her life to making sure this never happened.

Elsie promised her mother that upon her death she would keep her baskets and not bury them with her. Many Pomo people were angry about Elsie’s decision. They felt the old ways should die and we should forget our past and heritage.

“Since I felt that the Pomo were some the greatest basket weavers in the world, I resolved in my heart that this wonderful art should not be lost and that I would learn it well and teach others.”

Between the years of 1969 and 1971, Elsie Allen created 54 baskets.

Photograph of Elsie Allen courtesy of the Sonoma County Library

ARTIST

THE ARTISTS featured in the Woven exhibition, have taken an art form based in tradition and pushed the boundaries of what is expected by exploring new ideas, techniques and/or materials, unafraid of the results. This is continuation. This is how we move forward.

Native people have suffered from great loss, much has been taken from us. It is natural to hold on tightly to the past and traditions but as important as it is to cherish and keep traditions alive, we cannot solely live in the past—we must move forward in order to thrive.

Growth and change are vital to our survival. Adapting and changing tradition to reflect the current times is vital and it is often artists who are at the forefront of this movement.

Today's contemporary Native artists—working with traditional forms and techniques or exploring the outer boundaries of what would be considered traditional or even Native—walk in two worlds: one deeply rooted in tradition and the other firmly connected to the present and looking toward the future. It is at the intersection of this delicate balance where we find the most beautiful and interesting works of art.



Brittany Britton
Care Packages From Home, 2013



Joe Feddersen, *QR Code, 2013*

JOE FEDDERSEN *21st Century Native Artist*

In his work, Joe Feddersen explores the interrelationship between the urban landscape and the natural environment. His people, and other tribes from the Inland Plateau region of the Columbia Basin, are renowned for their textile traditions and the complex geometric patterns they use to represent the features of their lands and surroundings. These designs were originally inspired by everyday occurrences such as seeing snake tracks in the sand.

Feddersen brings this tradition into the 21st century by incorporating symbols and landmarks from the urban environment such as electrical towers, high rise buildings, cinder blocks, chain-link fences, traffic signs and construction barriers in concert with the visual vocabulary developed by his ancestors.

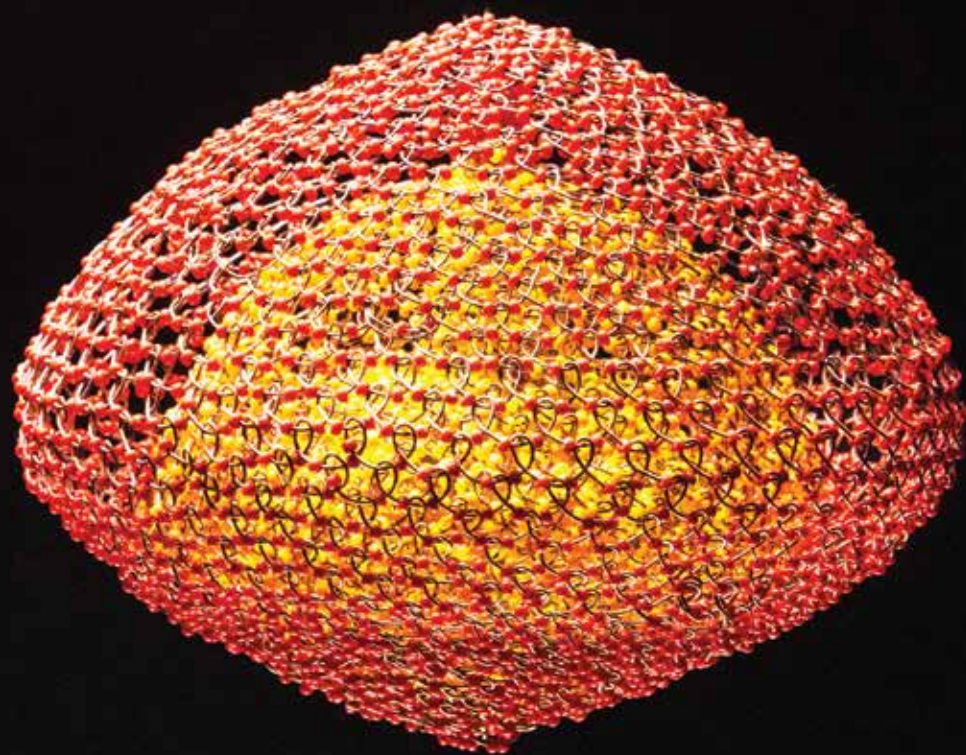
Joe's art actively addresses the destruction and impact on the land by encroaching development. An accomplished basket maker, he intricately weaves the outline of an electrical tower into *High Voltage* (2016) and the ever-present imagery of the freeway in *Hi-Way HOV* (2016).

Plateau basketry also informs his glasswork. Not only does he bring its design elements into the medium but also its texture. In *QR Code* (2013), Joe reproduces the QR code's pattern and design, discovering its hidden beauty.

"It's about sign and place. And I would hope that people from the Plateau area recognize the traditional patterns that are keeping the language alive, while also seeing the humor in the new ones, as to how our land is changing."

Feddersen's humor and wit demonstrate to his own people ways in which the urban environment can be incorporated into their ancient art forms and, at the same time, challenge audiences to view the contemporary environment through the lens of Plateau traditions.

Photo: Wilder Schmaltz, Froelick Gallery



Pahele I, 2014

BERNICE AKAMINE *Native Hawaiian*

As a child I loved being outdoors and to spend time with my Hawaiian grandmother, Kaha Halelaau, in her garden. I learned to talk to the plants and about their traditional uses. I also learned there are people who felt these types of activities were bad. There was a constant push and pull for my soul—Hawaiian versus non-Hawaiian. Every time I returned home after spending time with my grandmother Kaha, my non-Hawaiian grandmother prayed over me. When my parents divorced and the non-Hawaiian parent gained custody of the children, it seemed my soul was finally to be saved.

Throughout my life there was always a little tug here and there, bits of knowledge would be offered, but the time was not right. I would learn a little, shy away, learn a little more, and in the end it was the native plants and being outdoors that opened the floodgates to my inner being. There was no turning back, I was what I was—Hawaiian.

—Bernice Akamine



Burden Basket (Carry That Weight), 2015

BRITTANY BRITTON *Hupa*

I grew up on the Hoopa Reservation, immersed in my dances and culture. I haven't gone too far geographically from my home—it is only an eight-to-ten-hour drive from my current home, but at times feels as far away as the moon.

Along the way on my path through higher education, I've found the ties to my home and have grown and stretched, just a bit, like a tether between here and there or like a muscle that tears itself a bit to grow, to do new things. I found new ways of expressing myself, investing in identity politics.

I discovered threads and strands within myself I hadn't seen before. My work teases those strands, stretched out, into something I can gain new knowledge from. I'm invested in looking deep into what it means to be Indigenous, here in the now, and more specifically what it means to be Hupa with a cross section of other identities and modifiers. What it specifically means to be a queer Native woman today. My work comes directly from inside those strands/ties, connecting myself to my home and back again.

—Brittany Britton



Beauty and the Beast, 2016

KELLY CHURCH *Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians*

I come from the largest black ash basket-making family in Michigan, an unbroken line of weavers. We have a photo of my family making baskets from 1919, but my grandmother once said, “We made baskets before they made cameras.”

I am an artist and activist who teaches Anishnabe communities how to make baskets, and the effects of the emerald ash borer (EAB) on our Native traditions. Since the ash borer was first discovered in Michigan in 2002, the state has lost over 500 million ash trees, and the invasive pest has spread to 23 states and two Canadian provinces. The EAB can kill an entire ash stand in three-to-five years. Time is critical for seed collection and teachings.

My art is woven with these traditional materials in the style of traditional baskets we still use today, intertwined with metals and photographs to create baskets that tell a story and make a statement. My “7th Generation Black Ash Basket” is woven with a vinyl blind and string, and one strip of black ash. This basket illustrates that we are able to pass on our weaving methods, but not the most integral part, the harvest. It also speaks to how dependent we are on man-made materials today.

As a tradition bearer, it is my responsibility to pass on the teachings to the next generation while looking for ways to sustain the tradition for future generations to come.

—Kelly Church



Honoring Women, Warriors of Breast Cancer, 2016

PAT COURTNEY GOLD *Wasco*

My background is mathematics and computer analysis. I worked for fifteen years in research designing software programs. This career ended when I hit the glass ceiling. I then returned to my Wasco culture to help revive Wasco basket weaving techniques that are known for geometric designs.

I enjoy traditional weaving and creative contemporary designs. My culture lives on through my work.

—Pat Courtney Gold



Round Dance, 2015

CAROL EMARTHLE-DOUGLAS *Northern Arapaho and Seminole*

I create baskets because I enjoy the challenge of constructing innovative shapes and designs in my basketry. Coiled baskets are an extremely time-consuming process and the baskets I produce in a year's time are one of a kind.

My inspiration is taken from my Northern Arapaho and Seminole heritage. I have based some of my designs on the Plains style beadwork, ledger art and parfleche designs from my mother's tribe. My father is from the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma and I have also incorporated the colors and patterns of Seminole patchwork into my baskets. I am fortunate to have such a rich heritage to draw upon to inspire my work.

I prefer contemporary materials to produce my baskets. I use hemp twine and waxed linen thread for my large baskets, and use round reed with raffia, a palm fiber, along with silk threads to create my miniature baskets and jewelry pieces. I utilize both natural and contemporary materials, and experiment often to see what will work together to get the result I want to achieve. The technique I use is the traditional coiling method, which is one of the oldest methods used in basketry.

I consider myself a traditional/contemporary basket weaver.

—Carol Emarthle-Douglas

Photo: Mel Ponder



Pk'isap (Mother), 2015 and C'aa Gi Wnak (Son, little boy), 2015

KA'ILA FARRELL-SMITH *Klamath and Modoc*

Waqlisi? Gao' Sassas Ka'ila. Noo' a Ewksik'inii, noo'a Modoc'ini.

Utilizing painting and sculptural art forms, like basket weaving, I explore the space that exists in-between the Indigenous and western worlds, examining their cultural interpretations of aesthetics, symbols, and place. It is in this space I have been searching for my visual language: violent, beautiful, and complicated marks that express my contemporary Indigenous identity.

I am astounded at the mathematical complexity and beauty in the basketry of my ancestors. Once I began weaving, I discovered how heavily focused on process this art form is, which has greatly influenced how I approach painting. I have developed a system of layering marks and stenciling designs to create my own language, combining expressions, text, and color that reference contemporary influences, along with the traditional patterns found in Klamath basket designs.

I call these baskets "Failed Hats," because I have been trying to make a hat since I started weaving, but they end up taking on their own forms, so I follow that form. I do the same when painting. I start with an idea but ultimately the composition tells me where to go.

—Ka'ila Farrell-Smith



Hi-Way HOV, 2016 and High Voltage, 2016

JOE FEDDERSEN *Colville Confederated Tribes*

I don't really remember becoming an artist. As a child I was always making things. I remember my uncle Tom—he carved animals like deer, horses or wolves out of wood. I remember my mom sitting at the kitchen table drawing horses in the morning light after Dad went to work and before we kids got up.

My education came from working at H.H. Hall, a craft store in Omak, during high school and going on to college at Wenatchee Valley College, the University of Washington and the University of Wisconsin at Madison. I think there was an ongoing balance between my Native heritage and the mainstream arts. In tandem, I participated in the Native fine arts movement since the early eighties.

The clearest blending of influences occurred at the introduction of the Plateau series. It drew on my Plateau heritage basket making and celebrated processes inherent to printmaking. I thought I should learn to make baskets. Elizabeth Woody was learning then and showed me the basics. I learned the twining process to create sally bags. I never wanted to mimic baskets so I created new designs—ones that spoke to the contemporary environment.

—Joe Feddersen

SHAN GOSHORN *Eastern Band Cherokee*

Although my career was initially launched in the mid 1980s with hand-colored black and white photographs, I don't consider myself a photographer. I think of myself as an artist who chooses a medium as a tool for the best possible way to express a statement. Recently, I have found myself drawn to the traditional crafts of my people, specifically basket making, as a way to illustrate my political statements and bring awareness to contemporary Native issues. Combining reproductions of historical documents and photographs with contemporary ones, and weaving them together using traditional techniques and patterns, I strive to educate an audience about some of the unique issues that continue to impact Indian people, i.e. tribal sovereignty, gaming, repatriation, treaty violation, the commercial use of our images and names (mascots, etc.), denial of religious freedom and the high rate of substance/alcohol-related suicide.

It is my belief that much of the “dis-ease” and struggles of Indian people are a result of America's policy regarding the first peoples. Whether it is from the attempts to erase all Native identity by denying Indian children their language and culture through boarding school assimilation, breaking ties among tribal support through Indian relocation acts, providing Indian people with commodity foods that have contributed to major illnesses, etc., historical trauma continues to plague us in a big way. It is my goal to enlighten audiences to these ongoing practices and encourage honest dialogue between people. I believe it is only through mutual understanding and respect that we can move forward and heal the wounds created by these repeated violations of our human rights.

—Shan Goshorn



Oklahoma Indians, 2015



Birds in Flight, 1998, Mountain Trails, 1999 and Leaping Frogs, 1999

JOEY LAVADOUR *Walla Walla*

Weaving is often referred to in the context of a “lost art” that has been “regained.” I learned to weave in the traditional style of the Plateau people that goes back more than 10,000 years from tribal elder Carrie Sampson when I was 15 years old. The art of weaving had never been lost to her and her ancestors; a continuum of knowledge flowed directly down to her, and then passed on to me. I feel a great pride and obligation in being entrusted with that knowledge.

Carrie always said that instead of weaving designs in what I thought were traditional colors, I weave together the colors that I see in my dreams. My dreams are vivid and sometimes bring together colors that might seem at odds with making an object to look pleasing, but I find power in holding true to my dream world.

Pendleton wool yarn is a weaving material of great quality. It is of the same place I am, not just by virtue of manufacturing process, but the memories of Pendleton blankets being used by my family and my community. I worked at the mill when I was young and the rooms filled with thousands of spools of yarn created a vibrant backdrop to mindless work.

—Joey Lavadour



Detail: Anishinabe Solidarity “Distant Thunder” Honoring the 1836 Treaties, 2016

DAWN NICHOLS WALDEN *Ojibway*

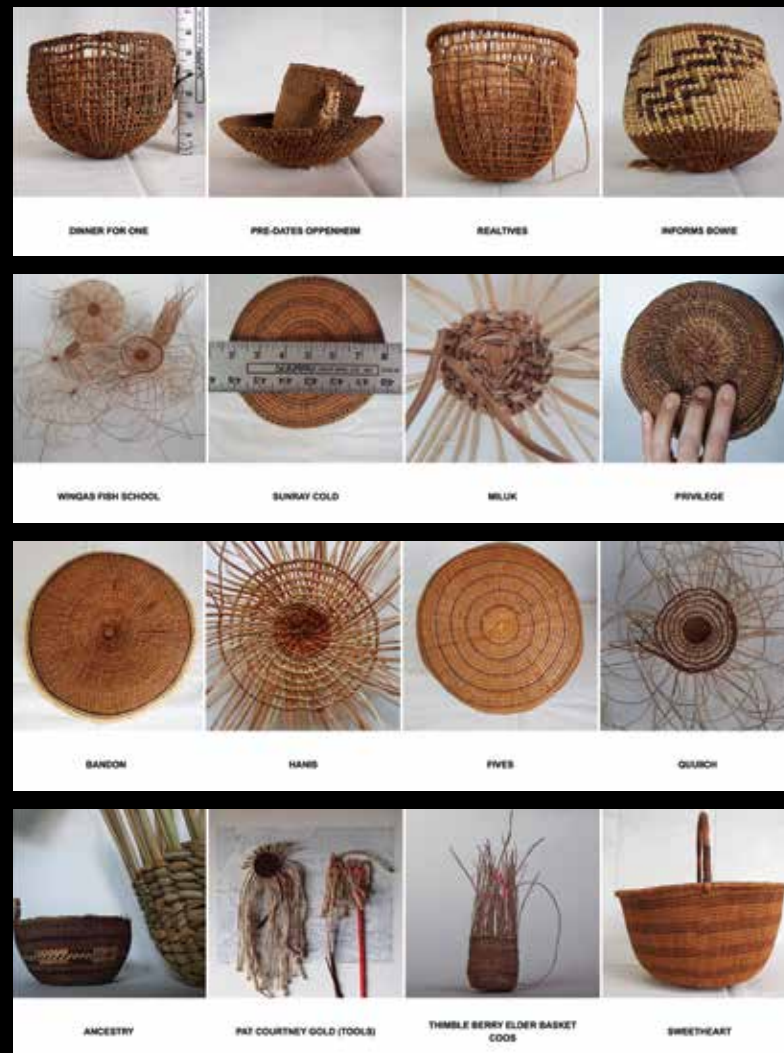
Weaving sculpture is like creating a spirit, pursuing an essence of plant and purity of form. The completed form in the end represents both the plant and the artist’s essence. The forms I make are the result of my search for the limits of my artistic capabilities.

I believe that the artwork is not only about a beautiful shape and well-crafted materials, but also about the spirit within the materials and within the artist. It begins in the woods to collect the plant materials with the reverence and reflection on the sacredness of nature.

There is a seeking of balance between myself, the materials and the form they are creating. There is a sense that I am imbuing admiration, respect and belonging into the solid form of the artwork.

Each new work is an accumulation of my studies in sculpture, Great Lakes ethnobotany, observations in nature, and the internal journey into my spiritual beliefs and culture of the Ojibway people.

—Dawn Nichols Walden



4/4 Time, 2016

SARA SIESTREEM *Hanis Coos*

I am a multidisciplinary artist, educator, and scholar with western training. In 2011, I began to study the traditional weaving culture of my people, a practice that has been in hibernation since the 1850s. My intention for doing this was to create a bridge of service between my work and my people, collectively the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians.

The 2D pieces I have contributed to this exhibition are photographs coupled with language. The photographs are in-process portraits of contemporary weaving and historic baskets and the titles are a reference to the contemporary moment. The south coast baskets in this exhibition were woven by the core group of my tribal weaving students: Ashley Russel (Miluk Coos), Amanda Craig (Hanis Coos), Morgan Gaines (Quuiich/Lower Umpqua) and Earla Kirk (Hanis Coos). They represent the awakening of our weaving culture and its movement into the future.

—Sara Siestreem



Too Haida, 2012

LISA TELFORD *Haida*

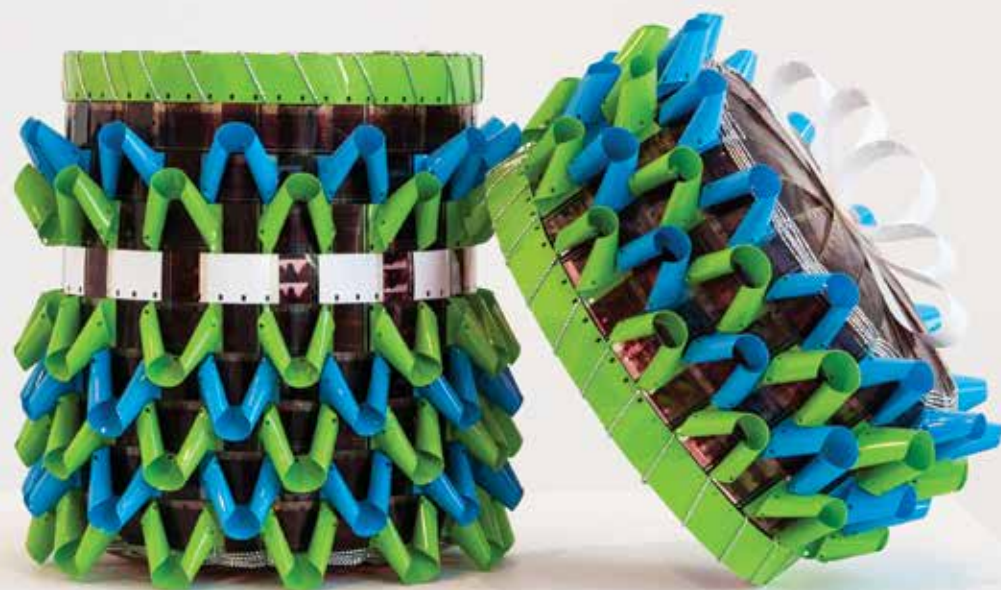
I am a Git'ans Git'anee Haida weaver. I come from a long line of weavers including my grandmother, mother, aunt, cousins and my daughter. I learned traditional techniques of Haida basketry from Delores Churchill, and Haida cedar garments from Holly Churchill. Since 1992, it has been important for me to pass on tradition and maintain a high standard of perfection.

I harvest and prepare my own material, using red and yellow cedar bark, and spruce root in my work. Harvesting cedar bark takes me hundreds of miles from home and many hours of preparation time. The bark is traditionally stored for one year and then further processing is required before weaving may start.

I stuck strictly to the tradition of form follows function until 2004, when I jumped off the cliff into contemporary cedar clothing, cedar shoes, cowboy boots and neckties.

Haida basketry was essential for survival years ago. I continue the tradition, celebrating the beauty of nature.

—Lisa Telford



As Long As the Rivers Run ..., 2013

GAIL TREMBLAY *Onondaga and Mi'kmaq*

I was born in Buffalo, New York, in December 1945, in the middle of a giant snowstorm. I was in a rush to enter this world, and was born forty-five minutes after my mother broke water.

As I grew up, I always wanted to learn how things were made. Perhaps that is what lead me to making art and weaving and working with fibers. And then living in American culture with its images of Indians made me want to re-contextualize the things I saw and comment on what I was seeing, and I started to weave film and turn weaving into a conceptual art.

I use non-traditional materials to explore ways I can weave traditional Onondaga and Micmac basketry forms so that my work will comment on Indigenous life in the 21st century. I began making film baskets when I taught with Marge Brown, a filmmaker at The Evergreen State College. I found film was an interesting material to weave, and I enjoyed the notion of recycling film and gaining control over a medium that had historically been 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 splint and sweet grass baskets. I enjoy creating titles to contextualize these baskets and often choose materials to ironic purpose. The choice of weaving stitches, many of which have names, is deliberate. I make baskets with both 35 and 16 mm film.

—Gail Tremblay

Photo: Wilder Schmaltz, Froelick Gallery

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For more information about these artists and the IMNDN exhibition series please visit: IMNDN.org

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