



## NEWS RELEASE:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 9, 2021

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# See Contemporary Native Arts at the Washington State History Museum: 16th Annual *IN THE SPIRIT* exhibition opens July 15



Tacoma, WA – The [Washington State History Museum's](#) annual exhibition of contemporary works by Native American artists makes a phenomenal return this summer. From July 15 through August 29, 2021, [IN THE SPIRIT Contemporary Native Arts](#) offers visitors a chance to see 37 works by 22 artists from the Pacific Northwest and beyond. Last year's edition was limited to online viewing because the museum was closed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Selected works for the 2021 exhibition include paintings, carvings, bead work, basketry, digital art, multimedia, and textiles. Each work is accompanied by the artist's statement.

"All art created by Native artists is Native art. Themes, media, and technique can be shaped by multiple influences in the artist's life," explained Laura VerMeulen (Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska) in her juror's statement. "Personal aesthetic, cultural responsibility, wise teachers, and family responsibility influence the works in this 2021 show. These are precious works of beauty, resilience, humor, and generations of Indigenous pride," she added. In her work with the Longhouse Education and Cultural Center

at The Evergreen State College, VerMeulen was part of the team that initially conceptualized the *IN THE SPIRIT* exhibition and arts market as a celebration of the region's diverse Native cultures.

The artist's statements often share their inspirations. Ursula Hudson (Tlingit) described her flowing, wearable woven art, *We Are the Ocean*, as ". . . a testament to who the modern Indigenous Woman is in this world, made up of everything that came before. We are a culmination of specific climates, cultures, moments, commitments, and whims from millennia of memories passed onto us by ancestors. When we let a bit of ourselves seep out onto paper, canvas, panel, fiber — the vastness of our infinite selves finds a tangible form."

Two paintings by Gilmore Scott (Diné (Navajo) Nation) vibrate with intense desert hues and repeating geometric shapes inspired by Diné rug weavers. "My use of colors, are strong and bold. Inspiration for my

subjects are interpretations of how I view my culture, Diné (Navajo) heritage. Our high desert southwest landscapes, day and night skies, stories taught of our tradition,” his statement said.

A tiny, precisely woven hemp basket crafted in a traditional coiled technique is a vivid response to the historic challenges of the past year. Artist Carol Emarthle Douglas (Northern Arapaho/Seminole) shared in her statement, “The *Healing Hands* basket was created to reflect the year of 2020. The raised hands are a way of giving thanks and offering prayers or a way to ask for assistance. The color red symbolizes power, passion and strength.”

Each iteration of *IN THE SPIRIT* is comprised of works entered by artists for review in a blind-jury process (meaning the artist’s identities are not revealed as the works are presented for consideration). The jurors for the 2021 exhibition included Todd Clark (Wailaki), Philip H. Red Eagle (Dakota and Puget Sound Salish heritage), and Laura VerMeulen (Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska). As part of the exhibition, artists have the opportunity to receive awards. The [2021 IN THE SPIRIT Artist Awards](#) will be presented in a free online program via the History Museum’s Facebook page at 6:00 PM on July 15.

Artists who are new to annual exhibition include Sonia Barry (Aleut), Jake DePoe (Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians), Ursala Hudson (Tlingit), Heather Johnson-Jock (Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe), Kathryn Miller (Spokane), Othniel A. Oomittuk Jr. (Inupiaq), Annette Pierre (Kalispel Tribe), Ayanna Proctor (Piscataway Conoy Tribe), Gilmore Scott (Diné (Navajo) Nation), Stephan Smith (Quinault), and Charcoal Wannassay (Cowlitz).

Returning *IN THE SPIRIT* artists include Peter Boome (Upper Skagit), P’K’ÆLWELTEN (Charles W) Bloomfield (Pyramid Lake Paiute, W̍SÁNEĆ, Lummi), Suzanne Lynn Cross (Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan), Carol Emarthle Douglas (Northern Arapaho/Seminole), Denise Emerson (Navajo and Enrolled Skokomish), Sean Gallagher (Inupiaq), Lily Hope (Tlingit), Cynthia Masterson (Comanche Nation of Oklahoma), Shaun Peterson (Puyallup), Robert Upham (Lake Traverse Sioux--Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate), and George Zantua (Tlingit and Haida).

“It is an honor to highlight these talented artists and bring their beautiful artworks to the Washington State History Museum for visitors to see,” said Molly Wilmoth, lead program manager at the Washington State Historical Society. “There is so much joy in being able to offer an uplifting, in-person, cultural experience this summer. It is an opportunity for artists and our communities to reconnect.”

In addition to working with the jurors, Wilmoth and museum staff also work with an advisory committee to shape the exhibition and the accompanying *IN THE SPIRIT* Arts Market & Northwest Native Festival. The free indoor/outdoor festival will be held on August 7 in collaboration with the Tacoma Art Museum and Museum of Glass, and includes an artist vendor market, cultural music and dance, art-making opportunities, and free access to museum exhibitions.

The Washington State History Museum will feature additional Indigenous art and culture beginning July 23 with the exhibition [As Grandmother Taught: Women, Tradition, and Plateau Art](#), coming from the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture in Spokane. Visitors can explore the work of three contemporary Columbia River Plateau women. The art of these cultures reflects traditional lifeways borne of a time-honored and interdependent relationship with the natural world. See works by Leanne Campbell (Schí’tsu’umsh - Coeur d’Alene Tribe of Indians, NiMiiPuu - Nez Perce Tribe, Sinixt - Arrow Lakes, P’squosa - Wenatchee, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation); Bernadine Phillips (Spuqspálqs - Okanogan/Wenatchi, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation), and HollyAnna CougarTracks

DeCoteau Littlebull (Yakama - Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, NiMiiPuu - Nez Perce Tribe, Cayuse - Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation).

Get all the details for IN THE SPIRIT Contemporary Native Arts at [www.WashingtonHistory.org/inthespirit-2021](http://www.WashingtonHistory.org/inthespirit-2021).

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## Exhibitions and Events Dates and Links:

### ***IN THE SPIRIT Contemporary Native Arts***

Exhibition: July 15-August 29, 2021

At the Washington State History Museum

<https://www.washingtonhistory.org/exhibit/in-the-spirit-contemporary-native-arts-2021>

### **IN THE SPIRIT Virtual Artist Awards Ceremony**

Online event: July 15, 2021, 6:00 PM

Free program via Facebook Live on the Washington State History Museum's Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/historymuseum/live>

### ***As Grandmother Taught: Women, Tradition, and Plateau Art***

Exhibition: July 23-November 28, 2021

At the Washington State History Museum

<https://www.washingtonhistory.org/exhibit/as-grandmother-taught-women-tradition-and-plateau-art>

### **IN THE SPIRIT Arts Market & Northwest Native Festival (event)**

August 7, 2021, 10:00 AM-5:00 PM

At the Washington State History Museum, Tacoma Art Museum, and Museum of Glass  
FREE museum admission at all three locations, indoor/outdoor arts market and festival

[IN THE SPIRIT Northwest Native Festival \(inthespiritarts.org\)](http://inthespiritarts.org)





**Image credits, top to bottom, left to right:**

**Ursala Hudson** (Tlingit), *We Are the Ocean*, 2021. Wool, silk, cedar bark, steel cones, leather, mother of pearl, 62 × 62 inches.

**Gilmore Scott** (Diné (Navajo) Nation), *Female Storm Dazzler*, 2021. Acrylic on wood, 8×8 inches.

**Carol Emarthle Douglas** (Northern Arapaho/Seminole), *Healing Hands*, 2021. Traditional coiled technique, figure-8 stitch. Hemp core, one rod coiling, waxed linen thread, red and natural colors, 3 × 2½ × 2½ inches.

**Lily Hope** (Tlingit), *Chilkat Protector*, 2021. Hand dyed yarns using 300-year old ethnographic dye techniques and materials, thigh-spun warp of merino and cedar bark, woven using Chilkat techniques, finished in tin cones, 7 × 8 inches.

**Othniel A. Oomittuk Jr.** (Inupiaq), *Wolf head dress*, 2021. Alaskan yellow cedar, ivory, baleen, 8 × 6½ × 18½ inches.

### **About The Washington State Historical Society and History Museum**

The Washington State Historical Society partners with our communities to explore how history connects us all. The Society's most visible activity, the Washington State History Museum is located in downtown Tacoma on Pacific Avenue among a thriving cultural scene. The museum features interactive permanent exhibitions about Washington's past in the Great Hall, unique rotating exhibitions highlighting the Society's collections, and dynamic feature exhibitions, and hosts events and programs on a wide range of historical topics. The WSHS also offers curriculum, downloadable exhibitions, and statewide educational support as well as consultation, support and programs for history and heritage organizations across the state.

**Address:** 1911 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma, WA 98402

**Hours:** 10:00 AM–5:00 PM Tues.-Sun. Third Thursday of each month, 10:00 AM–8:00 PM.

**Admission:** [FREE for members](#); Adults \$14; seniors (age 65+), students (age 6-17) and military (with ID) \$11; free for children 5 and under; family rate \$40 (up to two adults and four children under age 18). Patrons with a [Washington Quest card](#) and licensed Washington Foster Parents can attend for \$1 per person or \$2 per family. FREE for active duty military and up to 5 family members with ID as part of Blue Star Museums, through September 5, 2021.