

LEONOR R. FULLER GALLERY

THE 16TH ANNUAL NATIVE AMERICAN ART EXHIBITION
**HONORING ANCESTORS AND EMBRACING
OUR CULTURE IN THE MODERN WORLD**

CURATED BY MIKAELA SHAFER




South Puget Sound
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

GALLERY MISSION STATEMENT

The Leonor R. Fuller Gallery at The Kenneth J. Minnaert Center for the Arts fosters transformative education and community connections through engaging and challenging exhibitions and programming.

Cover image:
Ray Larkin
We are Still Here
Photography

EXHIBITING ARTISTS

The 16th Annual Native American Art Exhibition:

Honoring Ancestors and Embracing our Culture in the Modern World, curated by Mikaela Shafer, poses a thought-provoking question to both artists and viewers: "How can we lovingly honor our ancestors, heal generational traumas, and preserve culture in the modern world? This exhibition engages viewers and celebrates the art and culture of our Native community members.

The Native American Art Exhibition is a long-standing collaboration and community building exhibition shaped and selected by First Nations guest curators. Each year the exhibition highlights work by First Nations artists, adult, and youth from local and regional tribes around the Pacific Northwest, and Native artists from around the country who have relocated to the region. The Native American Art Exhibition engages viewers and the community celebrating the art and culture of our indigenous community members while providing career opportunities to experienced and emerging curators, as well as those whose interests and aspirations lie in exhibition curation or cultural programming within their indigenous communities.

Ray Larkin
Amber Starks
Aganaq Kostenborder
Arie Beston
Laurae Hughes
Steph Littlebird
Epiphany Couch
Megan McDermott
Jessica Doe Mehta
T'upqwspu? Stanger
Corina Stasso
Isabella Saavedra
Elise Bill-Gerish
Natasha Alphonse
Sophia Anderson
Madison Judkins
Shameka Gagnier
Cody Gray
Jack George

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

BY MIKAELA SHAFER

When I began putting together my proposal for this exhibition, I envisioned what has often felt missing from local galleries and art establishments: authentic representation of Indigenous stories TODAY. The real, the raw, the honest, the heart-breaking, the strong, the powerful, the magical—these are the narratives that deserve to be shared. Too often, institutions seek a diluted version of our truths, something that is palatable and easy to digest for a non-native audience, often asking artists to tone things down or try to fit into a box. However, our stories are so much more; they are layered, complex, creative, colorful, generational, and beautifully diverse.

I invited artists to reflect on the prompt, “How can we lovingly honor our ancestors, heal generational traumas, and preserve culture in the modern world?” through their work. My intention was for them to share their stories, creativity, and unique voices, allowing their individual experiences to shine through.

To ensure inclusivity, this exhibition showcases a wide variety of artists from the diverse community of indigenous peoples in the Pacific Northwest, representing many different tribes, communities, and backgrounds. By acknowledging the challenges faced by Indigenous peoples due to

relocation, disconnection, and modernization, this exhibition serves as a testament to their resilience, illustrating how culture can be preserved and cherished, no matter where we call home.

As visitors engage with this exhibition, I hope they see themselves in the artwork, hear their ancestors, and remember their own stories.

BIOGRAPHY

Mikaela Shafer is an artist, writer, and mother from Olympia, Washington. She is actively involved in her community as the former co-chair of the Olympia Cultural Access Advisory Board. As the founder of Maqa Collective, she supports businesses and artists' marketing efforts through storytelling and community building, including her role as Lead Storyteller for yəhaw' Indigenous Creatives Collective, where she helps to share and preserve stories of the land and artists. Notably, Mikaela's community-building initiatives in Ogden, Utah, earned her recognition from Weber State University, which named her one of the 100 influential women in the region's history. Additionally, she was honored with the 2023-2024 Native Arts and Culture Fund LIFT award and is the 2024 Santa Fe Indian Market 1st place winner in abstract art.

NATASHA ALPHONSE

Alphonsestudio.com
IG: @natashaalphonse



Natasha Alphonse is a Seattle-based artist, making functional ceramics focused on minimal and earthy design. A First Nations artist from the Dene Tribe in Northern Saskatchewan, her work is inspired by nature and childhood memories of growing up in a remote, wild landscape. She strives for visual grounding through atmospheric firing processes, adding a rustic quality to her pieces.

Natasha Alphonse
Seed Jar
Wood fired Stoneware, natural wood ash glaze
7" w x 10.5" h x 3.5" base



SOPHIA ANDERSON

sophiaandersonart.com
IG: @acornsasquatch



I grew up on the Shoalwater Bay Tribal reservation, located on a rural corner of the Olympic peninsula. I moved to Seattle in 2019 where I worked became a SOIL member, and worked to gain knowledge to bring home. I moved back to the reservation in November 2023. Much of my work is inspired by the experience of growing up on traditional coastal land surrounded by my tribal community, and then the transition to life away from and back to those roots. While I have a background in painting, during the time I lived in Seattle I began to learn to bead. My chicha (grandmother) Lorraine Anderson was a master beadworker, and she passed away when I was

young due to Alzheimers, so I didn't get to hear her talk about her memories while we were on this planet together. I started beading out of homesickness, because I wanted to understand her better, as well as to reconnect to my heritage while living off-reservation. It became a meditation and a life line. These beaded paintings are how I capture individual moments of how my life now fits into this ancient coastline, through a practice that connects me to my heritage and community.



Sophia Anderson
Shoalwater Bay
Beading on fabric
6.5" x 8.5"

ARIE BESTON

Arie Beston, a direct descendant of the Turtle Mountain band of Chippewa, explores pre- and post-contact Anishinaabe art forms such as parfleche, ledger art, basketry, and poetry in English and Anishinaabemowin. Their work delves into themes of two-spirited sexuality and cultural revitalization amid continued colonization.

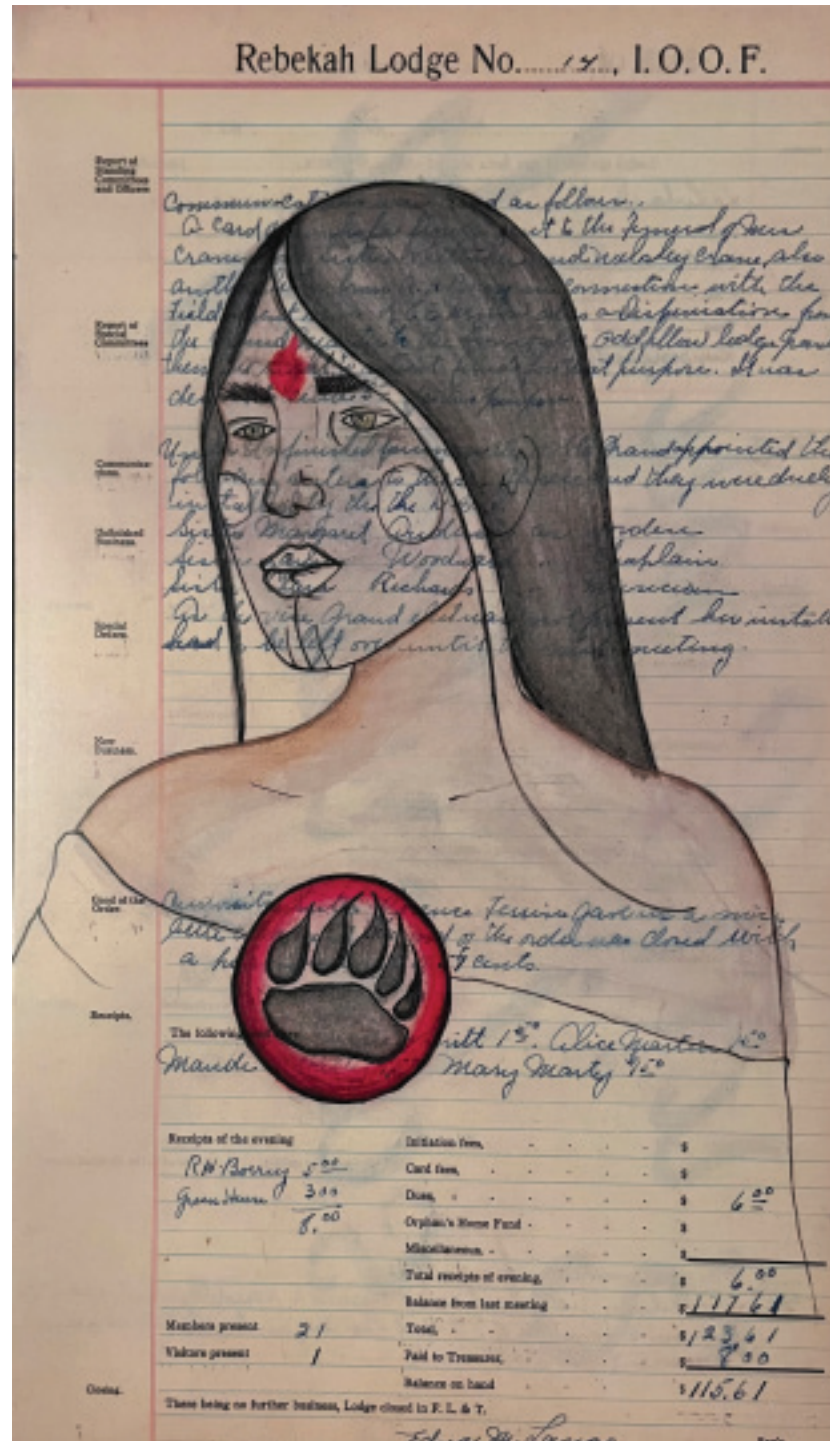
Central to Arie Beston's artistic practice is the use of culturally significant materials. They incorporate antique ledger paper sourced from traditional Anishinaabe territories and utilize Buffalo rawhide, brain-tanned leather, and ceremonial medicine within their art pieces. These materials not only carry historical and spiritual significance but also connect their work deeply to Anishinaabe tradition and way of life.

IG: @Mookawaji

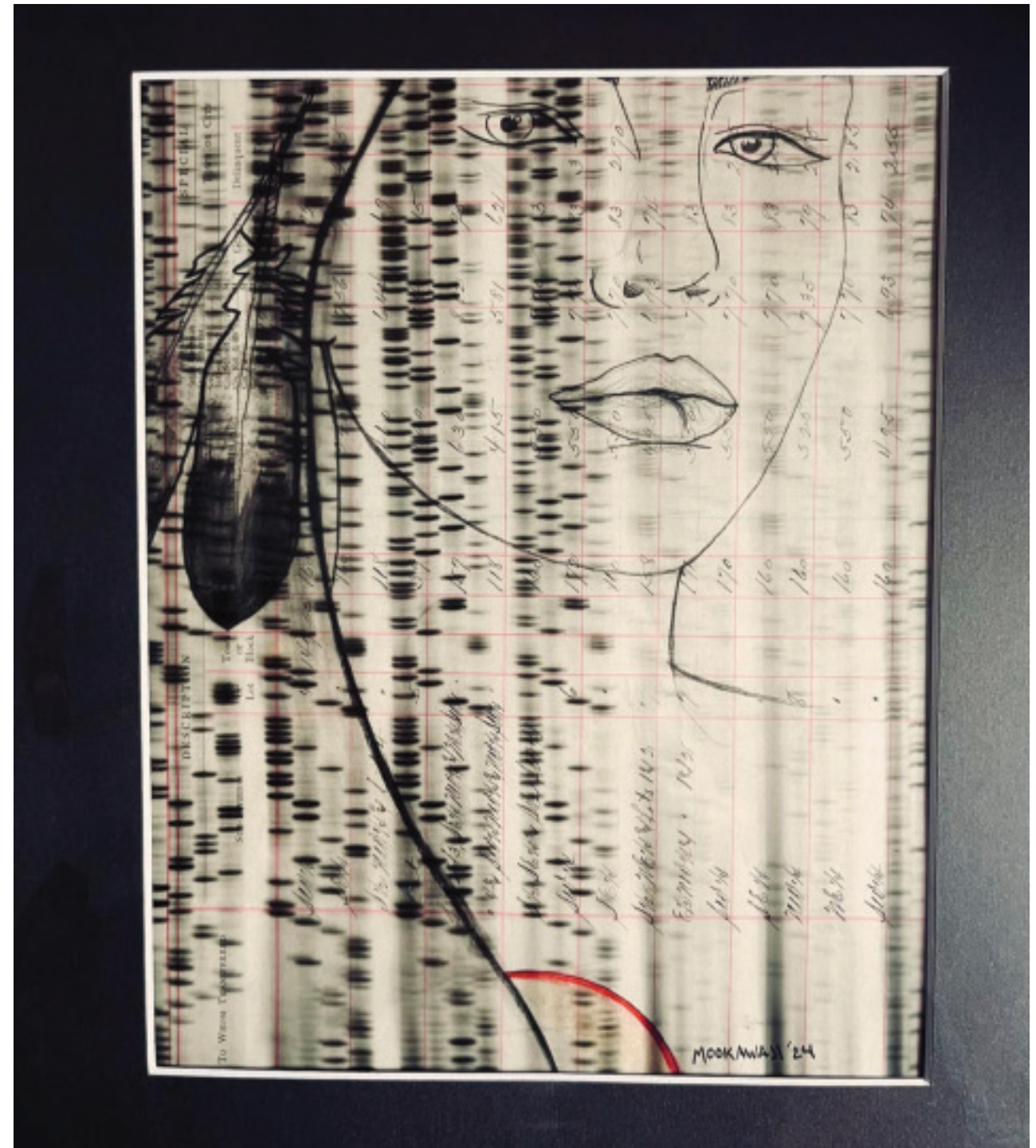
Arie Beston
Plains Indian parfleche container
Brain-tanned white smoked buckskin,
rawhide sourced from elk, and mica pigment
11" x 8" x 1.75" dia



Arie Beston
 "Manidoo-makwa, bi-gizhaawenimishinaan"
 1930 Ledger from North Dakota, watercolor pencil,
 archival ink, cedar, charcoal, mako-bimide
 7.5" x 9.5"



Arie Beston
 Blood Quantum
 1896 Ledger from North Dakota, watercolor pencil, charcoal,
 archival ink, and radiographic DNA sequencing
 7.5" x 9.5"



ELISE BILL-GERRISH



Elise Bill-Gerrish is a Muckleshoot Tribal Member and Muckleshoot Language Caretaker. She holds a master's degree in Education from the University of Washington Tacoma, focusing on best practices for Native and Indigenous students. A committed advocate for healing Native pathways, traditional plant medicine, food systems, and Southern Lushootseed revitalization, Elise is currently a professor of American Indian Studies at South Seattle College.

As a multimedia artist, she enjoys weaving, painting, film production, digital design, drum making, and collage. Elise focuses her artistic energy on Coast Salish wool weaving, feeling connected to her ancestors through her work. Coming from a strong lineage of weavers, including her grandmothers, Annie Jack and Julia Siddle, she is dedicated to teaching her children, and one day her grandchildren, how to speak their traditional language and practice cultural traditions.



Elise Bill-Gerrish
-kayə? - Grandmother
Wool
52" L x 28" W



Elise Bill-Gerrish
-sk^{uy} – Mother
Wool
8" waist x 34" length x 13" hip



Elise Bill-Gerrish
-bede? - Daughter
Wool
7" waist x 25" length x 11" hip



EPIPHANY COUCH

IG: @epiphany_couch_art



Epiphany Couch (she/her) is an interdisciplinary artist exploring generational knowledge, storytelling, and our connection to the metaphysical. By re-contextualizing mediums such as bookmaking, beadwork, photography, and collage, she presents new ways to examine our pasts, the natural world, and our ancestors. Epiphany's work is unapologetically personal, drawing from family stories, childhood experiences, archival research, and dreams.

Utilizing a multidisciplinary approach, she creates images and sculptural works that hold space for reflection, transforming them into intimate and heirloom-like objects. Epiphany is spuyaləpabš (Puyallup), Yakama, and Scandinavian/Mixed European, growing up in caləlali (Tacoma, WA) in the shadow of təqwuʔməʔ (Mount Rainier). She earned her BFA in Sculpture from the University of Puget Sound and has exhibited her work at various prestigious venues.



Epiphany Couch
Huckleberry Sister
Collage, Oak Gall Ink, Shells,
and Glass Beadwork on Giclée Inkjet Print
20" x 20"



Epiphany Couch
Chokecherry Sister
Collage, Oak Gall Ink, Hair, Shells,
and Glass Beadwork on Giclée Inkjet Print
20" x 20"

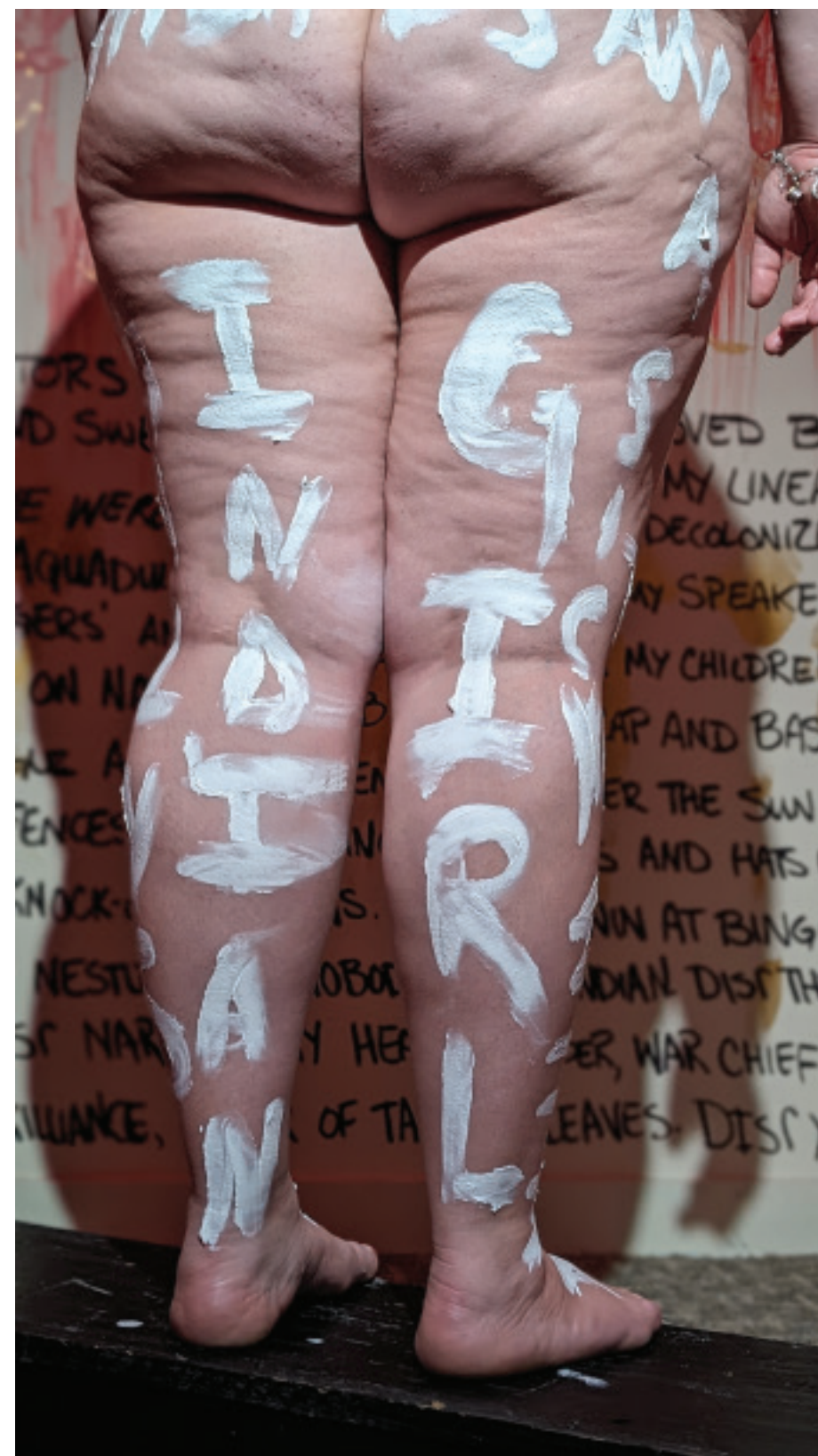
JESSICA DOE

IG: @thischerokeerose



Jessica Doe, PhD, is a multi-award-winning Aniyunwiya inter/multi/anti-disciplinary poet, artist, and researcher. As a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, she focuses on space, place, Indigenization, and decolonization. Her doctoral work addressed the relationship between eating disorders and female poetics. As a Fulbright Senior Scholar in Bengaluru, India, she curated a poetry anthology in English.

Her upcoming monograph addresses modern Indigenous and Indigiqueer poetics. Jessica will serve as the Notre Dame Visiting Faculty Fellow at the Kroc Institute for International Peace and will participate in the BigCi Environmental Award in Australia next summer, working with Aboriginal artist elders in national parks.



Jessica Doe
500 Years Ago
Photograph
12" x 24"



Jessica Doe
500 Years Ago
Photograph
12" x 24"



Jessica Doe
500 Years Ago
Photograph
12" x 24"

SHAMEKA GAGNIER

IG: @shameka.gagnier

Shameka Gagnier carries bloodlines from Central (Pure'pecha), Africa (Northern and Western), and Europe (Ireland, England, Spain). They are committed to creating and supporting spaces that center art, food, and nourishment for Black and Indigenous communities. Gagnier is a multimedia artist, working as a woodcarver, metalsmith, printmaker, performance artist, music maker, and gardener. Currently, they work with a collective called the Black Well Red Thread Collective. Mentoring young artists enriches Gagnier's approach to teaching, creating, and connecting.



Shameka Gagnier
Black Well Red Thread Collective
Yarn
6' x 5' with 32" tassels



JACK GEORGE

jackama.com
IG: @jackama_



Jack George is a creative based in Washington State, with unique skills in graphic design, photography, and videography. As the owner of Jackama Graphics & Media, he has been commissioned for logo designs for businesses and franchises alike. Jack's photography encompasses various styles, including graduation, headshots, family portraits, event photography, sports, weddings, landscapes, concerts, street photography, and product fashion. He utilizes industry-standard recording equipment and software for filming, editing, and color grading videos, including interviews, music videos, drone footage, and other projects.

Jackama, a nickname reflecting his affiliation with the Yakama Nation, promotes his ties to his heritage. Currently working full-time as a multimedia specialist for the Nisqually Indian Tribe, Jack fully applies his skills to his day-to-day work while also dedicating time to hone his craft. He focuses on cinematography and videography, aspiring to tell stories for organizations and individuals, everyone has a unique story to share.



Jack George
Rock the Mocs
Photograph
16.5" x 11"



Jack George
Rock the Mocs
Photograph
16.5" x 11"



Jack George
Rock the Mocs
Photograph
16.5" x 11"

CODY GRAY

IG: @gray_skill_photo



Cody Gray, also known as Citizen Gray, is a member of the Comanche Nation Tribe of Oklahoma. After retiring from the U.S. Army, he moved to Seattle, WA, where he studied photography at the Art Institute of Seattle. There, he developed a distinctive aesthetic that combines fashion portraits with architectural photography for advertising and contemporary art.

He has exhibited his work at the King Street Station Gallery in Seattle for the Yehaw Indigenous Creatives Collective and at the Thurston County Museum of Fine Arts in Olympia, WA. Cody's artwork is currently displayed in the 16th Annual Native Arts Exhibition: Honoring Ancestors and Embracing Our Culture in the Modern World. His latest form of self-expression includes creating a clothing line featuring his custom artwork on various products. Cody Gray is grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with many Indigenous creatives and to be involved with the Maqa Collective.

Cody Gray
The Kidnapping of Cynthia Ann Parker
Photograph Printed on Canvas
24" x 30"



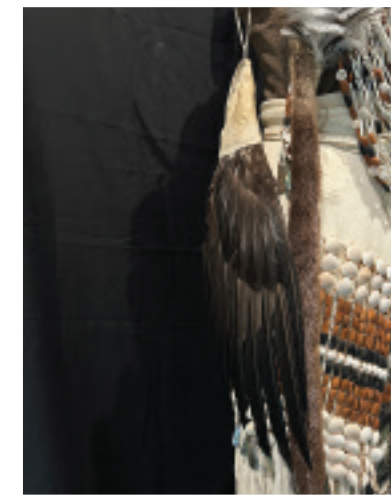
LAURAE HUGHES

IG: @hlaurae

Laurae Hughes (she/her) is an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians in Southern Oregon, with Rogue River, Chetco, Tututni, Shasta Costa, and European descent. Laurae believes in keeping culture and tradition alive to honor one's origins. Much of her work resembles historical examples from pre- and early contact with Europeans. Her pieces were featured in the movie *The First Cow*, depicting early life along the Columbia River.

She has taught classes in basketry, traditional gathering, hide tanning, bone tools, and stone tools for years. Laurae emphasizes that working and creating is a human purpose that brings joy and fulfillment. By teaching history tied to people's identities, she provides opportunities for others to rediscover their joy and purpose.

Laurae Hughes
Nuu-k'wii-daa-naa~-ye' (Ancestors) Are Dancing
Elk, Pinion Pine Nuts, Abalone, Dentelium, Sea Otter,
Urchin, Naa~set, Bald Eagle, Olivella
9" waist x 45" length x 15" hips





Laurae Hughes
 Ghvs-t'ulth (Cedar) Fedora
 Red Cedar, Yellow Cedar, Abalone,
 Bald Eagle feather, Sweetgrass
 10" x 6"



Laurae Hughes
 Cedar Headband
 Red Cedar, Elk Skin, Sea Otter, Bald Eagle
 Feathers, Abalone, Sinew
 7" x 12"



Laurae Hughes
 Xat-ghvtlh-ket (Leather) Satchel
 Bark Tanned Buffalo, Buffalo Teeth,
 Pinion Pine nuts, Abalone, Naa-se, Sinew
 12" x 13" with 19" strap

MADISON JUDKINS

Madison Judkins is a Shoalwater Bay, self-taught artist from Aberdeen, WA, currently residing next to the Salish Sea in Olympia, WA. She is of Chinook, Chehalis, and Nisqually descent. My artwork has always been a way of healing and therapy for me. Growing up, I often didn't know how to communicate my feelings. Art was my first place of comfort. In 2019, after going through a dark period in my life where I nearly lost everything to poor decisions, addiction, and depression, I decided to pray for the first time in over a decade.

Everything went dark, and I felt the presence of the Creator changing around me. I felt the people before me, including my Chitcha Lorraine Anderson Frank, and saw visions of beading, laughter, community, and love. I opened my eyes with purpose for the first time.

Although creating art has always been a part of me, it has saved me from self-destruction during distressing times. In my early childhood, I learned traditional formline shapes from Randy Capoeman of the Quinault Indian Nation and was taught by Earl Davis and Tony Johnson about Coast Salish styles of art. In 2020, my aunties gifted me beading supplies to start my journey in beading. My recent work is inspired by my transformative experience in 2019, bringing me closer to life's secrets, and I experiment with various mediums.

Madison Judkins

Kwalixwa – Raven
Beadwork

Main Pendant 1.5" x 2.5" with 4" dia

Madison Judkins

Is'-Kum- To Take
Beadwork
1.5" x 6"

Madison Judkins

Kwalixwa – Raven
Beadwork
1.75" x 3"

Madison Judkins

kwón-e-sum – eternal
Beadwork
1.5" x 2.5"



AGANAQ KOSTENBORDER

IG: @Aganaq



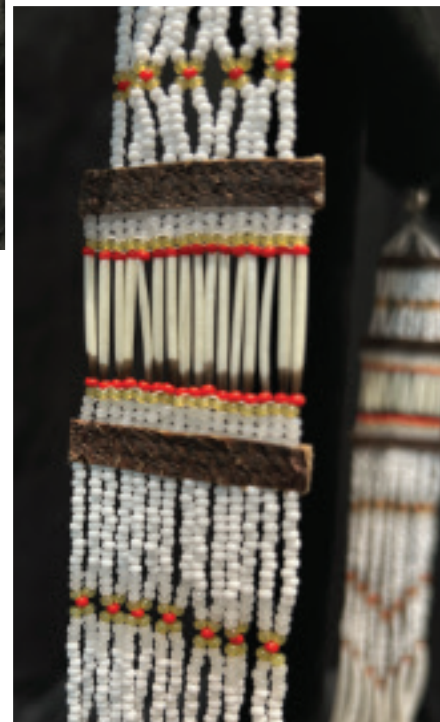
Aganaq is a multi-disciplinary mixed Alutiiq artist based in Portland, Oregon, and an enrolled member of the Curyung Tribe. Her artistic practice is deeply rooted in nurturing relationships with the plants and animals that inspire her work, as well as the lands from which these elements are sourced. This connection to her environment profoundly informs her creative expression and serves as a wellspring of inspiration.

Aganaq Kostenborder
Qaspek
Wool, Silk, Wolf, and Salmon Skin
18" waist x 48" length with 18" sleeve





Aganaq Kostenborder
Alutiiq Earrings
Beads, Porcupine quill, Salmon Skin,
Buckskin, and Dentallium
1.5" x 9"



Aganaq Kostenborder
Salmon and Seal Bag
Salmon and Seal
11" x 9" x 4"





Aganaq Kostenborder
Clam Basket
Grass
10" x 12"

RAY LARKIN

IG: @in.rl



Ray Larkin is a Skokomish Yakama artist, a mother, and a driving force behind MOM. She was born in occupied Duwamish Territory (Seattle, WA) and now lives on unceded Tongva Land (Los Angeles, CA), working with video, photography, and sound. MOM tells socially relevant stories with a contemporary lens, challenging norms while fostering empathy. Through powerful visual narratives, they seek to confront perceptions, bridge divides, and cultivate a more compassionate world.



Ray Larkin
We Are Still Here, Water
Photograph Printed on Fabric
28.5" x 44.5



Ray Larkin
We Are Still Here, Capitol
Photograph
6" x 4"



Ray Larkin
We Are Still Here, Forrest
Photograph
6" x 4"



Ray Larkin
We Are Still Here, Arrow
Photograph
4" x 6"



Ray Larkin
We Are Still Here, Fireworks
Photograph
12" x 8"

STEPH LITTLEBIRD

IG: @Artnerdforever

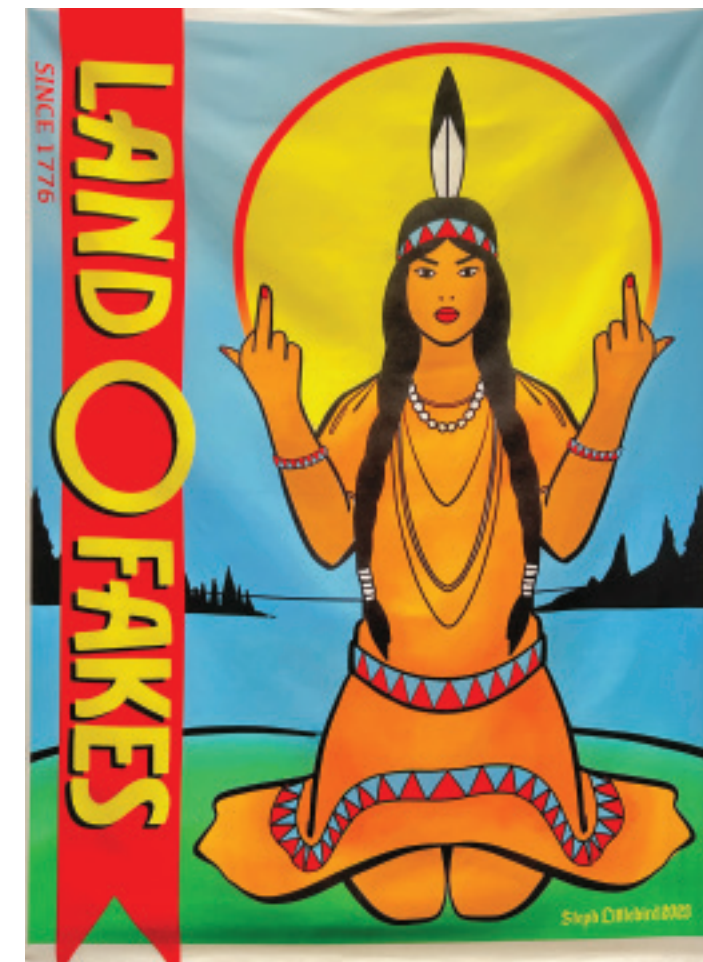


Steph Littlebird is an artist, author, curator, and enrolled member of Oregon's Grand Ronde Confederated Tribes. Steph earned her B.F.A. in Painting and Printmaking from the Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA) in Portland, Oregon, and currently lives and works in Las Vegas. Littlebird is known for her vibrant graphic imagery that combines traditional styles of her Indigenous ancestors with contemporary illustration aesthetics. Her work often examines issues related to Native identity, cultural resilience, and responsible land stewardship.

Steph's first children's book, *My Powerful Hair* (2023), made in collaboration with NYT bestselling Indigenous author Carole Lindstrom, earned the 2024 Carter G. Woodson Book Award. Steph has been commissioned by brands like Lucasfilm/Star Wars, Yahoo, and Luna Bar, and featured by media outlets like PBS News, NPR, and ArtNews.



Steph Littlebird
Paint With This
Digital print on silk
29" x 39"



Steph Littlebird
Land O Fakes
Digital print on silk
29" x 39"

CATHY LOPEZ

IG: @foxfire_designs_



Cathy Lopez
Coyote Clan Hopi Manta and Belt
Embroidery on cotton
42" length x 9" waist x 11" hip

MEGAN MCDERMOTT

gobsofcolor.com
IG: @gobsofcolor



Megan McDermott is enrolled Little Shell Chippewa and was born in 1994. Her passion for visual art began as a toddler, nurtured by her maternal Blackfeet grandmother. Megan faced difficult circumstances growing up, dealing with generational trauma and adversity. Her grandmother's influence helped her transform tumultuous experiences into positive artistic expressions such as beadwork, painting, large-scale murals, and mixed media. In 2023, she won awards at her first major juried Native market exhibitions, and in 2024, she received multiple honors from the Washington State History Museum. Through her exhibitions, she aims to express the importance of contemporary Native art within urban settings.



Megan McDermott
Bwaanzhiiniimi • Kááy'sspaa • Pwâtisimowin • Grass Dancer
Beadwork on canvas
11" x 14"



Megan McDermott
Urban Ndns
Acrylic on canvas
57.5" x 120"



Megan McDermott
Elk Spirit Calling
Acrylic on canvas
30" x 40"

ISABELLA SAAVEDRA

IG: @indigorituals



Isabella Saavedra is an artist based in Portland, Oregon. Her work documents significant moments through painting and stitchwork, highlighting identity, memory, and daydream. She focuses on vulnerable interiorities and documents her lived experience, a theme she refers to as her "now-isms."

"Now-isms" describes her immediate yet examined reactions to life, embedded with the philosophy of visual sovereignty. The abstract figures, settings, and texts in her work assert their presence without being easily recognizable, invoking a sense of controlled chaos.



Isabella Saavedra
Gnaw
Mixed media on canvas
46" x 28"

T'U᠙QʷŠČPU᠙Š STANGER

IG: @tu7stanger



T'upqwspu? Stanger, a 27-year-old Two-Spirit citizen of the Colville Confederated Tribe, is a multimedia artist currently focused on acrylic painting. Their work is deeply inspired by cultural preservation and the importance of creating safe, inclusive spaces for queer individuals. Through their art, they aim to show that there is, and always will be, a space for queer people to create, express, and thrive.

t'u᠙qʷščpu᠙š Stanger
cašw
Mixed media on canvas
48" x 48"



AMBER STARKS (MELANIN MVSKOKE)

IG: @melaninmvskoke



Amber Starks (aka Melanin Mvskoke) is a nationally recognized Afro-Indigenous (Black and Native) advocate, writer, cultural commentator, and decolonial theorist. An enrolled citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, she also has Shawnee, Yuchi, Quapaw, and Cherokee descent. Her passion lies at the intersection of Black and Native or Afro-Indigenous identity, seeking to normalize, affirm, and uplift the multidimensional identities of Black, Native, and Afro-Indigenous peoples.

Statement

Amber believes that through political education, community care, and cross-cultural kinship, Black and Native peoples can build authentic solidarity, realizing Black liberation and Indigenous sovereignty. Her activism encourages these communities to prioritize one another and reject compartmentalized struggles, fostering partnerships aimed at eradicating anti-Blackness, white supremacy, and settler colonialism together. Amber earned a Bachelor of Science in General Science (emphasis in Biology and Anthropology) from the University of Oregon and has contributed to various prestigious platforms, including the Smithsonian Museum, Princeton University, NPR Code Switch, and TEDx Portland. She is also the founder and owner of Conscious Coils Natural Hair Salon in Portland, Oregon. Her pronouns are she/her.

Amber Starks (Melanin Mvskoke)

Little One, Black and Red
Graphite, colored pencil, and beadwork on canvas
30" x 40"



CORINNA STASSO

IG: @chanceunica1



My name is Corinna Stasso, and I am an enrolled member of the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribe, with Spokane, Chippewa Cree (North Dakota, South Dakota), and Kalispel heritage. Growing up in Seattle, I attended Indian Heritage High School and spent time at the United Indians of All Tribes Labateyah Youth Home, where I faced homelessness during my teenage years. Poetry and art have always been my outlets; I was chosen to share my poetry at Bumbershoot during high school.

My father, an artist in Seattle, sold his artwork in downtown Seattle as a means of survival, having faced homelessness himself. My mother was also an artist, selling beadwork and purses, and she instilled a love of art in me from a young age. I began beading over 23 years ago, prior to the birth of my oldest son. Initially, watercolor was my first love before I transitioned to acrylic painting, with plans to explore oils as my father had.

Art has always been healing for me. Many of my family members are artists, and I have taught art classes in the community, volunteering at various events over the years. I'm in recovery for ten years, which has played a significant role in my artistic journey. Today, I work in administration for a nonprofit and continue to create art, using it to bring awareness to the struggles our Native American community faces.



Corinna Stasso
Self-Reflection
Acrylic on canvas
14" x 18"



Corinna Stasso
Northern Lights
Acrylic on canvas
16" x 20"



Corinna Stasso
Ancestors Are Ober Der
Acrylic on canvas
11" x 14"



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