SINEW
Female Native Artists of the Twin Cities
SINEW: FEMALE NATIVE ARTISTS OF THE TWIN CITIES TAKE OVER THE NORTHLAND

WHAT:
Exhibition featuring art by outstanding Female Native artists from the Twin Cities area

WHEN:
Opening Reception: Thursday, June 1, 2017, 6:00 – 8:00 PM
Exhibition dates: May 30, 2017 – September 24, 2017

WHERE: Tweed Museum of Art, 1201 Ordean Court, Duluth, MN 55812

Related Events:
Panel Talk: September 14, 2017 Montague Hall 80, UMD, 6 - 8 pm

Duluth, MN – The Tweed Museum of Art (TMA) at the University of Minnesota Duluth is proud to present Sinew: Female Native Artists of the Twin Cities, an exhibition curated by Dyani White Hawk. The show was originally organized for Artistry in Bloomington, MN in conjunction with the Guerilla Girls Twin Cities takeover. The exhibition presents an eclectic selection of works by each artist that include paintings, prints, weaving, drawings, digital videos, and sculptures.

Dyani White Hawk, Curator of the exhibition, says, “I am grateful for the opportunity to increase visibility and recognition of the strength, vigor, power, and resilience of Native American women and their important contributions to the arts, our communities, our families and our world.”
The artists selected for this exhibition are some of the most celebrated and accomplished female Native artists currently living and working in the Twin Cities area, and include:

Carolyn Anderson
Julie Buffalohead
Andrea Carlson
Elizabeth Day
Heid Erdrich
Louise Erdrich
Maggie Thompson

Sinew, thread created from the backbone tendons of animals, is a material central to historical Native arts and cultural knowledge. Before cotton thread became readily available in the U.S., woman of many tribes used sinew to sew garments and create the stunning porcupine quillwork, beadwork, clothing and other objects that required stitching. This simple material metaphorically speaks to the strength of a people and specifically to the strength of the women who used sinew to create much of the legacy of historic Native arts we know today.

The Guerilla Girls described their work as “feminist masked avengers in the tradition of anonymous do-gooders like Robin Hood, Wonder Woman and Batman.” This exhibition is dedicated to the millions of Native women who, with immense strength, intelligence, and grace, humbly serve as the backbone of our nations.

Related Events:

Exhibition-related programs provide opportunities to meet the artists and learn more about their respective work. Free and open to the public.

**Opening Reception** June 1, 2017 Tweed Museum 6:00 – 8:00 pm

**Panel Talk** September 14, 2017 Montague Hall 80, UMD 6:00 – 8:00 pm

**About the Museum:**  www.d.umn.edu/tma
**Dyani White Hawk** – Artist and Curator

![Dyani White Hawk](image)

**Biography:**

Dyani White Hawk currently resides in Shakopee, Minnesota. She is Sicangu Lakota, an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. White Hawk earned a MFA in Studio Arts in 2011 from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and BFA in 2-Dimensional Studio Arts in 2008 from the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She served as Gallery Director and Curator for the All My Relations Gallery in Minneapolis, Minnesota from 2011-2015. In May of 2015, White Hawk transitioned into full-time studio practice.

White Hawk is a recipient of a 2015 Native Arts and Cultures Foundation Visual Arts Fellowship, 2014 Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant, 2013/14 McKnight Visual Artist Fellowship, and the 2012 Southwestern Association of Indian Arts Discovery Fellowship. Her work has been acquisitioned into the collections of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, Tweed Museum of Art, Akta Lakota Museum, the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Wisconsin Union Art Collection, and the Robert Penn Collection of Contemporary Northern Plains Indian Art of the University of South Dakota. She is represented by Shiprock Santa Fe and the Bockley Gallery in Minneapolis.
Selected Images

Dyani White Hawk (Sicangu Lakota)
*Stealing Horses Back*, 2016
Oil, vintage and contemporary beads, thread on canvas, 18” x 48”
Collection Tweed Museum of Art, UMD
Marguerite L. Gilmore Charitable Foundation Fund
D2016.40
DYANI WHITE HAWK ARTIST STATEMENT

As a woman of Lakota and European ancestry, I was raised among Native American communities within urban landscapes. My work reflects these cross-cultural experiences through the combination of modern abstract painting and traditional Lakota art forms. Some works are executed strictly in paint; others incorporate beads, porcupine quills, ledger paper, brass sequins, and other materials representing a Lakota aesthetic.

I strive to create honest, inclusive compositions that acknowledge all parts of my being and history, Native and non-Native, urban, grassroots, and academic. This platform allows me to start from center, deepening my own understanding of self and culture, and then expand upon this, drawing correlation between personal and national history, and Native and mainstream art histories.

The works are intended to increase exposure and inclusion of Native American contributions and thought within contemporary arts. The complexity of visual and conceptual references encourage conversations which in turn acknowledge the diversity of Native experiences, break down misconceptions, generalizations, and reinforce the importance of a Native voice within contemporary arts.
**Biography**

Carolyn Anderson is a Minnesota–based artist of Irish, Scottish, French, and Navajo descent. She began her artistic career as a painter, but textiles have become an increasingly important aspect of her work. Carolyn is a descendant of a long line of Navajo weavers, and her grandmother began teaching her this art form in 2003. Carolyn's current work combines paintings, fabric, and Navajo weavings. These materials inspire reflection on the accumulating influence of the lives of her ancestors and family members. She also reflects on the way all of our perceptions are shaped by the people in our lives, the environments we inhabit, and the events that make significant impressions on human consciousness. Carolyn has exhibited at many venues in the Minneapolis area, including All My Relations Gallery, the Katherine E. Nash Gallery, and the Bockley Gallery. She has been the recipient of artist grants including the National Native Creative Development Grant from the Longhouse at Evergreen State College, the Minnesota State Arts Board Cultural Community Partnership Grant, and scholarships to study Navajo weaving through the Sievers School for Fiber Arts and the Split Rock Arts Program.

**Selected Images**

Carolyn Anderson (Navajo, born 1982)
*Disillusion/Dissolution #1, Silver Maple, Northern Red Oak*, 2013
Wool, fabric, acrylic paint on fabric, ink jet print on fabric, thread, 64” h x 52” w
Collection of the Artist
L2017.5.1
Selected Images

Carolyn Anderson (Navajo, born 1982)
*Disillusion/Dissolution #2, Valley Oak*, 2014
Wool, fabric, acrylic paint on fabric, ink jet print on fabric, thread, 61” h x 46” w
Collection of the Artist
L2017.5.2

Carolyn Anderson (Navajo, born 1982)
*Disillusion/Dissolution #3, Sugar Maple*, 2017
Wool, fabric, acrylic paint on fabric, thread, 67” h x 58” w
Collection of the Artist
L2017.5.3

**CAROLYN ANDERSON ARTIST STATEMENT**

In the series, *Disillusion/Dissolution*, I delve into complex issues of political, historical, and personal significance. Each piece in this series incorporates a Navajo weaving element, acrylic painting, and fabric. The process of making these pieces is a ceremony to help me understand or make peace with these challenging issues.
Julie Buffalohead – Artist

Biography

Julie Buffalohead, born in 1972, is an enrolled member of the Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design in 1995 and her Master of Fine Arts from Cornell University in 2001.

Buffalohead is a recipient of the McKnight Foundation Fellowship for Visual Arts, the Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art, the Fellowship for Visual Artists from the Minnesota State Arts Board, and the Jerome Foundation Travel and Study Grant.

Buffalohead lives and works in Saint Paul, Minnesota. She has exhibited both locally and nationally. She has had recent solo exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, Santa Fe, the Minnesota Museum of American Art, St. Paul, the Highpoint Center for Printmaking, St. Paul, the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, George Gustav Heye Center, New York, and the Plains Art Museum in Fargo, North Dakota, and others.

She has been in group exhibitions at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis, the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indian and Western Art in Indianapolis, the Carl N. Gorman Museum in Davis, California, and the Kohler Art Center in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, among others.

Her works are found in public collections including: The Field Museum, Chicago; Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minnesota, Museum of American Art, St. Paul; The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City; Rockwell Museum, Corning NY; Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, Washington DC, Tweed Museum of Art, University of Minnesota, Duluth; Weisman Art Museum, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Buffalohead's work has focused thematically upon describing Indian cultural experience through personal metaphor and narrative, drawing from the substance of traditional stories while contextualizing motifs of cultural identity. In pictorial terms, the works tend to evoke animals or anthropomorphism within a horizonless field, who are caught within the human condition, often tragic and comedic. Using an eclectic pallet, her painting juxtaposes evolving representations of animal spirit, deer, and coyote forms, and speaks to issues of commercialization of Native culture.
Selected Images

Julie Buffalohead (Ponca, born 1972)
If You Make This World Bad and Ugly, 2014
Acrylic, ink, and graphite on mulberry paper, 25.25” x 37”
Collection of the Artist and Bockley Gallery
L2017.6.1

Julie Buffalohead (Ponca, born 1972)
The Misgiving Stick, 2014
Acrylic, ink, and graphite on mulberry paper, 25.25” x 37”
Collection of the Artist and Bockley Gallery
L2017.6.2

Julie Buffalohead (Ponca, born 1972)
The Heist, 2014
Oil on canvas, 54 x 65.5 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Bockley Gallery
L2017.6.3
JULIE BUFFALOHEAD ARTIST STATEMENT

My work has focused thematically upon describing a cultural experience, an Indian experience, through a personal language which is a kind of iconography. My imagery is very personal, but also provocative. I use storytelling in a specific way to reference figures with traditional significance, where spirit and identity intermingle in nonlinear and interwoven narrative form. These narratives are evocative of a range of concerns I have from historical, political, cultural, as well as personal history, motherhood and childhood. Animals figure prominently in my work.

My imagery is so personal it’s hard to think about the viewer, but I try to be provocative. I use stereotypes because Indians didn’t have a hand in creating them. It’s my way of saying, “This is not who we are. This is your invention.”

The characters occupy a fictional territory that seems both out of place and time. They are not fairy tales, nor wholly products of fantasy, in the sense that they aren’t simply just invented. In many ways the characterizations are akin to staged facsimiles presenting specific archetypal or oppositional personalities, perhaps, in a way, as a dramatist would.

It is common in Native stories and imagery to find polymorphic beings. This figuration in masks, pottery, and dress manifests as a taking of the animal spirit to protect, to defeat, or as a didactic force.

Wielding mythic power to cope with the perils of human experience is a central concept in the work. Tapping into the animal within is a way to connect to some of the mysterious, impossible questions of daily life.

While sifting through what is evocative, my process begins on a mechanical level with a series of pencil on vellum cut-ups that serve the compositional need. It is driven by autobiography, on multiple levels, including historical references. Intuitively and emotively, things and creatures begin to coalesce together. Their world is psychically built, as one would put together (or tear apart) a set for a marionette scene or, perhaps, a ship in a bottle. This is my internal world.

When taped together, fragments of the montage become realized, the work begins on the paper with a painterly draft upon an earthy, transparent support called Lokta. The Lokta paper is made by hand in Nepal from shrub bark pounded into pulp – it’s a really beautiful ready-made.

I keep things minimal, using negative space. The spatial treatment is horizon-less and groundless, which emphasizes a precariousness in the layout that helps to shatter the familiar pictorial context of perspective and foreshortening. This realm is both extremely heavy, but weightless. Totemic figural and non-figural elements have gravity, but also ambivalence and enigma. The work is intimate and heartfelt. Does it avoid irreducibility? Sometimes just barely, while ultimately reinforcing pictorial tension, such that a kind of mythic spatial-figural relationship emerges.
The narrative that emerges in this mythic space is mostly opaque. As a parallel to traditional knowledge, the animals come out of the woods to meet with humans. The cast of characters are drawn from Native stories, the raven and the coyote. There exists a rosy nostalgia at times, in the work, but with a hard edge to it. I chose objects from childhood, furniture, kid’s toys, things with polaroid-photo vivid colors. This sweet surface disguises the less pretty realities of parenting, pain, and worry.

I began this autobiographical work to encapsulate my emotions about motherhood and to deconstruct romanticized visions of childhood. But these characters sometimes attack stereotypes of Native people, exposing their artificiality through children’s games. I use this iconography of childhood to explore the deeper and darker themes in order to exorcise them.
Andrea Carlson – Artist

Biography

Andrea Carlson (born 1979) received an MFA from the Minneapolis College of Art & Design in 2005. Although she now lives in Chicago, Carlson maintains a strong connection to her home town of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Over the span of her career, Carlson’s work has gained critical attention for its rigorous draftsmanship and cultural commentary.

Carlson’s first solo exhibition was presented by Soo Visual Art in 2006. She was awarded a 2007-2008 McKnight/MCAD artist fellowship, and her work has received wide attention with reviews in The Star Tribune, Newsweek and Art Papers. Carlson has exhibited at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (2007); October Gallery, London (2007); The Power Plant, Toronto (2011); and Plug In Institute for Contemporary Art in Winnipeg (2015).

From 2009-2011, Carlson created 20 large-scale painted drawings on paper as part of her VORE works. These pieces exhibited at the Plains Art Museum, Fargo (2010) and the Bockley Gallery in 2011. Part of this series exhibited in a solo show at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian at the George Gustav Heye Center, New York (2009–2010) and for the Venice Biennale at the University of Ca’ Foscari, Venice (2009).

Carlson’s work has been collected by institutions such as the British Museum, the Tweed Art Museum, the Weisman Art Museum, and the National Gallery of Canada.
Selected Images

Andrea Carlson (Ojibwe, b. 1979)
From the combined series:
16 framed pieces that are about 15” x 34” (all ink and oil on paper)
Courtesy of the artist and the Bockley Gallery
L2017.4.1-16
ANDREA CARLSON ARTIST STATEMENT

These works are remnants from different series of works: *O Cursed Lust of Gold, Forked Tongues and Vaster Ink Empire*. Although these works are modular and interconnected, one of the titles comes from the Hugh Blair poem that states, “O cursed lust of gold; when for thy sake The fool throws up his interest in both worlds, First starved in this, then damn’d in that to come.”

The line is also the last line in the silent film *Greed* (1924) by Erich von Stroheim. I’m interested in how this film slowly transforms the protagonist into a monster in a form of gold madness. A thread connecting these various works is also the idea of landscape and storytelling that continues to haunt our present interpretations of events. The phrase “Gold, God and Glory” sums up major motivations behind the *Age of Exploration*, but persist as major motivators of power in our current political landscape. The seascape also relates to the sea voyages of that era where landscapes were believed to be littered with monsters. The two worlds of Blair’s quote is referring to heaven and earth, but this work acknowledges the dichotomy to that of the “New World” as an allegorical heaven for European invasion and colonization.

Andrea Carlson (Ojibwe, b. 1979)
*Video with Objects, 2014*
Digital video, 1:15 mins
Courtesy of the artist and the Bockley Gallery
L2017.4.2
VIDEO WITH OBJECTS (2014)

*Video with Objects* points to flesh and water as ancient assimilators. A scrolling text reads, "I made myself a god today" over layered imagery of a mask and beef steak being cut apart against the backdrop of Lake Superior. The masks I create are of my own invention; they do not belong to a group, an identity, a people, but sprang from my own fantasy. They are culturally ambiguous things, transforming, as they are folded, mangled and submerged between texts and seascapes.
Heid Erdrich, Louise Erdrich, and Elizabeth Day (Collaborative work)

Biography

Heid E. Erdrich is the author of five books of poems, including *The Mother’s Tongue* (Salt Publishing), and, new in 2017, *Curator of Ephemera at the New Museum for Archaic Media* (Michigan State University Press). Her non-fiction memoir-in-recipes, *Original Local*, was a City Pages Top Food Book for 2014. She works as an interdisciplinary artist and scholar, a visual arts curator, editor, and performance maker. Her collaborative award-winning films, created with an all-indigenous crew, are available online at heid.erdrich.com. Heid is Ojibwe enrolled at Turtle Mountain. She teaches in the Augsburg College Low-residency MFA in Creative Writing program.

HEID E. ERDRICH ARTIST STATEMENT

It has been a joy to work with Elizabeth Day and Louise Erdrich. Both are sisters to me, one biologically and one tribally. The ease I feel as an artist working with other women artists and with Native people is extraordinary. Most artists never have to imagine working in a radically different context—say being the only white artist in a show of all Latina art—but that’s the norm for Indigenous artists. For me, collaboration just did not make sense until I was able to work with artists from a shared background, who share aesthetic and political interests—not to mention a sense of humor. Pure joy! - Heid
Elizabeth Day – Producer, Director and Writer

Biography

Elizabeth Day (Ojibwe) is a filmmaker from Minneapolis, Minnesota. Born on the Leech Lake Reservation and raised in the Twin Cities area, Day blends her Native American heritage with her urban upbringing to create films that employ traditional Ojibwe-style storytelling while using contemporary filmmaking techniques. Her work often explores the tension between traditional Native teachings and the life of a modern, urban Indian.

A primary motivation for Day is recording and capturing the quickly fading pastimes of Ojibwe culture, an important and integral piece of Minnesota’s history. Through the medium of film, she examines a broad swath of Native history, from the rich Ojibwe tradition of storytelling to the painful history of government-enforced boarding schools to the modern-day identity issues faced by Native families.

ELIZABETH DAY ARTIST STATEMENT

Advice to Myself 2: Resistance presents a visual and verbal collaboration between Day, author Louise Erdrich, and her poet sister Heid E. Erdrich. A figure dressed as a bear moves through a frozen yet domestic landscape, at times using a blade to practice martial arts moves, at other times carrying a baby in a woven carrier. The She-bear’s movements juxtapose with the voice of Louise Erdrich speaking a poem. Throughout the video, the bear gives us clues to her indigenous identity in her jingle dress moves, her beaded mukluks, the willow baby basket she carries. The words of the poem offer a message of personal, political, and universal resistance. In the last moments, the bear’s identity is revealed.
Selected Images

Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Chippewa)
Pallas Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Chippewa)
*Agency Apophany*, 2015
Mixed media installation, approx. 10’ x 10’
(Media = desk, typewriter, stationary, ashtray, placemats, chair, coat rack, fur coat, beaded hide mittens [Nancy Jones], mukluks, bear mask, collage box, Advice to Myself [Louise Erdrich], telephone stand with telephone playing audio Advice to Myself [Pallas Erdrich], video monitor for video Advice to Myself 2 [Heid Erdrich, Louise Erdrich and Elizabeth Day]
Collection of the Artists
L2017.8.1-16

Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Chippewa)
*Rough Draft*
Mixed media installation (box, paper, birch bark sheets)
Collection of the Artist
L2017.8.2
Louise Erdrich – Novelist

Biography

Louise Erdrich is a novelist and a Turtle Mountain Chippewa. She grew up in Wahpeton, North Dakota, where her mother, the artist Rita Gourneau Erdrich, taught her to draw, sew, and paint. Louise works with her sisters and daughters on art projects, including Agency Apophany, and Birchbark Books, a small independent bookstore that is also an ongoing piece of community art.

Selected Images

Elizabeth Day (Leech Lake Ojibwe) [director of photography and editor]
Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Chippewa) [writer]
Heid Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Chippewa) [director]

Advice to Myself 2: Resistance, 2016
Digital video, TRT - 00:04:35
Collection of the Artist
L2017.7.1
LOUISE ERDRICH ARTIST STATEMENT

All of my life I have made objects, drawn pictures, inhabited characters as a writer or as an actor when reading my work to an audience. Collaborating with my fellow artists Heid Erdrich and Elizabeth Day allowed me to do all of these things at once. Advice to Myself is an ongoing piece that changes every time it is installed. It is about many things that have to do with being a mother and an artist – inhabiting a persona, reveling in disguise, harvesting the snow as an intangible idea. We are always tidying up, putting things away in boxes. Thus the safety pins, place mats, tiny photos of my children instead of paint in a paintbox. It is wonderful to work with other Native women and Native mothers, because the dichotomy between motherhood and art does not exist as a conflict. Our mothers created at all times and included us in their work. – Louise
Maggie Thompson – Artist

Biography

Maggie Thompson (Fond du Lac Ojibwe) was born and raised in Minneapolis, MN. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Textiles at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in 2013. As a textile artist and designer, she derives her inspiration from the history of her Ojibwe heritage, exploring family history as well as themes and subject matter of the broader Native American experience. Thompson’s work calls attention to its materiality, pushing the viewer’s traditional understanding of textiles. She explores the use of language and materials in her work by incorporating multimedia elements such as photographs, beer caps and 3D-printed objects. She is the recipient of the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation Regional Fellowship, a Jerome Fiber Grant, and a Minnesota State Arts Board Cultural Community Partnership Grant. Her work has been exhibited at my All My Relations Gallery, the MN Textile Center, and the Minneapolis Institute of Art with work in the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society and the Minneapolis Institute of Art. Thompson is also an emerging curator of contemporary Native art at Two Rivers Gallery and runs a small knitwear business called Makwa Studio.

Selected Images

Maggie Thompson (Fond du Lac Ojibwe)  
Fragments, 2016  
Photography, foam core, fabric, assemblage, queen bed, 6’ x 8’ 2.5”  
Collection of the Artist  
L2017.3.1
MAGGIE THOMPSON ARTIST STATEMENT

When I was in college, my Dad told me to look at the sunset whenever I missed him, and now it is something I try to do in my daily practice. Since losing my Dad, one of my biggest fears has been of forgetting: forgetting all those special moments and details.

This sunset is a photograph I took the summer after his passing. It is broken down into triangles or “fragments” representing the fear of having my memories fade and separate. The triangles are glued onto a sheer piece of fabric creating a blanket or sort of “comforter”. These memories come back to me the strongest when I am trying to fall asleep. This piece symbolizes my way of sleeping under all of my memories.

Maggie Thompson (Fond du Lac Ojibwe)  
*Grieving*, 2014  
Cotton, raw wool tapestry weaving, 3’ x 4.5’  
Collection of the Artist  
L2017.3.2

This piece was made during the last few months of my Dad’s life. The use of wool is meant to feel heavy and weighted much like grief. The wool surrounds three sections of color representing my Dad’s children. It was meditative to work on with the repetition in stripes and use of raw material.