

For Immediate Release

Groundbreaking Exhibition Explores Photography by and of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and Native American Photographers

In Our Hands: Native Photography, 1890 to Now features more than 160 works of art, establishing the long-standing role of Native photographers as innovative artists in the medium

MINNEAPOLIS—July 26, 2023—This October, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) will present *In Our Hands: Native Photography, 1890 to Now*, a major exhibition builds upon the work of Native artists, scholars, and knowledge-sharers to trace the intersecting histories of photography and First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and Native American cultures, from the Rio Grande to the Arctic Circle. Developed in partnership with a curatorial council comprised primarily of Native advisors, *In Our Hands* centers the work of Native photographers with a diverse array of photographic objects that illuminate the ways in which Native people have advanced the medium of photography for over a century. The exhibition opens on October 21, 2023 and will be on view at Mia through January 14, 2024.



Cara Romero, (*Chemehuevi*, born 1977), *TV Indians*, 2017, Archival inkjet print. Courtesy of the artist © Cara Romero

In Our Hands: Native Photography, 1890 to Now was collaboratively organized by photojournalist and Mia guest curator Jaida Grey Eagle (Oglala Lakota), Casey Riley, Chair of Global Contemporary Art and Curator of Photography & New Media, and Jill Ahlberg Yohe, Associate Curator of Native American Art, in partnership with a curatorial council of fourteen advisors that includes internationally renowned artists, academics, and knowledge-sharers based in Canada and United States. Together, the curatorial council and Mia staff developed the checklist and thematic organization for the show and grounded their decision-making in Native methodologies, including consensus and relationship building, mutual respect, and reciprocity. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, featuring essays and interviews by Mia staff and many curatorial council members.

“We are excited to present such a comprehensive exhibition about Native photography, one created by and for Native people that will be equally powerful for non-Native audiences,” said Katie Luber, Nivin and Duncan MacMillan Director and President of Mia. “The exhibition celebrates the legacies of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and Native American photographers who emerged from a range of creative backgrounds and highlights their lasting impact on the medium. By relying on Native knowledge systems to guide their work, the many curators who have contributed to this project have advanced the work of Mia as a whole. This exhibition underscores both our long-standing commitment to presenting works by Native artists and how our approach with these artists can strengthen relationships with our audiences and community.”

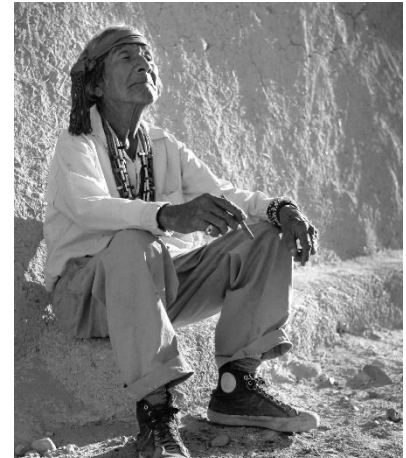
Presented in Mia’s 12,000 square foot Target Gallery, the exhibition is comprised of three thematic sections. By intermingling works created across time and place, and works that vary in format and formal approach, each section reveals the breadth and depth of Native photographic practice over that last 130 years.

The first section, *A World of Relations*, reveals the ways in which Native people and cultures conceive of the living world holistically, with respect for all forms of life and an appreciation for their interconnections. Foundational works by early twentieth century photographers such as Benjamin Haldane (Tsimshian), Richard Throssel (Nehiyawak [Cree] / Adopted Crow), Louis Situwuka Shotridge (Tlingit), and Peter Pitseolak (Inuit); works by mid-century artists such as Lee Marmon (Laguna Pueblo), and George Johnston (Tlingit) appear in conversation with works by contemporary artists such as Will Wilson (Diné), Sarah Sense (Chitimacha / Choctaw), Pat Kane (Algonquin Anishinaabe, Timiskaming First Nation), and Erica Lord (Athabaskan / Iñupiat / Finnish, Swedish, Japanese-American). Poignant historical

images created by Nettie Odlety (Kiowa) and Parker McKenzie (Kiowa) while they attended U.S. residential schools, as well as more recent works by Dakota Mace (Diné), Shelley Niro (Bay of Quinte Mohawk, Six Nations Turtle clan), Rosalie Favell (Métis), Jolene Rickard (Tuscarora Nation, Turtle Clan), Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie (Diné [Navajo] / Seminole / Muscogee [Creek]), Matika Wilbur (Swinomish and Tulalip), Faye Heavyshield (Kainaiwa Nation, Blackfoot Confederacy Blood Reserve), and many others highlight the crucial work of women photographers as well as female-identifying sitters. Among the works included in this section is Matika Wilbur's *Dr. Henrietta Mann*, depicting Dr. Mann, an enrolled member of the Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma and 2021 recipient of the National Humanities Medal in recognition of her leadership in the development of Native American studies programs.

The section *Always Leaders* recognizes Native leadership across an array of critical issues such as human rights, sustainable environmental practices, and the interdependent preservation of Native land and culture. This section draws together works by a broad range of historical and contemporary photographers, including Jennie Ross Cobb (Cherokee), Larry McNeil (Dak'aweidi K'eet Gooshi H'it, Killer Whale Fin House Tlingit / Nisga'a), Virgil Ortiz (Cochiti Pueblo), Ryan Red Corn (Osage), Greg Staats (Kanien'kehá:ka [Mohawk], Six Nations Hodiñshq:ni), Robert Kautuk (Inuit), Kalen Goodluck (Diné [Navajo] / Mandan / Hidatsa / Tsimshian), and Kali Spitzer (Kaska Dena / Jewish), among many others. Works included within this section focus on Native practices and perspectives, rejecting settler-colonial claims and asserting Native peoples' longstanding presence upon the land.

The diversity of leadership inherent to many Native communities and the duty to transmit community knowledge through time is exemplified in Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie's (Diné [Navajo] / Seminole / Muscogee [Creek]) 2012 portrait of We'wha, a nineteenth century Zuni Native American artist. Widely recognized during his lifetime, We'wha was an *Ihamana*: a male-bodied person who often wears both men's and women's clothing and takes on the social or ceremonial roles of women in Zuni culture. Tsinhnahjinnie's portrait celebrates both the history and contributions of We'wha to Native two spirit communities and the influence those practices have on contemporary 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.



Lee Marmon (*Laguna Pueblo, 1925–2021*), *White Man's Moccasins, 1954*, Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of the C.N. Gorman Museum, 2008.20.10.67

The third section, *Always Present*, declares the visual sovereignty of Native photographers and celebrates First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and Native American people through the lens of Native artists. The works in this section reject harmful visual narratives that would portray Native communities and cultures as declining or disappearing, and instead illuminate the profound social, political, intellectual, and artistic engagements of Native communities. Works by Carl Beam (M'Chigeeng First Nations Ojibwe), Frank Big Bear (White Earth Nation), James Brady (Métis), Dorothy Chocolate (Tłı̨chǫ), Jeremy Dennis (Shinnecock Indian Nation), Cara Romero (Chemehuevi), Kimowan Metchewais McClain (Cree [Cold Lake First Nations]), Horace Poolaw (Kiowa), Wendy Red Star (Apsáalooke), Barry Pottle (Inuit), and many others demonstrate the resilience, tenacity, and vision of Native photographers and their communities.

Dorothy Chocolate Carseen's (Tłı̨chǫ) *Victor Rabesca skinning a caribou at Got'okàti (Mesa Lake) NWT* documents the cultural and ecological knowledge and practices of Native communities. In the foreground of the work, a man sits among tall grasses and plants and skins a caribou, while tipis fill the background. The scene is contemporary and eternal: dressed in modern clothing, Victor Rabesca performs a task that Native people have been completing for centuries.

In addition to the thematic galleries, the exhibition includes reflection spaces for both Native and non-Native visitors, providing room for contemplation of the works on view. Key terms and phrases will also be identified and discussed throughout the show to ensure knowledge-sharing within and beyond Native audiences. As an overview of the exhibition development process, biographical information of curatorial and community council members is also included. "I truly believe that it is important for the legacy of all photographers to know this history, and it is the history of the land you are more than likely standing upon," said Jaida Grey Eagle, consulting curator. "This history and the stories told by the photographers are incredible testaments to the original people of this land. I hope that our collective journeys allow the next Indigenous youth who says they want to be a photographer to be believed wholeheartedly by their family, community, and all of us. It is a beautiful life, and we will be waiting for you with open arms and hearts."

Curatorial Council

- Rheanne Chartrand (Métis), curator, McMaster Museum of Art, University of Toronto
- Mique'l Icesis Dangeli (Tsimshian), adjunct professor, University of Northern British Columbia
- Rosalie Favell (Métis), artist
- Tom Jones (Ho-Chunk), associate professor, University of Wisconsin–Madison
- Amy Lonetree (Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin), associate professor, University of California, Santa Cruz
- Shelley Niro (Mohawk), filmmaker and artist
- Veronica Passalacqua, curator, C.N. Gorman Museum, University of California, Davis
- Jami Powell (Osage), curator of Indigenous art, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College
- Jolene Rickard (Tuscarora), associate professor, Cornell University
- Cara Romero (Chemehuevi), artist
- Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie (Seminole-Muscogee-Navajo), professor and curator, University of California, Davis
- Emily Voelker, assistant professor, University of North Carolina at Greensboro
- Laura Wexler, professor, Yale University
- Will Wilson (Diné), artist, photographer, and chair of the photography department at Santa Fe Community College

Community Council

This council will serve as advisors and consultants to the exhibition as it is presented in Minneapolis.

- Alexandra Buffalohead (Bdewakantowan Dakota), artist, curator, musician, and arts and cultural engagement manager at the Native American Community Development Institute and All My Relations Arts Gallery in Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Sharon Day (Bois Forte), Ojibwe leader and Native American activist, artist and writer
- Coral Gessner (Choctaw, Chickasaw, African American, Polish, English, Irish, Scottish), Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-racism Coordinator for Saint Paul Public Library
- Raphael Gonzales, a Dakota/Boricua hip hop artist and activist from Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Heidi Inman (Sisseton Wahpeton Sioux Tribe), an artist, photojournalist, and environmental activist
- Delaney Keshena (Menominee), moccasin maker and fine artist
- Bazille Owen-Reese, a beadworker from the Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin
- Iyekiyapiwin Darlene St. Clair (Lower Sioux Dakota Oyate), Multicultural Resource Center director and associate professor at St. Cloud State university
- Maryam Marne Zafar (Lenape), a graphic designer and visual strategist working in Minneapolis, Minnesota

In Our Hands: Native Photography, 1890 to Now carries forward Mia's commitment to presenting work by Native American artists. In addition to this exhibition, Mia is currently presenting a retrospective of the work of the late Minnesota-based Ojibwe painter Jim Denomie, which runs through March 24, 2024. Denomie was known for his large-scale paintings and pointed vignettes commenting on current events, including U.S. politics and protests of the Dakota Access Pipeline Project.

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About the Minneapolis Institute of Art

Home to more than 90,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest art collections in the country—from all corners of the globe, and from ancient to contemporary—Mia links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration.

General admission to Mia is always free. Some special exhibitions are ticketed with a small admission fee.

For more information, call + 1 612 870 3000 or visit artsmia.org

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