

FIRST NATIONS CONTEMPORARY ART

Exploring the Native American Experience in the Midwest

Open view Friday, October 30, 2020

What is the experience of First Nations people living in the Midwest? Perceptions, misconceptions, and identity are explored in this second annual exhibition of First Nations artwork. Presented in partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire American Indian Planning Committee.

Highlighting the works of Dawn Dark Mountain, an Oneida Indian artist from Wisconsin, Christopher Sweet, Ho-Chunk/Ojibwe from south central Wisconsin and Brittany Tainter, an Eau Claire based artist and a member of the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe of Ojibwe.

ROSE DOLAN-NEILL, CURATOR

*Visual & Literary Arts Manager
Pablo Center at the Confluence*

Pablo Center at the Confluence occupies the sacred and ancestral lands of Indigenous Peoples. We honor the land of the Ojibwe and Dakota Nations. Artists of the First Nations tell their stories, share their experiences, and explore their identity in a diversity of mediums and styles in our second annual exhibit exploring the Native American experience.

Through the viewing of art in our virtual exhibits on our website, we can all have a common experience. We can gain an understanding of our community and our humanity by scrolling through the images of artworks that have been created by our region's top artistic minds. We can reach audiences from across the world and those communities close to home that might not get to come into Pablo Center that often. Please be sure to read through the artistic statements and biographies of the artists on display, these words will add to the enjoyment and appreciation of the artwork and may give you further reason to purchase a work of art from Pablo Center. Who knows, it may even inspire you to take the next steps in your creative endeavor.

ARTIST STATEMENTS AND BIOGRAPHIES

Statements and biographies are written by the individual artists and are published with their permission. The views expressed are their own. All artwork pricing is set by the artist and is non-negotiable and non-refundable. All artwork sales are by commission with Pablo Center at the Confluence. Your purchase supports our endeavors to present quality visual arts programming that is free and open to the public. Thank you.

DAWN DARK MOUNTAIN

Using stories and traditions from my own Woodland culture, I translate traditional Iroquois beadwork designs into patterns and borders in my paintings. I also try to use the traditional meanings of different designs in creating each piece. The paintings themselves thus become visual stories, enhanced by the written narrative that I create for each one. My creative process begins with gathering these ideas and stories and developing a series of sketches, which will eventually be put together in a full-sized drawing. This drawing will then be transferred to watercolor paper. My actual painting begins with a series of layers of transparent watercolor washes. The smaller details are developed in the same manner, again using layers of transparent watercolor. I work with two brushes at all times, one to lay in the color, the other to control the diffusion of color with water. I lay the initial pigment in on dry paper, wetting the area near the line and following behind with the second brush to take the color where I want it to go. When the area is completely dry I may go back and lay in more pigment on the other side of the initial line and, using the same technique, create a line, which diffuses into the paper behind it. This creates the dimensional appearance of the painting as the "outlined" areas stand out from the background. As the piece nears completion, the details are emphasized and the darkest pigments are laid in. Some pieces are conceived with a "three-dimensional" aspect. Inspired by the three-dimensional effect created by my controlled watercolor style, I have taken that effect to another level by actually creating a sculptural painting. These sculptural paintings include cutout pieces that are successively layered on top of the original watercolor painting. The layering is put together in such a way as to create a "three-dimensional" painting. This work expands on the idea of what a painting is; experimenting with three-dimensional formats, adding beadwork, wampum or other elements and taking the painting in a new direction. I also create works as relief prints using wood or linoleum blocks, printing with oil-based inks and adding watercolor to enhance the images. Recently, I have created monoprints using relief printing, watercolor collage and layering, including a triptych using all of these elements. My work has a strong connection to my cultural background. I also seek to draw connections between the cultures of the past and the contemporary life of Native peoples, following the paths that traditions and art have taken over the centuries and interpreting them in a new way.

Dawn Dark Mountain is an Oneida Indian artist from Wisconsin specializing in watercolors, who works with Woodland Indian subject matter and ideas. This subject matter combined with a very controlled watercolor style (often mistaken for airbrush) results in a peculiar mystical quality sometimes referred to as "magic realism". An interest in art since childhood led Dawn to study at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and at the University of Arizona in Tucson where her emphasis was on watercolor. She graduated from the U of A with a Bachelor of Fine Arts and has taught art to both elementary and pre-school children. An Oneida Indian artist from Wisconsin specializing in watercolors, Dawn works with Woodland American Indian subject matter and ideas. This subject matter combined with a very controlled watercolor style (often mistaken for airbrush) results in a peculiar mystical quality sometimes referred to as "magic realism". Dawn is a member of the Turtle Clan of her tribe and she includes a turtle in every piece, sometimes obvious, sometimes hidden but always present. In addition to her paintings, Dawn also has a series of linoleum and wood block prints that are then completed with watercolor. Each of these blocks is carved and printed by hand, making each print unique. Dawn has been the recipient of numerous awards and honors including a fellowship and awards from the Santa Fe Indian Market, an Artist-in-Residency and numerous awards at the Eiteljorg Museum Indian Market, Indianapolis, IN, and awards, including Best of Show, at the Tesoro Foundation Indian Market in Denver, CO among others. Dawn's "Treaty Calico Series" about the Treaty of Canandaigua is part

of the permanent collection of Contemporary Native American Art at the New York State Museum in Albany, NY. Dawn was commissioned in 2006 to design a Pendleton blanket in honor of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin and created another blanket with Pendleton in 2011. Her work has been on book covers and posters, in magazines, and on several CD covers including Joanne Shenandoah's 2005 recording of "Sky Woman". Dawn's work can be found in numerous shops and galleries throughout the United States. She also markets her work at various art markets, art fairs and art shows including Santa Fe Indian Market, the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C., the Heard Museum in Phoenix and the Eiteljorg Museum in Indianapolis, IN.

Two Row Wampum, the Kaswentha

Watercolor, mixed media, 39x31 | \$8500

in 1613 to record and honor an agreement between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch, the first non-Natives to encounter our people. This treaty held three elements, first acknowledging our friendship, second that we will live in peace, and lastly that this treaty will last forever. Each peoples' ways were symbolized by the purple rows that run the length of the belt. In one row is a ship with our white brothers ways, in the other is a canoe with the Haudenosaunee ways. They are surrounded by white, symbolizing peace. We would each follow our own path or river, side by side, in peace and respecting each other as long as the grass is green, the water runs downhill, as long as the sun rises in the east and sets in the west and as long as our Mother Earth will last.

Who We Are

Watercolor, mixed media, 29x23 | \$7500

Who we are is not defined by our DNA, nor by our blood quantum, an artificial measure imposed on us by those who sought to erase us. Who we are is a matter of our culture, our upbringing, and our sense of belonging to our family, our clan, our community and a shared heritage with our ancestors. Our stories are not dictated by material taken from the graves of our ancestors, such a practice dishonors them and is a simplistic attempt to define our identity. Rather, we are made of the elements of our culture and our survival from a policy of genocide, assimilation and marginalization. We are Haudenosaunee, People of the Longhouse.

Creation, Sky Woman's Song

Watercolor, mixed media, 31x31 | \$8500

It is said that long ago there lived among the clouds another people, called sky people. Among them grew a sacred tree, which gave off a beautiful light. Sky Woman, who was with child, fell through a hole at the roots of the sacred tree. As she fell, she tried to find something to hold on to, but what came away in her hands were the sacred plants of strawberry & tobacco and a bit of earth from the roots of the tree. She fell into our world where there was only darkness with water below. The water birds saw Sky Woman fall and caught her so she would not fall into the water. It was the Great Turtle who offered his back as a place for Sky Woman. One by one, the sea animals swam down below the water in search of the sacred earth that fell with Sky Woman. It was Muskrat, finally, who was able to bring up some of the earth and spread it on Turtle's back. Sky Woman sang and walked in a circle and Turtle's back grew and grew until it became the Earth, as we know it, Turtle Island. And Little Turtle climbed into the sky and gathered the lightning into a great ball that became the sun and a smaller ball that became the moon and so there was light in the world.

Grandmother Moon

Watercolor, mixed media, 29x23 | \$8200

Borrowing the format of a traditional Iroquois "whimsy" picture frame, this layered, cut-paper, watercolor tells the

story of Sky Woman, who came to live on Turtle Island (the Earth), and there, she gave birth to her daughter, Tekawerahkwa. She grew to womanhood and had great love for her world. Some say it was the West Wind who grew to love Tekawerahkwa and soon she gave birth to twins although she died as they were born. Sky Woman, in her grief, placed Tekawerahkwa's head in the sky so she could watch over the Earth she had loved so much. She was given power over all waters. From her body grew Corn, Beans, & Squash, the Sacred Sisters, which would feed the people, as well as Strawberry and Tobacco, sacred plants.

We have been instructed to call her Grandmother. As she goes through her cycle she makes her face new, in harmony with other female life. She determines the arrival of children, causes the tides of the oceans and helps us measure time. For her, we are grateful and give thanks.

The Three Sisters

Relief print, hand-colored, 21x17 | \$700

Beans, corn, and squash grew together in mounds, placed about three feet apart. Cornstalks provided supports for climbing bean vines. Squash leaves provided shade, keeping the soil moist and preventing weeds from choking the crops. In this way, the soil remained fertile for years. When the soil became fallow, the entire village would move to a new location.

"the natural life teaches us to live in harmony with one another" - traditional teachings of the Iroquois

The Harvest Moon: Yeyathókwas Wahní•tale?

Watercolor on paper, 31x39 | \$6000

The Harvest Moon comes when the crops are gathered in preparation for the long winter ahead. The Harvest Ceremony is held to give thanks for all the food that was harvested and stored for the winter. Our Life Supporters (the Sacred Sisters, Corn, Beans, and Squash) dances are the major rites of the Harvest Ceremony. As is traditional, the ceremonies begin and end with the Thanksgiving Speech. The dances included the Women's Dance, the Corn Dance and the Stomp Dance.

Harvest Moon: Yeyathókwas Wahní•tale?

Relief print, hand-colored, 17x27 | \$850

In traditional Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) culture, we give thanks and honor that which sustains us. The Three Sacred Sisters, Corn, Beans, & Squash, and the Deer, whose lives are revered and never taken without need, are known as "Our Sustenance."

Honor the Children of Earth & Sky

Watercolor on paper, 23x29 | \$4000

In Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) tradition, we honor all of the elements of life that the Creator has given us, all of the children of the Earth and Sky with wings and roots and feet, as well as the waters, the Earth, and the Sun, Moon and Stars. It is our responsibility as the People to care for all that Creation has provided.

Preservation

Watercolor, mixed media, 23x29 | \$8000

Seeds are spiritually meaningful to Indigenous Peoples. They are believed to be living, breathing, beings who are our relations. It is our responsibility to care for them and they, in return, provide us with food to live and for the future.

They are a part of our cosmology and our creation story. Our white corn can be traced back to our traditional homeland in (what is now) upstate New York.

We seek to preserve our heirloom corn seed, as well as the other sacred sisters, beans and squash, for future generations within a symbol of cycles and eternal life. In a time of climate change it is necessary to protect our Native foods for future generations, despite drought, global warming, storms and floods, famine, and yes, disease and viruses from changes in our environment and habits. "Preservation" honors the seeds as well as other endangered traditional foods and cultural essentials such as salmon and Quahog shells; it is a prayer for protection. We give thanks, Yaw^ko.

Sky Woman, the Oneida Creation

Watercolor on paper, 23x29 | \$4000

It is said that long ago there lived among the clouds another people, called sky people. Among them grew a sacred tree, which gave off a beautiful light. Sky Woman, who was with child, fell through a hole at the roots of the sacred tree. As she fell she tried to find something to hold on to, but what came away in her hands were the sacred plants of strawberry & tobacco and a bit of earth from the roots of the tree. She fell into our world where there was only darkness with water below. The water birds saw Sky Woman fall and caught her so she would not fall into the water. It was the Great Turtle who offered his back as a place for Sky Woman. One by one, the sea animals swam down below the water in search of the sacred earth that fell with Sky Woman. It was Muskrat, finally, who was able to bring up some of the earth and spread it on Turtle's back. Sky Woman sang and walked in a circle and Turtle's back grew and grew until it became the Earth, as we know it, Turtle Island. And Little Turtle climbed into the sky and gathered the lightning into a great ball that became the sun and a smaller ball that became the moon and so there was light in the world.

It is this concept of the Good Mind, essential in our Oneida culture that demonstrates how it is our responsibility, as part of the world, to help each other in whatever way we can, to the best of our ability.

The Hunting Moon: Luto • láts Wahní • tale?

Watercolor on paper, 31x39 | \$6000

The hunting moon is the first new moon after the Food Storing Moon. With the leaves falling and the deer fattened, it is time to hunt. Since the harvesters have reaped the fields, hunters can easily see the animals that have come out to glean (and the foxes that have come out to prey on them). Bow and arrow designs are placed on the borders, the sky dome symbol runs along the top border and the wolves, honored for their hunting skills, run along the bottom border. As the men go out to hunt after the dance, they are reminded to return at the Mid-Winter Moon, when the meat will be needed to sustain the people through the rest of the winter and the new year begins. The deer are reminded of their responsibility to provide sustenance for the people.

The Long Night Moon: Wahsu • tés Wahní • tale?

Watercolor on paper, 31x39 | \$6000

The twelfth moon of the year is the time for the people to gather and tell stories. The elders tell stories to refresh our memories. Stories were told to the children because one day, they would tell them to their children and our oral traditions would continue.

The celestial tree, sky dome design with the world tree or tree of peace borders the landscape within the skydome with the sleeping sun above.

The Maple Syrup Moon: Otsi'khé•ta Wahní•tale'

Watercolor on paper, 31x39 | \$6000

The Maple Syrup Ceremony is to give thanks to all the trees, especially the maple, for the services they provide us: shelter, warmth, cooking, and sugar. The maple sap is harvested and the tobacco is burned acknowledging all of Creation and asking for all to be safe. It is the time of year when the day's light is equal to the night's dark.

The Strawberry Moon: Awahihte' Wahní•tale'

Watercolor on paper, 31x39 | \$6000

The strawberry has long been a revered gift of Creation in Oneida and Haudenosaunee culture. The fruit was the first to ripen in the year and is celebrated with the Strawberry Ceremony in mid-June. Strawberries were used in many ways, eaten fresh, mashed and dried in strips and mixed with maize to make strawberry bread. It was the Strawberry Water or juice that was known to promote health and well-being and was a feature of various ceremonies.

It is known that our souls do not end with this life but go on to the next world. It is said that we walk the strawberry trail. The path is laden with sumptuous strawberries to sustain us as we travel on our walk among the stars.

Tree of Peace

Relief print, hand-colored, 21x17 | \$700

The Great White Pine is the symbol of the Peace between the six nations of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois). Its branches symbolize the sheltering protection of this Great Peace. Its roots extend in the four directions and represent an invitation for all to follow them back and take shelter beneath its branches. It bears the Sun and the Moon aloft. Eagle flies above & watches over the People.

CHRISTOPHER SWEET

My Ho-Chunk name is Huuc Co (Hoonch-Cho) Blue Bear. My English name is Christopher Sweet. My family resides in the south-central area of Wisconsin. I attended the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, NM. A majority of my work is in relation to my Native American culture. I paint in miniature sizes to large murals. My main medium is acrylic on stretched canvas, but I also like to incorporate different texture techniques as well. Creating art keeps me focused on the important things in my life which include family, unity and healthy ways. I have a quiet nature and sometimes have trouble expressing myself, but art eases that challenge. I let my different moods, thoughts and feelings take shape on the canvas. My mind is always trying to find the right path in a painting, so when I begin a process there are sometimes a few ideas layered underneath the completed piece of work. It can be a long journey, but it is always a therapeutic experience.

Christopher Sweet (Ho-Chunk/Ojibwe) from south central Wisconsin, studied at the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, N.M. His work is intertwined with modern art and native culture. His work varies from still life to abstract, but his main focus is the, incorporating of unity and healing. "Art was a gift given, but not pursued. Experiencing the pain of losing two daughters put me in a bad place, but a woman I now proudly call my wife came into my life, helped heal me and reunite me with my gift of art. Now I focus all my creative energies toward unity and healing." Christopher and his wife Chrissy currently reside in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Unity in Healing

Plaster, textured canvas, acrylic, 40x30 | Not for sale

Messengers Vision

Acrylic on canvas, 24x12 | Not for sale

Reflecting Our Ancestors

Acrylic on canvas, 48x48 | \$7150

Ho-Chunk Elders

Plaster textured canvas, acrylic, 40x30 | \$6500

Remembering Stand Rock

Acrylic on canvas, 11x14 | \$455

Smoke Dancer

Acrylic on canvas, 8x10 | \$260

Dance From a Distance

Acrylic on canvas, 8x10 | Not for sale

Eagle Headdress

Acrylic on canvas, 16x20 | Not for sale

BRITTANY TAITER

When drawing, I lean toward charcoal as my most used medium. I appreciate the way I can blend and create texture directly with my hands and it somehow feels like I can connect better with each piece I create. Much of my artwork serve as a way for me to examine and process the thoughts and feelings that I have in relation to my Indigenous culture. Through the creation of the drawings in this collection, I was contemplating the forced cultural assimilation of Indigenous peoples. In the past, thousands of Indigenous children were sent to boarding schools, many through force, where the goal was to eliminate the cultural teachings and ways of life that they had been brought up with. In some instances, the children themselves were eliminated. This cultural genocide was just one of the many forms of trauma that was inflicted upon Indigenous peoples, and it continues to have an impact on families and communities to this day. In contrast to my drawings, my beadwork deals in light and healing. Our trauma may play a role in our lives, just as it would in any other group, but Indigenous cultures are also full of beauty, knowledge, and wisdom. Beading is one of those beautiful aspects and is one of the most prevalent mediums of artwork in many Indigenous communities. The act of beading and wearing beadwork itself are forms of medicine, so I approach each piece I create with intention and while in a positive mindset. I mostly lean toward colorful and striking designs, but I also appreciate the range of styles that I can achieve in my beadwork.

Eau Claire based artist, Brittany Tainter, is a member of the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe of Ojibwe. Originally starting her career as a Graphic Designer, her work now crosses many disciplines and often references Indigenous identity and place. She owns Giizhig Design Company, a small creative agency that offers graphic design, copywriting, and other services. Since starting the business in 2017, she has expanded her services and now creates and sells custom beadwork.

Assimilation

Charcoal & acrylic paint on paper, 19.5x24 | \$300

Raise Your Hands

Charcoal on paper, 19.5x25.5 | \$200

Metallic Silver & Black Fringe Earrings

Seed Bead Earrings, .625x4.75 | \$80

Yellow, Brown, & Quill Fringe Earrings

Seed Bead Earrings, .625x3 | \$45

Brown, Maroon, & Yellow Fringe Earrings

Seed Bead Earrings, .625x4.75 | \$60