



From the Belly of Our Being: *art by and about Native creation*

EDUCATORS RESOURCE



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About the Exhibition

To learn more about the artists and their artwork, please view the companion to this document, [Getting to Know the Artists](#).

About the Exhibition

From the Belly of Our Being: art by and about Native creation

Chokma! Greetings! This exhibition presents art made by some of the nation's finest Native American artists, providing a glimpse into the complex relationship between contemporary art and feminine cultural identity. For Indigenous people, our cultural ethos is passed to the contemporary generation through our tribal creation narratives, where we find the stories of the women who made the world.

The names and roles of these feminine forces vary: Asdzáá nádleehé or Changing Woman in Navajo, Selu or Corn Mother in Cherokee, Sedna or Mother of the Sea in Inuktitut, Ataensic or Sky Woman in Seneca, Nokomis or Grandmother in Ojibwe, Anunk lte or Double-Face Woman in Lakota. These women had a hand in creation, forming the people and the things of the earth, providing us with gifts that sustain us into the twenty-first century. Through these examples our tribal communities learn to be respectful of women, guide the men to understand the female role within tribal so-ciety, and, often, vice-versa.

Each of the participating artists explores how these feminine forces continue to inform the ideals of feminine behavior and gendered roles, the ability to be both delicate and gentle, while also being a force that is powerful and bold. The exhibition addresses those stories, where these feminine forces may be of great intellect, wisdom, skill, and generosity – and sometimes crippled by recognizable human frailties. This exhibition provides an opportunity for the artists to express, overtly or nuanced, how these forc-es live through them and within their art.

That time of the beginning was not so long ago that we have forgotten. So, the idea that these forces are present in the arts of Indigenous people is not a courteous nod to primordial time, it is evidence that these figures still live in our hearts and minds. It is our collective hope, curator and artists alike, that in sharing these personal stories we will edify others to appreciate these stories and the role of women within our collec-tive social engagements. This exhibition is our remembering, our telling of these sto-ries for ourselves and for our children.

- heather athone Guest curator

Curricular Connections

Cultural Understanding, Astronomy, Current Events, Visual Literacy, Contemporary Art, Female Art, Native American Studies, Math, Literacy, Self-ethnography, Composition

Recurring Themes

- The passing of feminine identity from mothers to daughters to granddaughters becomes an extension of the creation stories.
- Many of the stories are morality stories and they are usually told as per tradition, rather than written and read.

Booking a tour/visit – “Beyond the Classroom”

Beyond the Classroom (the OSU Museum of Art's PK-12 inquiry based tour program) encourages students of all abilities to engage with art and each other by looking deeply, and thinking creatively and critically.

Students make personal and curricular connections through discussion, writing, and hands-on activities. We welcome both public school groups and home-schoolers. Admission to the museum is always free.

To book a tour, please visit <http://museum.okstate.edu/tours>. Please be advised that we require at least three weeks advanced notice for tours of 10 or more to allow for appropriate staffing.

For more information, to discuss programming, or to request a transportation or substitute teacher subsidy, please contact Carrie Kim, Curator of Education and Programming, at (405)744-2785 or carrie.kim@okstate.edu.

Online Resources

Follow the OSU Museum of Art Pinterest page at <https://www.pinterest.com/osumuseumofart/> to stay up-to-date on all educator resources, news articles, curatorial talks, artist talks, artist presentations, and more.

“From the Belly of Our Being”

Exhibition catalog

https://issuu.com/osumuseumofart/docs/bob_catalog_wcover

Inside:OSUMA – Installing Marie Watt’s “Blanket Stories”

A time-lapse video showcasing how the artwork is installed in an exhibition.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBTBuxDHeXY>

Artist lecture: C. Maxx Stevens, Featured in “From the Belly of Our Being”

Installation artist, C. Maxx Stevens, discusses her body of work, her process, and the installation of her work in the exhibition in this artist lecture.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LEdeSrEkNA>

Anita Fields Residency, Installation

Anita Fields worked with the community in the museum to create a collaborative art piece that explores how mothers care for us as the Earth cares for us. The resulting work, a site specific ceramic installation exemplifying themes of interconnection and common ground, will remain on view in the artLAB at the museum for the duration of the exhibition. This video is a time lapse of the installation.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5a-DJfxlllg>

Curator’s Lecture: heather ahtone

Curator heather ahtone speaks about the inspiration for the exhibition.

http://ra.okstate.edu/STW_CAS/Museum_Tours/2016/Ahtone/Lecture/video.html

Curator’s Tour: heather ahtone

Curator heather ahtone walks through the exhibition and discusses a few pieces to discuss in depth.

http://ra.okstate.edu/STW_CAS/Museum_Tours/2016/Ahtone/Tour/video.html

Getting to Know the Artists

This companion guide to the Educators Resource Guide explores biographies and artist statements for each of the 20 artists in the exhibition.

https://issuu.com/osumuseumofart/docs/getting_to_know_the_artists_-_from

Oral History Project

The exhibition features many artists who have participated in the [Oklahoma Oral History Research Program](#).

- Shan Goshorn - <http://dc.library.okstate.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/Spot/id/308/rec/4>
- Anita Fields - <http://dc.library.okstate.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/Spot/id/305/rec/12>
- C. Maxx Stevens - <https://soundcloud.com/oohrp/stevens>

Native American Heritage: Indian Country Guide

An overview of Oklahoma's 39 Tribal Nations

<https://nie.newsok.com/educators/curriculum/native-american-heritage-indian-country-guide/>

Reading List

A list of books that explore the Native creation stories

Jingle Dancer, Cynthia Leitich Smith

Buffalo Woman, Paul Goble

The Legend of the White Buffalo Woman, Paul Goble

First Woman and the Strawberry, Gloria Dominic

Monster Slayer, Vee Browne

Beauty Beside Me, Seraphine Yazzie

Grandmother Spider Brings the Sun, Geri Keams

The Earth Made New, Paul Goble

Skywoman, Joanne Shenandoah

Native American Creation Stories of Family and Friendship, Teresa Pijoan

Visual Vocabulary

We see symbols that we recognize all the time. We know that when we see a large red octagon, we stop. We associate a large yellow "M" to represent McDonalds. Think about it, what symbols do you see on a day-to-day basis?

Artwork also makes use of symbols. In the Native American tradition of storytelling, symbols are used to record the basic details of the story so they are not forgotten. It is helpful to understand what some of these symbols represent.

A cross directly references the stars. It can be repeated with different effects. Most tribes believe that the key figures are coded into the stars as constellations. (See Reference Image *Connections*)

A dragonfly is represented by a cross with a doubled horizontal bar or an abstracted triangle. This represents the relations that humans have to water. It is used for making things beautiful. (See Reference Image *Connections*)

Flowers are related to fertility and growth. (See Reference Image *Looking Forward, Sewing Box for Anog Ite*)

Native American designs often rest strongly on a sense of balance, symmetry, and repetition. (See Reference Image *Sewing Box for Anog Ite*)

OTHER VOCABULARY TERMS:

- Contemporary: now, today
- Genesis or creation stories: Stories that explain how something began or how a group of people came to exist
- Installation: an artwork that an artist has created in the space (See C. Maxx Stevens or Anita Fields in "Getting to know the Artists")

Discussion Questions and Lesson Plan Starters

STAR GAZING

Connecting art to consider: Teri Greeves' *Sunboy's Women*,

Take a look around the exhibition. How many works do you see that feature stars or constellations? Many of these artists shared stories that include the stars. Can you think of any stories you've been told about the stars? Since the beginning of time, humans have looked to the stars and told stories about their origins and purpose. How many constellations can you find and name in the artwork?

ACTIVITY: Check out the app, Night Sky, for a fantastic star gazing experience. View the stars, planets, and constellations in real time as you move your phone or tablet around. Night Sky is available for [Android](#) and [Apple](#) phones.

POCKET TREASURES

Connecting art to consider: Anita Fields' *Finding Our Way to the Earth*

Look closely at Anita Fields' *Finding Our Way to the Earth*. Do you notice something in the pocket of the dress? Why would the artist have put that there?

The elk is an important figure in her tribe's genesis story. It is an important symbol to her. Read Anita's story in [Getting to Know the Artists](#).

What is important to you? What would you keep in your pocket?

ACTIVITY: Use air dry clay to create a small figure or object to keep in your pocket. You may choose to push objects into it to create textures, you might decorate it with sequins, beads, markers, etc.

SELF-ETHNOGRAPHY

Connecting art to consider: Meryl McMaster, Anita Fields, Julie Buffalohead, and Marie Watt

Many of the works in the exhibition include elements that discuss Native history, including Meryl McMaster, Anita Fields, Julie Buffalohead, and Marie Watt. Often times, that history is over looked or misrepresented. Much of this is due to the cultural ethnography that became prevalent at the turn of the century. Edward Curtis, among others, frequently photographed Native peoples in a staged setting, wearing garments that either they would not have usually worn, or were not even representational of their culture. Through this practice, the world was handed an inaccurate view of Native Americans. This has happened throughout the world for many indigenous cultures.

Ethnography is the documentation and analysis of a particular culture through field research.

Self-ethnography is the documentation and analysis of the self as a foreign culture through field research.

How might the two produce different results? If someone you did not know were to study you, do you think they would fully understand the things you do each day or why you do them? If you were to study yourself, do you think you might find anything new you didn't know about yourself?

ACTIVITY: Use yourself as a subject for documentation. Record all of your movements throughout the week. Include your activities, behaviors, and conversations. At the end of the project, what have you noticed? Did anything surprise you? How might this experience have been different if someone else had observed you throughout the day/week?

Use your observations to create an artist collage that represents you. For example, Shan Goshorn frequently uses photographs of her culture, taken by outsiders who were studying them, and rearranges them to provide a more accurate representation of her culture. You might use photos, magazine clippings, and text to build a collage. Shan also layers photos in the photo process. You can do this using a computer.

MAKING A MYTH

Connecting art to consider: Meryl McMaster's

Meryl McMaster creates works that explore a new myth. A myth is a story that has transited across time. It is a traditional story that is told and retold. A myth usually explains some natural or social phenomenon and typically involves supernatural beings or events, or the origins of a culture or cultural practice.

ACTIVITY: Create a new myth. Get creative! Remember to include a larger-than-life being or event that serves as an explanation for an event, or phenomenon, or practice. Maybe you'll make up a new cultural practice that people will follow in the future. You might choose to pull from current events as a jumping-off-point for your mythical event.

THE GREAT FLOOD

Connecting art to consider: Cara Romero's *Eufala* and *Water Memory*

Water Memory and *Eufala* are both deluge stories, or stories about a great flood. All around the world, people have stories of great floods. Read more about these stories at <http://www.talkorigins.org/faqs/flood-myths.html>.

ACTIVITY: Using Google My Maps, <https://www.google.com/maps/about/mymaps>, plot the locations of each of the flood stories around the world.

OIL IN THE GULF

Connecting art to consider: Linda Lomahaftewa's *Two Ancestral Gulf Bird* series

Art is informed by current events. Shortly after the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, Linda visited the Gulf and created a series of works. The two *Ancestral Gulf Bird* works are from this series. Learn more about the oil spill by visiting <https://ocean.si.edu/gulf-oil-spill>.

ACTIVITY: Research news articles and discover current events that you are passionate about. Create artwork inspired by the event.

SCALE

Connecting art to consider: Teri Greeves' *Sunboy's Women*,

Teri Greeves used her mother's hand as a model for the handprint surrounding the women of Sunboy's Women. Her mother's hand was most likely not this large, so Teri had to use scale to make the hand larger. Scale is the size of one object in relation to another.

ACTIVITY: Hold up your hand to match the hand in the artwork (remember not to touch the art!). Step back until your hand is the same size as Teri's mother's hand (be careful not to bump into any walls or people!). How far back did you go? Have a friend try it too. Who backed up farther?

Artist-In-Residence



MAKING OUR WAY TO THE TABLE

Connecting art to consider: Anita Fields' *Making Our Way to the Table*

In conjunction with *From the Belly of Our Being*, artist-in-residence Anita Fields worked with the community in the museum's artLAB to create a collaborative art piece that explores how mothers care for us as the Earth cares for us. Participants had the opportunity to contribute to this artwork by forming a simple human figure that represents their mother, a mentor, or a significant role model. The resulting work, a site-specific ceramic installation exemplifying themes of interconnection and common ground, will remain on view in the artLAB for the duration of the exhibition.

Each figure became a piece of a large clay table scene that symbolizes how we are nurtured and provided nourishment for our hearts, bodies and minds. By using the medium of clay, the earth itself, we pay homage to Mother Earth, provider of our existence.

TEACHER PREP FOR WORKSHOP

The following questions and basic research will help prep students for the workshop:

1. Many times I begin in the school library to see if there are any books available about clay or creating with clay.
2. Basic knowledge about what clay is, where it comes from.
3. Home Flashcards Art/Design Ceramics Vocabulary and Definitions

Flashcard Set

Total Cards – 31, Subject - Art/Design, Level - 8th Grade

- Pin Tool - A sharp instrument used to cut, pierce, and incise designs on clay.
- Slip - A mixture of clay and water in the consistency of mush, that acts like a glue when it is put between two pieces of clay.

¹ Anita Fields, *Making Our Way to the Table*, 2016. Clay installation.

- Score - The scratching of the clay surface, prior to applying slip, so that the slip penetrates the clay and bonds the two pieces better.
- Pinch pot construction - A clay form created by manually pinching and manipulating a mass of clay into a desired shape.
- Coil Pot construction - Creating the walls of ceramic forms by melding together ropes of clay.
- Slab construction - Creating a ceramic form by hand-building walls using flat rolled-out pieces of clay.
- Kiln - The device used in ceramics to fire (bake) our ceramic art work. The kiln takes about 8 hours to heat up and an additional 12 hours to cool down. It fires at about 2000 F.
- Potter's Wheel - An electric or manual machine with a flat, rotating disk used for throwing clay.
- Drying Cabinets - Cabinets where we put our ceramic in progress, to circulate and dry to the "bone dry" state before firing.
- Wedge/Knead - To wedge means to cut clay into manageable pieces and push and press on clay to expel all air bubbles trapped in the clay. If not done thoroughly, air bubbles will cause the clay piece to burst in the kiln, damaging the kiln and other pieces of work.
- Greenware- The state of clay when it goes into the kiln. The clay has no water in it and is referred to as "Bone dry".
- Bisqueware - The state of clay when it comes out of the kiln. It is a permanent state and is hard enough to have glaze applied.
- Glaze - A mixture of ground minerals and fluxes, that is applied to fired clay. It results in a glassy coating and forms a water-tight surface.
- Embellishment - Designs or pieces added to a clay form in the leather hard state to further enhance its beauty and decoration.
- Glazeware - The state of the ceramic art work after the glaze has been applied and the piece has been fired for a second time.
- Bone Dry - The state of the clay when all water has been pulled from the clay. The clay becomes a chalky white color, and when held up to your face, does not feel cold. It is now referred to as greenware and is ready for the first kiln firing.
- Leather Hard - The state of clay when a lot of the moisture has been pulled from the clay, but it is still soft enough to carve. It is at this stage where we can attach other pieces of clay & add other embellishments before allowing it to dry completely.
- Wire Cutter - Used to cut clay off a larger piece and to cut in half to check for air pockets.
- Rolling Pin - A wooden instrument used to roll out slabs of clay to an even thickness.
- Sponge - A device used with water to moisten the surface of the clay and smooth surface.
- Rib - A flat wooden or metal tool used to smooth wet or leather hard clay.
- Modeling tool - Wooden or plastic instruments that help to shape and carve out clay.
- Loop Tool - A clay tool with wire loops at each end used to carve clay.
- Banding Wheel - An instrument upon which a clay vessel is placed that turns easily and helps the potter to apply accurate decoration.
- Cone - Cone-shaped test pieces that are inserted in the kiln to let the potter know when a certain temperature has been reached.
- Bat - A flat disk or slab of sturdy material on which pottery is formed or dried.
- Foot - The base of a container. It should never be glazed or the pot will stick to the kiln shelf.
- Hole Cutter - A tool that can be inserted into clay to cut out holes.
- Air pockets - Air trapped within the clay body.

- Slab Sticks - Flat wooden sticks placed on either side of a piece of clay when rolling with a rolling pin to assure even thickness of the slab of clay.
- Spray Bottle - A bottle with spray attachment, filled with water, which is used to keep clay moist while working the clay.

Reference Images



Dyani White-Hawk (Sicangu Lakota, b. 1976). *Connections*, 2015. Acrylic 52, 13 beads, and thread on canvas. 42" x 42"



Molly Murphy Adams (Non-enrolled descendant Oglala Lakota, b. 1977). *Sewing Box, for Anog Ite*, 2016. Sculptural beaded sewing box, 8" x 10" x 10"



Melanie Yazzie (Navajo, b. 1966). *Looking Forward*, 2004. Monotype, 30" x 22".



Teri Greeves (Kiowa, b. 1970). *Sunboy's Women*, 2011. Glass beads, wooden beads, and Swarovski crystals on raw silk, 72" x 72" x 2"



Anita Fields (Osage/Muskogee, b. 1951).
Finding Our Way to the Earth, 2016.
 Porcelain clay, photo image transfer, mixed
 media, 58" x 38"



Linda Lomahaftewa
 (Hopi/Choctaw, b.
 1947). *Ancestral Gulf
 Bird #6*, 2010.
 Monotype, chine colle
 with ledger paper, 21
 3/4" x 28 1/2"



Linda Lomahaftewa (Hopi/Choctaw, b. 1947). *Ancestral Gulf Bird #15*, 2010. Monotype, chine colle with ledger paper, 21" x 26"