



WE NEVER LEFT

Artists of Southeast Indian Tribes

WE NEVER LEFT

Artists of Southeast Indian Tribes

“Discovery of the New World” unleashed centuries of disease and violence that decimated American Indian populations. But it was settler colonialism—the hunger for land that fueled America’s expansion—that increasingly drove American Indians from their homelands.

For Indians living in the Southeast, the Indian Removal Act of 1830 was its ultimate expression, resulting in the forced removal of an estimated 65,000 to “Indian Territory” west of the Mississippi (today’s Oklahoma). En route, as many as ten thousand people are estimated to have perished on what is now remembered as the Trail of Tears.

Removal, however, was far from complete. Estimates of Indians who remained range from as few as 4,000 to as many as 14,000—a discrepancy, scholars explain, due to who government officials counted. (Indians’ reluctance to come forward was certainly understandable.)

How did they manage to stay? By fleeing to, or already living on, inaccessible or “undesirable” land. Relying on existing state or federal treaties (usually resulting in further loss of territory). Assimilating through intermarriage and acculturation. And armed resistance.

WE NEVER LEFT celebrates contemporary artists descended from these American Indians who, against all odds, remained in the Southeast as tribes who continue to live in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia.

Their highly diverse artwork reflects engagement with tradition-inspired techniques, cutting-edge technology, and pop culture, and addresses a variety of issues—cultural preservation, language revitalization, personal identity and expression, American history, community pride, and threats to homeland and the natural environment.

**THIS EXHIBITION WAS ORGANIZED BY THE MUSEUM OF ARTS
AND SCIENCES, DAYTONA BEACH, FLORIDA,
AND CURATED BY WALTER L. MEYER, INDEPENDENT CURATOR**



PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

JOSHUA ADAMS

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

Wood sculptor, painter, photographer and potter, Joshua has won awards at the famed Santa Fe and Cherokee Indian Markets and was selected for Art in Embassies in Tanzania. His works in WE NEVER LEFT celebrate Sequoyah, inventor of the Cherokee syllabary, and address the conflict between American Indian beliefs and Christianity.

“DOC” & SPENCER BATTIEST

Seminole Tribe of Florida, Choctaw

Hip-hop artist/producer “Doc” composed “The Storm,” the music video on display in WE NEVER LEFT. Featuring his brother Spencer, a singer, songwriter, musician, producer and actor, it tells the story of their Florida Seminole tribe, and won Best Music Video at the National Museum of the American Indian’s Native Cinema Showcase.

HOLLIS CHITTO

Mississippi Choctaw, Laguna Pueblo, Isleta Pueblo

Hollis taught himself quillwork and then beadwork. He shows at leading Indian Markets, including Santa Fe’s, and lectures at institutions like the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian. Participating in WE NEVER LEFT with his father, Hollis’s beaded bag addresses HIV, over-represented but under-recognized in Native American communities.

RANDY CHITTO

Mississippi Choctaw

An acclaimed clay artist, Randy’s art is found in numerous museum collections including the National Museum of the American Indian, Heard Museum, and Denver Art Museum. Bears, symbolizing strength and courage, figure in much of his work, including the piece in WE NEVER LEFT.

JESSICA CLARK

Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina

Working in a variety of mediums, Jessica’s works are in the collections of the Museum of the Southeast American Indian, the Savannah College of Art & Design-Lacoste, France, and the Federal Reserve Bank in Charlotte, NC. Her artwork in WE NEVER LEFT addresses two important themes of Lumbee life: family and the Lumbee River.

FAREN SANDERS CREWS

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

A proud “Miss Cherokee 1968,” Faren is a self-taught artist working in a number of mediums, including the unconventional pastel on canvas included in WE NEVER LEFT, which depicts one of her culture heroes. Other work recently appeared in “Return from Exile: Contemporary Southeastern Indian art,” a traveling exhibition.

PEGGY FONTENOT

Patawomeck, Patawatomi

Known for her photography and beadwork, Peggy has shown in such prestigious settings as the National Museum of the American Indian, Eiteljorg Museum of the American Indian & Western Art, and Heard Museum. Her beaded sampler in WE NEVER LEFT confronts the controversial and complicated legal definitions of Indian identity.

JEFFREY GIBSON

Mississippi Choctaw, Cherokee

Jeffrey’s diverse work draws upon his own and Pan-Indian traditions, alternative subcultures, pop culture, and universal themes. His beaded piece in WE NEVER LEFT is no exception. He shows internationally, and is in many collections, including Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Denver Art Museum, and the Smithsonian Institution.

SHAN GOSHORN (1957-2018)

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

A renowned multi-media artist, Shan's unique text-rich baskets are in the collections of such institutions as the National Museum of the American Indian, Denver Art Museum, Minneapolis Institute of Art, and Switzerland's Nordamerika Native Museum. Her baskets in WE NEVER LEFT address historic and contemporary American Indian issues.

SHERRELL HENDRICKSON

Poarch Band of Creek Indians

The many traditional Creek art practices Sherrell mastered in programs offered by her tribe's Calvin McGhee Cultural Department earned her prizes in the 2018 Art Show for pottery, basketry, jewelry, gourds, and copper tooling, as well as "Best of Show" for the magnificent traditional Creek patchwork long jacket featured in WE NEVER LEFT.

LUZENE HILL

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

Luzene is a multi-media and conceptual artist whose works have appeared in such institutions as the Museum of Arts & Design in NY, and Eiteljorg Museum of American Indian & Western Art, and in Japan, Canada, UK, and Russia. Her pieces in WE NEVER LEFT address one of her special interests: the revitalization of the Cherokee language.

ASHLEY MINNER

Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina

A member of the Lumbee diaspora living in Baltimore, Ashley is a community based visual artist, and doctoral student interested in the relationship between place and identity. Her work in WE NEVER LEFT is part of a larger project that makes the statement: "While Lumbees run the gamut in appearance, we are all exquisite."

BENNY MITCH

Mississippi Choctaw

The fact that Benny's neighbors on the reservation couldn't afford art for their living room walls inspired him to sell his self-taught drawings to them at a reasonable price. His pieces in WE NEVER LEFT depict important cultural events—a stickball game, and a Snake Dance at his tribe's Mother Mound. This is his first off-reservation exhibition.

JESSICA OSCEOLA

Seminole Tribe of Florida

Jessica's ceramic artwork has appeared in "Return from Exile: Southeastern Indian Art," shows in Florida and New

Mexico, and the book, "We Will Always Be Here: Native Peoples On Living and Thriving in the South." Like her ceramic bas-relief in WE NEVER LEFT, her autobiographical narrative art speaks to her multicultural identity.

JEAN-LUC PIERITE

Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana

Jean-Luc lives at the intersection of traditional culture—through his tribe's Language and Culture Revitalization Program—and 21st-century technology—via his job at the Fab Foundation that emerged from MIT's Center for Bits & Atoms Fab Lab Program. His digitally fabricated sculpture in WE NEVER LEFT testifies to this fact.

CAROLEEN SANDERS

Catawba Indian Nation

A Catawba master potter, Caroleen considers clay sacred, and learned by watching her mother and family members. While her shapes are primarily traditional, she's also known for making busts of historic figures like the one in WE NEVER LEFT of 20th-century Chief Samuel Taylor Blue, famous for his innovative economic and cultural programs.

SARAH SENSE

Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, Choctaw

Sarah is an internationally acclaimed mixed media artist, photographing scenes then cutting them up and weaving the strips according to traditional Chitimacha basket techniques. She's shown in the U.S., Europe, Canada, and South America. Woven into her work in WE NEVER LEFT is a photo of Bayou Teche at the Chitimacha Reservation.

MONIQUE VERDIN

United Houma Nation

Creator of the award-winning film, "My Louisiana Love," Monique is an interdisciplinary artist who documents the interconnectedness of environment, economics, culture, climate and change in Mississippi's bayous. Her photographs in WE NEVER LEFT depict her family's imperiled life in this precarious environment.

FRED WILNOTY

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

Fred comes from a long generational line of talented artisans. With no formal training, this award-winning carver learned from watching his father. "I love to pick up a stone and begin to cut away at it to see what's waiting inside." Like the sculptures in WE NEVER LEFT, his work often has traditional, spiritual, and transformational themes.



Student of Nature, 2012

STUDENT OF NATURE, 2012

*Acrylic on canvas
Collection of Lambert Wilson*

Over a period of 12 years between 1809 and 1821, a man named George Gist, later known as Sequoyah, created a system of writing for the Cherokee language that consisted of 86 sounds, each with its own written symbol. This syllabary led to widespread literacy among the Cherokee people, and became a critical tool in the legal battles that would be waged over Cherokee land. Language and syllabary continue to be an integral part of Cherokee identity and a unifying element between the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians and the Cherokees who were forcibly removed in the 1830s and now live in Oklahoma. This painting depicts the face of Sequoyah surrounded by a large serpent. I credit the natural world for inspiring Sequoyah's invention of the Cherokee written language.

CULTURE, FORGIVE ME, 2012

*Butternut wood
Collection of Lambert Wilson*

Culture, Forgive Me builds on the tradition of Cherokee mask-making to examine the relationship between native culture and Christianity. The mask was always addressing the idea of cultural assimilation, or cultural assassination. I almost chose both of these ideas as possible titles for the piece, but chose instead to name both figures individually—culture, represented in the mask, and the idea of forgiveness, represented in the cross. It's a perfect cultural juxtaposition within the two symbols. I wanted the viewer to engage the mask from a neutral standpoint, and not be directed by a negative idea of the past.



Culture, Forgive Me, 2012

JOSHUA ADAMS

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

My artwork reflects the preservation of my Cherokee culture, as well as the outside influences that have, and still do, impact Cherokee life and belief. I try to produce unique works of art with meaningful cultural relevance.

While my art practice also extends to stone carving, painting, photography, pottery, and videography, I'm proud of my long lineage of Cherokee woodcarvers, starting with my great-aunt and uncle Irma and James Bradley.

I literally grew up around woodcarving; the tools of the trade were always nearby.

I developed my own style in carving classes at Cherokee High School in my hometown of Cherokee, North Carolina. That school continues to integrate Cherokee culture throughout its curricula, and I'm privileged to teach carving classes there today. I always remind my students that as artists, there's no better source of inspiration than your own vibrant heritage.

ZACK “DOC” & SPENCER BATTIEST

Seminole Tribe of Florida, Choctaw

Born into a family of musicians—our Choctaw father grew up performing with the Battiest Gospel Singers—we were raised on the Hollywood, Florida reservation of our mother’s Seminole tribe. “I’ve been into hip hop since I was 15 years old, and have been perfecting my craft ever since, working alongside some of the biggest names past and present, including most recently, Taboo of the Black Eyed Peas,” explains writer, producer and rapper Doc. Spencer, his singer/musician, actor brother recalls, “My first memory of being on stage was when I was about four years old at my grandfather’s church in Oklahoma. They propped me up on the piano and put a microphone in my face. My father saw potential and taught me the basics early on.”

▶ PLAY VIDEO



THE STORM

Music video (05:20)

The Battiest brothers filmed their first music video on all six Florida Seminole reservations while teaching at a summer youth program. As with all their projects, they worked with other Natives. The video was directed by Kiowa/Choctaw filmmaker Steven Paul Judd, and the kids helped with tech, wardrobe, makeup, and location. By the time the camp was over, almost all of it had been filmed. An homage to their parents, grandparents, and tribal leaders, the song is a tribute to the resilience of the Florida Seminoles, the only Southeast tribe that didn’t sign a treaty with the American government. *The Storm* went on to win “Best Music Video” awards at the 36th Annual American Indian Film Festival in San Francisco and SWAIA Santa Fe Indian Market.

The Storm

HOLLIS CHITTO

Mississippi Choctaw, Laguna/Isleta Pueblo

My interest in art began at an early age. I'm told my grandmother was a beadworker. Although she died when I was very young, many people believe her talent was passed down to me. But I first started doing quillwork. I taught myself by looking at illustrations in a French Canadian book, and experimenting with beads and quills that my mom had used to try to teach herself this skill. The two art forms' techniques are actually related: the two-needle band in quillwork is similar to beadwork's lazy stitch. People often say that beadwork takes patience, but I don't see it that way. It's like coloring to me; I see the designs and colors become reality in my hands. I never think of beadwork or quillwork as craft, but as fine art.



Bloodwork No. 2 (front)

BLOODWORK NO. 2

Swarovski crystals, stone beads,
silk dupioni, silk habitai lining

The blood in our veins gives us life, and is celebrated by various tribes. Unfortunately, this same substance is at risk for disease. Underrepresentation and misleading figures veil the fact that new HIV infections in the Native population have been steadily rising, and rank third behind Hispanics and African-Americans. The taboos of speaking openly about unsafe sex and intravenous drug use contribute to these rates. This piece is a starting point of discussion. The blood down the

center is the elephant in the room. The reds are stark against the white background, and remind the viewer that in the midst of the mundane there is the prospect of disruption. The beautiful colors are cut with a realization that yes, this disturbance will change everything. But instead of being the end of the design, it will integrate and become part of the whole narrative. The back of the bag is decorated with morning stars. They also symbolize HIV positive status.



Bloodwork No. 2 (back)

RANDY CHITTO

Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians

I grew up in Chicago after my family moved from the Choctaw reservation in Mississippi as part of the Indian Relocation Act of 1956. I was interested in art from an early age, drawing first in the dirt under our Mississippi porch. My skills really took off at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe with its culturally diverse and keen artistic focus. Although I started in painting, I was inspired to work in clay by two mentors: Otellie Loloma and Ralph Pardington, who challenged me to create my own style. Two animals figure prominently in my creations: the bear and the turtle. These wisdom keepers were instructed to protect our Choctaw origin stories and to preserve the spirit of our people. I see myself as a storyteller sharing tales about family and community that are rooted in both my Choctaw heritage and my wife's Pueblo heritage.

STARTLED, BUT NOT AFRAID

Twice-fired coiled dry and wet sanded red clay, sheepskin leather, white oak, ash, rawhide

As we travel through our life, things happen and can startle us, but shouldn't frighten us. The Family faces the concern in their way. The older members are slowly facing the matter, while the youngest stands behind. The adolescent stands ready. The dog also moves slowly towards the problem. They were all startled, but met it without fear, but a smile.



Startled, But Not Afraid



The Lumbee



Lumbee Family Values II

JESSICA CLARK

Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina

My work documents and preserves the everyday life of the Lumbee people, along with the members of other Southeastern Native American tribes. They are from my perspective, as I am Lumbee, and depict the people, places, and events specific to us. We are a version of the Postmodern Native, a combination of various Southeastern Native American tribes, with European and African influences. We intermixed with other tribes and settlers, retained our cultural identity, and assimilated into European culture in order to survive, not succumbing to the meta-narrative of the Native American. The act of creating allows meditation on the narrative and process, becoming overcome by the emotions, sounds, and stories associated with each subject. By dispelling stereotypes, my work portrays the perseverance, legacy and narrative of Southeastern indigenous peoples.

THE LUMBEE

Digital print

The Lumbee River bisects Robeson County where I was born and raised, and has served as a source of food and refuge, giving life and taking it. Archeology proves our ancestors have thrived along its banks for at least 10,000 years. Its name means 'dark water' in our original language due to the tannic acid produced by decaying leaves and logs—making it hard to determine its depth, and to avoid the strong undercurrent. Numerous drownings over the years is why it's sometimes called 'Drowning Creek.' You may also see the river called the Lumber River, referring to its use in the past transporting logs to South Carolina at the height of the lumber industry. But most often, native people refer to it as the Lumbee River, home to the People of the Pines. It is a hauntingly beautiful place, which is what I hoped to capture in my photograph.

LUMBEE FAMILY VALUES II

Oil on canvas

This is a portrait of my parents that includes variations of the Lumbee pinecone patchwork. It is a tribute to my parents, and also signifies their relationship. There is an old saying, "Behind every good man is a great woman," and this is a depiction of that. Native cultures are matrilineal, and the women in my family are often portrayed in my work. They are very significant, often making the family decisions and serving as a stronghold. The pinecone patchwork is a part of our history and is specific to the Lumbee. It's meant to resemble the bottom of the pinecone, and was first created as a quilting pattern in the 1800s. It is worn on regalia and made into jewelry, with as many variations as there are materials to make it. I use the pinecone patchwork in my work to symbolize tradition, history, and culture.

FAREN SANDERS CREWS

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

I am a descendant of ancestors on both ends of the infamous Trail of Tears. I was born in Tahlequah, Oklahoma—the seat of the Cherokee Nation—and grew up from age seven on the Qualla Boundary/Cherokee Indian Reservation—the original home of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in the heart of North Carolina’s Great Smoky Mountains. I’m a self-taught artist working in a variety of mediums, and consider my talent a gift from the Great Spirit. Sometimes I work “unconventionally,” like the pastel-on-canvas piece in this exhibition. I do a lot of volunteer work, church work, and working with elders and shut-ins. I am very community/tribally oriented. Thus the innate practice of *gadugi*...doing and working for others. As one of the oldest living “Miss Cherokee’s” (1968), I also consider myself an Ambassador for my People, and endeavor to educate and break stereotypical ideas about us.

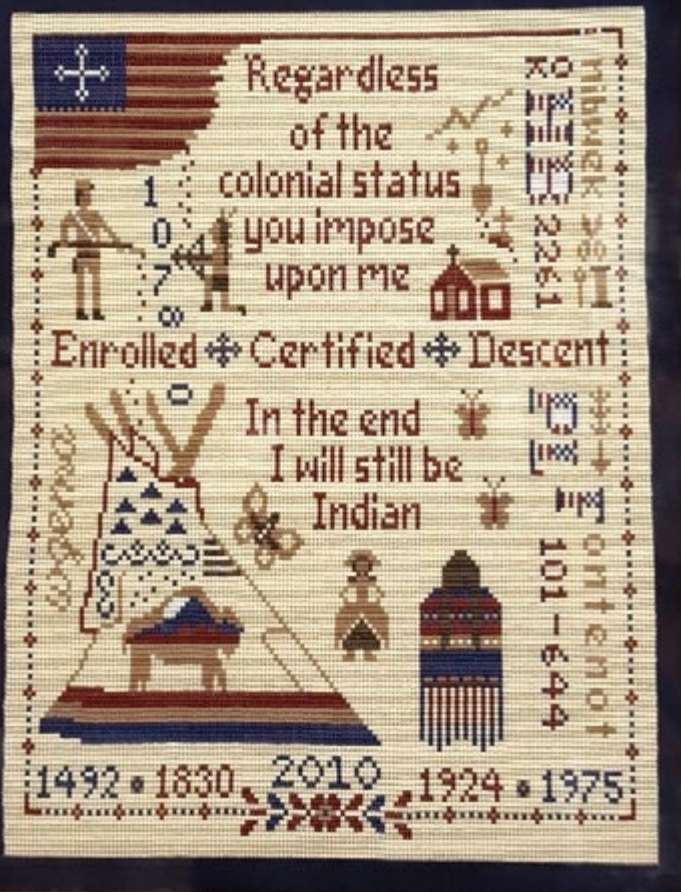


MY HEROES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN INDIAN COWBOYS!

Pastels on canvas

My Heroes Have Always Been Indian Cowboys! has several connotations...From Willie Nelson’s famous song and lyrics...this young native son sits in his father’s saddle and dreams of the days of the horse...of riding and hunting and fighting enemies...with the contemporary leisure of his bubble gum, you can almost picture the adventures in his mind’s eye...he and his cohorts...“and their slow movin’ dreams...” (to quote the song’s lyrics). The signature is my Indian name in our Cherokee Syllabary, *Se-dah-ni*, which does not translate into English.

My Heroes Have Always Been Indian Cowboys!



Colonial Status

COLONIAL STATUS

24,440 Size 11 Japanese glass seed beads loomed with Nymo nylon white thread

Colonia Status was born out of the ongoing conversation about who is and is not Indian. In 1982, I saw a pair of contemporary beaded earrings, which inspired me to start beading.

I am self-taught, and thirty-six years later I am still in love with the many facets of this art form. When designing *Colonial Status*, I decided to weave the piece on the loom so that it would replicate that of an old sampler. As one can see, the piece has a bit of rippling, giving it a feel of fabric. To date, *Colonial Status* has won Honorable Mention at the 2018 Heard Museum Guild Indian Fair & Market, and 2nd Place, Best of Beadwork & Quillwork Award at the Autry Museum’s 2018 American Indian Arts Marketplace.

Federal Law PL 101-644 states that if you are a member of a federal or state recognized Indian tribe, or certified by either, that you can lawfully sell your work as “Indian” produced—yet the conversation of who is and is not Indian continues to be a political hotplate. In 2016, Oklahoma enacted HB 2261, which is contrary to the federal law as it only allows members of federally recognized tribes to sell their work as native made. Certified by the Potawatomi, a federally recognized tribe, and a Member of the Patawomeck, a state recognized tribe that is in the process of seeking federal recognition, both disqualify me from marketing my work in Oklahoma as Indian. I have since filed suit against the State of Oklahoma, and the judge has placed an Injunction on the law while it moves through the courts. We are currently awaiting a Summary Judgment. (Footnote: Missouri has recently passed a similar law.)

DECODING COLONIAL STATUS

- PL 101-644** – Federal Law that defines who is an Indian Artist – Enrolled in a Federal or State Tribe, Certified by a tribe
- OK HB 2261** – New OK law that limits who is an Indian Artist – only acknowledges an artist if they are enrolled in a Federal tribe
- PLF** – Pacific Legal Foundation – Represents 1st Amendment Cases. Took on Peggy Fontenot as their client and filed suit against the state of OK
- PLFontenot** – Artist, Peggy Lynne Fontenot, fighting OK law
- 1492** – First Contact
- 1830** – Indian Removal Act
- 1924** – Native Americans made Citizens of the US/Racial Integrity Act implemented in VA, starting a Pencil Genocide by attempting to remove VA tribes and their people from history (Loving vs Virginia)
- 1975** – Racial Integrity Act removed from law
- 2010** – The Patawomeck Tribe of VA received State Recognition
- 10780** – My tribal number
- Flag** – 13 Colonies and the type of cross on the ships that arrived
- Soldier** – is a Native Soldier in the Revolutionary War fighting against other Native people
- Church/School** – Represents churches and Residential Schools where many of the children were murdered and buried in the church yards
- Scissors, Thread, Needle** – Girls were taught how to sew and created samplers as part of their education
- Broken Arrow** – My friend’s grandfather was handed an arrow and told to shoot it. Once he did, he was ordered to pick it up and hand it back to the Agent, who in turn broke the arrow in half – stating that this was the grandfather’s last act as an Indian
- Buffalo** – Represents our food supply that was killed. The red within the buffalo represents our polluted rivers
- Colonial Girl** – Who they want me to be
- Native Woman** – Who I am
- Butterflies** – Rebirth
- Floral Design** – Potawatomi/Woodland motif
- Wgema** – Potawatomi word for Boss, which is the name my uncle calls me
- Nibwek** – Algonquin word – Plural for STAND UP



JEFFREY GIBSON

Mississippi Choctaw, Cherokee

My art aims to complicate assumed ideas about “Native American-ness.” I started my art education at the Art Institute of Chicago in the early 90s during the rise of identity politics. I often felt pressured to reduce my work’s focus to reflect my Native American heritage. Getting my master’s degree at the Royal College of Art in London—generously funded by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians—opened my perspective. The materials I use can communicate both individuality and interconnection, unraveling static definitions rather than resolving them one way or the other. I think hard about the ethics of incorporating “traditional” practices, and how to pay homage to previous histories. My hope is that my work creates more than one representation; that it expands. We are stuck in a present and past written and defined by non-Native people. I want to make art that empowers the marginalized to author our own future.



Make Me Feel It

MAKE ME FEEL IT

*Beadwork panel, glass beads, quartz crystals, steel and brass studs, wire, wool, wood, artificial sinew
Collection of Edoardo Monti*

Make Me Feel It is one of the first wall tapestries I made in 2015. I wrote this text at a time when I was processing my own response to the impact of racism’s ability to make one feel invisible and numb. *Make Me Feel It* is a direct plea to feel. My decision to make textile-based wall works comes from the modern history of non-Native institutions exhibiting Indigenous ceremonial robes and weavings on their walls as decorative objects, oftentimes without any understanding of the narrative possibilities of their designs. In my work, I explore the possibilities of personal and symbolic narrative of geometric abstraction, material use and text, without mimicking any specific traditional aesthetics or formats of Native American histories.

SHAN GOSHORN (1957-2018)

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

I became politically active with my art in the early 1990s in response to America's quincentennial, creating photographic works addressing issues unique to native people. But I found that viewers often retreated as soon as possible. Years later in 2008, I was inspired to create a basket with a similar message, and discovered that the vessel shapes of baskets were a non-threatening vehicle. Audiences literally leaned into my work to learn more.

Normally one masters a traditional craft by repeatedly observing a family member. Without such a mentor, I taught myself by carefully examining a finished basket. Coincidentally, I learned the math and rhythm of basket weaving years earlier by drawing a series of traditional Cherokee basket patterns for the Indian Arts and Crafts Board. My intention is to present historical and contemporary issues relevant to Indian people today to a world that still relies on Hollywood as the main informant about Indian life.



Little River With Silver

LITTLE RIVER WITH SILVER

Arches watercolor paper splints printed with archival inks, acrylic paint, artificial sinew, silver foil

The photo in this piece is the Oconaluftee River in Cherokee country. It was chosen to keep the mission of the Standing Rock Lakota Water Protectors alive in the public mind and to illustrate the continuing spiritual, legal, and moral aspects of the life-affirming relationship all tribes have with water. The silver foil reminds of us of the beauty of pure water, and our responsibility to keep waters clean for all peoples and all generations. The pattern is "water," a traditional Cherokee one. Woven into this basket are the words from Standing Rock Lakota Chairman David Archambault's address to the UN, acknowledging the tribe's sacred relationship to the land, water, and sovereignty. This text also includes the Lakota prophecy of a poisonous greed that would move through the land "like a black snake," interpreted by native people to be an oil pipeline. Remember the water protectors' rallying cry, "Water is Life."

GOLD 'N VALUES

Arches watercolor paper splints printed with archival inks, acrylic paint, artificial sinew, copper foil

Once gold was discovered in Cherokee country in 1829, the settlers were even more aggressive about wanting our rich land. A handful of Cherokee men signed the Treaty of Echota agreeing to the US government's proposed removal terms to relocate southeastern Cherokee. The tribe objected that these men didn't have the proper authority to represent them, and in protest collected signatures from most tribal members. Reproductions of some of these signatures are included in this piece, combined with the Indian Removal Act of 1830, used illegally to support the forced removal of southeastern tribes to west of the Mississippi—the Trail of Tears. This Cherokee single-weave basket reflects conflicting values: Indian people place their ancestral motherland above everything else, while the dominant white culture idolizes the almighty dollar. The bulk of the text, written in Cherokee syllabary, is the Cherokee Morning Song, sung to greet the day in a sacred manner.



Gold 'N Values

SHERRELL HENDRICKSON

Poarch Band of Creek Indians

My engagement with Native American art began with art classes offered by the Cultural Department of the Poarch Creek reservation in Atmore, Alabama. I was fortunate to get instruction from local, national, and international artists. This hands-on learning inspired my own research into the history of Native American culture and archaeology.

I work in Seminole patchwork, shell carving, finger weaving, gourd carving, and copper tooling. Much of my shell carving and copper tooling pieces are replicas of artifacts from archaeological remains from

Native American village sites, mounds, and camps in the Southeast. I've participated in Poarch Band of Creek Indian Art Shows, displays at the Creek Indian Museum, and an exhibition at the University of South Alabama Library. Through my art, I want to honor my heritage, and to pay tribute to the craftsmanship of Indian artisans.



Long Jacket with Traditional Patchwork

LONG JACKET WITH TRADITIONAL PATCHWORK

Cotton, matte sateen

In the early 1800s, Southeastern Creeks and Seminoles would take scraps of materials that white settlers threw away or just didn't want any longer, and sewed them together in bands of color. This earliest "patchwork" would be in big triangles, slanted lines, and sawtooth designs. When vacationers started to come to south Florida in the 1900s, the Seminoles began to use patchwork as a way of earning income, making the patterns more intricate to appeal to the tourist trade. I made this long jacket with the intention that someone would eventually wear it, either for daily activities or during a tribal ceremony. I'm very proud of the fact that it won "Best of Show" in the Poarch Creek Cultural Department's 2018 Art Show.

LUZENE HILL

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

Luzene, a Cherokee word, was my paternal grandmother's name. It holds a part of my family history that has come to inform my art. My work advocates for indigenous sovereignty—linguistic, cultural and personal. I grew up in Atlanta with my white mother and grandparents. Summers we visited Cherokee, NC, but I only rarely heard Cherokee spoken. Both my father's parents had been sent, against their parents' wishes, to the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, founded in the late 19th century by Colonel Richard Henry Pratt in the wake of the US government's massive forced relocations of Native peoples. Pratt infamously followed the motto, "Kill the Indian, save the man." The school required children to speak English only. As a result, neither of my grandparents spoke their language to their children, nor did they teach it to me. This involuntary, often violently enforced, assimilation continued in similar schools across the country until 1978.



Spearfinger Letterpress Artist's Book



Shapeshifting



To Trap & Kill Spearfinger

SPEARFINGER LETTERPRESS ARTIST'S BOOK

Museum board, book cloth, ink, Arches text wove paper

The Cherokee syllabary, composed of 85 symbols, was created in 1821 by Sequoyah, a silversmith and scholar. The *Cherokee Phoenix*, a bilingual Cherokee/English newspaper was printed in New Echota, GA, until the military burned its office in 1835 prior to Cherokee removal to Oklahoma. The Eastern Band of Cherokee and Western Carolina University are making a concerted effort through the Cherokee Language Revitalization Project to support Cherokee language instruction. The Spearfinger collage illustrations were made for that program, and involve transformation, a concept that intrigues me. In creating a letterpress version of Spearfinger, I reference the 19th-century form of publishing Cherokee. I initially planned to make the book bilingual, but my feeling about preserving our culture deepened during the process. The syllabary, a symbol of Cherokee scholarship and achievement, conveys a strong language and culture, not a secondary one. It doesn't require a side-by-side translation. It stands on its own.

THE SPEARFINGER MYTH

Narrated in Cherokee by Nannie Taylor 13:45

The Cherokee language is endangered. A people's language is a direct reflection of their unique worldview. Native American tribes exist as sovereign nations within the US. Language is one expression of that sovereignty. Having the Cherokee language spoken and heard, even in this small way, is essential to keeping it alive.

▶ [PLAY AUDIO](#)

SHAPESHIFTING

Cut paper collage, Canson colored art paper

TO TRAP & KILL SPEARFINGER

Cut paper collage, Canson colored art paper



Tonya (2010)

ASHLEY MINNER

Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina

In my artwork and in my life's work, I am most inspired by the beauty of everyday people. I try to represent us in ways that are honest, in ways that we want to be seen, with honor and respect. I'm interested in stories, songs, families, histories, travels, traditions, dreams, resourcefulness during hard times, and everyone's expertise in their own life. I'm interested in making obvious both our humanity and our divinity, as well as the fact that we are all related. My artist books, prints, mixed-media drawings and installations are often made in collaboration with the people they depict. Always made with love, my art seeks to be a vehicle and a catalyst for healing, reconciliation, and hope.

THE EXQUISITE LUMBEE PROJECT 2010

These two portraits are from this project, a collaboration between myself, photographer Sean Scheidt, and 29 other members of the Baltimore Lumbee diaspora community whom I consider to be part of my generation. Many of us grew up together and despite the different paths we have chosen for ourselves in life, we are still close and see each other regularly. Those who agreed to visit the photography studio were encouraged to wear what they liked best. We did several sessions with different groups of people. Each time, the entire group would stand behind the camera to encourage the person whose portrait was being taken. Everyone was given the opportunity to choose the photograph they felt best represented them. Text incorporated into the portraits gives viewers a glimpse into our hopes for one another and the depths of ourselves. Although we, as a people, run the gamut of skin colors, hair colors and hair textures, we do have a distinctive quality, character and style. We recognize each other. We are exquisite.



Keith (2010)

TONYA (2010)
 Photograph by Sean Scheidt; Text by Tonya Gail Oxendine (Lumbee)
 Archival inkjet print

I'm one strong, independent Native woman. I accomplish so much, been through so much, and [I'm] still here... For everyone knows that I don't give up and that they will remember me for the loving, caring, strong, loud, funny, outgoing person that I am. A mother, a sister, a daughter, a friend, a Native, a female, a go getter, clean, drug free, always stayed drug free, that never fell or lost focus of where I came from, or who I am. Being Native to me means a lot of things, both good and bad. It means being part of something and someone with history. Being Native to me means being the 1st ones who discovered America, but the bad side sometimes I feel that I don't mean nothing because we don't be recognized for being Native.

KEITH (2010)
 Photograph by Sean Scheidt; Text by E. Keith Colston (Lumbee/Tuscarora)
 Archival inkjet print

I found it to be an honor to be part of this project—to be able to represent who I am as an individual, but also as part of a collective. It was an opportunity to be seen by not just a few, but whoever visits this exhibition, however far it may travel. There is a duality that some people miss out on. Sometimes people say that "the clothes make the man," but that's not always the case. What I'm wearing is an extension of who I am, but it doesn't make me Native or not. I don't want anybody to think that wearing a regalia is what makes me who I am. It's just an extension of who I am. It's not all that makes me who I am.

CHOCTAW STICKBALL: THE LITTLE BROTHER OF WAR

Tolih, as the game is known in Choctaw, earned its nickname because for centuries it was a peaceful alternative for settling disputes between communities. Players advance a woven leather ball (*towa*) down the field using only their hickory and leather or deer hide sticks (*kabocca*)—never touching or throwing the ball with their hand—in an effort to score a point by hitting the opposing team’s goalpost.

While traditional outfits have given way to team t-shirts and shorts, the *towa* and *kabocca* are still handcrafted. The drum, the heartbeat of the Choctaw, beats the cadence for the World Series championship games that are the thrilling close to the annual Choctaw Indian Fair.

The sticks are similar to lacrosse.

The ball’s the size of a golf ball.

Tackles are similar to football. Not surprisingly, Choctaw Stickball is sometimes referred to as the “Granddaddy of all field sports.”

I’m a lifelong resident of the Choctaw Pearl River Community in Neshoba County. My mother’s parents and grandparents went on the Trail of Tears and got land in Oklahoma. But they lost it because they couldn’t pay the taxes and came back to Mississippi. I don’t have any formal art training. I just love doing art. It began when I entered a drawing contest in the fifth grade. (I’m now 59.) I really got into it when I discovered I could work from photographs. When I would visit neighbors, they wouldn’t have anything on their walls. I asked why and they’d say, “I would love to have baskets but they cost too much.” So I started to draw baskets and other cultural items and sell it for cheap. That way people could afford it. My art is my sole source of income. I mostly sell on the reservation.



Youth Stickball Game, 2014

YOUTH STICKBALL GAME, 2014

Colored pencil on paper

The toss up of the ball (*towa*), much like basketball’s jump ball, started the *Tulli Okchi Ishko* youth division game, ages 14-17, at the annual Choctaw Indian Fair. Historically, players were barefoot, but today some wear socks or even shoes. The player on the far right sports a garment reminiscent of aprons worn by warriors prior to European contact. Benny seems to recall his community team won, the red-shirted Beaver Dam.



Snake Dance at Nanih Waiya

SNAKE DANCE AT NANIH WAIYA

Colored pencil on paper

Built by the tribe’s ancestors between the beginning of the Common Era and 300, *Nanih Waiya*, The Mother Mound, figures prominently in Choctaw origin stories and was only returned by the state to the Mississippi Choctaw in 2008. The Snake Dance imitates the movements of the reptile that feeds on insects and rodents that threaten crop success. The dancers wear traditional Choctaw clothing, adapted from 19th-century Euro-American attire. Marital status is coded: women’s flat hair combs=married; front-angled combs=single; men’s waist ribbons on both sides=married; on one side only=single.

JESSICA OSCEOLA

Seminole Tribe of Florida

I am American. I am Seminole. I grew up in my great-grandmother's Seminole Indian village in Naples, Florida. But my parents are from vastly different cultural backgrounds. As a biracial female trying to find my place in society, discovering my identity among two lifestyles and cultures has been a long journey in which my artwork takes root.

One very important aspect of my upbringing was the creative and artistic talents of my family. This inspired my passion for sculpture and ceramics, which led me to eventually pursue a Masters degree in fine art sculpture at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco.

My recent sculptural work is based on my personal narrative. My life as a mother, farmer, and artist has influenced my work to include "cycles" reflecting concepts of earth, human, life, and identity using ceramics and culturally symbolic organic mediums.

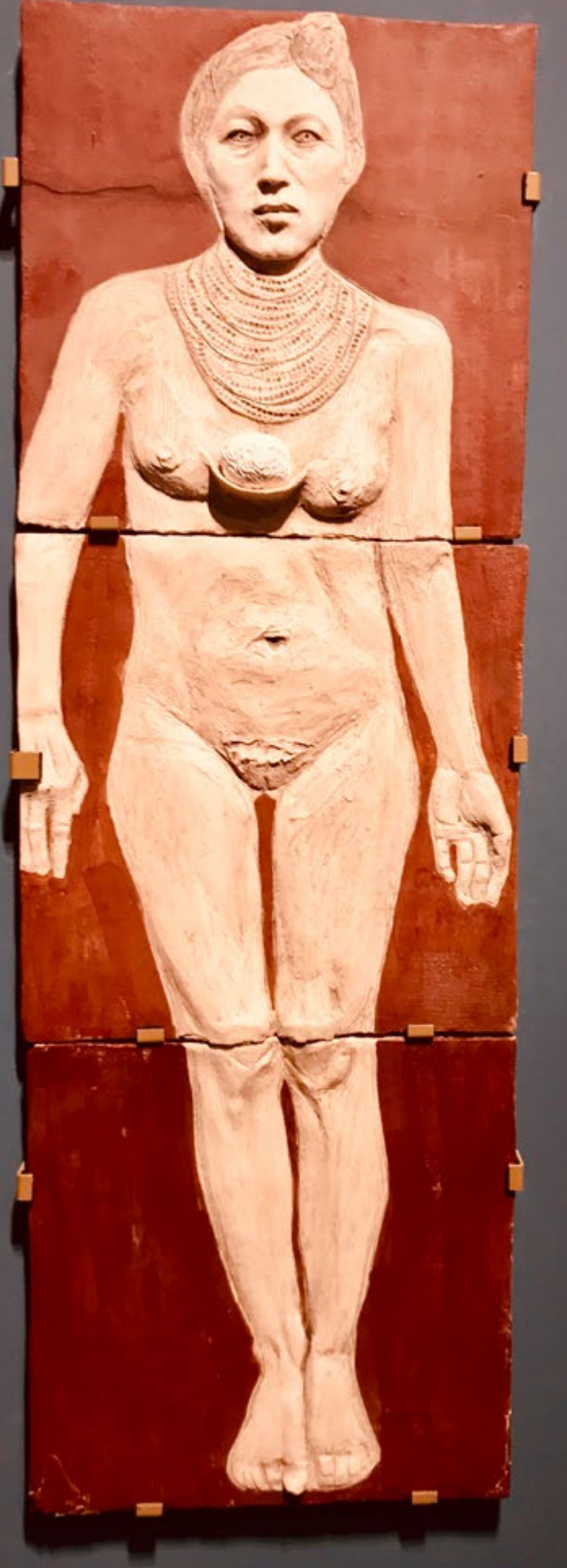


Figure One

FIGURE ONE

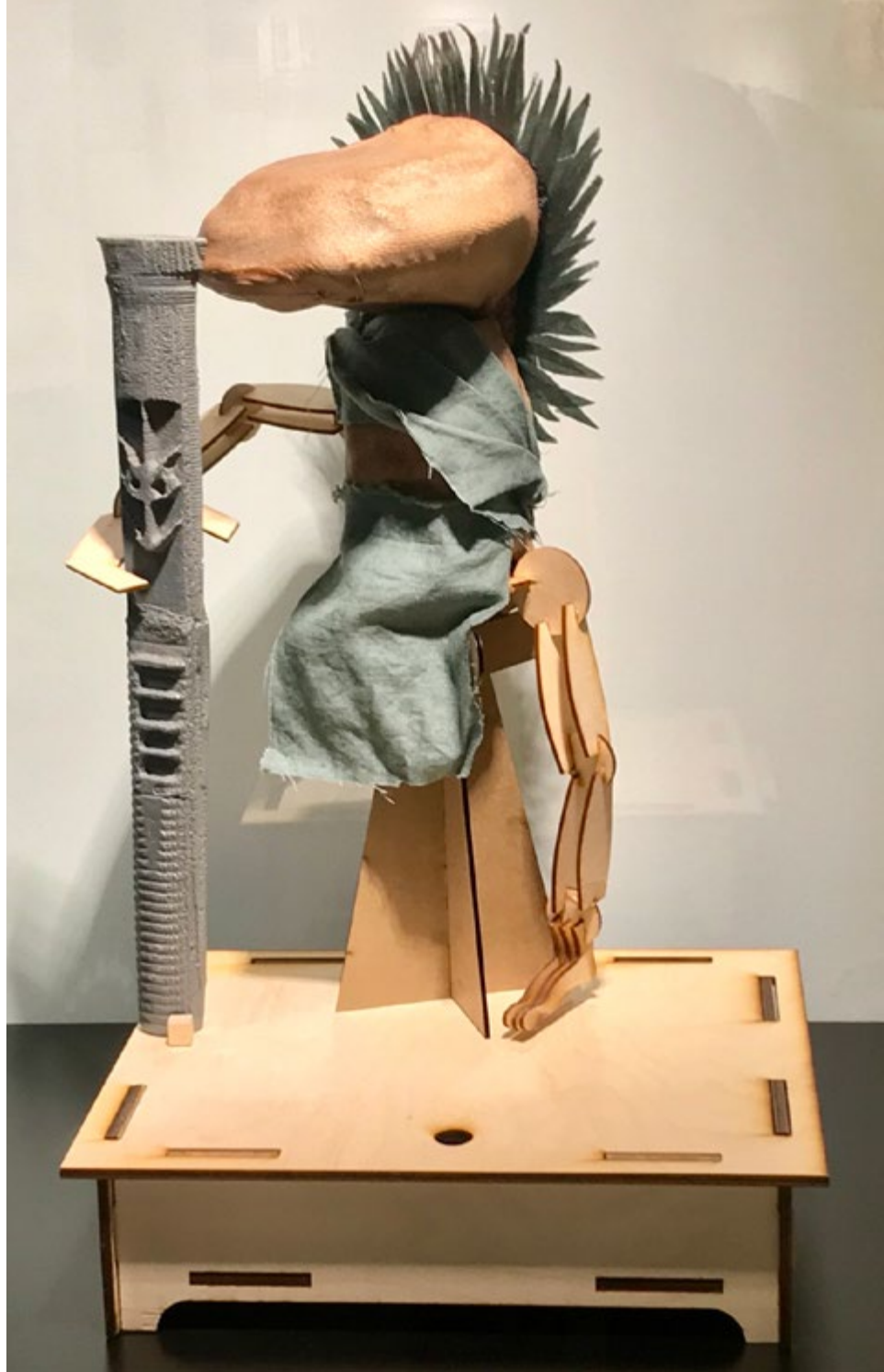
Bas relief, fired clay, homemade glazes, plaster

Figure One is a self-portrait. I wanted the viewer to engage in the body language, expressions, and symbolic elements of the woman with their own ideas. For me, clothes represent a closed conversation and preconceived ideas about the figure. In this piece I wanted to strip down the figure and reveal a vulnerability. The woman in the relief holds a brain in place of a heart, representing the information of culture that is planted into her children as she enters motherhood. I often work with clay as a medium because it reveals a warm tone and fragile quality to a figure. I use some symbolic aspects like hair, jewelry, colors or texture that always refer back to my culture, ethnicity (an inspiration of early sculptures that identify themselves this way). *Figure One* shows the traditional Seminole woman's bun hairstyle, and many-stranded necklace, which symbolizes a woman's economic independence.

JEAN-LUC PIERITE

Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana

When I was seven, my grandparents—Joseph Pierite, Jr., first tribal chairman of the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana, and Fannie Lou Ben Pierite, first Choctaw woman to graduate from college in Mississippi—decided to educate me about my identity. Growing up Indigenous and with mild cerebral palsy, I was often ostracized in school. In my grandparents' house, I learned about beadwork, basketry, and stories. These gifts empower me to help revitalize our endangered languages and ancestral knowledge. I carry the valuable lessons of my grandparents through all forms of media, traditional and new. Today I work with the International Fab Lab Network, representing my Tribe and the greater Louisiana Indian community to a global network of artisans, architects, and engineers.



Tanap, Medicine Keeper

TANAP, MEDICINE KEEPER

Laser-cut wood, burlap, nylon, high biobased-content epoxy resin, laser-cut dyed linen, plastic, circuit boards

My grandfather told me a story of a man with one arm, one leg, and half a face. If there's a little boy in the house, that half man will teach him to wrestle. And if that boy can throw that half man on the ground, he will be taught all about plants and be the best doctor in the world.

This half man is Tanap. Growing up with a mild case of cerebral palsy, I held fast to this story. Despite any physical impairment, Tanap was powerful—he held all plants' medicinal secrets. When asked to make something meaningful to me in a Fab Lab, I chose this cultural expression. In Fab Labs, we're called to turn data into things. In language revitalization, we're constantly generating data. It's my vision to be present in the convergence of these worlds, and to work towards a more holistic form of cultural revitalization.



CAROLEEN SANDERS

Catawba Indian Nation

I learned the traditional Catawba pottery method by observing my mother, Verdie Harris-Sanders, and other members of my extended family. Within our culture, pottery making is taken very seriously; children don't simply "play with clay." It is important adult work, and each part of the process is treated with great respect. The clay is sacred, dug from old sites or holes that remain protected and closed to those outside the Catawba reservation. Pieces are fired in an outdoor pit after being preheated by placing them near the fire or in a conventional oven. By carefully controlling the firing and oxidation process, I'm able to produce a wide range of colors. I knew that I had found my calling when, as an adult, my uncle, Master Potter Earl Robbins, handed me some clay with which I completed my first pitcher.

Chief Samuel Taylor Blue

CHIEF SAMUEL TAYLOR BLUE

Pan clay

Making shapes that have been handed down for generations is a great responsibility, so I primarily make traditional Catawba vessels. However, I've also become known for busts of historic Catawba figures, like Chief Samuel Taylor Blue, who served as Chief three times (the most recent being 1956-1958). Chief Blue was famous for his many efforts to bring relief to his people's hardships, and for drawing attention to Catawba history. I worked from a photograph to reproduce his likeness. Interestingly, the feathered headdress isn't Catawba, but was a gift from a western tribe. I dug the pan clay from our clay hole that's been in use since the 1700s. Hand built without the use of any molds, scraped and polished using shells, metal scalpels and smooth stones, the bust was fired in the traditional manner.



Weaving the Bayou #6, Bayou Teche, Chitimacha Reservation, Charenton, LA

SARAH SENSE

Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, Choctaw

My maternal grandmother is Choctaw from Oklahoma, and my maternal grandfather is Chitimacha from Louisiana. Raised in Sacramento, I was in my late teens when I went to the Chitimacha reservation for the first time with my mother. It was unfamiliar then, and I remember the bayou having a huge impact on me—the idea that this is where my ancestors come from. It's not new land; it's not different land. This is the original land. The landscape and community inspired me to return again and again. My Choctaw grandmother's collection of baskets from around the world instilled in me a love of this art form, and an interest in basket weaving myself—with a very contemporary twist. It's my own interpretation of weaving, and what my experience is, as I engage with my community and with Indigenous peoples as I've traveled around the world.

WEAVING THE BAYOU #6 BAYOU TECHE, CHITIMACHA RESERVATION, CHARENTON, LA

Woven archival inkjet prints over watercolor paper, artist tape

Weaving the Bayou is fifteen photographs of one sunset over Bayou Teche in Charenton, Louisiana. With traditional Chitimacha basket techniques using nontraditional material of cut paper woven into flat mats and baskets, I have taught myself a weaving practice to expose socio-political themes affecting Native peoples, particularly issues of tradition-land preservation. Bayou Teche is the main water fixture on the Chitimacha reservation. The bayou and surrounding waters are home to cypress trees. Cypress roots grow into the earth under water and then above water to breathe oxygen through the root, delicately balancing life with water, air and earth. Chitimacha photo-weavings gently reveal patterns morphing and changing into abstraction to push imagery forward and backward, creating a dialogue between the bayou landscapes. Like photographs, stories are a recorded history, merging time and memory repeatedly both orally and visually. Intersections of land, spirit and tradition humbly tell a story of a single sunset.



Burial Grounds, Pointe Aux Chenes, Louisiana, 2000



Industrial Balance, Grand Bois, Louisiana, 2004



After the Storm



Anesie Verdin at Home

MONIQUE VERDIN

United Houma Nation

I returned home to Louisiana in the late 1990s, which was when I started photography, mainly in Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes. During that time I learned about my camera, my family, our land, and our politics. I now think of myself as a reporter raising awareness about the socioeconomic and racial injustices we've tolerated for decades. For more than 10 years, I've been intimately documenting the day-to-day lives of communities along the southern coastal parishes, including my indigenous Houma family's complex interconnected relationship to the environment, economics, culture, climate, and change. I want to capture what it means to live permanently on the edge, both figuratively and literally, and to foster change. To that end, I have also been a proud member of the Tribal Council since June, 2016.

BURIAL GROUNDS, POINTE AUX CHENES, LOUISIANA, 2000

Archival pigment print, first edition, 2 of 14

Houma elder, Armantine Billiot Verdin, took a boat ride down Bayou Pointe aux Chenes (Point of the Oaks), 3 miles past the end of the road and the manmade canal called the "Cutoff", to visit the place she grew up, where the burial grounds of ancestors sit between skeleton oak trees. Pointe aux Chenes is experiencing some of the most rapid land loss in the world, due to sea-level rise, saltwater intrusion induced by a maze of canals dredged through our territories, delta subsidence, levee infrastructure and natural resource extraction.

INDUSTRIAL BALANCE, GRAND BOIS, LOUISIANA, 2004

Archival pigment print, first edition, 2 of 14

Boys play in floodwaters in Grand Bois (Big Woods), a community in the heart of the Houmas' Yakne Chitto (Big Country), along an old highway connecting the communities of Bayou Terrebonne to Bayou

Lafourche, and a "shortcut" to the United States's largest deepwater oil port, Port Fourchon. Grand Bois sits less than 2,000 feet from an oilfield waste facility, permitted to treat "non-hazardous material" that has hazardous characteristics in open air pits and using injection wells, just north of some of the fastest disappearing land on the planet.

AFTER THE STORM

Archival pigment print, first edition, 2 of 14

A young Houma boy paddles his *pirogue*, a flat bottom canoe traditionally used by the indigenous people of the Mississippi Delta in front of his home, after Hurricane Ike. His family was forced to ring their home with sandbags and install a water pump to keep out rising floodwaters. The cycle of storms has proven how unpredictable tropical cyclones are and how fragile the Mississippi River Delta is. Coastal communities outside levees, like Grand Bois, don't need a hurricane anymore, just a south wind to blow a little too hard, a little too long for marshwaters to cover land.

ANESIE VERDIN AT HOME

Archival pigment print, first edition, 2 of 14

Houma communities found at the ends of the bayous in the Yakne Chitto are feeling the frontline impacts of climate change. Anesie Verdin has raised his home another 8 feet, since this photograph was taken, to adapt to higher storm surges. Communities across the coast of Louisiana are currently facing how they remain and reclaim or do they retreat to higher grounds, further inside levee risk reduction systems, leaving their bayouside ways of life behind.

FRED WILNOTY

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

My work is an expression of my God-given talent. I love to pick up a piece of stone and begin to cut away at it to see what's waiting inside. I come from a long line of talented artisans. My father was a carver and my mother made baskets. I remember my grandfather, Julius Wilnoty, made ceremonial pipes, as well as bows and arrows, even knapping the arrowhead himself. With no formal training, I've been carving stone, wood, and sometimes bone for more than 20 years. I learned from watching my father, acclaimed Cherokee sculptor John Julius Wilnoty, who always encouraged me to develop my talent. The early Cherokee scratched lines in stone to depict their world. Like my father, and my early ancestors, my carvings often display a rich and complex mythology.



Eagle, Snake, Man-The Struggle Within, 2015



Panther and Snake-Survival of the Fittest, 2015

EAGLE, SNAKE, MAN—THE STRUGGLE WITHIN, 2015

Steatite stone

Collection of Lambert Wilson

This carving exemplifies the struggle that Native Americans face with their cultural and traditional backgrounds and the possible assimilation into the cultural aspects of modern times and the “White Man.” It is a constant struggle! The eagle and snake stand for the choices that must be made—do we believe our Native teachings or Christian teachings? Do we continue the Native ways of everyday life or modern American ways? Do we speak English or speak our Native language? The list goes on! These are the struggles—good or bad—that Native Americans face daily. Traditional art is an excellent way to represent these struggles.

PANTHER AND SNAKE—SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST, 2015

Steatite stone

Collection of Lambert Wilson

“Survival of the fittest” is a phrase that describes the mechanism of natural selection. It not only exists in nature, but also in culture. Who is the fittest—the panther or the snake or the Native American or the Modern American? This carving serves as a catalyst of thought concerning the longevity of Native American cultures, thus “survival of the fittest.” Only time will tell!