

Renwick Invitational 2023

S H A R I N G H O N O R S
A N D B U R D E N S

Sharing Honors and Burdens: Renwick Invitational 2023

We can be burdened by grief, by our personal histories, and by history writ large. Yet some kinds of burdens can be precious to us. We carry them with love and pride. The artworks in *Sharing Honors and Burdens: Renwick Invitational 2023* arise from traditions of making that honor family, community, moiety, or clan and require broad community participation. Six artists—Joe Feddersen, Lily Hope, Ursala Hudson, Erica Lord, Geo Neptune, and Maggie Thompson—analyze the present moment by evoking historical practices and potential futures. Each artist is Native American or Alaska Native. Their works are often culturally specific, yet they communicate across cultural boundaries.

Maggie Thompson (Fond du Lac Ojibwe) creates multimedia textiles that explore the intersections of loss and grief with honor and healing. **Erica Lord** (Athabaskan/Iñupiat) crafts beaded objects with representations of common diseases abstracted from genetic tests. **Joe Feddersen** (Arrow Lakes/Okanagan) is a printmaker, glass artist, and basket maker who produces geometric patterns for living in the modern land. Sisters **Lily Hope** (Tlingit) and **Ursala Hudson** (Tlingit) weave textiles that balance tradition and innovation for garments representing honor and responsibility. Basket maker **Geo Neptune** (Passamaquoddy) weaves containers connecting the values of Passamaquoddy traditions with contemporary lived experience.

Sharing Honors and Burdens: Renwick Invitational 2023 is the tenth installment of the series. Established in 2000, the Renwick Invitational showcases emerging and mid-career makers deserving of wider national recognition. This installment features Native American and Alaska Native artists for the first time, reinforcing a commitment by the museum to contemporary Native American artists and Indigenous voices.

The Ryna and Melvin Cohen Family Foundation Endowment provides support for the *Renwick Invitational*. The Cohen Family's generosity in creating this endowment helps make possible this series highlighting outstanding craft artists who are deserving of wider national recognition.

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Wyeth Foundation for American Art



Andy Warhol

The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

Gallery #1

Artist Panel, Gallery 1:

Maggie Thompson (Fond du Lac Ojibwe; born Minneapolis, MN, 1989; resides St. Paul, with a studio in Minneapolis)

Maggie Thompson's artistic practice is deeply engaged in the work of processing emotions around loss, grief, and transformation. Her practice and finished artwork function as part of the healing process, for both the artist and the viewer. Thompson pushes the boundaries of textile art by combining beadwork with manufactured materials and techniques from quilting, sewing, and other handwork traditions. The use of labor-intensive methods and the large scale of the works honor the otherwise invisible emotional processes involved in change: rumination, accountability, grief, and intention.

Thompson lives and works in Minneapolis and often collaborates with other artists in socially engaged art projects. She is founder and owner of Makwa Studio, a machine knitwear brand.

Object labels, Gallery 1:



On Loving
2022–23

vinyl, glass beads, thread, and zippers

The artist explains the inspiration for this series:

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It was inspired by my experience of watching the coroners come in carrying a simple, solid colored bag the night my dad passed away. After this I was compelled to create a body bag as an act of saying goodbye and as a way to honor my dad. The colorful and beaded arms of the star wrap around the bag as a way of wrapping and holding a body with love.
—Maggie Thompson

Quilts are created to recognize transitions in life, with details varying from one tribal community to another. Displaying a Morningstar patterned quilt is a public affirmation of honoring, whether displayed on a wall, on the ground, on a casket, or bestowed as a gift.

The conditions of the pandemic, especially early on, interrupted customary funerary practices. *On Loving* honors those lost during these difficult years since COVID-19 and honors the grief of the living as well. Thompson transforms a painfully anonymous, utilitarian object—the body bag—into a beautiful tribute with the Morningstar pattern found on quilts, further embellished with beadwork.

Courtesy of the artist and Bockley Gallery



I Get Mad Because I Love You

2021–23

glass beads, filament, and silver-plated tin cones

While some of Thompson’s works honor sustaining relationships, others examine the indicators of unhealthy ones. This beaded panel repeats the title to evoke the dizzying interplay between words and intent. The variations in the translucence of the beads used to create the words symbolize the fading in and out of the voices we hear, and don’t hear, in unhealthy relationships. Thompson states, “Even if we know someone is mistreating us, we can feel attached to their words, ‘I love you.’ It’s all about the words.”

A fringe of metal cones references the healing potential of making and dancing in the jingle dress in Ojibwe culture.

Courtesy of the artist and Bockley Gallery



The Equivocator

2021

rope, wire, stockings, thread, and ribbon

“A belly tied in knots with the red flags that you so delicately placed but insisted did not exist.”

Thompson wrote these words to acknowledge an abusive relationship, and they became the starting point for her soft sculpture *The Equivocator*. It is often said that our gut corresponds to a source of knowledge, an instinct, a sixth sense. The meandering shape of Thompson’s sculpture is interrupted by red ribbons prompting us to honor the knowledge we gain from how we feel in our own bodies on our journeys to self-love and self-trust.

Collection of Hair and Nails

Gallery #2

Artist Panel, Gallery 2:

Erica Lord (Athabascan/Iñupiat; born Nenana, AK, 1978; resides Santa Fe, NM)

Erica Lord grew up traveling between the Tanana Athabascan village of Nenana, Alaska, and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Her mixed-race cultural identity as the daughter of a Finnish American mother and an Athabascan/Iñupiat father inform much of her work. With photography, beadwork, performance, video, and installation work, Lord critiques institutional constructions of history, identity, and art.

Through her focus on the surface of the body, Lord’s early performative and photographic works call into question the legitimacy of racial identification. In her recent work, Lord combines visual renderings of genetic testing data with traditional technologies for carrying burdens. This work provides her new ways of exploring invisible burdens, whether they are precious burdens of love and family or painful historic burdens of inequity.

Text Panel, Gallery 2:

Carrying Burdens

Athabascan and Iñupiat burden straps are used for carrying everyday supplies. They can be simple lengths of tanned hide or woven fibers. Wider, highly embellished straps are for carrying babies. Made by the mother or other female relatives, baby belts honor and recognize new life as a part of the community. Erica Lord made her first baby belt out of moose hide in 2005, as she was thinking about motherhood and identity.

Lord then began thinking of burden straps symbolically rather than functionally. The designs and techniques used to embellish burden straps have strong ties within communities. As makers' skills increase, their motifs evolve, and their work becomes more their own. Lord took a conceptual leap from typical geometric patterns to an abstract design taken from genetic testing for diseases. By connecting the burden strap form with the science of genetic testing, she draws connections among invisible markers of genetics, the bureaucracy of "blood quantum" (the amount of "Indian blood" an individual possesses),* and the burden of disease.

* The "blood quantum" system was imposed on tribes by the federal government to track Native Peoples and limit their citizenship, reducing the populations each time someone has a child with a non-Native or someone from a different tribe.

DNA Microarray Analysis into Beaded Form

With her beaded burden straps, Lord represents diseases that have affected her family members or, like diabetes, are conditions that disproportionately impact Indigenous communities. To create these patterns, she translates the exact graphic representation and colors of the genetic testing into beaded form.

The genetic testing method Lord adapts for her work creates microarrays—color-coded, spatially arranged representations of specific features in DNA strands. For red-and-green assays, the green fluorescence generally indicates the normal expression of a gene, while the red indicates a mutated or diseased segment. Black and yellow mark inconsequential segments. The pattern may appear to be pixelated, but it is not. Each colored block represents a match or mismatch in a comparison of genetic samples.

When designing a burden strap, Lord enlarges the microarray graphic, then creates a pattern board with assigned bead colors. Each four millimeter–square glass bead correlates to one segment of genetic code. The patterns are precisely duplicated.

Object labels, Gallery 2:



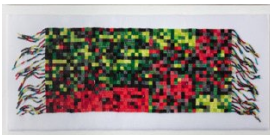
Breast Cancer Burden Strap, DNA Microarray Analysis
2018
glass beads and string

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Edwin E. Jack Fund



Multiple Myeloma Burden Strap, DNA/RNA Microarray Analysis
2022
glass beads and wire

Courtesy of the artist and Accola Griefen Fine Art



Adrenocortical Cancer Burden Strap, DNA/RNA Microarray Analysis
2021
glass beads and string

Rollins Museum of Art, The Alfond Collection of Contemporary Art, Gift of Barbara '68 and Theodore '68 Alfond



Diabetes Burden Strap, DNA/RNA Microarray Analysis
2008
glass beads and wire

Municipality of Anchorage, AK | Public Art Program



Nephropathy Burden Strap, DNA Microarray Analysis
2009
glass beads and wire

IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, Santa Fe, NM, Museum Purchase, 2018, ATH-49



Leukemia Burden Strap, DNA/RNA Microarray Analysis
2022
glass beads and wire

Courtesy of the artist and Accola Griefen Fine Art



Blood Quantum ($1/4 + 1/16 = 5/16$), from the series (Untitled) Tattooed Arms
2007
inkjet print



Enrollment Number (11-337-07463-04-01), from the series (Untitled) Tattooed Arms
2007
inkjet print

Erica Lord's father is Athabascan/Iñupiat and her mother is Finnish American. If Lord were to have a child with a non-Native or a Native from another tribe, that child would not be recognized legally as Native Alaskan because their percentage of "Indian blood" would drop below a quarter.

The series *Untitled (Tattooed Arms)* is composed of two life-size photographs of the artist's arms. The fractional formula representing her blood quantum is written on one arm, and her tribal enrollment number is on the other. Inscribing the dehumanizing numbers on her body draws parallels to the Nazis' use of numerical tattoos in concentration camps. Multiple

exposures divide the “whole” person into fractions of a person.

Courtesy of the artist and Accola Griefen Fine Art



The Codes We Carry
2022

sled, dog forms, and beaded tuppies (dog blankets)

Courtesy of the artist and Accola Griefen Fine Art

Text panel, Gallery 2:

Tuppies

Erica Lord’s Alaskan village, Nenana, was the departure point for the famous 1925 dog sledding relay that delivered diphtheria antitoxin serum to an outbreak in Nome, Alaska. The 674-mile journey took twenty mushers and a total of 150 dogs five and a half days to complete. Many of the 1925 mushers were Alaska Natives. Likewise, delivering COVID-19 vaccines in Alaska required bush planes, boats, snow mobiles, and sleds pulled like trailers behind snow mobiles.

Tuppies (or tapis) fell out of use in Lord’s village before she was born. She learned about the historical use of these fancy dog blankets in college by visiting museum collections. They are not practical gear for dog sledding. Rather, they are carried along to dress the dogs before a team’s arrival for a ceremonial or social event. In the past decade, tuppies have slowly returned. Historically, the beaded designs on tuppies are floral. Lord’s use of abstract, geometric designs is a departure from that convention, but she trimmed the dog blankets with fabric, fringe, and bells, like many historic examples.

The Codes We Carry

The Codes We Carry brings together a team of sled dogs dressed in tuppies that represent specific diseases. Lord expanded on the same concept and process as the beaded burden straps to create each blanket. The lead dog carries a diphtheria pattern. The swing dogs, behind the lead dog, wear smallpox and tuberculosis patterns. The following dogs wear a diabetes and ovarian cancer patterns. The tuppies on the dogs closest to the sled display two different microarray patterns representing COVID-19.

The dog’s blankets carry the disease burdens, but they also deliver the cures: antitoxins and vaccines. Combining representations of diseases with the modes of carrying precious burdens poses thoughtful questions: What burdens do we have to carry with us? What burdens are we honored to carry? And what burdens can we no longer tolerate?

Gallery #3

Artist Panel, Gallery 3:

Joe Feddersen (Arrow Lakes/Okanagan; born Omak, WA, 1953; resides Omak)

Joe Feddersen's work in printmaking, glass, and basketry is unified by connections among landscapes, animate beings, and the built environment. He does this, in part, by adapting or creating new symbols that function similarly to the abstract visual representations used in regional petroglyphs, pictographs, and woven patterns. Each suite of works builds a narrative about a shared experience such as social distancing or the annual canoe journey.

Feddersen grew up camping, hunting, and fishing throughout the lands of the Okanagan in North Central Washington State. His family often traveled to visit his maternal relatives in British Columbia among the Pentiction Indian Band of the Okanagan Valley. These experiences imparted a love for this region of mountains, plateaus, valleys, lakes, and rivers. Feddersen states that one of his goals is "to contribute to *our* history. I want to do works that are of cultural significance and in the voice of my people."

As he works across multiple media, Feddersen mingles historic symbolism with new symbols that we see and use every day without much notice: tire tracks, traffic control patterns, planned community layouts, hazard symbols, emojis, and more. In a few hundred years, will our ancestors understand them still? Will our lives continue to change so rapidly that we will lose the usefulness and meaning of some of these symbols?

Text panel, Gallery 3:

Plateau Twined Basketry

Feddersen bases his basketry forms, materials, and imagery on the Plateau twined bags historically used for gathering and storing food. There are two main Plateau shapes associated with food: rectangular flat bags used for storing foods, and cylindrical baskets used for gathering. Feddersen most often creates the latter, whether twined from fiber or formed in glass. Both traditional shapes customarily feature abstracted figurative designs and geometric patterns.

The materials and uses of these baskets have changed over time. Older plant-based materials had practical uses to ward off insects and prevent mold. Other materials like cornhusks and wool have been used for objects made for gifts and finery for public events. A resurgence of traditional food gathering practices has coincided with more people weaving cylindrical bags today. Commercial materials like hemp, cotton, wool, and acrylic yarn have become customary.

Feddersen makes baskets for use and ones to be shared with the public as art objects. In his current practice, the practical baskets are finished with fabric liner, loops for attaching to a belt, and a rim reinforced with hide. The baskets presented here are for display only. It is important to the artist that those intended for use are made available for that purpose.

Object labels, Gallery 3:

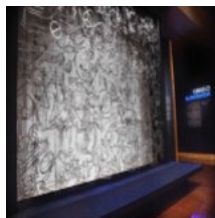


Social Distancing series
2021
mirrored and blown glass

Social distancing has become part of our lives. I would like to relate that idea on some of the traditional basket forms. We are living through these times. —Joe Feddersen

When viewers gaze into these vessels, their reflections become part of the work, and they see themselves as a part of the narrative. Like his ancestors and earlier artists, Feddersen is communicating through symbols and signs about lived experiences and current events.

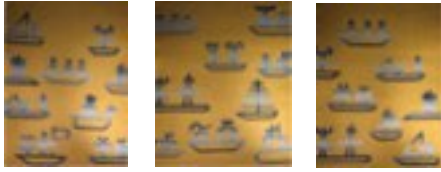
Anonymous; Museum of Glass, Tacoma, WA, Gift of the artist; and Courtesy of the artist



Charmed (Bestiary)
2021
fused glass and filament

Charmed (Bestiary) is a collection of signs and symbols from the Okanagan lands, which include present-day Eastern Washington State and extend north across the border into Canada. Feddersen's father once commented on the desolate nature of the semi-arid land. In response, Feddersen created hundreds of fused glass "charms" to represent the abundance of the region's animals, and the markers of human presence: pictographs, petroglyphs, and high-voltage electrical towers.

Courtesy of the artist

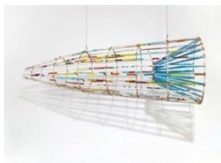


Canoe Journey
2022
monoprint

The *Canoe Journey* basket (on view nearby) and this three-part print illustrate the annual Canoe Journey that takes place in the Pacific Northwest. The journey continues the practice of travel between tribal communities connected by the region's waterways. Intertribal protocols of diplomacy are observed and maintained in the process of coordinating as many as eighty canoes on a month-long summer journey with stops at multiple tribal communities for welcome and potlatch ceremonies.

The pandemic interrupted the 2020 and 2021 Canoe Journeys, but the people returned to the water in 2022. The final destination for Canoe Journey 2022 was far inland, along the Columbia River waterways east of the Colville Reservation, where the artist resides.

Courtesy of the artist



Fish Trap
2021–22
fused glass and metal

Used in many Native communities, traditional fish traps require great skill to create and use. The form's open weave allows water to circulate continuously and is sized to allow smaller fish to pass through unharmed. When larger fish swim into the trap's open mouth, they are generally unable to swim out again. The fish are collected efficiently in a manner that does little harm to the overall population.

While on a visit to the Salish Kootenai Community Center nearly twenty years ago, Feddersen noticed a willow fish trap displayed on the wall and was stunned by the beauty of the form. Inspired, Feddersen created several large-scale interpretations. The glass and wire ribs of Feddersen's *Fish Trap* cast shimmering shadows that evoke the play of water.

Courtesy of the artist



Bestiary 4
2021
monoprint

The three prints from the *Bestiary* series incorporate the abstracted symbols from Feddersen's *Charmed: Bestiary* glasswork series. The prints suspend the moving glass charms into a moment in time and space, with each print using different approaches to color, space, and composition.

Feddersen has worked in multiple media throughout his long career as an artist, with printmaking an important and continuous aspect of his work. He often works in thematic series, creating visual conversation between three-dimensional works and two-dimensional prints.

Courtesy of the artist

Gallery #4

Artist Panels, Gallery 4:

Lily Wooshkindein Da.Aat Hope (Tlingit; born Juneau, AK, 1980; resides Douglas, AK)

Ursala Kadusné Hudson (Tlingit; born Santa Fe, NM, 1987; resides Pagosa Springs, CO)

Tlingit sisters Lily Hope and Ursala Hudson were trained in Ravenstail and Chilkat weaving by their mother, renowned weaver Clarissa Rizal (1956–2016). To the untrained eye, Ravenstail and Chilkat weavings may appear similar, but the techniques can be distinguished by design: Chilkat weavings typically feature curving formline shapes, while Ravenstail weavings employ geometric designs. Formline design is a highly developed pictorial system using ovoids and U-shaped elements to represent animals, humans, and other beings. Many formline designs belong to clan crests and carry specific rights and responsibilities. It takes extensive understanding of the design principles to create works that do not overstep permissions. The curving lines in formline designs are technically challenging to transform into weaving.

These weaving traditions produce garments for use in ceremonial practices by high-ranking members of Haida, Tsimshian, Tlingit, and other Northwest Coast Indigenous Peoples of Alaska and western Canada. Such textiles take hundreds of hours to make and years of training, research, perseverance, and dedication to master.

Lily Hope's works respond to societal issues with care and emphasize the need to pass knowledge along to future generations of weavers. Ursula Hudson's work explores the delicate balance between custom and innovation by combining Ravenstail and Chilkat techniques with a high fashion sensibility. Hudson describes her work as, "ceremonial regalia for the globalized yet indigenous-spirited warrior woman—her heart with the ancestors and her mind on the future." Their works reflect clan relationships, gendered labor, and the Tlingit values of reciprocity and balance.

Object labels, Gallery 4:



Lily Hope
Memorial Beats
2021

thigh-spun merino and cedar bark with copper, headphones, and audio files

Memorial Beats is adorned with the "Sisters" Ravenstail pattern designed by Haida artist Patty Fiorella and woven in a Chilkat style. The copper cones pay homage to the *Copper* series of regalia sets for man, woman, and child created by Hope's mother, Clarissa Rizal.

The headphones play a layered audio file featuring several voices and sounds. Master weaver Jennie Thlunaut speaks in Tlingit and master weaver Clarissa Rizal speaks in English about their lives as weavers. The rhythmic subtle tones of twining a Chilkat robe are mixed into Irene Lampe (Tlingit), Hope and Hudson's maternal aunt, singing a Takdeintaan clan song.

The Hope Family Trust



Lily Hope
Clarissa's Fire Dish
2021

cedar bark and merino

Care for ancestors is a widespread Indigenous practice. One form of ancestor care involves the use of fire or smoke to carry the offerings of the physical world to the spirit realm. In Tlingit, *gankas'ix'i* means "Dishes for the Fire" and represents the Tlingit practice of placing food into a

fire to feed and comfort the spirits of the departed.

Lily Hope created this fire dish in honor of her late mother, Clarissa Rizal, with the intent that, eventually, it will be ritually burned. Hope created the sculptural dish form by weaving a cedar bark vessel with sections of Chilkat weaving around the rim of the dish. The construction of the dish conveys Hope's appreciation of her mother's knowledge and skills and her own commitment to continuing Tlingit weaving traditions.

The Hope Family Trust



Lily Hope

Between Worlds (child's robe) 2022–
23

thigh-spun merino and cedar bark with beaver fur

This version of the *Between Worlds* robe is the little sister; the big sister resides at Houston's Museum of Natural Science in Texas. The robes feature the Diving Whale pattern, but instead of the customary Chilkat forms being the only design elements, Hope has "collaged" a face peering back at us. The overlaid and interwoven face represents the first and the previous weavers of Chilkat. Those ancestors become present as Chilkat textiles take form, serving as a physical conduit of knowledge and a tangible link between the weaver and those who came before. The spirit present in the robe quietly watches as a new generation of weavers carry their clan, tribal, and family obligations and traditions forward into the future.

(NOTE: Image of adult robe provided)

The Hope Family Trust



Lily Hope

Tlingit CEO
2022

thigh-spun merino and cedar bark with copper cones
headdress and cane created by Eechdaa Dave Ketah (Tlingit)

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Maybe the narrative of our spiritual connection to the land has drastically shifted, but that's the story of Chilkat. It was constantly innovated. Techniques shift. And it doesn't mean that it's now a new art form. It's just the evolution of [Chilkat]. It's the changing narrative of our connection to the land and to other people. —Lily Hope

Tlingit CEO embodies the intersection between Tlingit culture and the corporate world. Business casual attire and common outdoor gear are embellished with elements from ceremonial regalia: fur trim, woven panels, and swinging fringe. The ensemble visually represents the interdependence of cultural and economic realms.

The Hope Family Trust



Ursula Hudson

Matriarch Rising

2021

collar: merino, silk, steel cones, and leather

Electrified Heart apron: merino, silk, leather, and steel cones

hat: vintage wool hat, merino, silk, and mother of pearl

Tencel garments

Twenty years after her mother wove *Discovering the Angles of an Electrified Heart*, Hudson worked the same design into this dance apron. The entire ensemble responds to contemporary needs, accentuating and embracing the wearer's feminine form as well as her strength.

Courtesy of the artist



Ursula Hudson

Sister Bear

2022

thigh-spun merino and cedar bark with silk

As Hudson's first Chilkat robe, *Sister Bear* incorporates her own innovative twist, using black

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and white exclusively for the design and omitting the classic combination of yellows, greens, and black that has come to define Chilkat aesthetics. The design is a female bear, as signified by her labret, a customary piercing worn by women and girls. This bear holds the enormity of inherited experiences and knowledge from all her different bloodlines and accepts that this future looks unlike any other.

Courtesy of the artist

Gallery #5

Artist Panel, Gallery 5:

Geo Soctomah Neptune (Passamaquoddy; born Indian Township, ME, 1988; resides Indian Township)

Geo Soctomah Neptune is a two-spirit master basket maker, educator, and activist living in the Dawnland, the homeland of the Wabanaki in the town of Motahkomikuk (Indian Township, Maine). The term “two spirit” describes roles found in many Native cultures that hold a sacred space between masculine and feminine energies. Raised in a family of artists, Neptune was immersed in Passamaquoddy arts and cultural lifeways from an early age. They learned basketry from their grandmother, Molly Neptune Parker (1939–2020), a Passamaquoddy master basket maker and family matriarch. Neptune started weaving baskets at the age of four, and by the age of eight was teaching basketry classes. The black ash and sweetgrass baskets they create display superb precision—whether in the tiny, rainbow curls on a woven corn cob or in the intricately braided sweetgrass stem on a petite strawberry.

As an Indigenous artist, Neptune has commented on the burdens of creating art for a mainstream audience. Unlike non-Native artists, they must bear the burden of “combatting all of these boxes and labels put on us and our art, questioning whether or not it is ‘traditional’ or even ‘Indian’ art.” On the other hand, “basketmaking represents the Passamaquoddy’s ability to survive and adapt, and a refusal to conform to that Western lifestyle.” On the surface, Neptune’s baskets are colorful and bright, but they also tell powerful stories and reveal a personal journey. Through these works, Neptune honors their family, community, and heritage while expressing their view of the world.

Text panel, Gallery 5:

About Black Ash Basketry

Preparing black ash materials for use in basketry is a time- and labor-intensive art. Before any weaving can even begin, the maker must select a healthy tree, remove the bark, pound the log, and peel, clean, trim, and sand the splints.

The ash tree is significant to Wabanaki culture; in their creation story, the Wabanaki emerged from its bark. Wabanaki basket makers have the honor and burden to care for and protect their sacred tree. This role has been especially critical in the past several decades, due to the introduction of an invasive species of beetle called the emerald ash borer. Since arriving in

North America, these beetles have destroyed tens of millions of ash trees through laying eggs in the bark. The resulting larvae feed on the tree, disrupting its ability to absorb nutrients and water.

As Neptune explained in 2018, “Nobody in the world is more prepared for the emerald ash borer than the Wabanaki peopleWe’ve been storing seeds. People have been planting seedlings. We’ve been studying the bug..... We’re bracing ourselves. Our basketmaking traditions will survive.”

Object labels, Gallery 5:



Apikcilu Binds the Sun

2018

black ash and sweetgrass with commercial dye, acrylic ink, and 24-karat gold-plated beads

Koluskap is a cultural hero who created the Wabanaki. Sometimes, he was accompanied by Apikcilu (Skunk). Jealous of the praise Koluskap received, Apikcilu sought recognition through a devious plan. He traveled to find Kisuhs, the Sun Bird. When Kisuhs stood atop her mountain and opened her wings, she provided daylight for the world. When she closed her wings, nighttime arrived. Apikcilu grabbed Kisuhs, bound her wings, and threw her into a ravine, causing worldwide darkness. Koluskap rescued Kisuhs, but he could only free one wing. Now, when Kisuhs stands on her mountain, the extended wing provides sunlight to half of the world while the bound side is in darkness. She slowly makes a full rotation each day, allowing sunlight to reach every part of the globe.

Neptune’s *Apikcilu Binds the Sun* depicts the end of the Wabanaki story. Kisuhs sits atop a pink mountain range woven in relief on the lid. The lid is divided into two hemispheres, one with ash splints dyed in bright yellow and the other dyed in deep purple. Where Kisuhs’s open wing extends, that side of the basket is bathed in sunlit yellow and pink colors. The black, dark purple, and blue side of the basket mimics the colors of the night sky.

Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, ME, Museum Purchase, The Philip Conway Beam Endowment Fund



Heart Medicine (AKA Molly's Berry)

2020

black ash, sweetgrass, and commercial dye

Neptune wove this basket in honor of their grandmother, Molly Neptune Parker (1939–2020), who saw basketry as more than a tradition. She remarked, “Basketmaking for me is about innovation and creativity within the context of a traditional art form. The functionality, the materials, and the shapes have been a legacy for each generation. I honor that legacy and believe I have a responsibility to continue it.” Parker created her own signature designs and forms that continuously challenged her, including woven acorns and strawberries.

When Parker passed away in June 2020, *Heart Medicine* was the next strawberry basket Neptune wove: a completely red, ripe strawberry woven in a similar shape and design to Parker’s. Neptune reflected, “[Parker] being the master and me being her apprentice, I was the growing strawberry until she handed that strawberry to me. I wove this piece with the idea of being able to carry it on and try to heal myself from the pain of her loss.”

Courtesy of the artist



Piluwapiyit: The Powerful One

2018

black ash, sweetgrass, commercially tanned deer skin, brain-tanned deer skin, cochineal-dyed deer skin, 24-karat gold-plated beads, freshwater pearls, garnets, charlotte-cut glass beads

Piluwapiyit: The Powerful One is a self-portrait that contains the Wabanaki creation story. The sculpture is a human figure sewn in deerskin, wearing beaded Wabanaki regalia—a white, fringed dress with a wine-colored collar, cuffs, and double-peaked cap. The figure emerges from the circular woven base of an ash tree on grass dotted with tiny flowers. The Wabanaki are made from the ash tree; the cultural hero Koluskap shot an arrow into the tree, and the first humans emerged from its bark.

Neptune sees themselves in this story. When they were born, elders told Neptune’s mother and grandmother that the child would help the people. Neptune felt different growing up and later

came out as two-spirit, pointing out, “what people struggle with is that they define [two-spirit] as a sexual orientation, a gender identity, a spiritual identity, or a societal role. In reality, those four parts are not separate but exist into one intersectional identity.” *Piluwapiyit: The Powerful One* depicts Neptune’s arrival into their true self.

Courtesy of the artist

Gallery #6

Object label, Gallery 6:



Ursala Hudson

Tlingit

born 1987, Santa Fe, NM

Tideland Warrior

2021

headpiece: merino, feathers, and mother of pearl

shawl: merino, cedar bark, silk, mountain goat fur, and mother of pearl

belt: merino, cedar bark, silk, and leather

Tencel garments

It is such a blessing to continue these artforms traditionally and it's a blessing to get to see how they're changing. . . .

—Ursala Hudson

Inspired by the enduring strength of the women in her own clan, Hudson engineered this ensemble using a combination of Chilkat and Ravenstail weaving techniques. *Tideland Warrior* incorporates precious mountain goat fur, a material that conveys strength and status. The green color used in the ensemble can sometimes be found in older examples of both Ravenstail and Chilkat weaving, though this green is deliberately closer to the green of the Ponderosa pine trees around Hudson’s home in Colorado. Traditional techniques and materials blend with Hudson’s signature aesthetic to create a high-fashion ensemble that honors the women in Hudson’s community.

Courtesy of the artist

Text panel, Gallery 6:

The artists featured in this exhibition help us think about honors and burdens through intricately crafted artworks—large, small, in stillness, and in movement.

Consider the honors and burdens you yourself hold—on an individual, familial, cultural, and universal level. What is a burden you carry today? Who do you wish to honor today?

What is a **burden** you carry today?

Who or what do you wish to **honor** today?