

SPENCER MUSEUM ANNOUNCES KU COMMON WORK OF ART FOR 2021-2022¹

Tue, 07/06/2021



LAWRENCE — The Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas announces "Native Host," a series of five signs by artist Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds (Cheyenne, Arapaho), as the [KU Common Work of Art](#)² for the 2021-2022 academic year. The series will complement the 2021-2022 [KU Common Book](#)³ "Braiding Sweetgrass" by Robin Wall Kimmerer (Potawatomi).

Themes in this year's KU Common Book and Common Work of Art selections explore relationships among art, history, scientific thought and Indigenous ways of generating knowledge. This year also marks the first Common Book partnership between KU and Haskell Indian Nations University.

"Native Host" consists of five aluminum signs and is currently on display in front of the Spencer Museum on Mississippi Street. The signs name Native tribes who historically or currently inhabit the region that is now called Kansas. On each sign, the colonial name is printed backward while the name of the land's original occupants is printed forward. The visual tension that Heap of Birds creates

between these names aims to remind viewers of the displacement of Indigenous peoples from their homelands as well as their continued and active presence in the Americas.

Spencer Museum Curator Kate Meyer said that the selection of "Native Host" was prompted by a line in Kimmerer's book: "Our relationship with land cannot heal until we hear its stories."

"'Native Host' acknowledges that the land the Spencer Museum and KU reside on holds history and stories beyond or outside colonial expectations," Meyer said.

Because the signs are installed outdoors, students and other visitors can experience the KU Common Work of Art at any time. A forthcoming virtual exhibition will draw further connections between "Braiding Sweetgrass" and objects in the Spencer's collection, and a sampling of art included in the virtual exhibition will be on display in the Spencer's Learning Center when the museum reopens in fall 2021.

A [Hawk Week event on August 25](#)⁴ invites students to engage with "Native Hosts" and create their own artwork that explores place, heritage, culture and memory. Resources for expanding conversation about the KU Common Work of Art are [available online](#)² and will continue to be updated throughout the year. Instructors interested in incorporating the KU Common Work of Art and other Spencer Museum resources into their fall courses should contact Celka Straughn, the Spencer Museum's deputy director for public practice, curatorial and research.

Photo: Installation view of "Native Host" series by Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds in front of the Spencer Museum. Credit: Ryan Waggoner.

The University of Kansas is a major comprehensive research and teaching university. The university's mission is to lift students and society by educating leaders, building healthy communities and making discoveries that change the world. The KU News Service is the central public relations office for the Lawrence campus.

kunews@ku.edu⁵ | 1450 Jayhawk Blvd., Suite 37, Lawrence, KS 66045

Links on this page:

1. <https://news.ku.edu/2021/07/06/spencer-museum-announces-ku-common-work-art-2021-2022>
 2. <https://www.spencerart.ku.edu/common-work-art>
 3. <https://experience.ku.edu/common-book>
 4. <https://www.spencerart.ku.edu/calendar/event/14222>
 5. kunews@ku.edu
-

Contact The University of Kansas

785-864-2700
1450 Jayhawk Blvd.
Lawrence, KS 66045

All social media at KU »

The University of Kansas [prohibits discrimination](#) on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion, sex, national origin, age, ancestry, disability, status as a veteran, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, gender identity, gender expression, and genetic information in the university's programs and activities. Retaliation is also prohibited by university policy. The following persons have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies and are the Title IX coordinators for their respective campuses: Director of the Office of Institutional Opportunity & Access, IOA@ku.edu, Room 1082, Dole Human Development Center, 1000 Sunnyside Avenue, Lawrence, KS 66045, 785-864-6414, 711 TTY (for the Lawrence, Edwards, Parsons, Yoder, and Topeka campuses); Director, Equal Opportunity Office, Mail Stop 7004, 4330 Shawnee Mission Parkway, Fairway, KS 66205, 913-588-8011, 711 TTY (for the Wichita, Salina, and Kansas City, Kansas medical center campuses).

