



## Smithsonian Institution, Kansas Humanities Council fund Native American art exhibitions at Spencer



Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian provides \$11,000 for contemporary *Heartland Reverberations*

- Kansas Humanities Council provides \$7,900 for historical *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place*

### MEDIA CONTACT

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Lawrence, KS—An \$11,000 grant from the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian and a \$7,900 grant from the Kansas Humanities Council will provide critical funding for two fall 2011 exhibitions at the Spencer Museum of Art that feature contemporary and historical Native American art, respectively: *Heartland Reverberations* (October 15, 2011-January 15, 2012) and *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* (September 10, 2011-January 15, 2012).

"We are grateful for the support of the Smithsonian and the Kansas Humanities Council," says Nancy Mahaney, SMA Curator of Arts & Cultures of the Americas, Africa & Oceania. "Place and identity are the primary themes for these exhibitions of contemporary and historical American Indian Art, which will coincide with the [sesquicentennial commemoration of Kansas' statehood](#).

"Statehood presents a unique set of 'memorial' issues for native people, as it is often a reminder of loss of land and communal identity that is tied to place. We see these issues as potentially relevant to a broad cross-section of Americans due to the diversity of people who have passed through Kansas as a result of immigration and relocation."

Mahaney will curate the exhibitions, bringing to bear 20 years' experience in museum and heritage management, including eight years working with Native nations in Arizona.

*Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* will feature historical Native American art from the Spencer's collection and serve as a companion and complement to *Heartland Reverberations*. The project has at its center American Indian cultural materials and accompanying public programs and educational materials to tell the story of the native tribes relocated into and out of the state of Kansas.

The contemporary exhibition, *Heartland Reverberations*, will provide an opportunity for artists from descendant American Indian communities that were relocated out of Kansas to present work that speaks to the issues of place, identity and relocation. In spite of the many “celebrations” of statehood that have occurred in recent years (e.g. Oklahoma, Arizona), few opportunities have been offered for Indian people to express their own sense of commemoration. The five artists selected to participate in this exhibition have distinguished themselves through their unique and thought-provoking treatment of these topics.

[Norman Akers](#) utilizes iconic Osage symbols in his paintings and prints, overlaying them on landscapes both real and imagined. Road maps of the Kansas-Oklahoma territory that the Osage cultivated and roamed freely serve as the backdrop for Akers’ dreamscapes. State borders are removed and Osage place names are highlighted to emphasize the Osage origins that serve as the basis for the more prominent symbols. Akers will contribute three to five new works to the installation and provide an opening lecture and gallery talk to facilitate understanding of personal and shared concepts.

Pawnee artist [Bunky Echo-Hawk’s](#) paintings are motivated by a sense of justice expressed in broad strokes of warm tones that communicate messages of environmental responsibility and historical reckoning. He utilizes irony and popular imagery to transcend stereotypes and communicate across cultural divides. Echo-Hawk will create an installation work addressing the legacy of Pawnee removal and provide a gallery presentation interpreting his work.

[Chris Pappan’s](#) “displaced persons” series overlays historical images of Native peoples on contemporary road maps, thus serving as a visual call that aims to encourage people to return to their homelands. His contemporary ledger drawings bring attention to the distortion of Native peoples in contemporary culture. Pappan will contribute three to five new works to the exhibition and will conduct a workshop on contemporary ledger drawing in collaboration with Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence.

[Ryan Red Corn](#) has distinguished himself as a graphic and installation artist, working with museums and communities across the country to bring recognition to American Indian issues. Red Corn will serve as the graphic artist for the exhibition, creating dynamic visual imagery that

gives voice to the collective creativity emerging from the group exhibition. This will include the design of all graphic materials associated with the exhibition, as well as graffiti installation art within the exhibition.

[\*\*Dianne Yeahquo Reyner\*\*](#) is the creative force behind the American Indian Repertory Theatre. As a Kiowa playwright Reyner addresses issues relevant to contemporary indigenous people, confronting stereotypes through juxtapositions of imagery and ideology. Reyner will develop a solo performance piece that responds to the exhibition of a historical Kiowa ceremonial dress from the Spencer Museum of Art's collection.

[\*\*The Kansas Humanities Council\*\*](#) is a nonprofit cultural organization promoting understanding of the history, traditions, and ideas that shape our lives and build community. The Kansas Humanities Council creates, sponsors, and promotes humanities programs across Kansas. Through the humanities—history, literature, philosophy, and related areas—we gain understanding of where we've been, who we are, and what we've valued over time and across generations. KHC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization governed by a 22-member Board of Directors. KHC is an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities and is not a state agency. Funding is provided by NEH, the State of Kansas, and gifts from Friends of the Humanities, foundations, and others.

[\*\*The National Museum of the American Indian\*\*](#) is the 16th museum of the [\*\*Smithsonian Institution\*\*](#). It is the first national museum dedicated to the preservation, study, and exhibition of the life, languages, literature, history, and arts of Native Americans. Established by an act of Congress in 1989 (amendment in 1996), the museum works in collaboration with the Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere to protect and foster their cultures by reaffirming traditions and beliefs, encouraging contemporary artistic expression, and empowering the Indian voice.

[\*\*The Spencer Museum of Art\*\*](#) houses an internationally known collection that is deep and diverse, currently numbering approximately 38,000 artworks and artifacts in all media. The collection spans the history of European and American art from ancient to contemporary, and includes broad and significant holdings of East Asian art.

Areas of special strength include medieval panel painting and religious sculpture; the Kress Study Collection of early modern Italian painting; 19<sup>th</sup>-century American art and material culture; old master prints; photography; European, East Asian, and Indian textiles; American Indian pottery, beadwork, and jewelry; African sculpture; Japanese Edo-period prints; and 20<sup>th</sup>-century Chinese painting.

**Spencer Museum of Art**

The University of Kansas

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Lawrence 66045-7500

785.864.4710

[www.spencerart.ku.edu](http://www.spencerart.ku.edu)

**Gallery Hours**

Tues., Wed., Fri., & Saturday 10 AM – 4PM

Thurs. 10AM – 8PM

Sun. Noon – 4PM / Closed Monday