

'Native Fashion' exhibition to celebrate local Indigenous designers, display richness of cultures

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An installation shot of the Spencer Museum's Perkins Central Court featuring work by contemporary Indigenous designers. (Ryan Waggoner, Spencer Museum of Art via KU News)

A fashion exhibition dedicated to the “resilience, representation, resistance and relations” of Indigenous community members will soon be on display at the Spencer Museum of Art in Lawrence.

“Native Fashion” will showcase traditional garments and regalia, streetwear, accessories, haute couture, photography and contemporary art created by local and national Indigenous designers, according to a University of Kansas news release. More than 40 tribal nations are being represented.

Curated by Sydney Pursel, Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska and the Spencer's curator for public practice, the exhibition takes a dive into historical and modern expressions through fashion.

Pursel collaborated with a team of Native American community advisers, including Christina Haswood, Diné; Alicia Swimmer, Oglala and Sicangu Lakota; Felicia Miner, Cheyenne River Sioux; and Miranda Bradford, Citizen Potawatomi Nation.

“The all-Native advisory board was instrumental to the development of the exhibition themes and the artist selection, which includes many local Indigenous designers,” Pursel said in the release. “I am particularly excited to have the opportunity to present local artists alongside those who are nationally recognized to capture the incredible talent in our home region and reflect the depth of diversity among Native makers.”

Pursel worked beside curatorial interns Elena Theresa, Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, and Dominique Stringer along with the advisory board to develop four themes to drive the exhibition, according to the release: “Resilience” expresses cultural originality, “representation” celebrates diversity among tribal nations, “resistance” communicates Indigenous activism against violence and government policies that result from colonialism, and “relations” highlights the people behind the art.

Photography students at Haskell Indian Nations University took portraits of Indigenous community members from Lawrence and the surrounding area, which will be in an interactive display.

Some pieces and their artists featured in the exhibition, according to the Spencer’s [website](#), include “Spider Woman/Emerging Woman” by Teri Greeves, Kiowa; “concho belt” by Eddie Tsalabutie , Zuñi; “Bless All Those Who Walk Here” by Chris Pappan, Osage, Kaw and Cheyenne River Lakota Sioux; “bolo tie” by Bernard Homer, Zuñi; “Portrait of Portlyn Harjo, Creek/Seminole” by Ryan RedCorn, Osage; “quill wrapped bracelet” by Lani Porter, Omaha; “Void” by Jontay “Kahm” Kahmakoatayo; “Becoming” by Jamie Okuma; and “Pretty Shield and Raven” by Rhonda Holy Bear, Cheyenne River Sioux.

Accompanying the exhibition, a runway show with contemporary Native fashion will hit the Kansas Union on Dec. 14, according to the release. More details will be available in the coming months. More related programming can be found [at this link](#).

The exhibition goes live Sunday, Sept. 1 and will remain until Jan. 5 at the Spencer Museum of Art, 1301 Mississippi St. on KU’s campus.

Admission is free to the public, and the Spencer is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays and noon to 5 p.m. weekends. Hours are extended to 8 p.m. on Thursdays.

Learn more about “Native Fashion” on the Spencer’s website, spencerart.ku.edu/exhibition/native-fashion.

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