FIRST NATIONS ART OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

This exhibition brings the artwork of some of the finest and most accomplished Indigenous artists of the Northwest Coast of British Columbia, Canada to the East-West Center. Included are traditional and contemporary works in a variety of mediums including painting, printmaking, woodcarving, textiles, basket-weaving, drawing, and etching.

Guest Curators: Ray Hartley and Sheila Hall
EWCGallery Curator: Michael Schuster
Installation Design: Lynne Najita
Coordinator: Eric Chang
Consultant: Brenda Crabtree

Presented in collaboration with:
Aboriginal Gathering Collective of Vancouver
Schaefer International Gallery, Maui Arts & Cultural Center
Emily Carr University of Art and Design

Including works from:
Kovalik Family Collection
Ken and Lorraine Stephens Collection

Artists featured in the exhibition:

Primrose Adams and Alfred Adams, Haida Nation, Master Weaver, Elder
Matilda Andrews, Thompson/Nlak’pamux Nation, Master Weaver, Elder
Sonny Assu, Kwakwaka’wakw Nation, Multidisciplinary Contemporary Artist
Dempsey Bob, Tsimshian/Tlingit Nation, Master Carver, Elder
David A. Boxley, Tsimshian Nation, Contemporary Artist, Dancer
David R. Boxley, Tsimshian Nation, Carver, Contemporary Artist, Dancer
Corey Bulpitt, Haida Nation, Multidisciplinary Contemporary Artist, Dancer
Delores Churchill, Haida Nation, Master Weaver, Elder
Brenda Crabtree, Sto:lo/Nlak’pamux Nation, Multidisciplinary Artist, Exhibition Consultant
Ben Davidson, Haida Nation, Multidisciplinary Artist, Dancer
Reg Davidson, Haida Nation, Multidisciplinary Master Artist, Elder, Dancer
Robert Davidson, Haida Nation, Multidisciplinary Master Artist, Elder, Dancer
Aggie Davis, Haida Nation, Weaver
Richard Hunt, Kwakwaka’wakw Nation, Carver
Shawn Hunt, Heiltsuk/Scottish Nation, Multidisciplinary Contemporary Artist
Lena Jumbo, Nootka/Nuu-chah-nulth Nation, Weaver
William Kuhnley, Nuu-chah-nulth Nation, Carver
Isabel Rorick, Haida Nation, Master Weaver, Elder
Larry Rosso, Carrier Nation, Master Carver
Evelyn Vanderhoop, Haida Nation, Master Weaver
Jesse Webster, Nootka/Nuu-chah-nulth Nation, Weaver
Xwalacktun, Coast Salish Kwakiutl/Squamish Nation, Multidisciplinary Contemporary Artist
Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, Coastal Salish/Okanagan Nation, Multidisciplinary Contemporary Artist, Social Activist
First Nations art of British Columbia is among the most vivid and distinctive artwork in North America. It flourishes as an integral part of Indigenous cultures who live today, as they have for thousands of years, surrounded by old growth forests, mountains, oceans, islands, and an abundance of animal and sea life.

These cultures create exquisitely carved objects, intricately woven materials, and beautifully painted surfaces. Totem poles, masks, rattles, bentwood boxes, bowls, and canoes are carved from cedar and other trees; baskets, blankets, and clothing are woven from bark, roots, and animal hair; drums are created from elk and deer hide; and paintings, drawings, prints, and intricate designs are crafted using pigments and dyes. Rich in tradition, and continually innovating in response to cultural circumstances, these dynamic art forms are recognized worldwide for their distinctive character and artistic excellence.

An overarching system of design principles underlies the creation of the art and includes specific visual elements such as form line, ovoids, “U,” “split U,” and “S” shapes. It also includes a collective understanding of the characteristics of animals, sea life, and supernatural beings. This shared language guides the artists in the creation of their work and allows them to produce endless variations in their designs.

Indigenous peoples of the Northwest Coast live in various regions and form distinct cultural groups with their own language, customs, stories, and legends. These groups have developed unique artistic styles while maintaining the overarching design system that is central to Northwest Coast Indigenous art.

Oral histories assist in defining the fabric of Northwest Coast Indigenous society, confirming family lineages, recognizing social position, and affirming rights to important cultural elements like crests, songs, and dances. The art gives

“There is a wisdom inherent in the art and stories of Indigenous peoples, one which is expressed in a worldview that recognizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of all beings — human, animal, and plant. It is a wisdom that is of great value in facing the challenges that exist in the world today.”

—Aboriginal Gathering Collective of Vancouver
visual representation to these oral histories, and to the stories that articulate their understanding of themselves and their connection to their cultures.

The stories are essential to their way of living, and the art brings their stories to life. Along with songs, dances, and legends, art is used in ceremonial gatherings like the potlatch, where marriages, deaths, and other significant events are recognized, and social, spiritual, political, and economic aspects of life are determined.

This exhibition includes artwork from several Northwest Coast First Nations and incorporates new pieces from established, mid-career, and emerging artists, and inter-generational artwork from members of the same family. It also highlights art from the Kovalik Family Collection and works from the Ken and Lorraine Stephens Collection.

These works showcase the artist’s unique interpretations, mastery of materials, and technical excellence and explores both traditional artwork and the social, cultural, and political activism of contemporary Northwest Coast art and design. The exhibition is part of the process of rewriting historic narratives of governments and institutions and expressing an Indigenous perspective and an Indigenous truth.
The East-West Center promotes better relations and understanding among the people and nations of the United States, Asia, and the Pacific through cooperative study, research, and dialogue. Established by the U.S. Congress in 1960, the Center serves as a resource for information and analysis on critical issues of common concern, bringing people together to exchange views, build expertise, and develop policy options. The Center is an independent, public, nonprofit organization with funding from the U.S. government, and additional support provided by private agencies, individuals, foundations, corporations, and governments in the region.

The East-West Center Arts Program for nearly 40 years has enriched the community through concerts, exhibitions, and community engagement focused on arts of the Asia Pacific region, and by arranging cultural and educational programs by artists who are skilled in bridging cultures.

EWC Arts Team: Karen Knudsen, director, Office of External Affairs; Eric Chang, arts program coordinator; Michael Schuster, Ph.D., curator; Annie Reynolds, Ph.D., arts program assistant; William Feltz, adjunct arts specialist; Jeffrey Davis, program officer; Jody Hukaby, development director, Office of Development; Gary Yoshida, development officer; Jennifer Leger, development assistant; Hunter Kaye, Marina George, student assistants


East-West Center Gallery
John A. Burns Hall, 1601 East-West Road (corner Dole St. & East-West Rd.)

Gallery admission is free
Hours: Open Weekdays 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. and Sundays Noon–4:00 p.m.
Closed Saturdays and Oct. 13, 14, Nov. 11, 28, Dec. 1, 24, 25, 29, 31, Jan. 1
Parking on the UH Mānoa campus is normally free and ample on Sundays.
Free school & group tours available.

For further information: 944-7177
arts@EastWestCenter.org
http://arts.EastWestCenter.org

Special Events

In the EWC Gallery with free admission, open seating, no reservations

Guided exhibition tours will be offered Sundays at 3:00 p.m.

Sunday, September 22, 2:00–3:30 p.m.
Exhibition Gala Opening including reception, gallery walkthrough with the curators, and demonstrations by guest artists

Sunday, October 6, 2:00–3:00 p.m.
Illustrated Talk: “No ka Mahalo i Ko‘u Mau Mākua (grateful for my parents)” by Kaili Chun, artist

Sunday, November 3, 2:00–3:00 p.m.
Illustrated Talk: “Hawaiian Pioneers in the Pacific Northwest” by Derek Ferrar, East-West Center communications specialist, and Kate Roland, Kanaka pioneer descendant

The co-curators of the exhibition are Ray Hartley and Sheila Hall with the Aboriginal Gathering Collective (AGC) in Vancouver, Canada. Ray Hartley (Secwepemc Nation/English) is a designer and organizes exhibitions, cultural projects, and activities worldwide. Sheila Hall is a practicing artist, Emeritus Faculty of Culture and Communication at Emily Carr University of Art and Design, and past chair of the Public Art Committee for Vancouver.

Consultant on the exhibition is Brenda Crabtree (Sto:lo Nation), an ethnographer, practicing artist, and Director of Aboriginal Programs at Emily Carr University of Art and Design.


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