



Add Space: Traveling On Native Lands

Curated by Anita Fields

November 15 - December 12, 2021

Tulsa, Oklahoma

Add Space is a project created to bring artworks to public spaces traditionally used for advertising in Tulsa, OK. The fourth iteration of this project, titled “Traveling on Native Lands”, is curated by Anita Fields (Osage) and features works by artists Norman Akers (Osage), Ruthe Blalock Jones (Delaware/Shawnee/Peoria), June Carpenter (Shawnee/Osage), and Richard Ray Whitman (Yuchi/Muscogee) on billboard and bus shelter spaces throughout the city of Tulsa.

Statement from curator Anita Fields:

When asked by Richard Zimmerman to curate a series of his Tulsa Artist Fellowship Add Space series, I immediately imagined filling billboards and bus shelters with art by contemporary Native artists. Oklahoma is home to 39 tribes, tribal members from many different Nations reside in the urban landscape of Tulsa, yet our presence remains invisible.

A large area of Tulsa is located on the land of the Muscogee Nation. Boundaries of Tulsa encompass the lands of the Osage, Cherokee, and Muscogee Nations.

Traveling On Native Lands reminds viewers who pass by the billboards in their vehicles and wait at bus shelters to board buses as transportation that they are moving through Native land.

The artists selected, Ruthe Blalock Jones, Delaware/Shawnee, Richard Ray Whitman, Yuchi/Muscogee, Norman Akers, Osage, and June Carpenter, Osage/Shawnee, provide glimpses into the thoughts, observations, joys, sorrows, and nuances of their respective communities.

The presented works of the Indigenous artists represent a continuum of refined Indigenous belief systems, social constructs, complex issues faced by Native people, and organized worldviews that challenge a colonial mindset. Native ways of being reside deep in the hearts and minds of the participating artists. The red earth of Oklahoma holds the memory of our diaspora and arrival into Indian Territory. Our art and stories are pertinent components of our survival; something to consider as you travel the roads past billboards and bus shelters with imagery related to Native people.

Norman Akers was born and raised in Fairfax, Oklahoma. He is a citizen of the Osage Nation from Grayhorse District. He received a BFA in Painting from the Kansas City Art Institute in 1982, and a Certificate in Museum Studies from the Institute of American Indian Arts in 1983. In 1991, he received a MFA in Fine Arts from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Akers had solo exhibitions at the Lawrence Arts Center, Lawrence, Kansas, I Space, Chicago, Illinois, and the Gardner Art Gallery, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. He has participated in numerous group exhibitions including, Monarchs: Brown and Native Contemporary Artists in the Path of the Butterfly, Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, KS, Mapping: Motion and Memory in Contemporary Art, Katonah Museum, Katonah, New York, Unlimited Boundaries, and The Dichotomy of Place in Contemporary Native American Art, Albuquerque Museum, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

His paintings are in several collections including the Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona, Eiteljorg Museum, Indianapolis, Indiana, and the Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri.

In 2007 he was selected to participate in the “We Are All Knots” print project, sponsored by the National Museum of the American Indian and ART in the Embassies Program Print Series. He was a recipient of the Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Grant in 1999.

Norman Akers previously taught painting and drawing at the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In 2009 he accepted a teaching position at the University of Kansas where he is currently an Associate Professor of Painting and Drawing.

Ruthe Blalock Jones: Shawnee descendant of Shawnee Chief Blackhoof. I grew up in a traditional Indian home, attended NAC (Native American Church) meetings, Shawnee Ceremonials at White Oak Ceremonial Ground, where I am now a ceremonial leader. Participated in pow wows and other Indian events. I enjoy ceremonial dancing, pow wow dancing their attire. I have made dance outfits for family for both ceremonial and pow wow dancing. My work is autobiographical as it is based on these activities and contemporary Indian life

Selected Honors:

2009 Prof Emeritus, Bacone College
2014 Circle of Honor, Tulsa Library
2013 Co-author Woody Crumbo, nominee Center for the Book
2013 Honored Elder artist, Tulsa Indian Art Market
2011 Pow wow Honoree, Bacone College
2009 Prof Emeritus, Bacone College

June Carpenter is a multimedia artist who was born and raised in Tulsa. Her Osage name is Mon-ci-tse-xi and she is a member of the Tsi-zho Wa-shta-keh clan. Using intricate images and text, she explores connections with nature and the redressing of systemic injustices. Carpenter is a self-taught artist whose most recent work consists of paper cutting, embroidery, and beadwork. She earned a Bachelor of Science from Tulane University, and a Juris Doctorate and Master of Arts in Museum Studies from the University of Oklahoma. In Philadelphia, she worked in historic house museums, and in New York, she worked at the National Museum of the American Indian. Having returned to her hometown, Carpenter now works as the Chief Registrar at the Philbrook Museum of Art.

Richard Ray Whitman is an artist, actor, and activist who has spent a lifetime working to strengthen Native communities through his creative efforts. His art and photography have been exhibited at museums and galleries nationally and internationally - with highlights including exhibits at the

Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in NY and La Biennale di Venezia in Venice Italy. Whitman's work has been featured in magazines and books including Aperture's Strong Hearts and Oxford University's textbook Native North American Art. He attended the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, NM and California Institute of the Arts.

As an actor, he has performed in critically acclaimed films including Barking Water, Winter in the Blood, Drunktown's Finest and Neither Wolf Nor Dog. He's appeared in series for AMC-TV, Netflix and Hulu, including the Sterlin Harjo/Taika Waititi FX comedy series Reservation Dogs. Richard worked with Chickasaw composer Jerod Tate as a narrator for the symphonies Fire and Light and Lowak Shoppala.

Richard grew up in Gypsy, Oklahoma, where he learned Yuchi as his first language. His maternal grandmother Polly Long raised Richard and his brothers, taught them how to speak their native language and helped to instruct them in the ways of the Yuchi people. That cultural foundation remains at the heart of Richard's work.

Richard's involvement with activism began with his opposition to the Vietnam War and support for Civil Rights and Treaty Rights as a student at IAIA in 1968. He participated in the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee. At the community level, Richard has worked with the Oklahoma Arts Council, the Native American Art Studies Association and other organizations to teach young people how art can bring them closer to their cultural heritage and help with the intergenerational trauma that so many Indian youth experience.

In recent years, he has worked with Idle No More, the Indigenous Environmental Network and other groups to oppose oil pipeline developments that threaten cultural resources and water supplies and contribute to climate change. He is also using his art to bring attention to the hundreds of murdered and missing Indigenous women whose cases have been largely ignored by law enforcement and the public.

Born in Oklahoma, artist Anita Fields (Osage) creates works of clay and textile that reflect the worldview of her native Osage culture. Her practice explores the complexities of cultural influences and the intersections of balance and chaos found within our lives. The early Osage notions of duality, such as earth and sky, male and female, are represented in her work. Heavily textured layers and distorted writing are elements found in both her clay and textile works. These reference the complex layers and distortion of truths found in the written history of indigenous cultures. "The power of transformation and transformative actions are realized by creating various forms of clothing, coverings, and figures. The works become indicators of how we understand our surroundings and visualize our place within the world." Landscapes, environment, and the powerful influences of nature are themes found throughout the work of Anita Fields. They reflect time, place, and how the earth holds the memory of cultures who once called a specific terrain home. Fields creates narratives that asks viewers to consider other ways of seeing and being in an effort to understand our shared existence. Fields' work has been featured in American Craft, Ms Magazine, American Style, and First American Art. Her can be found in several collections, such as the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Museum of Art and Design, New York City, the Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas, and the Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona. Fields' sculptures were exhibited in "Changing Hands," Museum of Art and Design, New York City "Who Stole the Teepee?," NMAI, Smithsonian, New York City, "Legacy of the Generations," National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C. "Art for A New Understanding: Native Voices," Crystal Bridges Museum of Art, Arkansas, and "Fluent Generations: The Art of Anita, Tom, and Yatika Fields," Sam Noble Museum,

Norman, Oklahoma. In addition, the Minneapolis Institute of Art commissioned a contemporary textile for the "Hearts of Our People" traveling exhibit. Her work can be found in the collections of the Museum of Art and Design, New York City, Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, Santa Fe, Crystal Bridges Museum, Arkansas, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minnesota and the Heard Museum, Arizona. Fields is a 2017-2019 Tulsa Artist Fellow and 2020-2021 Tulsa Artist Fellowship Arts Integration Awardee.

Add Space was made possible by the generous support of the Tulsa Artist Fellowship.

Work locations:

Ruthe Blalock Jones (Delaware/Shawnee/Peoria) "Stomp Dance"

Location: 1311 S. Peoria Ave Tulsa OK, 74120

Ruthe Blalock Jones (Delaware/Shawnee/Peoria) "Shawnee Women at the Ceremonial Grounds, at camp"

Location: 1905 S. Boulder Ave Tulsa OK, 74119

Richard Ray Whitman (Yuchi/Muscogee) "The Presence of your Absence"

Location: 624 E Archer St. Tulsa OK, 74120

Richard Ray Whitman (Yuchi/Muscogee) "Do Indian Artists Go To Santa Fe When They Die?"

Location: 121 South Lewis Ave. Tulsa OK, 74104

Norman Akers (Osage) "Alien Conquest"

Location: 1429 S Utica Ave Tulsa OK, 74104

June Carpenter (Shawnee/Osage) "Of the Air"

Location: 145 E. 1st St. Tulsa OK, 74104