

Outings

July 25 – September 06, 2025

The Carlisle Indian Industrial School opened in 1879, the latest in a line of educational experiments which sought, with varying degrees of viciousness, to assimilate Native American children into the Euro-centric society rapidly spreading across the continent. Carlisle quickly became the model for a massive Federal program of boarding schools for Native youth administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which grew to include hundreds of such schools across the next century.

North Carolina based painter Marcus Dunn, of Tuscarora and non-native descent, has spent years scouring archives for images of these boarding schools, and related forms of assimilationist educational practices, transforming such images into richly textured impressionist paintings and giving presence to the lives transformed by the landscapes and architecture of the boarding school system. *Outings*, his latest body of work, devotes particular attention to programs which brought children from the boarding schools into the surrounding communities, offering them as a cheap workforce for farms or domestic services. Ostensibly designed to give them skills to carry into their adult lives, the program quickly became understood primarily as a way for white families and businesses to benefit from unpaid child labor.

Informed by his own career as a schoolteacher, as well as the present-day work of his Tuscarora community to retain and rebuild their own cultural traditions and lifeways, Dunn's paintings exude a deep sympathy and respect for the lives of his subjects. Whether depicted in classroom settings, or on the titular "outings", the children Dunn portrays are complex and multifaceted, displaying the defiance, uncertainty, and sensitivity likely familiar to all from one's own childhood. Works like *Pool Hall* or *Three-Legged Race* show children stealing moments of joy and self-definition back from their overseers, searching for ways to discover their own identity, collective and individual, within the system of assimilation imposed upon them. A longing for escape is perhaps the throughline that ties together each of these paintings, whether openly marking the faces of the children, or masked and disguised for their own protection.

Dunn's work gives view to a vast historical project, beginning with proto-boarding schools from as early as the 1820s, through the formation of the federal boarding schools at the turn of the century, on into their mid-century proliferation, and then their eventual decline in the 1980s as Tribal governments clawed back control and self-determination of their educational systems. Across the years, children in these schools often found the homes and communities they so yearned to return to transformed in their absence, a transformation which they bore in their own beings as well. Dunn's tender portrayal of these transformations carries deep relevance to the contemporary moment, as questions over tribal sovereignty continue, political fear and assimilationist urges towards migrants and refugees grows, and prison labor programs carry forward the legacy of exploitation begun by the outings programs. Without providing simple resolutions, Dunn's work re-endows the human lives at the center of such socio-political issues with a presence and voice that is all too often lost.

Marcus Dunn

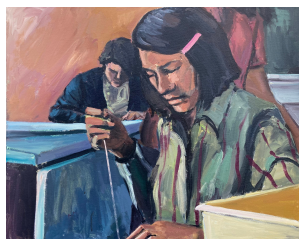
Marcus Dunn (b. 1986, United States) has exhibited his work at the Florence County Museum in Florence, S.C., SCAD Museum of Art in Savannah, Ga., and the Institute of American Indian Arts Museum of Contemporary Native Arts in Santa Fe, N.M. He is a 2022 South Arts Southern Prize recipient for North Carolina. His work consists of small and large-scale paintings concerning memory and cultural identity. His heritage is Tuscarora and non-Native descent. He is currently living and working in Laurinburg, N.C. He is an alumnus of the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture. Prior to earning an M.F.A. in painting from the Savannah College of Art and Design, he earned a B.F.A. in studio art at the Institute of American Indian Arts.

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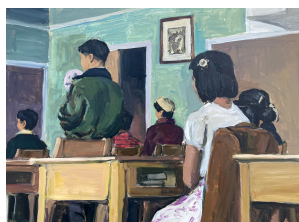
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Marcus Dunn
Sewing Class, 2025
Acrylic on canvas
24 x 30 inches



Marcus Dunn
Making Rows, 2025
Acrylic on canvas
36 x 24 inches



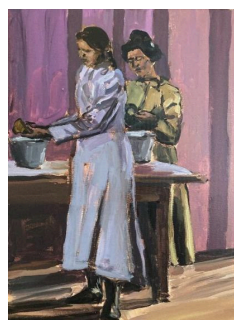
Marcus Dunn
Gathering His Thoughts, 2025
Acrylic on panel
18 x 24 inches



Marcus Dunn
Pool Hall, 2025
Acrylic on canvas
24 x 36 inches



Marcus Dunn
Filing In, 2025
Acrylic on canvas
30 x 48 inches



Marcus Dunn
The Outing, 2025
Acrylic on canvas
18 x 14 inches



Marcus Dunn
Pop Quiz, 2025
Acrylic on canvas
24 x 36 inches



Marcus Dunn
Over Land and Sea, 2025
Acrylic on canvas
24 x 30 inches



Marcus Dunn
Piano, 2025
Acrylic on canvas
36 x 23 ½ inches

Works are available for purchase, price list available upon request.

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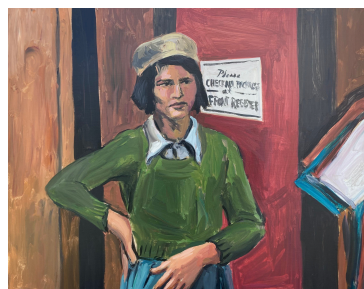
Marcus Dunn
Farm Boys, 2025
Acrylic on canvas
18 x 14 inches



Marcus Dunn
Three-Legged Race, 2025
Acrylic on canvas
16 x 20 inches



Marcus Dunn
Preparing the Room, 2025
Acrylic on canvas
36 x 27 inches



Marcus Dunn
*Please Check All
Packages at Front*, 2025
Acrylic on panel
24 x 30 inches



Marcus Dunn
Blue Shirt, 2023
Acrylic on panel
12 x 9 inches



Marcus Dunn
Sunny Afternoon, 2025
Acrylic on canvas
20 x 16 inches

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