

I. Main Entry Panel

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith is Salish (with Cree and French ancestry as well) and is an enrolled member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in northwestern Montana. From these Native origins, she has moved comfortably into the non-Native world as a traveler among peoples. Her work bridges cultures and integrates diverse forms of art.

Smith describes herself as a “cultural arts worker.” She is an activist and storyteller. Her subjects are the worst and the best of human nature. When reveling in the beauty of nature or the joys of loving connections, she creates work that is lush in color and form. When tackling issues of brutality or injustice, she persuades with honey in place of irritating with vinegar.

There’s always a germ of buffoonery in human arrogance; therein lies the wellspring of much of Smith’s irony and humor. She doesn’t have to invent the circumstances she examines. Existence contains it all, as a resource waiting to be explored, examined, unmasked, and critiqued.

It is out of Jaune Quick-to-See Smith’s responses to her own time and her reverence for her own cultural origins that this exhibition has emerged.

“She is enacting the most ancient role of the artist, to make visible what others cannot see.”
—Carolyn Kastner (2013)

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II. Conflict – works directly or indirectly about war, friction, strife, inequity

A. Panel

Throughout human history, people have striven for peace ... without lasting success. There are always those who seek war, encourage strife, and are indifferent to inequities and the sufferings of others. Smith’s work bears witness to this human circumstance. Her visual voice calls out the corruptible, the greedy, and the cruel. For decades, her work has shined a spotlight on disparity and injustice. Her personal experience with the past and contemporary social conditions of Native Americans and women is a particularly dominant thread in her work.

“For thousands of years, tribes, communities, and nations have been fighting over who has the Map to Heaven.” Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (2004)

B. Individual labels

The Eye of the Storm, 2015, oil on canvas

Collection of the Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon

In 1896, a tiny wooden carving—part human, part panther—was excavated in Florida. Here we see the Key Marco Cat, made by the Calusa people about twelve hundred

years ago, sit resolutely as the storms of climate change roil behind it. The “eye of the storm” refers to the illusion of calm as well as the knowledge that the worst may be yet to come. The bird motif acknowledges the work of Afro-Chinese-Cuban painter Wilfredo Lam, an international artist with whom Smith feels an affinity.

Fear, 2005, mixed media on canvas

A figure with an armload of faces of different ethnic origin stands before you. It is headless but not sightless. The figure refers to the truncated way in which women are often portrayed in art, but the figure also reveals a sheltering nature. One face derives specifically from that of an Iraqi sculpture stolen during the Iraqi conflicts. The fear of the title is the fear of the “other” and the worldwide fear of women... fear of women attaining genuine equality and power.

Imperialism, 2011, oil and acrylic on canvas

In the upper right, a moth flies toward a flame, even as an imperialist is seduced by dreams of power. Below the moth, a child with an abacus suggests education. Other elements allude to religion, torture, and death. The ever-present eyes of constant surveillance jostle for space alongside figures gesturing violently.

King of the Mountain, 2005, oil on canvas

Using a dark palette, Smith comments on the power-hungry and the misery they cause. Medieval Spanish imagery calls to mind the arrival of the Spanish in the New World. Allusions to Picasso’s *Guernica* and human figures crushed by money leave no doubts about what follows from violence and greed. India and China climb uphill on the left; the U.S. and the U.K. move downhill on the right. A Disney character stands in for multi-national cultural takeover. A heart bleeds oil. A tortoise and hare race toward oblivion.

Shock and Awe, 2011, oil and acrylic on canvas

“Shock and awe” is a military term referring to displays of force so overwhelming that an enemy is stunned. It implies an unnerving element of visual spectacle, as if war were a performance or game. *Shock and Awe* bears comparison to anti-war and protest works by the German George Grosz and Spaniard Pablo Picasso although it responds specifically to videos of nighttime carpet bombings in Iraq.

Sissy and the Plutocrats, 2012, oil on canvas

The Greek myth of Sisyphus, a king condemned perpetually to push a boulder uphill and never reach his goal, is a well-known story of useless action. In this painting, we see a Native woman pushing a shopping cart uphill over a mountain of lavish food, unavailable to her. The moon in the upper left makes different cross-cultural allusions: Iranians, South American Indians, the Japanese, and others see a rabbit in the moon, not a man.

Tongass Trade Canoe, 1996, mixed media on canvas, plastic baskets on shelf

Collection of the Yellowstone Art Museum, gift of John W. and Carol L. H. Green (2012.06.01)

It is so far away that few are aware of the Tongass National Forest in Alaska. Fewer still are in a position to observe the impact of oil drilling on its native species. The shelf of plastic baskets—trivial items that are a petroleum product—draws explicit contrast between the little that is gained and the costs. Collaged quotes refer to short-term and long-term issues that rest in the balance.

The Vanishing American, 1994, acrylic, paper, cotton, printing ink, fabric, chalk, and graphite on canvas

Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2007.88); gift of Dorothee Peiper-Riegraf and Hinrich Peiper in memory of Arlene LewAllen

This piece turns on its head the old adage of Native Americans being a “vanishing race,” which has never been true, and is even less true today. In contemporary North America, Native populations are growing. Rather than vanishing Natives, in this work we see white faces on a white ground fading from view. Intermarriage and other demographic factors contribute to the “browning of America.”

War Horse in Babylon, 2005, oil and acrylic on canvas

Not for the faint of heart, *War Horse in Babylon* is an explicit commentary on the Iraq war, its suspect motivations, and its horrific human price. A blood-stained horse modeled after a Leonardo da Vinci image stands paralyzed in a field of skulls and bones. Even the astronaut—ostensibly exploring for the sake of pure knowledge—is armed with a spear. The taint of violence colors every inch of the image.

War Is Heck, 2002, lithograph with chine collé

Missoula Art Museum Contemporary American Indian Art Collection, gift of the artist

The term Smith uses to title this piece came from an article published in the late 1990s. Smith often finds irony in the headlines and popular press, or creates it through juxtaposition of collaged wording. The stop-action bison photo sequences of Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904) symbolize how people are herded and slaughtered in war. Bingo cards refer to the destructive act of gambling.

III. **Dream** – works including or evoking inspiration, compassion, peace, animals, life

A. **Panel**

One cannot achieve a better world unless one can envision it. Origin stories, cultural customs, social organization, religious visions ... all of these are ways in which people attempt to understand life and their place in it. Dreams can be an escape, but can also be a means to accommodate reality and gain inspiration. Smith’s body of work often circles back to a fundamental desire for peace, compassion for those who suffer, love of animals and nature, and appreciation for those who foster good in the world.

“Nature is the common denominator ... In my drawings, I use the microcosm and in my paintings the macrocosm.” (2003)

B. **Individual labels**

Celestial Circle, 2004, mixed media on canvas

“The ‘celestial circle’ is the movement of Mother Earth in our galaxy.” (2017) The planet is portrayed by a female figure in a Salish cut wing dress. Elements fundamental to life—insects, animals—share space with symbols of religion, death, and commercialism. As is true of the planet, “All life clings to it.” (2016)

Cheyenne Series #99, 1984, mixed media on paper

“One summer, I wanted to practice collage and watercolor so I copied designs, patterns, and landscapes from used scraps of fabric. I imagined that my horse Cheyenne and I traveled to exotic places. He stood in the doorway of the studio while I talked to him. Some pieces [in this series] resemble travel posters.” (2017)

Georgia on My Mind, 1986, oil on canvas

Collection of the Yellowstone Art Museum, gift of Miriam T. Sample (2001.009)

The title does recall a famous song, but another meaning comes into play in this painting. Georgia O’Keeffe died the year Smith painted this work. It serves to honor one who, by example rather than combativeness, achieved much for women artists. Both artists developed close ties to New Mexico, although both are native to other regions.

Site Series #26, 1980, pastel on paper

This is a drawing from an early series that commemorates places where Native Americans have been. Where they have been they have left their traces: house foundations, middens, glyphs, cave paintings, pottery shards, and other artifacts. Each one includes her horse Cheyenne, and each explores its specific, known site in light of Smith’s understanding and use of contemporary mainstream artistic forms and styles.

The Swamp, 2015, oil on canvas

Courtesy of the Accola Griefen Gallery, Brooklyn, New York

A figure both human and animal stands in a swamp, wreathed by symbols of the vivid life one finds in swamps. Humans and animals are caught up in the stew of action, just as none escapes thoughtless decisions that poison the air and water that everyone needs. This painting acknowledges the importance of swamps within our ecosystems, their cleansing waters, and their rich habitat. In the central role, Smith “created an elk anthropomorphic female figure, converted from a male elk love medicine figure.” (2017)

Wallowa Waterhole Series, 1979, pastel on paper

In an image that could be read as a map or diagram, dynamic pictographic forms are arrayed from foreground to background. They make it easy to imagine a narrative. Smith is always storytelling, although not in the sense of literal illustration. The *Wallowa Waterhole Series* refers to part of northeast Oregon and the peoples who have lived there or been driven from it.

We Are All Knots in the Great Net of Life, 2007, lithograph on paper

This collage-like lithograph was a commission for an embassy. Smith was prohibited from creating an overtly political or religious image—a challenge for a politically and socially engaged artist. As is often the case with limitations, the constraints proved fruitful. Smith succeeded in getting around the prohibition and created a work that paradoxically is and isn’t religious, but is certainly philosophical. Using Native “injunctivity,” Smith “placed plants, animals, and a human figure in a circle to show that they are all connected.” (2017)

Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?, 2002, watercolor on paper

The title of this work refers to a well-known painting by Post-Impressionist Paul Gauguin. At the time he painted his masterpiece, Gauguin was in despair about life itself. In Smith’s work, the blue and the red states break apart and fly off into (cyber) space. There is an aimlessness and sense of futility. It blends an ostensibly frivolous statement with serious implications.

IV. Identity – explicit Native reference

A. Panel

Indigenous peoples face pressure both to live in the “real” world and to live in the past. These pressures come from outside and inside each specific culture. Jaune Quick-to-See Smith navigates these waters with extraordinary success. She seamlessly and effectively melds traditional and mainstream contemporary art, and Native and non-Native art historical imperatives. The reality is that she lives in two worlds. She is not a visitor in either. She lives and works without artifice, exemplifying authenticity regardless of the arena. Smith returns to the wellspring of her origins often to reflect on the nature of being and the nature of being Native.

“I make snapshots, so to speak, of a particular message, some issue about the human condition, such as war, women’s rights, animal rights, the environment, justice, the oil business, class issues, racism ... but always through a Native world view.” (2016)

B. Individual labels

American Landscape Series: American Landscape, 2006, lithograph on paper

“Every circle in this print contains something that happens in America.” (2016)

American Landscape Series: Earth People, 2011, lithograph on paper

“My work comes from a visceral place—deep, deep—as though my roots extend beyond the soles of my feet into sacred soils. Can I take these feelings and attach them to the passerby? To my dying breath, and my last tube of burnt sienna, I will try.” (1996)

American Landscape Series: Eye Candy, 2006, lithograph on paper

“My eye candy is nature.” (2016)

American Landscape Series: Sky People, 2011, lithograph on paper

This lithograph “is about connecting the holistic world, such as butterflies and solar panels, star charts and lightning, weather patterns and the air we breathe—it’s all connected.” (2017)

Celebrate 40,000 Years (Coast to Coast), 1997, lithograph on Rives BFK

The U.S. measures its political history in centuries, but Indigenous populations measure their time in the Americas in tens of thousands of years. “Politicians never mention Native peoples. Blacks and Hispanics, yes; Asians, maybe; Natives, no.” (2016)

Horse Sense, 1994, lithograph on paper

Missoula Art Museum Contemporary American Indian Art Collection, gift of the artist

For Smith, the term “horse sense” has added resonance from her memories of her father, who was a horse trader. Whether one had horse sense or not was a measure of one’s worth. In this image, a man’s buckskin shirt topped with a horse dominates a space populated by everything from diamonds to dinosaurs, snippets of a life both traditional and non-traditional.

I See Red, 1992, oil and mixed media on canvas

The never-accurate and tired old colonial stereotype of the “red Indian” led Smith to reflect on the phenomenon of labeling. She considered subject matter never thought of as red that she could paint red. The red snowman, with a feather on his head, is scattered with collaged imagery that evokes further stereotyping and treats it ironically. With the prominent words “simply red” over the face, we realize that simplicity is the last thing we’re likely to find.

Indian Men Wear Shirts and Ties, 1996, acrylic, mixed media, and collage on canvas
Identity is coded in visible and invisible ways. The deep irony of this piece is reinforced by the collaged headlines and ad copy. The piece “is a riff on the meaning in white culture, white shirt, and tie, but in this case it’s a traditional man’s shirt that would be worn to dance in, with leggings. During the week, he might wear a white shirt and tie, so a Native man would have both in his closet.” (2016)

The Long Shadow, 2016, woodcut on paper
A person casts an enormous shadow, but it’s not in his own shape. The looming presence of the Native American trickster rabbit overwhelms the person to whom he is firmly linked. Or, on a still more symbolic level, we can see in this image the overwhelming impact of effects relative to cause.

Mixed Blood, 2004, mixed media on canvas
Four hearts signify each of the cardinal directions. The painting is about Gerald Slater, a beloved cousin/brother (“as the Navajos describe that relationship”) who was founder of the Salish-Kootenai College and a very giving person. Smith gives him step-like power lines. “He had a huge impact on my life ... and many, many others’ lives as well.” (2016)

Spam, 1995, acrylic and mixed media on canvas
Collection of the University of Arizona Museum of Art, Tucson, Arizona; museum purchase with funds provided by the Edward J. Gallagher, Jr. Memorial Fund
A bison—originally an important food source for Native peoples—is juxtaposed with the word SPAM, referring to a highly processed product no longer resembling its origins. It alludes to the government replacing Natives’ traditional food sources with an unhealthy diet. A similar process of denaturing and devaluing runs as a common thread through centuries of Native experience.

The Survival Series: Humor, 1996, lithograph on paper, printed at the Lawrence Lithography Workshop, Lawrence, Kansas
“To an outsider, Indian humor seems like a self-deprecating, bleak humor about unfunny predicaments. It takes what we think we know and turns it over, around and upside down, often getting at real truth. Indian humor has been an important part of survival in the worst of times. Stories abound about carelessness, stupidity, bad behavior, and hardship. Yet when told around the dinner table, we all laugh so hard, we can hardly talk, tears roll down our faces in sharing such stories. This is our way. It’s one of our ways of survival. It’s like hearing the drum, it makes us feel so good and alive and binds us together physically and mentally. I used Borscht Belt humor like ‘walk this way’ and ‘take my wife’ and mixed it together with a Coyote story. The train is chasing the Indians ... everything is upside down and backwards in this print because that’s how Indian humor works.”

The Survival Series: Nature Medicine, 1996, lithograph on paper, printed at the Lawrence Lithography Workshop, Lawrence, Kansas
“Medicine is a Native American word from the Algonquin word *mediwiwin*. Our tribal medicine is holistic and it also comes from nature. The FDA lists over two hundred plants that are medicinal and discovered by Indian people, but there are hundreds more used by our tribes today. Drugstore chemical stews cooked up by Eurocentric drug companies sometimes make people even sicker. Some in the mainstream population

have become wary of the drug companies' concoctions and have turned to homeopathic medicines from natural plants. Often these were discovered by Indian people eons ago. My reservation, the Salish and Kootenai, has six of the seven life zones, and plants at all levels have been used to keep people healthy and frisky."

The Survival Series: Tribe Community, 1996, lithograph on paper, printed at the Lawrence Lithography Workshop, Lawrence, Kansas

"Tribal people tend to stick together, thus the meaning of 'tribe.' Often you find two and three generations, sometimes four, living in the same household, sometimes due to economics but sometimes because they want to be together. Generosity and sharing are tribal folkways and that's especially true of my tribe. The Catholic Church helped us Natives to increase our numbers. So I used the worldwide fecundity figure—the rabbit standing over the top of the Basilica floor in Rome. There are other symbols around the rabbit that represent togetherness and community as the old Mother Goose saying goes, 'Birds of a feather flock together.'"

The Survival Series: Wisdom / Knowledge, 1996, lithograph on paper, printed at the Lawrence Lithography Workshop, Lawrence, Kansas

"In Indian country, a person isn't considered wise just by going to college. We revere our elders, who are sometimes illiterate, as being extraordinarily wise because they combine their life experience with cultural study and teaching, plus very practiced analytical skills. We also believe that intelligence is a path from the heart to the head. College does not teach that. It teaches book learning, linear thinking, and mainly Eurocentric thinking, not where to find the best bitterroot bed or where the black moss grows or what the grizzlies need to eat at this time of year to stay healthy. No, our elders got us here since the Creation Times, and we have them to thank for our survival."

Tribal Map 2001, 2000, oil, mixed media, and collage on canvas

The tribes noted on this map are only federally recognized ones. Of the hundreds of tribes indigenous to North America—meaning only those not already extinct—many have not successfully navigated the onerous and capricious process of gaining federal recognition. Without it, the United States claims that they do not "exist," their ethnic and physical existence notwithstanding.

Memory Map, 2000, mixed media on paper

The scatter of pictographic images instantly suggests both art and language. They create the outline of the U.S. "This is to remind us that our Native ancestors were here and brought us into the world today." (2017) Some of these pictographs are all that remains of past cultures. Like all good maps, Smith's map paintings seduce the viewer with the allure of unfamiliar territory while conveying factual information. "Indian people consider all of the Americas stolen land. I use maps as a point of departure for the political treatment of Native people." (2003)

V. Full Circle – works that illustrate irony, wry humor, comeuppance, and death as part of life

A. Panel

At the everyday human level, life is experienced as linear. We cannot un-spill the milk or be five years old again. On a larger scale, however, many cultures and the contemporary sciences

view existence as cyclical ... as a fabric or a continuum. There's karma and comeuppance. There are consequences, and these consequences often involve poignancy, wry humor, and irony. Smith's work often illustrates a benevolent wider view. Death is part of life. Injustice hurts now and will hurt again when repeated. Arguments resurface in new guises. Cruelty in one time and place is just as cruel in another. Each song has a refrain.

"Put back what you take out, don't waste, and remember where you came from—out of that earth and you'll go back into it." (1996)

B. Individual labels

Ceci n'est pas une <peace> pipe, 1993, monoprint on paper

In 1928, the Belgian Surrealist René Magritte painted *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* ("This is not a pipe"). Today an icon of Surrealism, the painting marked the difference between a thing and an image of a thing. In Smith's monoprint, Custer's image wafts out of the pipe, occupying the thought of the Indian. This pipe, too, is but an image and not even an image of an Indian peace pipe, but a European pipe. Magritte's original title was *The Treachery of Images* ... knowing this further enriches Smith's image.

A Chart of the Human Body, 2005, woodcut and lithograph on mulberry paper

Scattered across this print one finds images that allude to what is in and part of our bodies. Believe it or not, like it or not, this stew includes synthetic chemicals, different races, rust, ancestors, Neanderthals, "bug dust," and on and on. Even the dust or ashes of art and collectively inherited cultures feeds the plants—and us as well.

Down the Rabbit Hole, 2014, woodcut on paper

As an expression, "down the rabbit hole" stems from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. If you go down the rabbit hole, you enter a realm of confusion and disruption. Add to this the Native concept of the rabbit as trickster, the one who disrupts (perhaps in revealing ways). We wonder if the rabbit's headlong tumble into flames is retribution, punishment, bad luck, or the journey of an immortal.

Going Forward, Looking Back, 1996, oil and mixed media on canvas

This diptych—rich with puns—alludes to events that happened to and on Smith's reservation, specifics that echo more universal Indigenous peoples' issues. Decisions such as widening a highway have ramifications that must be informed by knowledge of what came before. A personal reference appears in that Smith had an ancestor named Nellie, who was an expert beadworker. The dripped painting technique reflects the influence of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. Smith states, "I'm a painter," and this manifests in her enjoyment of delving into the physical nature of paint and its thick-and-thin aspects.

The Long Shadow, 2015, oil on canvas

Courtesy of the Accola Griefen Gallery, Brooklyn, New York

Smith presents a parade of mixed-species and anthropomorphic figures from the rocks and rills of the Plateau. They cross the shadow of a rabbit, cast by a man. It's a scorching image suggesting hidden strengths, unseen identities, and the power of forces we don't understand that will cause a ruckus and claim victories. Images pulled from the past advocate a narrative for Native life today.

Rain, IV, 1993, monoprint on paper

General Custer lies on the ground. Dead, we suppose ... it is his death and the hours before it that lodge him in our collective body of knowledge. Yet, his arms are crossed across his chest as if still defiant. Custer lies like Gulliver tied to the ground by the Lilliputians in the eighteenth-century satire, *Gulliver's Travels*. Blood-red streaks and pictographic Native figures shower down upon him. They are upstanding, confident, and ever-multiplying figures. Legends say that the Americas will be brown again. "Indians moving north from Meso- and South America are coming like the rain." (2017)

Trade Canoe: Don Quixote in Sumeria, 2005, oil and acrylic on canvas
Collection of Eleanor Flomenhaft, New York, New York

Under a midnight sky full of tumbling skeletons, a skeletal horseman steers a canoe overflowing with humanity in its many guises. Visual quotes from the art of the ancient Middle East to Walt Disney jostle with details from Picasso's essential anti-war painting *Guernica*. Is the canoe aground on a ceremonial altar or adrift in a blood-red sea? "Each piece is a narrative with no beginning and no end." (2016)

Trade Canoe for the North Pole, 2017, acrylic, collage, and oil stick on canvas

A changing climate may mean palm trees, cactus, horses and bison grazing grassy fields, and big cities ... in the North Pole. "The canoe is old, rugged, and has been patched and re-patched but it carries quite a load of cargo. ... Seven Plains Indians represent the seven generations from the past to the present. ... A nearly invisible Coyote presides over all with hands that [gesture that] s/he gives up. ... Though there are many other images and text offering solutions or clouding the narrative, the important message is offering directions to Mars to go boldly where no serious thought has gone before." (2017)

Which Comes First? (The Insects or the Humans), 2004, mixed media on canvas

"This is my body with life ebbing away. The insects will take over." (2016) Smith has done more figurative work during the past decade than she did earlier in her career, especially images of women. She reflects that the reason for this may be her thinking more upon mortality.

The Long Shadow, 2016, woodcut on paper, 19 x 15 inches

A person casts an enormous shadow, but it's not in his own shape. The looming presence of the Native American trickster rabbit overwhelms the person to whom he is firmly linked. Or, on a still more symbolic level, we can see in this image the overwhelming impact of effects relative to cause.