

TOURING

AUGUST 24, 2019 – FEBRUARY 23, 2020

This touring packet emphasizes experiential inquiry-based learning by asking questions to help visitors think about the exhibition. Expertise on every work is not necessary.

WITH VISITORS

INFORM: As you go through this exhibition, I would like you to engage with Melanie Yazzie’s approach to art making. She says, “... **what we create must have beauty and harmony from within ourselves, from above, below, in front, behind and from our core.**”

DIRECT: Walk around the gallery and take in how she presents harmony in her work, thinking about the following questions:

ASK:

- **What strikes you in this exhibit as pleasant or harmonious?**
- **Why are you drawn to those pieces or elements?**
 - Ex: Visitors could find particular colors pleasant because they elicit ideas, emotions, memories, etc.
 - Ex: Visitors could be drawn to certain symbols in her work from personal connection

INFORM: Melanie is informed by the Diné concept of *hozho* (*hu-zoh*) — translated as blessings, beauty, and harmony. This concept reflects that we are all a part of the world and everything in the world is beautiful. In this body of work, she is drawing on her memories of her family, travel, and life experiences. Her early works focused on calling attention to the harsh realities of racism, poverty, and loss of home territories. She continues to acknowledge these struggles, but now layers her artworks with recuperative images to expand on the complexities of human experiences and bring joy and harmony through her work. “**Despite the sadness underlying both past and present, Melanie Yazzie’s art conveys the open mind, the big smiles, the joy of living and creating, the constant challenge to Walk in Beauty**” (Becker & Lippard 15).

INFORM: Melanie Yazzie creates her work with these main components in mind:

- Travel & Experiences of other people
- Transformation & Change
- Diné cultural practices

DIRECT: Yazzie explore many of these themes when she was the 2018 Mellon Artist in Residence at the FAC. Notice these themes presented in the kitten bear (“Kitten Bear in New Zealand” in exhibit case):

- Model themes presented in the print of the kitten bear:

- **Travel:** through her travels, Yazzie drew inspiration from the turtle, a prevalent symbol in Aotearoa New Zealand. She presents her self-portrait of “kitten bear”, a form that includes a turtle body to represent her many travels to that land.
- **Transformation & Change:** Yazzie depicts multiple personal traits of herself, both within the strength of the bear but the gentleness of the kitten, demonstrating transformation and change within the individual.
- **Diné Cultural Practices:** The bear is symbolic of strength in Diné culture.

AFTER MODELING: There are 3 cards which each of these themes on them. Have each person in your tour pick one of the cards to work with as they explore the exhibit.

DIRECT: Pick ONE of these three cards (representing a theme) to investigate within the gallery. Notice that these themes may be presented through different elements: symbols, maps, colors, layers, etc. Use the wall text to discover more about your selected theme.

- Ex: Visitors may be drawn to her use of maps. If so, you could share that Yazzie states that these maps a representative of Diné people “being healed together by our land”, which helps locate the work and the artist herself.

ASK:

- **How is this theme connected to the work you selected?**
- **What do you see that makes you connect that theme to the work?**
(ask visitors to share what they saw with one or two people near them.)

VTS: “Making New Friends” (Sculpture)

Post-VTS Reflection:

DIRECT: Following VTS, think about what was just shared in our discussion. **What additional connections can you make to our themes?** Reminder of themes:

- Travel & Experiences of other people
- Transformation & Change
- Diné cultural practices

ASK: Which themes we discussed earlier do you notice recurring in this sculpture? What do you see that makes you connect to that/those theme(s)?

- Ex: Visitors may connect to the transformation within the figures.
- Ex: Visitors may bring up symbols as cut-outs in the sculpture, which create both presence and absence for the figures.

INFORM: Through the presentation of her work, Melanie Yazzie hopes that her audience will come away with something they didn’t expect. Her goal is to “**confront people who need to hear our story, to make work that is like a door or window through connecting**” (Becker &

Lippard 15). She also seeks to empower people to find and tell their own story as a means of personal reflection. In doing so, she both connects people to people and people to art.

ASK:

- **What is something you came away with that you did not expect through the course of exploring this exhibition?**
- **If you were to use techniques similar to Melanie’s what story of your own might you share?**

DIRECT: As we conclude our tour today, I would like to leave you with a quote posted in Diné at on the wall: **“Always do things in a good way with a clear mind.”** As a further engagement with Yazzie’s work and intention, engage with Yazzie’s formal characteristics on the interactive light table.

Direct visitors to the light table interactive to explore their own process with layers. On the table, they will find:

- Symbols represented in Melanie’s work
- Maps, representing place
- Images referencing Dine traditional cultural knowledge

Use the instructions on the tri-fold stand to engage with Melanie Yazzie’s process of printmaking. Play with layering these prints to try to create your own stories.

THEME CARDS

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| <p>TRAVEL & EXPERIENCES OF OTHER PEOPLE</p> | <p>LOOK FOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Maps- Thumbprints- Direction & Movement- Spirals |
| <p>TRANSFORMATION & CHANGE</p> | <p>LOOK FOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Nature- Plant life & Animals- Maps as transformative- Healing through hardships (overcoming the past) |

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| <p>DINÉ CULTURAL PRACTICES</p> | <p>LOOK FOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bear - Circles - Comb as a weaving tool |
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RECOMMENDED FOR VTS

If the sculpture is inconvenient for VTS, this is a good option: “With Sue in Norfolk – Great Travelers” (West Gallery near security).

EXHIBITION TEXT

Wall text in separate document.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

As a printmaker, painter, and sculptor, Melanie Yazzie’s work draws upon her rich Diné (Navajo) cultural heritage. Her work follows the Diné dictum “walk in beauty” literally, creating beauty and harmony. As an artist, she works to serve as an agent of change by encouraging others to learn about social, cultural, and political phenomena shaping the contemporary lives of Native peoples in the United States and beyond. Her work incorporates both personal experiences as well as the events and symbols from Dine culture. Her work is informed and shaped by personal experiences.

Yazzie uses her travels around the world to connect with other indigenous peoples. Her visits to New Zealand, the Arctic, the Pueblos in the Southwest, and to indigenous peoples of Russia, have been the impetus for continued dialogue about Indigenous cultural practices, language, song, story-telling, and survival.

Yazzie has exhibited widely, both in the United States and abroad. Her work is in the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Print Collection, Providence, the Museum of Contemporary Native Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico, the Kennedy Museum of Art, Art Collection, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, Rhodes University, Print Collection, Grahamstown, South Africa, to name a few. She has been reviewed in *Focus Magazine*, *Santa Fe*, *the Los Angeles Times*, *New Zealand Herald*, and she is mentioned in *Printmaking in the Sun* by Dan Welden and Pauline Muir, and *The Lure of the Local: Sense of Place in a Multi Centered Society* by Lucy Lippard. She has had over 500 group and solo exhibitions combined. Yazzie makes prints,

sculptures, paintings, and mixed media works. Her work can always be found at the Glenn Green Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

<https://www.colorado.edu/artandarthistory/melanie-yazzie>

"My artwork is culturally based in my heritage of being a Diné (Navajo) person. The artworks stem from the thought and belief that what we create must have beauty and harmony from within ourselves, from above, below, in front, behind and from our core. We are taught to seek out beauty and create it with our thoughts and prayers. I feel that when I am making my art, be it a print, a painting or a sculpture, I begin by centering myself and thinking it all out in a "good way", which is how I was taught from an early age. My work speaks about travel and transformation." - Melanie Yazzie

<https://www.glenngreengalleries.com/Artists/myazzie/index.html>

RELATED EVENTS

Member Tour:

Saturday, September 7 (12pm)

All members of the Fine Arts Center are welcome to join us for our Monthly Member Tour, held on the 1st Saturday of each month at 12 noon. Each tour (lasting approximately 1 hour) will feature a different topic, so feel free to come back often and continue learning about the FAC.