

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

WITH VISITORS

PRONUNCIATION:

Naranjo Morse: *nuh-rah-n-ho mors*

nan – nahn

Tewa - tay-wah

INFORM: Nora Naranjo Morse is an artist from Santa Clara Pueblo (in Tewa is: Kha P'o Owingeh - use Santa Clara Pueblo when speaking to visitors). Naranjo Morse considers herself, her artwork, and the world around her, to be in a constant state of transformation – In her words “always becoming”. “The sculpture in this exhibition represents the shifts in Naranjo Morse’s artwork over the past fifteen years.”

- Naranjo Morse thinks of *nan* (Santa Clara clay) as a grounding force in her process that serves as a foundation to experiment with form and medium and reject commercialized expectations of ‘traditional’ art forms.
- “[Naranjo] Morse defines “traditional” not as conforming to prescribed artistic forms, but rather as feeling a connection to her work, seeing her work as linked to the Earth, and to her experience as a Pueblo woman” – Kristine Holmes, *This Woman Can Cross Any Line...*

DIRECT: Walk through the gallery and think about the different kinds of materials and forms that you see. Take some time to read the text (maybe).

ASK: What materials are you able identify in these artworks?

Maybe: wire, plastic, clay, cardboard, foam, wood, string, paint, mesh screen, metal

ASK: Given the materials that we have identified, what forms and patterns do you see emerging? (Accept all answers - VTS style)

INFORM: While gathering *nan* from the source she has used throughout her life, Naranjo Morse unexpectedly encountered a nearby landfill. Uncertain how to react to the desecration of this sacred space, she began gathering the discarded materials which she ultimately used to produce the installations: *Gathering Again* and *Webbing*.

- In deconstructing and reconstructing these gathered materials into art assemblages, Naranjo Morse calls our attention to habitual waste.
- Naranjo Morse uses *nan* to give the pieces in *Gathering Again* their physical stability and compositional balance – which resonates with her idea of clay as a grounding force.
- The cast shadows of these assemblages (*Gathering Again*) were also an important consideration in Naranjo Morse’s artistic process.

ASK: According to Nora Naranjo Morse, we are all, “always becoming”. Along this theme of emergence (i.e. becoming) what do you see in this exhibition that connects to transformative experiences in your own life? (ie: major life changes, learning experiences, personal revelations) – if you would like, share with someone near you.

Before leaving the gallery, **DIRECT** visitor's attention to the billboard post cards. From the wall text: "[Nora] Naranjo Morse's artworks advance the trajectory of Indigenous artistic traditions. When shifting between materials...she raises her own questions about cultural change...Resisting the idea that cultural loss is probable or inevitable, Naranjo Morse offers an alternative: embrace traditional Indigenous knowledge as a solution to the urgent issues of our time."

- For the 2018 For Freedoms Project, Nora activated billboards--typically commercial spaces--in Colorado Springs to remind viewers to protect what is sacred to them.
- **ASK:** *What would you protect? - Use these postcards to share with a distant friend.*

RECOMMENDED FOR VTS

Gathering Again, Pods

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Nora Naranjo Morse's most recent body of work is made from recycled materials. Working with wire, plastic and other discarded materials Naranjo Morse is forging a new direction in her work. Although known for her ceramics, these new forms express Naranjo Morse's distinctive aesthetics and continued approach to her artistic growth.

Naranjo Morse works in several mediums including organic materials. The ephemeral installation, "Always Becoming" made of clays, packed earth, wood and stone can be seen at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. A feature length documentary focuses on the making of the five "Always Becoming" sculptures and the themes of land and community behind the installation concept.

Naranjo Morse's work has exhibited nationally at numerous museums and internationally. Nora continues to explore issues of environment, culture and the social practice of making art with community. - <http://noranaranjomorse.squarespace.com/about>

RELATED EVENTS

TBD

EXHIBITION TEXT

Throughout her career as a sculptor, Nora Naranjo Morse has confronted contradictions between what she knows as a Kha P'o (Santa Clara Pueblo) woman and what she observes in the world. As a young artist, she began to move away from working on traditional pottery when she understood how the art market commodified Pueblo culture. Naranjo Morse took up the role of cultural critic, addressing the impact of Westernization within her Tewa community. But more than just pointing to the struggles, Naranjo Morse directs us to values based in Indigenous knowledge.

The sculpture in this exhibition represents the shifts in Naranjo Morse's artwork over the past fifteen years and includes artworks from distinct bodies of work. In that time, she has experimented with new media, found new inspiration, and expanded the scale of her works. She continues to build on her work with *nan* (natural Santa Clara clay) that she gathers from the clay pit that is near the Kha P'o Owinghe (Santa Clara Pueblo). *Nan* is always at the heart of her sculpture, even when working with metals and found materials.

In her exploration of new sculptural techniques, Naranjo Morse's art works advance the trajectory of Indigenous artistic traditions. When shifting between materials from *nan* to metal and back to *nan*, she raises her own questions about cultural change. She challenges the expectation that Pueblo art must remain confined by a set of restrictions deemed traditional by an outside commercial force. Resisting the idea that cultural loss is probable or inevitable, Naranjo Morse offers an alternative: embrace traditional Indigenous knowledge as a solution to the urgent issues of our time.

The act of gathering connects Nora Naranjo Morse's artistic work. She gathers *nan* (Santa Clara clay); she gathers debris; she gathers thoughts and moments as she walks through the world. The *nan* that she uses is dug from a local clay pit where generations of Kha P'o (Santa Clara Pueblo) women have also gathered material to make pottery. This source is sacred to her community, and she was brought up knowing to offer a prayer before harvesting the *nan*. Yet the local landfill was located in such close proximity that she was shocked by the apparent disregard for the place.

In her most recent works, Naranjo Morse wanted to bring attention to the accumulation of waste produced by our throw-away society. She did this by salvaging wire, plastic, and foam pieces to use in her artworks. In a process that she would describe as obsessive, she cut and wrapped and tied and wove these forms. Retrieving the materials to make sculpture is an act of resistance. The repurposed material is no longer trash but is given new life in Naranjo Morse's assemblages.

To transform the trash sculptures, Naranjo Morse returned to her knowledge as a Kha P'o woman. In combining the discarded materials recovered from the local landfill with pieces she made from *nan*, she realized that she could achieve balance in the final compositions.

Similar to amassing materials, she also forms a collection of memories from observed images and actions that she later expresses as gestures, shapes, or marks. While walking, she might come across a path scattered with pottery sherds and notice how the patterns of these lost vessels connect in new and unexpected ways. This poetic observation has been an ongoing practice that informs her creative process. The stories she gathers may not be known to us but are a constant source for insight in Naranjo Morse's own thinking.

Polly Nordstrand (Hopi)
Curator of Southwest Art