OU Art Museum Opens Indigenous Printmaking Show June 4

NORMAN, OKLA. – A new printmaking exhibition featuring Native American, First Nations, Maori and South African indigenous artists debuts at the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art on the University of Oklahoma Norman campus with a complimentary public reception Thursday, June 4. Enter the Matrix: Indigenous Printmaking explores how printmaking has become a matrix for cultural and artistic exchange, identifies critical sites where engagement has occurred and features key figures who have contributed toward this exchange.

The exhibition opens at 7 p.m. with a lecture by Heather Ahtone, the museum’s James T. Bialac Assistant Curator of Native American and Non-Western Art, followed by the reception at 8 p.m.

“This exhibition investigates how printmaking has become an artistic seed for cultural vitalization,” Ahtone said. “I have been looking at the network of artists that underlies the expansion of this medium as both a reflection of the continuum of Native cultural exchange and a chance to see how a medium can undergo a form of cultural fusion, whereby it becomes an important form of cultural expression.”

Enter the Matrix combines art from the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art’s permanent collection with works on loan from Crow’s Shadow Institute in Pendleton, Oregon; the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City; and the private collection of Melanie Yazzie in Boulder, Colorado.
“In the last 20 years, printmaking has become a medium facilitating global cultural exchange for indigenous artists,” Ahtone said. “Historically, for oral-based cultural communities, paper has been used as a weapon of cultural dominance, facilitating dispossession of lands and forced cultural assimilation. For indigenous artists, using paper as a medium for artistic expression has become a significant form of self-determination that fosters dialogue about issues of culture and identity, contributing to cultural survival.”

In addition to OU and Crow’s Shadow Institute, key sites have emerged for the creation of art by indigenous printmakers, including Bacone College in Muskogee, the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe, the Tamarind Institute in Albuquerque and the Inuit print studios from across Nunavut, Canada.

“These sites have served a critical function by supporting educational and technical engagement or by hosting artistic gatherings,” Ahtone said. “The exhibition will provide didactic materials to explain the historical role and artistic importance of each.”

To accompany the exhibition, museum and OU Web Communications staff members have developed the museum’s first iTunes U short course, which explores the imagery within the exhibition beyond the walls of the gallery. Available for complimentary download through iTunes, this course is organized by themes evident within the exhibition and important to the indigenous artist community: cultural practice, gendered roles, sustainability, landscape/place, and politics/governance.

Additional public education programs scheduled at the museum in conjunction with Enter the Matrix include:

- Print-palooza Saturday, Sept. 12
- Lecture by Native American curator and scholar Nancy Mithlo Thursday, Nov. 5
- Gallery talk by W. Jackson Rushing, the Eugene B. Adkins Presidential Professor of Art History and Mary Lou Milner Carver Chair in Native American Art, OU School of Art and Art History Tuesday, Nov. 10;
- and a series of live Skype interviews with Native artists Sept. 21, Oct. 12, Oct. 26 and Nov. 16.


More information about the exhibition and programs is available on the museum’s website at www.ou.edu/fjjma.
The Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art is located in the OU Arts District on the corner of Elm Avenue and Boyd Street, at 555 Elm Ave., on the OU Norman campus. Admission to the museum is complimentary to all visitors, thanks to the generosity of the OU Office of the President and the OU Athletics Department. The museum is closed on Mondays. Information and accommodations on the basis of disability are available by calling (405) 325-4938 or visiting www.ou.edu/fjjma.

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**IMAGE CREDIT**

The Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art at the University of Oklahoma opens a new exhibition of international indigenous art on Thursday, June 4. *Enter the Matrix: Indigenous Printmaking* features multiple works, such as Crow artist Wendy Red Star’s 2010 lithograph, *Enit*.

Wendy Red Star (U.S., Crow; b. 1981)
*Enit*, 2010
Lithograph, 22 3/8 x 30 in.
Image provided by Crow’s Shadow Institute of the Arts, courtesy of the artist (c) 2015.