



Inherent Memory



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Inherent Memory is an exhibition of contemporary expressions of basketry and related artforms by Indigenous women of California and the Great Basin. This exhibition centers on the stories of their connection to basketry through the work they create and its source.

Indigenous artists of California and the Great Basin continue to evolve and interweave basketry design—its textures, symbols, and essences—with many different art media today. Basketry is a vital part of our history—our *Inherent Memory*—of cultural and personal knowledge that is passed down through generations.

As a visual artist from northern Nevada with tribal connections to northern California and southern Oregon, I have always gravitated to the art and design of my region's basketry, beadwork, and the land itself. They connect me to my ancestors, and they speak to me and teach me through this inherent memory they have instilled in me.

—Melissa Melero-Moose (IAIA class of 2009)

Acknowledgements:

My deepest thanks go to all the participating artists of the *Inherent Memory*, *Intertwined*, and *Interwoven* exhibitions. A special thank you to my friends and family who have encouraged and supported the Great Basin Native Artists, and myself, since the beginning.

The Great Basin region includes all of Nevada, the eastern Sierra portion of California, a large western portion of Utah and southern parts of Oregon and Idaho. Indigenous artists from California and the Great Basin are severely underrepresented in our own region and throughout North America. Inclusion and documentation of contemporary Indigenous arts from the Great Basin is insufficient and it is imperative to exhibit and write about this art community; their past, present and future. This is how and why I started the Great Basin Native Artists collective, directory and archive.

Like many from my generation, I grew up with very limited access to Native basketry, especially from the Great Basin. The government-run Indian boarding schools and other systems of colonization had cut off my family from traditional practices like basket weaving. I longed to be among the baskets, to learn from them and to have that tangible connection to my ancestors creations.

Indigenous basketry in California and the Great Basin has a complex history attached to it. Many of our cultural items, especially basketry, were stockpiled by anthropologists and institutional custodians, which hid them in inaccessible collections. The very few Indigenous weavers that were able to make a living from their craft were forced to sell their wares inexpensively to provide economically for their families during a time of poverty and hardship. Basketry has slowly made its way back into Indigenous peoples lives and resides in our communities as it was meant to be since time immemorial.

As an Indigenous artist, I carry this cultural history inside of me, as do all of the artists in the *Inherent Memory* exhibition. I paint the intricacies of baskets in my art, from their weaves and patterns to their texture and origins. These details become revealed to me when I personally encounter a basket as well as the land and raw materials we interact with for their creation. Through my tribal interactions and artistic

research, I identified many Indigenous artists from California and the Great Basin, both weavers and non-weavers, who were also engaging with basket culture and land activism through other artistic media, such as drawing, sculpture, photography, installation, and video. Basketry is very much a part of our artistic language, and so the journey began.

The *Inherent Memory* exhibition is a culmination of two earlier exhibitions, *Interwoven* (2017) and *Intertwined* (2019). In 2016, while creating my *Basket Series* paintings, I was a Dubin fellow at the School for Advanced Research (SAR) in Santa Fe, which provided me the opportunity to work with the basket collection at the Indian Arts Research Center. While its Great Basin collection was small, it was an enriching experience that placed me on the path for another research fellowship and more basketry visitations. The following year a visitation was arranged, for me and a small group of California Indigenous artists, to the California State Parks' Statewide Museum Resource Center (SMRC). The State Indian Museum's collection, inside the SMRC, contains over 3,000 Native American baskets and items of cultural patrimony. The colossal warehouse is located on the former McClellan Air Force Base in Sacramento and houses more than one million historic objects and artifacts from parks around the state, with an enormous 12 miles of shelving and 3.5 miles of pallet racking.

Visiting the basket collection was an emotional experience, and many of us had to reconcile the grief we felt about what we had missed in not having these cultural pieces as part of our everyday lives and communities. These ancestors seemed lonely there in that stark environment without us, after being away from their original families and communities for so many years. It was very hard to see this history of separation that has not been adequately acknowledged or explored. A historical lack of access to collections of Native baskets, and other cultural art forms across the country, means that most of us have had limited opportunity to see or

spend time with these ancestors and apply their lessons to our own traditional and artistic pursuits.

The *Interwoven* and *Intertwined* exhibitions became the beginning of that conversation about the difficulties of Indigenous peoples' limited access to basketry and cultural items in institutional collections and the relationships that baskets maintain with their creators and their communities. As Dr. Vanessa Esquivedo so beautifully articulated in her *Decolonizing the Archive* presentation that closed out the *Intertwined* exhibition: "baskets are indeed Relatives." Throughout the process of researching and organizing these exhibitions, this awareness enabled us to realize that arts and culture are the root we must start with in all of the work we do in the community. Every infrastructure initiative or attempt at social change must begin with arts and culture because they are the foundation. Basketry is integral for us in California and the Great Basin, so we must start there and honor the centrality of this rich cultural heritage. I had also come to appreciate the power of publications, and lack thereof. Our documentary heritage in the Great Basin has been historically undervalued and inclusion and documentation of contemporary Indigenous arts insufficient. The ability for us to disseminate our cultural work widely through both digital and print publishing is vital.

In 2019, my research and work with the Great Basin Native Artists (GBNA) collective, led to the creation of the Great Basin Native Artists archive project at the Center for Art + Environment at the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno, Nevada. I had been keeping track of the artists I had come into contact with during our exhibitions but also realized that there was no directory of our Indigenous artists for the region nor an organized way to locate our Indigenous artists for future shows or documentation.

The *Inherent Memory* exhibition is the introductory use of the GBNA archive in action. While working on the archive, it

became apparent there was a substantial amount of unified imagery and content that revolved around our region's basketry and expression of the lands we resided on. As our central thread of *Inherent Memory* is tied to basketry, there are also connections to the history of our Indigenous peoples, the lack of access to our Indigenous lands, environmental impacts and our cultural relationship with the land. However, one of the main goals is to promote our underrepresented region of California and the Great Basin.

Many of the artists who came on that initial visit to the collections, have joined us again for the *Inherent Memory* exhibition. In this third installment of the "basket" shows, we have barely scratched the surface of our region's artists to highlight in these exhibitions. Another important goal for these exhibitions, is to introduce these artists and their work to their own communities and the art world. These Indigenous female artists are the American artists missing from our art history, our mainstream art museums and collections. I admire all of these artists for the work they are doing in their communities and for their talents they share with us. It is my hope that *Inherent Memory* and its online publication sheds light on the importance of Indigenous art and its documentation for future generations. Our children need to grow up immersed in representations of their culture, so that they see themselves and their ancestors as active creators of culture and art. *Inherent Memory* has many layers and many threads that have yet to be unraveled.

I am very grateful to the IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts for hosting this exhibition, a museum with whom many of our participating artists and I are closely connected. We look forward to creating and sharing the art with our community in many future exhibitions to come.

Linda Aguilar (Chumash)

The Bingo One, 2011

Coiled horsehair, beads, shells, bingo markers, cut up credit and debit cards

Large basket: 3 x 6.25 inches, Small basket: .8125 x .9375 inches, Bingo cards: 5.75 x 3.5 inches, dimensions variable
School for Advanced Research, SAR.2011-10-1A-Q,
Gift of the Artist, 2011

Linda Aguilar is a Chumash basket maker who uses traditional techniques to create her unique horsehair and waxed thread baskets-an unusual blend.

There is a stigma to basket weavers: “traditional” or “non-traditional.” I am both. I work with horsehair and waxed thread, which are non-traditional materials. I approach the weaving with tradition. I respect the many generations of ancestral basket makers.

—Linda Aguilar



The Bingo One

Natalie Ball (Modoc)

Klamath Land Back Fuckers, 2021

Synthetic hair, Converse sneaker, cardboard box

25 x 14 x 6.50 inches

Collection of the Artist, courtesy of Bortolami Gallery, New York

Natalie Ball's installation *Klamath Land Back Fuckers* is part of her series *Shed a Tear, Running Deer*. Through these artworks Ball practices self-determination, authority, and collective responsibility, while criticizing the federal government in her fight to regain the rights to the water on which the Klamath Tribe's survival depends.

Some of the materials Ball uses are very personal. Others are American icons, that are also specific to her community. Stitched and fused together, these quilts, animal hides, pieces of wood, neon, and clothing are often gathered from the site where the artist lives and works, on her ancestral homeland in the rural community of Chiloquin, Oregon. Several of the recurring symbols are inspired by customary artforms, including basket weaving and petroglyphs and secure the artist with a language through which she inscribes her narrative onto a larger shared history.

In *Klamath Land Back Fuckers*, 2021, strands of synthetic braiding hair hang from the eyelets of a child's pink Converse sneaker, which is placed atop a piece of found wood. Charred black by the disastrous 2021 Bootleg Fire near Beatty, Oregon, the piece of wood is wrapped in quilted fabric, turned inside out and roughly painted white in places. The large wildfire threatened not only Klamath tribal lands but also their precious water sources, which were drawn on heavily to fight the blaze. On the floor below the sculpture sits a cardboard box labeled in black marker with the artist's name, the sculpture's title, and its date. It seems, the box served as both, a homemade protest sign and a shipping container for the work: the gesture suggests how closely Ball's art practice and activism are connected. The box's inclusion implies that for many contemporary Indigenous artists, their art practices and politics, like nature and culture, remain inseparable and are deeply entangled within the ongoing struggle for survival, justice, and human rights.



Klamath Land Back Fuckers

Brittany Britton (Hupa)

Care Packages from Home, 2013

Willow sticks, glass bottles, river water, sediment

48 x 18 x 33 inches

Collection of the Artist

In 2013 I was contemplating my future move away to school, a move that made home feel as far away as the moon. I went to the river below my house and gathered up water and sand from home to carry with me. I wove a protective case around the main bottle to protect it. In a future work I want to return the water from this work back home.

—Brittany Britton

Burden Basket (Carry that Weight), 2016

Baling wire, FlexiDip, vinyl, rocks, pantyhose,

14 x 23 x 15 inches

Collection of the Artist

I had always wanted to make a burden basket, but never got around to it while living in my homelands. When I went away for grad school, I didn't know how to gather in a place I didn't know. So, I went gathering at the hardware store and found baling wire and tool dip instead of hazel sticks. I felt like I was carrying the weight of the person I was supposed to grow into while away at school, someone who constantly represented what others thought I was.

—Brittany Britton



Care Packages from Home



Burden Basket

Sarah Biscarra Dilley (yak titʻu titʻu yak tilhini
[Northern Chumash])
qšišimuʔ, 2018-2020
Video, 5:51 min.
Collection of the Artist

Sarah Biscarra Dilley is a multidisciplinary artist, author, educator, and member of the yak yak titʻu titʻu yak tilhini Northern Chumash tribe, currently residing in the ahupuaʻa o Makuʻu, Hawaiʻi Island. Her interdisciplinary process is grounded in collaboration across experiences, communities, and places. Dilley relates land and beings throughout nitspu tilhin ktitʻu—now known as California—and places joined by shared water. Her written and visual texts connect extractive industries, absent treaties, and forms of enclosure in order to emphasize movement, kinship, and embodied sovereignties. While her early foundations were shaped by body, land, and the worlds in and around us, Dilley’s formal education began at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She went on to earn a BA in Urban Studies from the San Francisco Art Institute and an MA in Native American Studies from University of California, Davis, where she is currently a PhD candidate in Native American Studies.



qšišimuʔ

Fawn Douglas (Southern Paiute)

Nuwuvi Basket, 2021

Mixed media sculpture, wire, metal conduit, willow

48 x 24 x 5 inches

Collection of the Artist

Nuwuvi Basket functions as a critical case study of how Native women continue to pass down tribal artistic practices, cultural traditions, and storytelling to the next generations, despite the impositions and oppressions that have occurred throughout history. This work fuses traditional practices with contemporary materials to extend the conversation among Indigenous artists through time. In her artmaking and activism, Fawn Douglas tells the stories of Indigenous peoples to remember them and ensure that they are heard.



Nuwuvi Basket

Rebecca Eagle (Paiute/Shoshone)

Miniature Beaded Willow Basket, 2011

yellow basket

1.50 x 1.50 inches

Collection of Great Basin Native Artists

Miniature Beaded Willow Basket, 2011,

white basket

1.50 x 1.50 inches

Collection of Great Basin Native Artists

Rebecca Eagle is a basket weaver known for miniature beaded basketry, which she learned to do from her grandmother, Adele Sampson, and mother, Jeanette Mitchell. Although taught in the customary manner, Eagle incorporates innovation and contemporary application of traditional design concepts in her work. Both she and her sister, Sandra Eagle, create tiny round baskets, although Rebecca has also beaded some very large baskets with elaborate and complicated pictorial scenes. Rebecca miniature fashions vivid contemporary bead patterns to decorate her tiny baskets, and literally “paints with beads” on her larger creations. She resides in Nevada on the Pyramid Lake Reservation.



Miniature Beaded Willow Basket

Ka'ila Farrell-Smith (Modoc)

Get Out NDN + Under Fire (diptych), 2018

Acrylic, aerosol, graphite, charcoal, wax crayon, oil bars on canvas
48 x 26 inches

Collection of the Artist

Ka'ila Farrell-Smith is a contemporary Klamath Modoc visual artist, writer, and activist based in Modoc Point, Oregon. The conceptual framework of her practice focuses on channeling research through a creative flow of experimentation and artistic playfulness rooted in Indigenous aesthetics and abstract formalism. Utilizing contemporary painting and traditional Indigenous practices, her work explores the space between Western and Indigenous art paradigms.

I created Get Out NDN + Under Fire in my Portland studio during a mentorship with master basket weaver Pat Courtney-Gold (Wasco). The Klamath basket design "Gaak Qolanc" (Crows bending knees) is a visual citation from my research on baskets at the Portland Art Museum and the Burke Museum in Seattle. I was also responding to the wildfire smoke that choked the Pacific Northwest for the last two summers. I moved out of Portland that year and relocated to my ancestral homelands in Modoc Point in Southern Oregon.

—Ka'ila Farrell-Smith



Get Out NDN + Under Fire (diptych)

Leah Mata Fragua (Northern Chumash)

New Cultural Resources, 2022

Plastic bags, pop-tops, bottle lids, straws, foil, paint
small size

Collection of the Artist

This dress symbolizes the impact of environmental degradation on coast Indigenous communities, and on the ocean itself, which is central to our way of life.

The dress was created out of frustration during a gathering of materials for a pre-contact style dress, when I realized that the only available materials were the trash littering our shores. The abundance of trash reflects the reality of our diminishing ocean resources, which we rely on to sustain our communities. This dress serves as a warning about the consequences of neglecting the health of our oceans. If society does not take immediate action to protect and preserve our oceans, this is what our future will look like.

—Leah Mata Fragua



New Cultural Resources

Karma Henry (Paiute)

Northwards, 2021

Acrylic on canvas

24 x 30 inches

Collection of the Artist

Karma's current body of work encompasses ideas of place, experience, and pattern. Forms and shapes inspired by basketry designs, natural materials like shells or plant life, as well as architectural elements are sources for the overlays in her landscapes. These layered images also serve as visual interpretations of her experiences.

I hope I can also impress upon those who meet me, and/or see my work, that Native peoples are immeasurably tied to the land. While we live in a modern world, our beliefs reflect what we've been taught historically and traditionally. As a Native artist, I think those beliefs are important in the context of our tribal communities, the Native art community, and the greater art community. I want to recognize the designs of our ancestors while also exploring my interpretation of the patterns and imagery around me.

—Karma Henry



Northwards

Micqaela Jones (Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone)

Whispers of Wisdom, 2023

Acrylic on canvas

40 x 30 x 2 inches

Collection of the Artist

In the creation of her painting *Whispers of Wisdom*, Micqaela Jones was inspired by the strong women of the Great Basin tribes, including their beautiful and useful basketry and strong connection to the earth and creation.

I was raised on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation of the Shoshone and Paiute Nations. Along with my family heritage, and the abundance of rich cultural influences, my work has evolved into an intertwining of my culture and contemporary expressions of the Great Basin.

—Micqaela Jones



Whispers of Wisdom

Topaz Jones (Shoshone/Lummi)

She Who Weaves, 2022

Organic burnout, bronze, beads, buckskin, and wood

6.50 x 6.20 x 9.20 inches

Collection of the Artist

Woven Cedar, 2021

Red and white cedar, rawhide, pine nuts, beads, and acrylic paint

4.20 x 4.20 x 6 inches

Collection of the Artist

Discord Basket, 2019

Red and white cedar, electrical cords

9 x 7 x 8

Collection of Great Basin Native Artists

Miniature Basket with X Design, 2021

Red and white cedar, horsehair

1 x 1 x 1 inches

Collection of the Artist

Miniature Basket, 2021

Red and white cedar, horsehair

1 x 1 x 1.25 inches

Collection of the Artist

The bronze sculpture She Who Weaves symbolizes traditional practices and the strength of Indigenous women throughout history. This piece was created during my residency at the Institute of American Indian Arts to honor Indigenous women basket weavers through the act of transforming a natural material into a precious material, uplifting the basket as fine art. The sculptural structure of She Who Weaves is an original, handwoven cedar basket that was burned out in the lost-wax casting process. I juxtaposed the bronze alongside cedar baskets, and together they are dedicated to the traditional and contemporary arts of Indigenous people. The Discord Basket represents the imbalance of our world in its current state. Indigenous cultures throughout history have used natural materials for advanced purposes. Materials including stone, wood, clay, and natural fibers have been used for many things including tools, pots, baskets, and weapons. We are in a time when humans are going against nature, depleting resources, and moving so fast that we are unaware of the natural world around us. I must ask, "Is this progress?" The base of the Discord Basket is woven first and builds as it reaches the top. It begins in perfect harmony; the up weave is natural until about halfway, where the electrical cords are intertwined into the basket. This is where the basket starts to expand, pushing itself out, symbolizing the chaos of our world.

—Topaz Jones



Miniature Basket with X Design *Miniature Basket*



Woven Cedar

She Who Weaves

Discord Basket

Carina King and Pauli Carroll (Yurok)

Speaking Through the Ages, 2020

Glass sculpture, lost wax glass casting made from historical basket cap

6 x 6 x 3 inches

Collection of the Artists

Two-Fingered Yurok Basket Cap, 1900-1910

Willow sticks, beargrass, five-fingered fern

6 x 6 x 3 inches

Collection of the Artists

I tried many times as a young child to make baskets out of the found materials in my environment and did, in a child's way. As the years have gone by and I found out about my Hupa ancestry, it made so much sense to me that I needed to pursue what was a deep connection in my spirit: to create art and use the medium I have come to love, glass, as the vehicle to reach into my soul. I formed the basket cap by using a technique called "casting," which is a multi-step, labor intensive, and process-oriented method. I have only just begun my journey to create more pieces that are emerging from my spirit and hands.

–Pauli Carroll



Speaking Through the Ages

Two-Fingered Yurok Basket Cap

Melissa Melero-Moose (Northern Paiute/Modoc)

Women, Water, and the Gathering, 2019

Mixed media on canvas

42 x 50 inches

Collection of the Artist

Women, Water, and the Gathering layers basketry designs and textures with remembrance and the importance of place and time. Our ancestors passed down our cultural ways to us and we carry them with us. Even with so much disruption in our history, from genocide to the mission and boarding school era, Indigenous people continue to create and bequeath this knowledge.

—Melissa Melero-Moose

When She is Complete, 2020

Mixed media on canvas

36 x 36 inches

Private Collection

Drawing from my connection to my homelands, my work abstracts place, identity, and memory. My imagery integrates basketry shapes and textures with willow, pine nuts, and paint washes layered intuitively to create visuals in which Indigenous life is told through my perspective as a Native woman, mother, and American artist. When She is Complete is a self-portrait displaying a basket design and shape suspended in the air, with water and land of the Great Basin below. I am always learning—from my family, the land, and the animals.

—Melissa Melero-Moose



Women, Water, and the Gathering



When She is Complete

Lillian Pitt (Warm Springs/Wasco/Yakama)

She Who Watches, 2003

Bronze

5 x 6 inches

IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, YI-35

Lillian Pitt is a multidisciplinary artist whose ancestors lived in and near the Columbia River Gorge. The focus of her work is to honor the history and culture of her people. *She Who Watches*, whose Native name is Tsagaglal, is an image created in stone high up on a bluff, overlooking the village of Wishxam, where Lillian Pitt's great-grandmother used to live. Unlike most of the rock images found in the region, which are either rock etchings (petroglyphs) or rock paintings (pictographs), *She Who Watches* is both. *She Who Watches* was the first rock image that Pitt ever saw or knew anything about, and it was only because an elder took her to see it. The elder thought it would be good for Pitt to learn something of her heritage and of her grandmother's village.

My ancestors were traders and innovators. They traded goods and exchanged ideas with people from many Native traditions. I honor my ancestors by carrying on this tradition of exchanging goods and ideas through my art.

–Lillian Pitt



She Who Watches

Cara Romero (Chemehuevi)

Oil & Gold, 2021

Archival fine art photograph

60 x 39 inches

Collection of the Artist

The starting point of the California Indian genocide began with the arrival of Spanish missionaries, and it continues today. Through waves of colonization and layers of industries, the Indigenous peoples of California, especially along the coast, have been stripped of their inherent rights. There are 18 tribes along the California coast that never received federal recognition in the mid-1800s because the state of California failed to ratify their treaties. It was no coincidence that these tribes' traditional lands were nestled within regions rich in gold and oil.

This photograph features Naomi White Horse and Crickett Tiger wearing regalia of Central Coast people made by Leah Mata Fragua, one piece of regalia dipped in gold and the other one dipped in oil, standing in front of a South Bay Los Angeles refinery. The image aims to transform historical narratives, educate, and increase dialogue about the 18 unratified treaties. The photograph centers around issues of cultural representation, erasure, cultural activism, land stewardship practices, and the genocide and displacement of the first peoples in the name of gold and oil.

—Cara Romero



Oil & Gold

Monique Sol Sonoquie (Chumash)

Post-Industrial Work Basket, 2018

Industrial and electric cables, metal spacers

24 x 24 inches

Collection of Great Basin Native Artists

Monique Sol Sonoquie is a multidisciplinary basket weaver, documentary filmmaker, traditional food and medicine gatherer, and educator. As a basket weaver, she gathers traditional materials such as tule, juncus, hazel, and willow sticks, and, recently, kelp and seaweeds. Her newfound challenge and exploration is weaving with recycled materials. This practice combines her passion for traditional weaving and her dedication to the four Rs: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. In 2019 she was an Artist-in-Residence at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe.



Post-Industrial Work Basket

Tanaya Winder (Pyramid Lake Paiute/Ute)

“Pyramid Lake Poem,” 2017

Tanaya Winder, *Why Storms are Named After People and Bullets Remain Nameless*. United States: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017.

Dimensions variable

Collection of the Artist

Thirteen Ways of Loving a Blackbird, 2018

Video, 3:48 min.

Collection of the Artist

The performance of this poem was filmed on the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Reservation. The poem format took inspiration from Wallace Stevens’s “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird.” Many young women and femme relatives have struggled with self-love and acceptance when we’re continually serving our communities and families, all while working on healing intergenerational and generational trauma. Healing is a journey and when you’re on that journey you often realize you outgrow situations, friendships, or relationships. It is then that you understand the importance of letting go of those people, situations, or habits that do not serve the heartwork you were called to do during your time on Mother Earth.

I wanted to write a poem that speaks about honoring all parts of your being—your light, your darkness, your quirks, your so-called “difficulties” in being a fierce, resilient, and unrelenting Indigenous woman who seeks to stand in her sacred power. This poem speaks to the challenges overcome when people you love don’t always love you the way you want to be loved. Our differences, our nuances, and our difficulties can be our strength and power. So, I wrote this poem calling on us to honor ourselves as the blackbird. I dressed in black and my older sister Natahnee Winder filmed me in our maternal homelands at Pyramid Lake, where the Stone Mother sits. She is, perhaps, the original blackbird.

—Tanaya Winder



Thirteen Ways of Loving a Blackbird

Pyramid Lake Poem

Lena Tseabbe Wright (Paiute/Yurok)

Basket Cap Series (I – IV), 2019

Acrylic plastic, acrylic paint

3.50 x 3.25 x 1.20 inches

Collection of the Artist

Modeled after Yurok basket caps, this is one of many models created via 3D modeling and printing. I engage with what it means to be indigenous and alive in the present. My work is directly connected to my identity and heritage, and centers on femininity and indigeneity. I use objects from my culture to inspire a new understanding of the gaze, lineage, and the self. Specifically, in engaging contemporary materials such as digital renderings and sculptures, this new understanding emerges through a humanizing, indigenous knowledge system.

–Lena Tseabbe Wright

Heritage Portrait, 2019

Acrylic on cut out paper

42 x 175 inches

Collection of the Artist

Heritage Portrait is part of a series. Utilizing negative space, the series of paintings focus on the gaze and identity. Even when we lose pieces of ourselves and culture, what is left is still connected, including the shadows of what once was.

–Lena Tseabbe Wright

Reasons Not To, 2021

Brass bullet casings, acorns

.625 x .50 x .50 inches

Collection of the Artist

In isolation, the urge to reach out and connect felt impossible at times, as loss became normalized. Lifelines is an artist's book that archives my own physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental toll during the time of Covid-19. The book will be burned at the end of the pandemic. Even when alone, my ancestors and family fill me with love. In the darkest times, they give me strength and reasons not to pull the trigger. This is a sculptural piece made of repurposed bullet casings that have removed the threat of death and replaced it with life.

–Lena Tseabbe Wright



Basket Cap Series



Heritage Portrait



Reasons Not To

