

Press Release



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Newark Museum Spotlights Contemporary Artist Wendy Red Star with Mid-Career Survey *Wendy Red Star: A Scratch on the Earth* February 23 through May 19, 2019

NEWARK: The most comprehensive exhibition of Wendy Red Star’s work to date, and the Portland-based artist’s first solo museum exhibition on the East Coast, *Wendy Red Star: A Scratch on the Earth* will open at the Newark Museum on February 23, 2019. This unprecedented show features 60 works by Red Star, including loans from museum collections throughout the United States, and highlights 15 years of Red Star’s studio practice, from 2006 to 2019. Bringing the historical details of Crow and colonist history into the Technicolor present, Red Star uses photography, textiles, and mixed media installation to explore themes of Crow history, the indigenous roots of feminism, and contemporary life on the Crow Indian reservation in Montana where she was raised. The exhibition is curated by Nadiah Rivera Fellah, guest curator, and Tricia Laughlin Bloom, Newark Museum’s Curator of American Art, and is supported by a grant from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and by Loren G. Lipson, M.D.

An enrolled member of the Apsáalooke (Crow) Tribe, Red Star works across disciplines to explore the intersections of Native American ideologies and colonialist structures, both historically and in contemporary society. Drawing on pop culture, conceptual art, and aspects of reservation life and Crow traditions, she pushes photography in new directions — from self-portraiture to photo-collage and altered historical photographs — often incorporating photography with textiles and fashion as bearers of tradition. At the heart of the exhibition visitors will get to experience a new immersive multi-media installation, co-directed by Red Star and Amelia Winger-Bearskin, artist and Google VR JUMP Start creator. Titled *Monsters*, this five minute video will be screened inside a simulated sweat lodge. *Monsters* documents the Montana landscape in a 360 degree format, and brings to life aspects of Crow mythology related to the landscape.

In 2016 the Newark Museum launched *Seeing America*, an ongoing initiative to relocate its Native American collections within the physical space of the American galleries, and at the same time to integrate works of Latin American, African American, and Native American art more thoughtfully throughout the American galleries. “This solo exhibition devoted to a contemporary artist of Native American descent is a direct outgrowth of the Museum’s continuing efforts to broaden the definition and boundaries of American art,” said Ulysses Grant Dietz, the Museum’s Interim Co-Director and Chief Curator Emeritus. Underscoring the Museum’s commitment to presenting the work of living artists, *A Scratch on the Earth* will be the first solo show mounted by the Museum in its new special exhibitions gallery, a 5,000-square-foot space designed to accommodate major exhibitions.

The title of the exhibition, *A Scratch on the Earth*, (or Annúkaxua in Apsáalooke) refers to a period after 1880 when U.S. government policy prioritized keeping the Crow people on their reservation. An artist with a research-driven practice, Red Star mines archives related to her Apsáalooke heritage to investigate the boundaries of the Crow reservation and how they came to be negotiated throughout the 19th century. Although deeply rooted in colonialist policies and attitudes, this negotiation process presented a means by which community leaders could fight for the preservation of their land and culture. Photographic based works in the exhibition will refer to the legacy of these struggles, including the *1880 Peace Delegation* series, and Um-basax-bilua, *Where They Make the Noise*. Both series reference the history of how the Crow Indian reservation was formed, the subsequent loss of Crow lands, the changing of a people, and the resilience of their culture from the 19th century up to the present. “Growing out of this historical narrative in which arbitrary borders were repeatedly imposed on the Apsáalooke, the exhibition explores how boundaries between cultural, racial, social, and gender lines have subsequently been reinforced, and how they blur across time and space,” notes Fellah. “The Apsáalooke word also implies a historical shift in self-perception for the Crow people, and the seeds of a post-colonial, post-reservation identity,”

Red Star’s 2016 photographic series, *Apsáalooke Feminist*, continues and expands the theme of self-portraiture which is strong in her production, and also crosses generational lines to revive the matrilineal legacies of Crow culture, with the inclusion of Red Star’s daughter in this series of double portraits. Within this metaphoric consideration of borders, Red Star’s work also brings to light the commodification of Indian culture over time and the politics of museum display. In keeping with Red Star’s themes of matrilineage and feminism, adjacent to *A Scratch on the Earth*, Bloom and Fellah have curated an adjunct show of contemporary photography from the Newark Museum’s permanent collection, which includes works by Carrie Mae Weems, Sally Mann, Cindy Sherman and others.

Wendy Red Star: A Scratch on the Earth is accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalogue, with a new essay by Nadiah Rivera Fellah, published by the Newark Museum and available in February 2019.

For further information, visit www.newarkmuseum.org.

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