Celebrate Native American art in Bloomington and beyond

By Connie Shakalis Special to the H-T
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A canoe by Bonnie Devine is included in the exhibition “Powerful Women: Contemporary Art from the Eiteljorg Collection,” continuing at the Eiteljorg Museum through March 21. (Hadley Fruits Photography / Courtesy photo)

Native American Heritage Month is almost over, but Indigenous artwork and other artifacts are still on view in Bloomington and Indianapolis venues.

**Indiana University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology**

"Although our building is temporarily closed to the public, we do have two online exhibits
about Native American materials available to users from our Mathers Collections of World Cultures," said Judith Kirk, assistant director at the Indiana University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

The new Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology officially came into existence this past summer and merges the collections of the Glenn Black Laboratory of Archaeology and the Mathers Museum of World Cultures. Its mission now is to focus on the objects and experiences that make us human. The museum strives to make accessible its research and collections in order to connect university, indigenous and public audiences.

The building is closed for renovations, but the museum is very much “open,” offering online exhibits and programs, and working with indigenous partners on planning new in-person programs and exhibits for a reopening to the public in Spring 2022.

The two online exhibits on Native American holdings examine two kinds of artifacts — photographs and textiles. “In Their Own Words: Native Americans in World War I,” explores documents and photographs that give perspectives on Native American participation in World War I.

**Indiana University's Eskenazi Museum of Art**

Indiana University's Eskenazi Museum of Art is celebrating by highlighting its collection of objects created by Indigenous artists.

A “Tiny Tour” video available on the museum website features artworks in the African, Oceanic and Indigenous American Art collection created by female artists. The Indigenous
Art of the Americas section also includes a small group of more recent Native North American artworks.

“Tradition and Authenticity in Native American Arts” is a new essay by one of the museum's collections specialists Emma Fulce and is also available. Fulce discusses the definition of traditional Native American art and how an art object is deemed to be authentically Native American.

“There is a common misconception among many non-Native peoples," Fulce writes, "that traditional and authentic Native American art practices are something old and unchanging—trapped in time, formed without interaction with other cultures, particularly European cultures, and eroded by post-European cultural change."

She notes also that Southwest traditions have long mixed the tastes of people outside the Native American community with the tastes of those in it. Hopi basketry and plaque weaving are examples. Artists create both objects using a technique practiced for hundreds of years. The technique's long history is consistent, but the art form changes. Over time artists have adapted basketry and plaque weaving for its audiences.

Artists, she said, create some art objects purely for the tourist or art market, bringing prosperity to their communities as well as pleasing tourists and collectors. Hopi men make small dolls, which they give to children as a means of teaching good behavior. Beginning in the 1930s, these dolls were also sold to people outside the artists' community, with many artists creating the figures purely for sale to non-Native peoples.

“It is important to remember," Fulce writes, "that many art lovers, scholars, and art historians based in the European tradition do not judge the authenticity of European or American art on the fact that it was created for a particular patron or for the general art market."

A "Two Gray Hills" style rug by Katherine Nathaniel is an example of Diné (Navajo) weaving. Today such rugs are held up as traditional and authentic Native American art among scholars, museums, dealers, collectors, and the artists themselves. Their creation's history, however, is inspired by Persian rugs as well as European's desire for borders. The Two Gray Hills rug style was developed in the twentieth century and is firmly rooted among Diné weavers.
People don't think less of Monet, for instance, because he wanted to sell his art, or of Michelangelo for working for and taking artistic direction from religious organizations. She says too that we need not question why the issue of authenticity should even be addressed when Native American artists create works for the art market, and when they use religious imagery to suit the desires of the people who will buy their art.

"Traditions that do not adapt do not last," she said.

**Grunwald Gallery of Art**

Although the Grunwald is not offering new Indigenous art specifically for National American Indian Heritage Month, Betsy Stirratt, academic specialist and the gallery's director, wants the public to know about the gallery's philosophy on Indigenous people.

"We wish to acknowledge and honor the Indigenous communities native to this region," she said, "and recognize that Indiana University Bloomington is built on Indigenous homelands and resources." She said that the gallery recognizes the Miami, Delaware, Potawatomi, and Shawnee people as past, present and future caretakers of this land, stressing that IU sits on lands that were once other people's homelands.

**Eiteljorg Museum**

The Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, in Indianapolis, has hosted several virtual program events for Native American Heritage Month. The current artist in residence, Karen Ann Hoffman (Oneida of Wisconsin), had virtual events scheduled at the museum through Nov. 21.

Some of the world's most significant collections of contemporary Native art can be found in the Eiteljorg. The initial phase of "Powerful Women: Contemporary Art from the Eiteljorg Collection," features works by
contemporary Native American women artists and continues at the Eiteljorg now through March 21, said Bryan Corbin, the museum's public relations manager. A second rotation of that exhibition will be from April 18 through Oct. 23, 2021.

"Please Touch! The Sculptures of Michael Naranjo" is an exhibition going through Feb. 9, 2021. Naranjo encourages visitors to experience his sculptures as he does: by sense of touch. Blinded by a combat injury during the Vietnam War, he works solely through tactile perception. His bronze sculptures depict humans, Native hoop dancers, eagles and bison as they appear in nature, as well as mythical creatures. The Eiteljorg exhibition features more than 30 examples of his work spanning 1972 to 2012.

The Naranjo exhibition includes Braille labels and audio descriptions.

Also, the Eiteljorg's holiday model train display, Jingle Rails, is open and continues through Jan. 18, 2021. The creative team at Applied Imagination, a botanical architecture firm led by Paul Busse, designed "Jingle Rails" and its additions. This year, two of the most popular backdrops return: the Indiana State Fair, complete with the Ferris wheel and the Coliseum, and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, with Grandstands, Pagoda, Yard of Bricks, Hall of Fame Museum and Goodyear Blimp. Visitors will hear authentic Speedway sounds. "Jingle Rails" runs for 10 weeks, and model-train enthusiasts volunteer to see that the electric trains run smoothly. They will also answer visitors’ questions.

Looking ahead, in late spring/summer 2021, the Eiteljorg will host a traveling exhibition from the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian of Santa Fe, New Mexico, "Laughter and Resilience: Humor in Native American Art." It will be on view from May 23 to Aug. 6 at the Eiteljorg.

Finally, the Eiteljorg's plans to renovate and reinstall its Native American art galleries in 2022, to showcase Native American artworks from Indigenous cultures of the Great Lakes regions, including Indiana.

More Information

Indiana University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

"In Their Own Words: Native Americans in World War I" at https://bit.ly/32UsH8O

“Hózhó: Navajo Beauty, Navajo Weavings,” features woven textiles that reflect harmony found in
Celebrate Native American art in Bloomington and beyond | Entertainment...  https://www.hoosiertimes.com/herald_times_online/entertainment/celebr...

Navajo design at https://bit.ly/2IPvUIY

iumaa.iu.edu

**Indiana University's Eskenazi Museum of Art**

Four continents and the world's most massive ocean are represented in the collections of the Eskenazi's "Art of Africa, Oceania, and Indigenous Art of the Americas." The exhibits reveal the histories of hundreds of ethnic groups and cultures. Some objects date from more than three thousand years ago, while others belong to practices that continue today. 1133 E. Seventh St., IU Bloomington campus. artmuseum.indiana.edu.

**Grunwald Gallery of Art**

Fine Arts Building 123, 1201 E. Seventh St., IU Bloomington campus. soaad.indiana.edu.

**Eiteljorg**

The Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art is in White River State Park, 500 W. Washington St., Indianapolis; 317-275-1315. eiteljorg.org.