

PRESS RELEASE

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MAJOR SEATTLE ART MUSEUM EXHIBITION EXPLORES LEGACY OF PHOTOGRAPHER EDWARD S. CURTIS FROM 21ST-CENTURY PERSPECTIVES

Double Exposure: Edward S. Curtis, Marianne Nicolson, Tracy Rector, Will Wilson presents historic Curtis photographs alongside work by three contemporary indigenous artists

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SEATTLE, WA - The Seattle Art Museum presents *Double Exposure: Edward S. Curtis, Marianne Nicolson, Tracy Rector, Will Wilson* (June 14-September 9, 2018), featuring iconic early 20th-century photographs by American photographer Edward S. Curtis (1868-1952) alongside contemporary works—including photography, video, and installation—by indigenous artists Marianne Nicolson, Tracy Rector, and Will Wilson. Held in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Curtis's birth, the exhibition explores the legacy of his historic portraits of Native Americans from 21st-century perspectives, focusing attention on Native and First Nations voices.

Edward S. Curtis is one of the most well-known photographers of Native people and the American West. Establishing a photography studio in Seattle in 1891, he made his first portrait of a Native American in 1895 of Princess Angeline (Kikisoblu), daughter of Chief Seattle. In 1906, funded by financier JP Morgan, he embarked on a decades-long project to photograph and document Native Americans and their traditional lifeways, resulting in *The North American Indian*, 20 volumes published between 1907 and 1930.

Double Exposure features over 150 iconic photographs by Edward S. Curtis, including famed portraits of historical figures such as Chief Joseph, Geronimo, and Princess Angeline. On view are rarely seen examples of his photos across many media: sepia-toned photogravures, platinum prints, silver gelatin prints, cyanotypes, and orotones (goldtones), a process perfected by Curtis. The exhibition also includes one of Curtis's cameras, lantern slides he used in multimedia lectures promoting his project, audio field recordings of languages and songs made on wax cylinders, and a projection of his docu-drama feature-length film made in British Columbia, *In the Land of the Head Hunters* (1914).



Threaded throughout the galleries of Curtis works are multimedia installations by three contemporary indigenous artists: Marianne Nicolson, Tracy Rector, and Will Wilson. Their work provides a crucial framework for a critical reassessment and understanding of Curtis’s representations of Native peoples and the complex response that Natives and others have to those representations today.



In the exhibition, Dzawada’enuxw First Nations artist Marianne Nicolson creates an immersive, light-based installation about the significance of the Columbia River to First Nations people—traditionally a source of sustenance and spirituality—and the modern challenges resulting from the transfer from indigenous to colonial jurisdiction. Seminole and Choctaw filmmaker/artist Tracy Rector presents a new video work of “microstories” derived from the life experiences of Natives today who are creatively reinvigorating and adapting language and traditions. In addition, Rector’s installation creates a “Native space” for viewing the videos and related art works. Will Wilson, a Diné photographer who spent his formative years living in the Navajo Nation, presents large-scale images derived from tintypes he makes of Native sitters. These works—featuring lawmakers, artists, educators, and more from the Washington area—purposefully reference Curtis’s 19th-century photographic processes. Using the augmented reality Layar app, Wilson activates the sitters, who perform dance, song, or spoken word about their ancestors depicted in the Curtis images. Wilson’s work offers an antidote to Curtis’s stoically posed portraits by showing the vibrancy of the contemporary Native experience.

“The historical significance of Curtis’s project is well-established,” says Barbara Brotherton, SAM’s Curator of Native American Art. “In many cases, his photographs and texts provide important records of Native culture. However, it’s time for a reevaluation of his work. His methodology perpetuated the problematic myth of Native people as a ‘vanishing race.’ This exhibition reflects a collaboration among SAM, the artists, and an advisory committee comprising Native leaders to make space for a reckoning with Curtis’s legacy.”

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Seattle Art Museum will publish a 40-page, full-color exhibition catalogue, also titled *Double Exposure: Edward S. Curtis, Marianne Nicolson, Tracy Rector, Will Wilson*. It will feature essays by Barbara Brotherton; Lydia Sigo, curator/archivist at the Suquamish Museum; and Christy Christodoulides, Curtis expert and proprietor of Duwamps Fine Art & Antique Appraisal.

RELATED PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Art Beyond Sight and docent tours, as well as programs for educators, will be offered in conjunction with the exhibition in addition to a series of public programs to be announced.

Double Exposure is part of a community-wide commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Edward S. Curtis’s birth, including exhibitions, lectures, and performances through the end of 2018. Find out more at beyondtheframe.org.

THE ARTISTS

EDWARD S. CURTIS

American photographer Edward Sheriff Curtis (1868-1952) established a studio in Seattle in 1891 and is most known for his photographs of American Indians of the West. From 1907 until 1930, he visited more than 80 tribes in a mistaken effort to “salvage” aspects of their culture and customs before they forever disappeared. The images and written texts, as well as language and songs transcribed from wax cylinders, formed the 20-volume *The North American Indian*, in part financed by J. P. Morgan. This ambitious, life-long project produced 40,000 images, thousands of pages of ethnographic text, scores of audio recordings, and a feature-length film. Curtis’s work is often lauded for its artistry, especially the sensitive portraits, but also criticized for using methods that erased any evidence of the strategies that Native peoples were using to survive and maintain their culture. In 1970, his glass plates and unbound books and images were discovered in the basement of a Boston book dealer, thus inspiring a resurgence of interest in his work.

MARIANNE NICOLSON (Dzawada’enuxw)

Marianne Nicolson is an artist/activist of Musgamakw Dzawada’enuxw First Nations—part of the Kwakwaka’wakw (Kwak’wala-speaking peoples) of the Pacific Northwest Coast—and Scottish descent. She is trained in traditional Kwakwaka’wakw forms and culture as well as contemporary gallery and museum-based practice. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Emily Carr University of Art and Design, a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Victoria, and a Master of Arts and PhD in Linguistics and Anthropology from the University of Victoria. Nicolson works as a cultural researcher and historian for the Kwakwaka’wakw, as well as an advocate for Indigenous land rights. Her multi-disciplinary practice encompasses photography, painting, carving, video, installation, monumental public art, writing, and speaking. Exhibitions include the 17th Biennale of Sydney, Australia; The Vancouver Art Gallery; The National Museum of the American Indian in New York; Nuit Blanche in Toronto, Ontario; and many others. Major monumental public artworks are situated in Vancouver International Airport; the Canadian Embassy in Amman, Jordan; and the Canadian Embassy in Paris, France.

TRACY RECTOR (Seminole/Choctaw)

Raised in Seattle and Albuquerque, Tracy Rector is a mixed-race filmmaker, curator, community organizer, and co-founder of Longhouse Media. She has made over 400 short films. Rector is co-producer of the award-winning film *Teachings of the Tree People*, producer of *March Point*, co-director of *Clearwater*, and director of *Ch’aak’ S’aagi*. Her work has been featured on Independent Lens, Cannes Film Festival, ImagineNative, National Geographic’s All Roads Film Project, Toronto International Film Festival, the Seattle Art Museum, and in the Smithsonian’s Museum of the American Indian. Recent exhibitions including *RE:DEFINITION* at the Paramount Theatre Gallery, *YOU ARE ON INDIGENOUS LAND* at Core Gallery, *Women On the Brink* at Vermillion Gallery, and *BLOODLINES* at Bridge Productions. As a Native Education specialist, Rector has facilitated work with over 3,000 youth, worked as a consultant with the Seattle Art Museum, and served as a Native Naturalist for SAM’s Olympic Sculpture Park. Tracy has received the National Association for Media Literacy award for outstanding contributions made in the field of media education, she is currently a Firelight Media Fellow, a WGBH Producer Fellow, Sundance Institute Lab Fellow, Tribeca All Access Grantee, and City of Seattle Arts Commissioner. She received the Horace Mann Award for her work in utilizing media for social justice.

WILL WILSON (Diné)

Diné photographer and trans-customary artist Will Wilson spent his formative years living on the Navajo Nation. He studied photography, sculpture, and art history at the University of New Mexico (MFA, Photography, 2002) and Oberlin College (BA, Studio Art and Art History, 1993). He is the recipient of the Native American Fine Art Fellowship from the Eiteljorg Museum, the Joan Mitchell Foundation Award for Sculpture, and a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant for

Photography. He has held visiting professorships at the Institute of American Indian Arts, Oberlin College, and the University of Arizona. From 2009 to 2011, Wilson managed the *National Vision Project*; a Ford Foundation initiative focused on contemporary Indigenous art at the Museum of Contemporary Native Arts in Santa Fe, and helped to coordinate the NM Arts: *Temporary Installations Made for the Environment* program on the Navajo Nation. Wilson is part of the Science and Arts Research Collaborative, which brings together artists and collaborators from Los Alamos National Laboratory. His work, *eyeDazzler*, a Diné textile comprised of 78,050, 4 mm glass beads, QR codes, and web-based video was featured at the International Symposium on Electronic Arts in 2012. In 2017, Wilson received the New Mexico Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts and his solo exhibition, *PHOTO/SYNTHESIS*, was presented at the Fred Jones Jr. Museum, in Norman, OK. Wilson is Program Head of Photography, Santa Fe Community College.

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT

Double Exposure: Edward S. Curtis, Marianne Nicolson, Tracy Rector, Will Wilson is organized by the Seattle Art Museum.

Special exhibitions at SAM are made possible by donors to the **Jeffrey and Susan Brotman Fund for Special Exhibitions**

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Image credits: *Chief Joseph-Nez Perce*, 1903, Edward S. Curtis, American, 1868–1952, photogravure, 16 x 12 in. *K'ómoks Imperial Stormtrooper (Andy Everson)*, *Citizen of the K'ómoks First Nation*, from the series *Critical Indigenous Photographic Exchange*, 2017, Will Wilson, Navajo/Diné, b. 1969, talking tintype, 45 x 55 in. *The Harbinger of Catastrophe*, 2017 (detail), Marianne Nicolson, Dzawada'enuxw, b. 1969, glass, wood, halogen-bulb mechanism. *Clearwater: People of the Salish Sea*, 2018, Tracy Rector, Seminole/Choctaw, b. 1972, multimedia installation.

ABOUT SEATTLE ART MUSEUM

As the leading visual art institution in the Pacific Northwest, SAM draws on its global collections, powerful exhibitions, and dynamic programs to provide unique educational resources benefiting the Seattle region, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond. SAM was founded in 1933 with a focus on Asian art. By the late 1980s the museum had outgrown its original home, and in 1991 a new 155,000-square-foot downtown building, designed by Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates, opened to the public. The 1933 building was renovated and reopened as the Asian Art Museum in 1994. SAM's desire to further serve its community was realized in 2007 with the opening of two stunning new facilities: the nine-acre Olympic Sculpture Park (designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architects)—a “museum without walls,” free and open to all—and the Allied Works Architecture designed 118,000-square-foot expansion of its main, downtown location, including 232,000 square feet of additional space built for future expansion. The Olympic Sculpture Park and SAM's downtown expansion celebrated their tenth anniversary in 2017.

From a strong foundation of Asian art to noteworthy collections of African and Oceanic art, Northwest Coast Native American art, European and American art, and modern and contemporary art, the strength of SAM's collection of approximately 25,000 objects lies in its diversity of media, cultures, and time periods.