

Together Through as Within

Curated by Leslie Moody Castro
at NMSU Art Museum

Together Through as Within is an exhibition of the work of staff and faculty within the Department of Art at New Mexico State University, where each educator is also an artist, working to build their own practice and the practices of the generations of artists whom they mentor and guide. Their work comes together in a new space, a building made for the collision of ideas and generations, of methods and mediums, of the push and pull of criticism and acceptance.

From one sunrise to the next and through cycles of fall to summer artists and educators, students, and facilitators work to grow practices by sharing place, space and knowledge. Day to day and week by week works are made, and finally, they are shown here, in this place of conversation, received, and welcomed.

Guest Curator Leslie Moody Castro writes, "Mentorship is and has always been an integral part of the art world. The relationships and conversations between artists across generations has run a strong thread of connectivity throughout art history. Even as the current system of university education has evolved, friendships between artists across generations have offered the advice and counsel necessary to younger artists looking to find success in a nebulous and ever shifting professional world of visual art that is and always will be as subjective as the work we continue to make. It's a cycle that we perpetuate, and one that makes the job of an educator difficult, exciting, and exhausting."

In January of 2022, I packed my life into my red, 2006 Pontiac Vibe and made the drive across half of the state of Texas from Austin to Las Cruces. I had been invited to be the inaugural Visiting Curator Fellow as part of the Lillian Steinmann Visiting Artist and Scholar series at New Mexico State University (NMSU) in Las Cruces, an experimental post that would test the viability of a potential future program, and the first time I would spend both a significant amount of time in the desert, and teach a full semester course. I reflect on all of this now because retrospect is always so clear, and in the moment things felt as chaotic as trying to grasp at the wind that blows wildly in the desert. Now I think about the mentors, educators, and artists that have influenced my career, and my voice as a practitioner, and in retrospect I can clearly see how their own work influenced my own decisions. In the moments of learning the lessons, however, nothing really makes sense and it takes building a practice, creating a repertoire of work and exhibitions to begin to trust your gut enough to also share the wisdom learned along the way with others.

We have no real answers in this art world of ours. We forge ahead in whatever manner we find success, whether that is by taking the same path as our predecessors, or carving out our own trail. We can offer advice, studio visits, time to edit bios and artist statements, and offer facilities and materials provided within the university structure itself. But at the end of the day, there is no single way of arriving, no single way of practicing, and certainly not a definitive way to just be an artist. The thought can be as terrifying as it is liberating."

LEFT: Bree Lamb+Josh Clark/Muscle Memory, *Teen Dream*, 2022, ceramics, archival pigment print, wood, 30 x 18 x 4 inches • Craig Cully & Kelly Leslie, *Tethered Descent*, 2022, oil on panel, 48 x 80 inches • Tauna Cole, *Holding Thoughts*, 2021, watercolor, 11 x 12.25 inches



Artists as Knowledge Carriers

Curated Rachelle B. Pablo (Diné) with input from Leslie Moody Castro at 516 ARTS

New Mexico's expansive culture is composed and shaped by lines that trace back to Indigenous, Chicano, and colonial descendants, among other cultures. These entwined histories have evolved through various artistic expressions from the past to the present, resulting in unique creative practices. These distinctions are echoed in the multifaceted landscapes of art education and the fertile soil fostering the next generations of creatives.

Artists as Knowledge Carriers includes the work of art faculty from New Mexico State University (NMSU) in Las Cruces; the University of New Mexico (UNM) and Central New Mexico Community College (CNM) in Albuquerque; and Santa Fe Community College (SFCC) and the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe. The varied themes explored include identity, the philosophies of space and place, commerce, feminism, privacy, and the environment.

Identity is shaped by these artists' historical experiences from diverse cultures, as well as by feminism and queerness. They bring their cultural experiences as Black, Japanese, Latinx, Mestiza, Mexican, Ojibwe, and Yaqui, among others. The reimaginings of identity are expressed through their art and, in some pieces, implement traditional knowledge.

Environmental artworks have been part of visual expression from the beginning of origin stories through the current climate crisis. A sense of place, privacy, and environmental impact is on display in the exhibition. In Ojibwe artist Marcella (Kwe) Ernest's film titled *Aki* (earth), she combines the Ojibwe creation story, language, and soundscapes to create a multi-sensory experience. The photography of Will Wilson (Diné) explores the environmental effects of contamination on sovereign land. Stefan Jennings Batista's photographs examine the issue of privacy in public spaces of "universally accessible" Google photos of individuals in intimate beach landscapes. Daisy Quezada Ureña's large-scale white sculpture titled *AQUI* creates a space of engagement, emphasizing notions of space and place.

Labor is examined in Mayumi Nishida's large-scale installation titled *Inverse Pyramid*, which links the exploitation of the Japanese women's workforce that represents the first industrial practice in Japan. The inverted pyramid shape points to the hierarchy of capitalism and commerce. Socio-economic realities in various works in the exhibition reinforce the agency of the mentors' practices in creative economies.

The COVID-19 crisis has left many to contend with a shifting understanding of survival and safety. Many people have confronted their vulnerabilities during the experience of quarantine isolation, which has heightened a collective sense of mortality and overall health fragility. Artworks in the exhibition that respond to the pandemic include depictions of the calmness of sleeping animals by Jazmin Novak (Diné) and life preservers by Jamison Chās Banks (Seneca-Cayuga).



Artists as Knowledge Carriers delves into the artistic production of mentors, celebrating their visions, rigor, and dedication to their craft. The artwork of art professors in New Mexico are essential reference points for the emerging artists they teach. While their role as teachers is instrumental in cultivating critical and informed intellects in their students, their artwork provides models for professional contemporary art practices in the context of global culture.

—Rachelle B. Pablo (Diné)

ABOVE: Stephanie J. Woods, *A Radiant Revolution I, II, III*, 2018, burlap dyed with sweet tea, woven brass chains, t-shirt, textile foil, polished furniture vinyl, red tablecloth, gold rope, dresser mirror frame, upholstered taffeta print, 9 x 5 feet each • Will Wilson (Diné), *Auto Immune Response Survey 1* (detail), 2020, Digitype (archival pigment print) from original tintypes and digital captures, 39.375 x 48.5 inches