

Providence Is Only Looking Up
2017
oil and acrylic paint with collage

Bet the Farm on Bokeh
2018
oil and acrylic paint with collage

Stemming from the Japanese word *boke* which means “blur” or “haze,” more nuanced spellings and translations allude to being mentally hazy, befuddled, childish, senile, or playing stupid. Ambrose-Smith’s juxtaposition of the concept with the children’s literary characters Alice/Velveteen Rabbit suggest a kind of naivete, or ignorance of the world outside of their self-constructed fantasy worlds.

Get in the Relief Pod

2017

oil and acrylic paint with collaged border

Environmental Map

2017

oil and acrylic paint with collage

Phone Call to the Universe

2017

oil and acrylic paint with collage

Ambrose-Smith's source material pulls from a wide array of influences that combines both traditional symbols associated with Indigenous knowledge as well as mainstream contemporary culture. *Get in the Relief Pod* offers two forms of movable living quarters, two trailer homes and Enterprise C from Star Trek: The Original Series, important for someone from a historically migratory culture. Swirling around in the galaxy the artist includes clown faces and other figurative forms from 1950s illustrations, along with a feathered headdress. Similarly, in *Environmental Map*, Ambrose-Smith combines a variety of imagery and symbols to reflect the increase in, and acceleration of policies aimed at natural resource extraction and land destruction from the past few years.

Traditional Blocks

2017

monotype with Xerox transfer, solarplates:

Measuring over 13 feet long and comprising multiple printmaking techniques including, lithography, etching, monotyping and Xerox transfers, Ambrose-Smith showcases his printmaking expertise. For the artist, this piece shows “the stress of culture in snapshot moments, following old traditional to new traditional. On my reservation, everything is on blocks: the cars, the canoes, and the houses.” With a twisted circle of trailer homes spirally around images of Alice, this piece embodies the energy of a migratory life.

Coyote Explains to Max

2019

graphite, watercolor, acrylic, crayon, and ink on paper

Coyote Says, 'Hurray, No More Toxic Fish'

2019

Graphite on paper with watercolor, acrylic, crayon, and ink

Romance is Where You Find It, It's Just the Matter of Wearing It All the Time

2019

graphite, watercolor, acrylic, crayon, and ink on paper

The Albissola Years

2017

lithograph

The artist celebrates the work of Cuban-born Surrealist painter Wifredo Lam, a reference to the 2019 retrospective at the Tate Modern in London. Lam lived in the Italian town of Albissola Marina where he worked alongside other artists, which Ambrose-Smith depicts here with the meeting between Alice and the cartoon spacemen in feathered headdresses.

#MeToo

2017

lithograph

The Bright Side

2019

acrylic paint and collage

Ironically titled, this dark painting depicts Max from *Where the Wild Things Are*, being sucked under by a whirlpool. Ambrose-Smith observes, 'I'd like to believe the grass is greener at the neighbors, but I know once I get there it's a house of cards. They say your life flashes by in death, but I tend to review events leading to the current tragedy I'm in—like when I smash my fingers in the car door."

The Story Teller

2017

monotype with color Xerox transfer, Akua ink, and crayon
on dry Arnhem 1618

In his professorial suit, Coyote becomes the storyteller, sitting in the center of a circle of trailer homes, legs crossed and smoking a pipe. The piece references the importance of oral history. As the artist states, "Circle around for storytime, folks. Harvest is over and we gather around the fire. What's it going to be this time? Are we learning about Badger's stripes or Coyote and Fox? Are we learning about tolerance and sustainable living or traveling through the stars and time? Stay tuned because the storyteller will never fail us."

Coyote Consults the Neighborhood

2017

lithograph

Do You Ever Get That Feeling

2019

oil, acrylic, and collage

If I Have to Listen to the News One More Time

2019

oil and acrylic paint with collage

Perhaps no phrase better encapsulates the past four years than “alternative facts.” The artist considered how “sometimes I realize I’m being sucked into the news void. News is vernacular for “tabloid.” I remind myself how alternative facts are not facts. Likewise, alternative truths are not truths. This certainly goes beyond my feelings about imperfection and perfection. I believe perfection has imperfection built in.”

Coyote Whispers in Italian

2019

oil and acrylic paint with collage

Ambrose-Smith considers fact and fiction with Iron Eyes Cody, the Italian-American actor who played Native American parts in films for many years. The artist observed, “Many of us have some idea of the sweet nothings we’d like to hear. Coyote is whispering some Indian Romance Sweet Nothings with Iron Eyes. Who knew Coyote was multilingual?”