

An Indigenous Present

June 26–September 27, 2026 • Upper-Level Galleries



Mary Sully. *Amelia Earhart*, ca. late 1920s–early 1940s. Colored pencil, graphite, and watercolor on paper; three parts: 12 7/8 x 18 in., 12 x 19 in., 9 1/2 x 12 in. Courtesy The Mary Sully Foundation. Photo: Charles Meyer Photography

An Indigenous Present, a thematic exhibition spanning one hundred years of modern and contemporary Indigenous art, includes new commissions and significant works by fifteen artists who use strategies of abstraction to represent personal and collective narratives, describe specific and imagined places, and build upon cultural and aesthetic traditions. Co-organized by artist Jeffrey Gibson (member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and of Cherokee descent), whose work was presented at the Frist in 2023, and independent curator Jenelle Porter, the exhibition offers an expansive consideration of Indigenous art practices highlighting a continuum of elders and emerging makers.

An Indigenous Present draws from Gibson and Porter’s 2023 landmark publication of the same title, which, through a collaborative process, brought together work by Native North American artists exploring diverse approaches to concept, form, and medium. Their engagement with artists during the making of the book inspired this exhibition—one that demonstrates the endless variability of abstraction and its capacity to hold multiple forms and histories.

An Indigenous Present is organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston. The exhibition is curated by Jeffrey Gibson and Jenelle Porter, Guest Curators.



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The Frist Art Museum is supported in part by



Frist Art Museum

Curriculum Connections: *An Indigenous Present*

Tennessee Academic Standards

Fine Arts: Visual Arts

Grades K-12

CREATE: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.; Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.; Refine and complete artistic work.

PRESENT: Select, analyze and interpret artistic work for production.; Develop and refine artistic work for production.; Convey and express meaning through the production of artistic work.

RESPOND: Perceive and analyze artistic work.; Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.; Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

CONNECT: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to artistic endeavors.; Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context.

Social Studies

Grades K-12: Social Studies Practices

SSP.01: Gather information from a variety of sources, including: Printed materials (e.g., literary texts, newspapers, political cartoons, autobiographies, speeches, letters, personal journals); Graphic representations (e.g., maps, timelines, charts, artwork); Artifacts; Media and technology sources.

Grades K-5

2.01: Identify various cultural groups within the U.S. and the students' community.

2.03: Distinguish how people from various cultures in the community and nation share principles, goals, and traditions.

Grades 3-12

SSP.05: Develop historical awareness by: Recognizing how and why historical accounts change over time (Grades 3-12).; Recognizing how past events and issues might have been experienced by the people of that time, with historical context and empathy rather than present-mindedness (Grades 3-12).; Evaluating how unique circumstances of time and place create context and contribute to action and reaction (Grades 6-12).; Identify patterns of continuity and change over time, making connections to the present (Grades 3-12).

Grades 6-8

7.55: Describe the existence of diverse networks of North American Indian cultures (within present day United States) including: varied languages, customs, and economic and political structures.

Grades 9-12

S.07: Describe components of culture (e.g., nonmaterial culture, norms and values, material culture, subcultures).

S.08: Explain how the various components of culture form a whole culture. Identify common patterns.

S.10: Compare and contrast various cultures of the world.

S.12: Analyze how culture influences individuals (e.g., ethnocentrism, cultural relativity, culture shock, American values).

S.13: Describe how the social structure of a culture affects social interaction.

CI.08: Analyze how causal factors (e.g., cultural differences, boundary disputes, imperialism, and religious conflicts) fostered past and current conflicts.

CI.23: Analyze types, patterns, and attitudes regarding discrimination.

P.45: Explain how social power structures relate to stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination.

P.46: Examine how perspectives influence stereotypes and the treatment of minority and majority groups in society.