

May 5 through July 21, 2024

Layered Histories

monoprints by
Norman Akers
of Lawrence, Kansas

Artist Information

As a painter and printmaker, I communicate my vision of place using a visual vocabulary consisting of images and symbols. The underlying principles that inform my art include tribal histories, maps, art historical references, and nature. Through visual narrative, I explore how my point of view relates to a historical, political, and cultural sense of place in contemporary society.



Hidden by Norman Akers, 2022, monoprint, 10 x 8 inches

My creative process begins with making paper copies of digitalized imagery, such as maps, historic images, and drawings. Then, the images are cut out and pasted together using a collage technique to create key images for the prints. The primary printmaking techniques used to print are monoprint and chine collé. I am fascinated with physically moving cutout images across a printed map or landscape, which becomes an act of constructing, revealing, concealing, and recontextualizing the meaning and history associated with place and ancestral land. The final process involves using a gum Arabic transfer process, stencils, and glazing to create a layered visual space for my iconography to create an opportunity for viewers to engage.

Working from the perspective of an Osage person, the use of maps of Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma is central to the print works as they are direct references to our traditional homelands. While these maps record places we live, they also trace the history of settler colonialism on our ancestral land. Using imagery such as the elk, birds, architectural structures, roads, tree stumps, lunch boxes, and

flying saucers inhabited by historical figures from the US currency records a history of removal and change in our Osage homeland.

The artwork is about reclaiming a sense of identity and place. The processes I work with allow me to orient myself to a place in an ever changing landscape called home. My goal is to engage viewers by reconstructing a sense of place that is both familiar and new.

Artist Biography

Norman Akers is an Osage artist from Grayhorse District who teaches painting and drawing at the University of Kansas. His artwork addresses concepts of place through multilayered visual images to form narratives bridging a personal understanding of Osage culture and experiences to contemporary issues. Norman's artworks act as maps of culture, memory, and place. The intersecting lines that serve as the background for his images are clearly cartographic, but it is with the images placed on top of these maps that Akers creates forceful visual statements. He states, "Through color, line, and visual form, I express deeply felt concerns regarding removal, disturbance, and the struggle to reclaim cultural context."

Akers' work has received national recognition, including a solo exhibition at the Albrecht Kemper Art Museum, Saint Joseph, Missouri, and recent group exhibitions New Terrains, Phillips Auction, New York City, NY, Rivers Flow/Artist Connect, Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, NY, and the travelling exhibition Exploding Native Inevitable, Bates College Museum of Art, Lewiston, ME.

He is a recipient of the Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Fellowship, and his artworks are in several collections, including the Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis, Missouri, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, Kansas, and Gilcrease Museum of Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.



Birger Sandzén
- MEMORIAL GALLERY -

401 N. First Street, PO Box 348, Lindsborg, KS 67456

(785) 227-2220 sandzengallery@gmail.com www.sandzen.org

Gallery Hours: Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, 1 to 5 p.m.