NW Art Now @ TAM

[Intro]

Since 1940, Tacoma Art Museum has organized regular surveys of contemporary Northwest art. Although the frequency and names of these exhibitions have changed over the decades, they showcase the achievements and advancements made by artists living and working in this region. We define the Northwest as Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Alaska, and British Columbia. *NW Art Now* *@ TAM* continues in this tradition and looks at the forces that are actively shaping our regional self-perception, especially issues of identity, social justice, and environmental action. These three issues seem to combine and intersect in ways that continually reshape what it means to identify as part of the greater Northwest.

Because of Northwesterners’ deep love of the region’s varied terrain, environmental concerns remain a central theme for many artists. A group of artists in the exhibition explore complex issues of caretaking our environment. Their works signal concern about the impact of catastrophic climate change. Other works defy simple categorization, setting their narratives in the extraordinary beauty of both urban spaces and undeveloped corners of the region. Such artists affirm the importance of landscape as an enduring factor in regional identity.

A second theme in the exhibition is the importance of articulating identity, oftentimes in subtle and unexpected ways. Artists address the spectrum of sexuality, gender, and race, complexities of migration and the value of independence. They also explore an increasing awareness around issues of social justice. These works help underscore the importance of respect and diversity as a shared value. A number of artists resist preconceived ideas about authority and power and offer more nuanced and complex presentations.

*NW Art Now @ TAM* reveals how Northwest art is a mix that illuminates the complex issues of identity, social justice, and environmental stewardship. Because these forces interact within a specific geographical context, Northwest artists today point to a more thoughtful engagement with our shared responsibilities for healthy and sustainable communities.

*NW Art Now @ TAM* is organized by Tacoma Art Museum.

Selecting Artists and Works for *NW Art Now*

*NW Art Now* is a juried exhibition. Through an open call-to-artists last December, TAM invited artists to submit digital images and statements about their artwork created since 2012, when TAM hosted the*10th Northwest Biennial*. The call was distributed through the museum’s website, listserv, and social media. We asked how artists grappled with issues of identity, social justice, and environmental action in their work. These three broad topics have dominated local media coverage over the past two years, and we wanted to see artists’s responses.

296 artists from Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and British Columbia offered their work for consideration. Their submissions were reviewed by Rock Hushka, TAM’s Chief Curator and Curator of Contemporary and Northwest Art, and Juan Roselione-Valadez, Director of the Rubell Family Collection, Contemporary Arts Foundation in Miami, Florida. Hushka and Valadez narrowed the field to 30 artists for further review through studio visits or conference calls.

After careful consideration, Hushka and Valadez selected the final 24 artists whose work met the following three criteria: First, the artists demonstrated a solid understanding of the most recent trends in contemporary art and how their work fit within this broader dialogue. Second, the artists worked at a high level of technical and formal excellence. And finally, the artworks shared by the artists address one or more of the themes in interesting, unexpected, and compelling ways.

*NW Art Now* Throughout the Museum

L_NWArtNow_k.tifSome of the artists prefer alternative spaces and are known for inserting artworks into the public sphere. To parallel their practices, we offered them the opportunity to exhibit their works outside the gallery. Look for these artworks around TAM, identified by this logo:

**Brad Adkins**

*NO DOGS*, 2014

Vinyl on HDO plywood

**Dakota Gearhart**

*Sunken Hot House*, 2016

Single channel video

**Guestwork**

Accounting for Public Interest, 2016

Unscientific opinion survey posed to museum visitors, Tacoma Art Museum version

**Paul Komada**

*Going Cascade*, 2014

150 hand-knit fabrics

**Dylan Neuwirth**

*Just Be Your Selfie*, 2014 (recreated 2015)

Neon, argon, glass, nickel, acrylic, GTO, aluminum, and two transformers

**SuttonBeresCuller**

*Under the Rug*, 2014  
Bronze with patina, edition of 8

**SuttonBeresCuller**

*Piso Mojado*, 2013

Bronze with patina, edition of 5

**Lou Watson**

*Section of the I-705, on a Wednesday, for Electric Piano*, 2016

Video projection, sound, and score