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Tacoma Art Museum presents *Kent Monkman: Death of Adonis* with companion installation *Visions of the West: Grafton Tyler Brown*



Kent Monkman (b. 1965), Death of Adonis, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 72 x 120 in. Art Bridges. Photography by Steve Panecasio.

Tacoma, WA — Tacoma Art Museum (TAM) presents *Kent Monkman: Death of Adonis*, opening June 27, 2026. A companion installation, titled *Visions of the West: Grafton Tyler Brown*, will open the same day.

Kent Monkman: Death of Adonis centers on a single monumental painting by acclaimed Cree artist Kent Monkman, inviting visitors to engage deeply with a work that challenges dominant narratives of North American history and art.

Death of Adonis (2009) responds directly to Albert Bierstadt's 19th century painting *The Last of the Buffalo* (1888–1889), a celebrated example of American landscape painting. While Bierstadt's work has long been viewed as an elegy for a disappearing frontier, Monkman exposes the colonial violence, environmental destruction, and mythmaking embedded within that narrative. Through a dramatic reimagining of the original composition, he shifts attention from romanticized visions of the American West to the realities of settler expansion and Indigenous dispossession.

Painted at the same scale as Bierstadt's original and presented in a similarly ornate frame, *Death of Adonis* enters into direct dialogue with this important painting and well-known trope. At the center of the composition lies a fallen male figure referencing Adonis from Greek mythology, while buffalo, hunters, and traders move across a sweeping landscape. Monkman's celebrated alter ego, Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, stands prominently within the scene, asserting Indigenous presence and agency within a genre that historically marginalized Indigenous voices.

Known internationally for his large-scale paintings, performances, films, and installations, Monkman uses humor, theatricality, and art historical references to examine colonization, sexuality, identity, and resilience. His work reclaims the visual language of European and American history painting to tell stories from Indigenous perspectives and to challenge assumptions about whose histories are represented in museums and public memory.

"*Death of Adonis* demonstrates the power of contemporary art to reshape our understanding of history," said Jessica Wilks, Director of Curatorial at Tacoma Art Museum. "By engaging an iconic image of the American West, Monkman reveals how art has contributed to colonial narratives while offering new ways of seeing the past and imagining the future."

The exhibition offers visitors an opportunity to spend sustained time with a single work of art. Through close looking and in gallery reflection, audiences are invited to consider how historical images shape collective memory and how contemporary artists can challenge and transform those narratives.

Organized by Tacoma Art Museum and curated by Jessica Wilks, Director of Curatorial. Generous loan of artwork and support for the exhibition provided by Art Bridges.

Presented in dialogue, *Visions of the West: Grafton Tyler Brown* features two major landscape paintings and an in-depth exploration of the artist's life and career.



Grafton Tyler Brown (b. 1841), *A Canyon River with Pines and Figures (Yellowstone)*, circa 1886. Oil on canvas, 35 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 56 in. Tacoma Art Museum, Museum purchase with funds from the Art Acquisition Fund and the Tacoma Pierce County Black Collective, 2016.5

"Known for his captivating lithographic prints and ephemera of California and magnificent landscape paintings of the Pacific Northwest, Grafton Tyler Brown is widely recognized for his immense artistic contributions to the West Coast and to the American landscape in the 19th century," said Victoria Miles, Rebecca and Jack Benaroya Curator. "As recognizable as his artistic contributions are, very little is known about him. A significant fact we do know is that he began passing as white around 1880. This installation invites us to look closer and think more critically about the impact of race on Grafton Tyler Brown's life and art, through an exploration of his time and depictions of the West."

Kent Monkman: Death of Adonis and Visions of the West: Grafton Tyler Brown will be on view at Tacoma Art Museum until January 3, 2027.

About Tacoma Art Museum

Tacoma Art Museum connects people through art, presenting exhibitions and programs that emphasize the art and artists of the Pacific Northwest. Located in downtown Tacoma, the museum is committed to equity, community engagement, and fostering meaningful encounters with art.

Visit Tacoma Art Museum

Wednesday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Thursday 10 a.m.–8 p.m., free admission 5 p.m.–8 p.m.

Friday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Sunday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Closed Monday and Tuesday

Contact: 253-272-4258 / www.tacomaartmuseum.org

Admission:

\$18 Adult, \$15 Senior (65+), \$15 Military (active duty or retired with ID), \$10 (youth 6-18), free for TAM members