

"Andrea Carlson is at the center to showcase Native American arts"

By Lee Egerstrom

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Andrea Carlson's Perpetual Genre, 2024. Oil, acrylic, gouache, ink, color pencil, and graphite on paper; overall: 45.5 × 61 in.
(Courtesy of the artist and Bockley Gallery.)

Native Minnesotan and Grand Portage Ojibwe artist Andrea Carlson is a key exhibitor at a unique series of Indigenous art exhibits underway this fall and winter in Chicago.

Six exhibits featuring Indigenous artists are in progress linked and promoted by the Chicago-based Center for Native Futures and its current Art Design Chicago initiative. Carlson, a co-founder of the Center for Native Futures, has been a resident artist in the Twin Cities and Chicago over the years and also works from her home in northern Minnesota. She is a key exhibitor in three of the Chicago exhibitions.

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The Center for Native Futures is a unique Native artist-led organization promoting Native fine arts. It supports contemporary artists with gallery exhibitions, artist-in-residencies and community events.

The center gives wide usage to the name Zhegagoynak, which is Potawatomi for Chicago. It also salutes the linkages of the Potawatomi, Ojibwe, Odawa, Menominee, Myaamia, Ho-Chunk, and Peoria people who have shared Potawatomi land.

Like the Twin Cities, Phoenix and Los Angeles among other major examples, Chicago is a major urban center for Indigenous people from across North America. Approximately 175 different tribes are identified as having people living there.

The Chicago series of exhibits features artists' works from across the nation that include Lakota and Ojibwe artists.

Carlson pointed to that diversity in a statement about the participating artists in the Chicago exhibits. "If one listens to Native people talk about the content of our own work it becomes hard to paint us with the same brush, and that is a good thing. We are not monolithic, we are diverse, and complex."

She has work showing in three of the Chicago exhibits. They include Chicago Works/ Andrea Carlson: Shimmer on Horizons, a show running from August through Feb. 2 at Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; Still Here: Linking Histories of Displacement, opening in January at the National Public Housing Museum; and Woven Being: Art for Zhegagoynak/ Chicagoland, at the Block Museum at Northwestern University, from Jan. 26 through July 13.



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Promotional materials for the Chicago Works exhibit said the art focuses on her take of the horizon "reminiscent of her homelands on Lake Superior." Her works make reference, the museum said, "to the tactics of colonialism as well as her family and peers, Ojibwe culture, and Indigenous sovereignty. Confronting ongoing histories of erasure and dispossession, Carlson proposes that what appears to be lost can be remade, reimagined, or otherwise regained."

Three other Art Design Chicago will be closing soon. They include Gagizhibaajiwan, closing Dec. 14 at the Center for Native Futures; Indigenous Chicago, closing Jan. 4 at the Newberry Library; and Living Stories: Contemporary Woodland Native American Art, ending Jan. 5 at the Mitchell Museum of American Indian Art.

Over the years, Carlson became a well-known Minnesota mixed media artist with works on paper and multi-media offerings that include painting, video and sculpture. Learning as a child from her artist father, she has worked from her northern Minnesota home and from studios and homes in Minneapolis and Chicago.

She has a bachelor's degree in studio arts and American Indian studies from the University of Minnesota and a master's in visual studies from the Minnesota College of Art and Design. As an artist with wide and diverse appeal, she travels a lot, said Emily Marsolek, assistant director of Bockley Gallery, 2123 W. 21st St., Minneapolis. Carlson has been a featured exhibitor there over the years.

The Bockley Gallery was founded in 1984 and has similar goals as the Chicago arts effort. It explains itself as a gallery assisting artists living and working in "Mni Sota Makoce" (Minnesota) and other artists from across "Turtle Island" (North America).

A current exhibit features North American landscape photographs from Ho-Chunk artist Tom Jones.

Some of Carlson's screen prints are available for sale nearby at the Highpoint Center for Printmaking at 912 W. Lake St., Minneapolis. Highpoint, a cooperative of artists, has Carlson prints on hand and is currently preparing another.

Carlson art has been displayed at numerous museums abroad and across "Turtle Island." They include the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the Walker Art Center, the National Gallery of Canada and the British Museum.

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