Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art announces “Dyani White Hawk: Speaking to Relatives”
By combining techniques of abstract expressionism with Indigenous art forms, Dyani White Hawk’s work inspires viewers to expand notions of history, identity, and cultural value.

Dyani White Hawk (Sičâŋju Lakota, born 1976), *Untitled (coral, turquoise and yellow)*, 2016, acrylic, oil, vintage beads, thread on canvas, 20 x 20 inches. Private Collection, Twin Cities, Minnesota. © Dyani White Hawk, Courtesy of the artist and Bockley Gallery.

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Media Contact: Louise Forster, lforster@kemperart.org
Access Kemper Museum’s “Dyani White Hawk: Speaking to Relatives” media kit here.


This major solo exhibition of mixed-media work by Minneapolis-based artist and United States Artist Fellow Dyani White Hawk (Sičâŋju Lakota, born 1976) is a ten-year survey of painting, sculpture, photography, video, and installation. White Hawk works across different cultures, histories, and visual traditions to show the significance of a shared history between Native and non-Native groups and encourage conversations that challenge the lack of representation of Native people, arts, and voices in art movements and beyond.
“White Hawk’s strength is in her ability to see what others cannot, namely how the past, present, and future are all interconnected and influence each other,” said Sean O’Harrow, executive director at Kemper Museum. “Contemporary artists help us reexamine the world we live in today and imagine possibilities for the future. We hope visitors leave this exhibition inspired by the work, with a richer and more nuanced understanding not only of art, but of our larger culture.”

The exhibition examines White Hawk’s use of techniques that emerged in the 1950s and became prominent in 20th century American art, foregrounding the expression of abstract mark making, rather than representational imagery, to communicate. Through the works on view, White Hawk offers a new historical perspective, employing these techniques alongside materials and craft derived from Native visual history, an underrepresented focus in American abstraction. This combination acknowledges Indigenous art as American art and inspires viewers to expand accepted notions of history, identity, and cultural value.

“Speaking to Relatives is an exciting exhibition as it fuses motifs from two well-known art movements that have historically been siloed,” said Kemper Museum Assistant Curator Jade Powers, who curated the exhibition. “This presentation of White Hawk’s practice allows beautiful and engaging work to help start a dialogue about equality and intersectionality.”

Virtual programs for all ages will accompany the exhibition, including an artist talk, curator and docent-led tours, scavenger hunts, mystery art challenge, and guided meditations. “Dyani White Hawk: Speaking to Relatives” will also be featured on Google Arts and Culture, creating a digital archive for the exhibition and allowing engagement with the work from anywhere in the world.

“Dyani White Hawk: Speaking to Relatives” is organized by Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, Missouri, and curated by Jade Powers, assistant curator.

A full-color catalogue is available in conjunction with this exhibition and features contributions by Kathleen Ash-Milby, Curator of Native American Art, Portland Art Museum and Carmen Hermo, Associate Curator, Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, Brooklyn Museum. The catalogue is published by Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art and available upon the opening of the exhibition.

Kemper Museum is sponsoring this program in partnership with the Missouri Humanities Council and with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, among many others. Please visit kemperart.org for a more complete list of funding sources.