

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith



Jaune [zhon] Quick-to-See Smith was born in 1940 at the Saint Ignatius Mission on the Flathead Reservation in northwestern Montana. She is an enrolled member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation. The daughter of a horse trader and rodeo rider, she grew up traveling across the western United States with him. This experience instilled a respect for the trade process and developed her love of horses. Smith's father often gifted her small drawings of animals, which inspired her to become an artist. She also encountered many challenges in her youth. There were long periods of time when she had to live with foster families while her father travelled, and her family also experienced racism. Smith has cited an instance when the local sheriff falsely accused her father of stealing a horse simply because he was Native American.

In the face of these difficulties, Smith began to develop her identity as an artist. She describes her discovery of crayons, paste, and tempera upon entering the first grade as the point when she became interested in making art. At age 13, Smith saw *Moulin Rouge* (1952), a dramatic film about the French painter Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec in late nineteenth-century Paris. The young artist modeled herself after the film's Bohemian protagonist and even posed for a photograph as Toulouse-Lautrec, complete with faux goatee, paint brush, and palette. She used her earnings from working as a farmhand and waitress at age 16 to enroll in the "Famous Artists School," a popular mail-order correspondence course in drawing founded by notable illustrators such as Norman Rockwell (1894–1978).

Smith continued her art education at Olympic College in Bremerton, Washington, where she took her first formal courses in drawing and painting in 1958. During her studies, one instructor told her that even though she could draw better than her male peers, women could not become artists. He suggested that she teach art instead. Undeterred, Smith received her Associate Degree in 1960 and continued to pursue an arts career. Moving between Boston, Seattle, and Houston, she worked a number of odd jobs while raising her two sons and sporadically taking college courses. In 1976, she received her Bachelor of Arts degree in art education from Framingham State College in Massachusetts, and, four years later, she earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in visual arts from the University of New Mexico.

During her graduate studies, Smith created work in a highly abstract idiom, using a variety of colors and expressive brush and line work to describe her subjects. She also began experimenting with different media and techniques, adding various printmaking styles to her repertoire. Throughout her career, the artist has worked with a range of symbols and representational images that are meaningful to many Native American communities. These include animals such as bison, horses, and rabbits, as well as



IMAGES (LEFT TO RIGHT): Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, ca. 1990s, photographer: Thomas King; Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Nation, b. 1940), *Trade Canoe for the North Pole*, 2017, acrylic, collage, and oil crayon on canvas, 60 x 160 in. (152.4 x 406.4 cm), Missoula Art Museum Collection; Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Nation, b. 1940), *War is Heck*, 2002, lithograph, photolithograph and collage, 58 9/16 x 57 5/8 in. (148.7 x 146.4 cm), Whitney Museum of American Art, Gift of Dorothee Peiper-Riegraf and Hinrich Peiper, 2006.287

references to Indigenous artistic practices, such as petroglyphs, parfleche containers, and war shirts. Smith has also drawn from a variety of found materials to call attention to stereotypes about Native American culture that pervade popular imagery. Her mixed media practice has enabled her to address Indigenous histories and the legacies of colonialism, which includes environmental degradation and social injustice. A recent painting titled *Trade Canoe for the North Pole* (2017) demonstrates Smith's development of her iconic style that is characterized by expressive brushstrokes, collage, and a wide range of Native imagery. In the large painting, Coyote, a trickster figure, journeys to the North Pole to escape the effects of climate change. He stands in a canoe packed with animals, palm trees, and a host of peoples and places referenced through collage. This painting embodies the artist's commitment to address urgent social and environmental issues through her art.

In addition to her celebrated career as a professional artist, Smith has curated numerous exhibitions and advocated for Native American artists. In 1976, she founded Grey Canyon Artists (GCA) in Albuquerque, New Mexico, named for the urban, concrete environment in which the artists worked. The collective showed their work in several touring exhibitions before disbanding in 1983. For Smith, the purpose of GCA was to create a space for Native American artists in contemporary galleries, museums, and institutions that have historically excluded Indigenous artists. Work by GCA members embraced modernist and post-modernist artistic methods, such as pictorial abstraction and the use of unconventional materials, and addressed Native American rights issues. Smith has also supported artists from the Flathead Reservation where she grew up. She founded the Coup Marks Coop in 1980 to provide assistance to aspiring young artists in Montana and spearheaded the fundraising campaign to add an art building to the reservation's Salish Kootenai College.

Through her curatorial work, Smith has introduced Native artists and worldviews to mainstream gallery and museum spaces. Some of her notable exhibitions include *Women of Sweetgrass, Cedar and Sage: Contemporary Art by Native American Women* (1985–1987), the first touring exhibition of art by contemporary Indigenous women artists. The exhibition *The Submuloc Show/Columbus Woks* (1990) featured 35 Native American artists whose works countered the Euro-centric discovery narratives. Smith continues to organize exhibitions throughout North America in addition to her work as a full-time artist. She is currently based in Santa Fe, New Mexico.



Timeline

1940

1940 Jaune Quick-to-See Smith is born on January 15 at the St. Ignatius Mission in Montana



1950

1960

1960 Receives an Associate of Arts from Olympic College in Bremerton, Washington

1970

1976 Receives a Bachelor of Arts in art education from Framingham State College, Massachusetts

1977 Founds Grey Canyon Artists in Albuquerque, New Mexico

1980

1978 First time Smith's work is in a museum exhibition, *Indian Art Now* at the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian

1980 Receives a Master of Arts in visual arts from the University of New Mexico; Founds the Coup Marks Coop on the Flathead Reservation in Montana

1985 Curates the exhibition *Women of Sweetgrass, Cedar and Sage: Contemporary Art by Native American Women*

1990

1990 Organizes the exhibition *The Submuloc Show/Columbus Woks*

2000

2001 Curates the exhibition *Offerings from the Heart*, which introduced a new generation of contemporary Native American artists

2010

2020



IMAGES (TOP TO BOTTOM): Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Nation, b. 1940), *Going Forward, Looking Back*, 1996, oil and mixed media on canvas, diptych, 50 x 120 in. (127 x 304.8 cm); Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Nation, b. 1940), *Indian Hand (I See Red)*, 1992, mixed media on canvas, 72 x 72 in. (182.88 x 182.88 cm), Garth Greenan Gallery, New York



Jaune Quick-to-See Smith
(Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Nation, b. 1940)
Horse Sense (For Advice and Council)
1994
color lithograph
30 x 22 3/8 in. (76.2 x 56.83 cm)
Museum purchase, 1994.31

Discussion Questions

How does Jaune Quick-to-See Smith's *Horse Sense (For Advice and Council)* address the impact of colonialism on Indigenous peoples?

What roles do animals play in Smith's work?

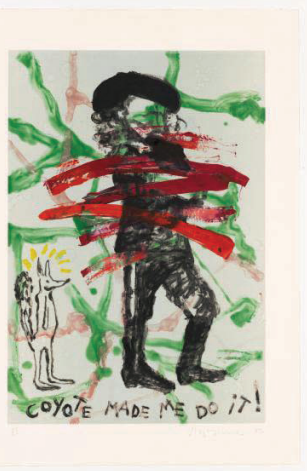
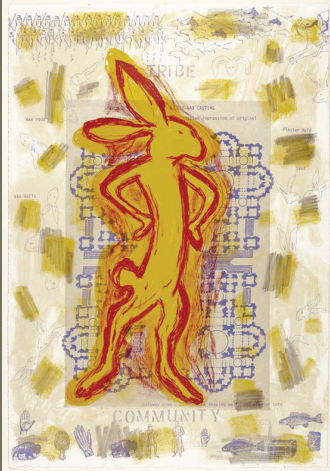
How does Smith convey a sense of humor or irony in her work?

Teachers: go to www.joslyn.org/education for this poster's related academic standards and lesson plans.

Horses, Rabbits, and Coyotes

As with many of Jaune Quick-to-See Smith's works, *Horse Sense (For Advice and Council)* incorporates several references to animals. This lithograph includes images of horses and a rabbit as well as a textual reference to Coyote. The central figure is significant considering the artist's personal connection to horses. She often used her own horse, Cheyenne, as a model and inspiration in her art. Also, the title *Horse Sense* is a play on words; it implies that horses perceive the world in a way that is distinct from "human sense." Many Native religious practices and belief systems have been dismissed as "nonsense," another word conjured by Smith's title. Thus, she asserts that horse sense and that of many animals has much to teach us about our modern world.

Rabbits, coyotes, and other beings are often trickster figures in Native American storytelling. That is, they often disobey rules and upend the workings of society to cleverly impart wisdom. Smith explains that these "foolish, bright, conniving, beneficent, helpful, greedy and generous" characters help her to see "the flip side of life and its ironies." Tricksters play an important role in her creative process as instruments of humor through which she conveys serious messages in her work. She inverts the typical Euro-American view of animals as inferior by showing that these beings, whether mythological characters or living companions, can educate humans.

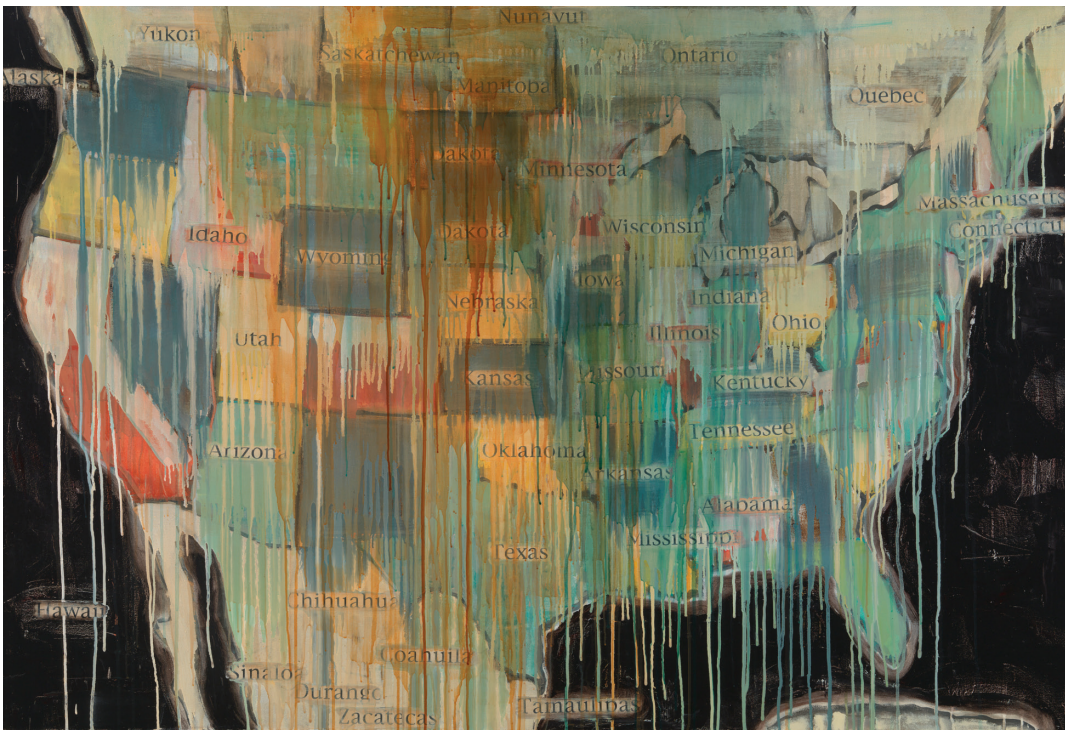


IMAGES (LEFT TO RIGHT): Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Nation, b. 1940), *Survival: Tribe/Community*, 1996, color lithograph with chine colle, 36 x 24 7/8 in. (91.44 x 63.18 cm), Publisher: Zanatta Editions (Shawnee, Kansas) Minneapolis Institute of Arts, The Patricia and Peter Frechette Endowment Fund and the James and Maureen Duffey Endowment for Prints and Drawings, 2008.66.4; Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Nation, b. 1940), *Coyote Made Me Do It*, monotype, 41 5/8 x 29 5/8 in. (105.7 x 75.2 cm), Printed and published by Smith College Print Workshop, Fine Arts Department—published by Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Whitney Museum of American Art, Gift of Dorothee Peiper-Riegraf and Hinrich Peiper in memory of Harry Fonseca, 2007.9

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Native American Art and Colonial Histories

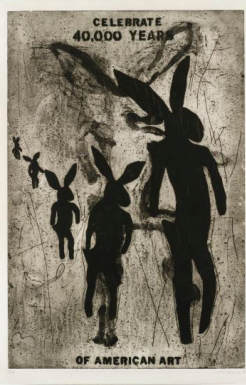


A recurring theme in Jaune Quick-to-See Smith's body of work is Native Americans' continued struggle with the legacy of the colonization of Indigenous territories. Colonization means the process of settling Indigenous lands and establishing control over Native people. In North America, European nations and the United States often used violence to impose their political structures and religious beliefs on the continent's first peoples. The results—land dispossession, disease, and forced assimilation to Euro-American culture—continue to be felt by these communities today. The myth that Europeans discovered America, when in fact the region has been Indigenous territory for centuries, perpetuates violence against Native people and lifeways.

Smith and other Native American artists, scholars, and activists counter this notion by reiterating that Indigenous peoples lived in the Americas long before the arrival of Europeans. Smith's large mixed-media painting *State Names* (2000) elucidates the role of language within colonial history. It features a map of the

United States with several missing or obscured state names. The visible state names are those that derived from Indigenous words. For instance, the name Nebraska means "flat water" in the Omaha, Ponca, and Otoe languages, a reference to the Platte River. Smith reorients us within an Indigenous landscape using language and a powerful visualization of colonial history. The United States imposed state borders on Indigenous lands that divided tribes and restricted their ability to move freely. There is an irony in the fact that colonial powers used Native American words to name these new territories. *State Names* counters the colonialist myth that Europeans settled an empty continent, and she draws attention to the continued Indigenous presence across America.

In regards to the history of American art, Smith has stated that "...[I]t is never taken into consideration that some of the world's greatest cultures and cities were here in the Americas for thousands of years—and are still here." *Celebrate 40,000 Years of American Art* (1995) brings to light the colonial history of American art that has excluded Indigenous artists. Her title cleverly corrects this narrative and asserts that Indigenous people were the first peoples—and artists—of America. Smith achieved the heavily textured background through a print process called collagraphy, in which the image is created from various materials collaged onto a rigid surface. This resembles the appearance of a stone's surface. Indeed, Smith modeled the print's rabbit figures after a petroglyph (rock carving) located near Peterborough in Ontario, Canada, that long predates the arrival of Europeans. By choosing this ancient image, the artist shows the continuum and variation of Indigenous art traditions.



IMAGES (CLOCKWISE): Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Nation, b. 1940), *State Names*, 2000, oil, collage and mixed media on canvas, 48 x 72 in. (121.9 x 182.9 cm), Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Elizabeth Ann Dugan and museum purchase, 2004.28; Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Nation, b. 1940), *Celebrating 40,000 of American Art*, 1995, collagraph, 76 1/2 x 53 in. (194.3 x 134.6 cm), Printed and published by Island Press, Whitney Museum of American Art, Purchase, with funds from The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, 2000.191; Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Nation, b. 1940), *Where Do We Come From?*, 2001, mixed media on canvas, 36 x 48 in. (91.44 x 121.92 cm), The Alford Collection of Contemporary Art at Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida, Gift of Barbara '68 and Theodore '68 Alford

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JAUNE QUICK-TO-SEE SMITH
Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead
Indian Nation, b. 1940

HORSE SENSE (FOR ADVICE AND COUNCIL)
1994, color lithograph
30 x 22 3/8 in.

JOSLYN ART MUSEUM OMAHA, NEBRASKA
Museum purchase, 1994.31