

THE JOSLYN



DRIPPING EARTH: CANNUPA HANSKA LUGER

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Image: Cannupa Hanska Luger
(Mandan/Hidatsa/Arikara/Lakota, b. 1979),
We Survive You—Midéegaadi, editorial photograph featuring
seven mixed media bison regalia made of repurposed materials,
© Cannupa Hanska Luger. Courtesy of the artist and Garth
Greenan Gallery, New York. Photo by: Brandon Soder, 2023

ABOUT DRIPPING EARTH



Cannupa Hanska Luger (Mandan/Hidatsa/Arikara/Lakota, b. 1979), *Midéegaadi – Lightning*, 2022, from the series *Future Ancestral Technologies*, mixed media bison regalia, installation dimensions variable, © Cannupa Hanska Luger. Courtesy of the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York. Photo by: Brandon Soder

MIDÉEGAADI

The *Midéegaadi*, part of Luger’s *Future Ancestral Technologies* series, are powerful examples of the artist’s vision. The title *Midéegaadi* comes from the Hidatsa word for “bison.” Bison can serve as a symbol of survival, cultural adaptation, and the sacred relationship between humans and ecosystems. Luger leans into this symbolism by creating regalia that echoes the bison’s form, encouraging viewers to reflect on these interconnected themes. These works imagine figures that “exist throughout time,” maintaining accountability to the lands and waters of the Buffalo Nation.

Luger combines repurposed industrial materials, hand-made regalia, single-channel looped video, and immersive sound to create figures that are simultaneously historical, contemporary, and futuristic. By merging customary practices with speculative imagery, the *Midéegaadi* invite viewers to reflect on resilience, kinship, and Indigenous perspectives on time, accountability, and survival.

THE ARTIST

Cannupa Hanska Luger’s work combines creativity, storytelling, and community. Born on the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota, he is an enrolled member of the Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold and is Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, and Lakota. This exhibition takes its title from Luger’s Hidatsa clan, the Awa xee (Dripping Dirt), who oversaw the repair of earth lodge dwellings. A trained ceramicist, Luger cites his application of clay as a natural extension of his lodge-building forebears’ labor and care for their communities.

Luger uses many materials and methods—including sculpture, video, performance, and public art—to explore how we care for one another, the land, and our shared future. His art often invites community members to collaborate, helping them imagine new ways to connect to one another. The artist’s work is included in several major museum collections across the United States and around the world. Luger continues to create from his studio in Glorieta, New Mexico, where he develops projects that celebrate Indigenous knowledge, collaboration, and creativity.

“I practice empathetic response and community catharsis through craft based social collaboration... my work is inherently social and requires engagement.” - Cannupa Hanksa Luger



Cannupa Hanska Luger with his *Remarkable Landscape* lithographs. Photograph by Shayla Blatchford (Diné), 2025

“... I place myself between the realms of contemporary art and Indigenous culture, moving amidst museums and the front lines to enact a more complex understanding of contemporary Indigeneity.” - Cannupa Hanska Luger



Installation view of *Dripping Earth: Cannupa Hanska Luger* in The Joslyn’s Temporary Exhibition Galleries. Photograph by Shayla Blatchford (Diné), 2025

THE PROCESS

Luger’s process begins with research into Indigenous histories, ecological concerns, and contemporary social issues. He often poses a central question: What does accountability to land, water, and community look like? His materials—clay, fiber, steel, repurposed industrial objects, and digital media—carry both symbolic and functional meaning, transforming discarded materials into objects of reflection.

Collaboration is central to his practice. Luger often asks community members, elders, or students to participate in the making process, which reinforces the idea that art is social and relational. Luger’s installations combine objects, performance, sound, and video to create immersive experiences. The resulting work bridges ancestral knowledge with speculative futures, challenging viewers to rethink definitions of technology, customary practices, and environmental stewardship.

FUTURE ANCESTRAL TECHNOLOGIES

Future Ancestral Technologies is Luger’s ongoing research and creative project, which he describes as “Indigenous science fiction.” This ongoing series challenges the perception that Indigenous peoples exist only in the past and instead asserts that Indigenous knowledge and innovation are central to shaping the future. The series uses art as a laboratory where ancestral technology, speculative design, and contemporary materials intersect.

The project employs sculpture, performance, sound, video, and mixed-media regalia to construct mythic narratives about survival, environmental stewardship, and community responsibility. Repurposed industrial materials recur in *Future Ancestral Technologies*, connecting contemporary ecological challenges with Indigenous worldviews. Luger’s work in this series emphasizes the ethical responsibility of humans to land, water, and more-than-human beings, envisioning futures where reciprocity, care, and interconnection guide technological and cultural development.



SOME INSPIRATION

Luger’s work is in dialogue with the nineteenth-century paintings and drawings of Karl Bodmer, a Swiss artist who documented Indigenous peoples and landscapes along the Missouri River during an 1832–34 expedition with German naturalist Prince Maximilian of Wied. Bodmer’s images have long shaped how Native communities of the Upper Missouri are visually understood. As Luger draws from his own Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, and Lakota heritage, he revisits this archive not as static history, but as living material.

During his formative years, Luger recalls seeing Bodmer’s images and now reconsiders how Bodmer’s works were collected, reproduced, and interpreted over time. Many of Bodmer’s works are now part of the Joslyn Art Museum’s permanent collection. Luger’s work responds by asserting Indigenous presence, continuity, and self-representation. Through sculpture, performance, and installation, Luger reframes Bodmer’s documentation as a starting point for contemporary Indigenous voices, restoring agency to stories often filtered through a colonial lens.

Karl Bodmer (Swiss, 1809–1893), *Leader of the Mandan Beröck-Öchatä*, 1834, watercolor and graphite on paper, 17 × 11 15/16 in. (43.2 × 30.3 cm), Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, Gift of the Enron Art Foundation, 1986.49.264, Photograph © Bruce M. White, 2019

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DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Why do you think Cannupa Hanska Luger focuses on ideas like care, kinship, and accountability when imagining the future?

Why might Luger choose secondhand or discarded materials when designing regalia or sculptures for *Future Ancestral Technologies*? What do used materials carry that brand-new materials do not?

How does imagining Indigenous people in the future help undo harmful ideas from the past?