Immersive Audio Tour

Welcome to *Indie Folk: New Art and Sounds of the Pacific Northwest*, an exhibition at the Museum of Craft and Design in San Francisco. We're so glad you're here to enjoy the art either onsite or online. This guide is an invitation to spend some extra time with us getting to know the artists and their art. Welcome!

A little bit about the exhibition

The *Indie Folk* exhibition features pieces by seventeen artists from the Pacific Northwest and includes paintings, baskets, quilts, photography, video, and sculptures. They come from rural and working-class traditions, and most were created in the last decade. To create a unique, immersive experience, we've curated a playlist of Pacific Northwest music to enjoy in the gallery. These songs were recorded between 1975 and 2018 by working-class musicians from the region, and we hope that pairing folk art with folk music brings Pacific Northwest art to life. For anyone who prefers to experience a quieter exhibition, noise canceling headphones and earplugs are available at the front desk.

Indie Folk will be available to visit onsite from February 24th through June 30th, 2024. While you're here, you can take in artwork that's handmade, unpretentious, and sometimes made with found objects or salvaged materials. The focus is on craft and tradition and creating art that reflects everyday experience rather than emphasizing rigid rules or studio techniques.

The exhibition was organized by the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art WSU and guest curated by Melissa E. Feldman. Funding for this exhibition is provided by the Samuel H. and Patricia W. Smith Endowment, the Mildred S. Bissinger Endowment, Nancy Spitzer, Patrick and Elizabeth Siler, and members of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art WSU.

The exhibition and gallery layout

The gallery space is a bright, high-ceilinged hall with a polished cement floor and dividing walls that are positioned to suit each exhibition. Some artworks are in the open, while others are mounted or in cases against the walls. Low-hanging rows of track lights illuminate everything from a few feet overhead.

The artworks of *Indie Folk* are the first to be encountered as you enter the gallery space. In the open, on a low platform are three megalithic-inspired wood carvings by Vince Skelly. Beyond them, against the museum wall on the right, are pieces by Marita Dingus and Brian Beck. A dividing wall partially traverses between the left and right walls of the museum, which can be rounded in either direction. Hanging on it is a large fabric freeway exit sign and, continuing left along the dividing wall, another quilt by Whiting Tennis. Before you make the sharp right around the end of this wall to consider the other side, note that a few steps on, against the left-hand

wall of the museum is one of three benches for resting. Proceeding around the dividing wall, a touchscreen on the other side allows you to select any of nine songs, which will play through an attached set of headphones, while the entire soundtrack plays throughout the museum on speakers. In the open, alongside this sound wall is a large, freestanding sculpture by Jessica Jackson Hutchins, entitled *Mourner*. Past the end of this dividing wall and hanging on the right-hand wall of the museum is *So What*, a painting by Warren Dykeman. A second divider intersects the museum wall a few steps left of the painting. Another quilt by Joey Veltkamp hangs on it, and further along, a display of two ceramic sculptures also by Hutchins and flanking her *Mourner* piece. Steps ahead, this dividing wall comes to an end roughly in the middle of the gallery space, or arguably, it makes a short right turn to enclose the neighboring exhibition, *Mr. Roboto*. But atop a small display directly ahead, is Joe Feddersen's *High-Voltage Tower*. Making the short right turn, a few more *Indie Folk* pieces decorate the walls and stand in the open here. In the right corner is the entrance to *Mr. Roboto*.

Indie Folk playlist

Eric Isaacson, founder and owner of Mississippi Records in Portland, Oregon says this of the Pacific Northwest: "The skies are grey, the trees are green, and the music is minor chord and sweet."

Here's the playlist of nine songs, Sounds From the Pacific Northwest, that we put together for your time at the Museum.

Michael Hurley's "In the Garden" (1991), Ural Thomas's "Smile" (2018), Ted Lucas's "Baby Where You Are" (1975), Luz Elena Mendoza's "Ojos Del Sol" (2017), Brian Mumford's "True & False Comforts" (2014), Sávila's "Fantasia" (2015), John Fahey's "Remember" (1983), Dead Moon's "Unknown Passage" (1989), and Fred Louis and Ella Thompson's "Haida Song" (1986)

A sampling of four pieces and artist bios

1. Marita Dingus

About the work in this exhibition:

Before heading to graduate school in the 1970s, Marita Dingus worked as road crew for the Washington State Department of Ecology. Soon the shards of rubber and metal she was picking up along the freeways found their way into her work. The resulting sculptural assemblages are also informed by the Black Studies courses she petitioned to take in college instead of the required Western art history classes. Her work references traditional American Black folk art, which, by necessity, was made from the scraps of daily life and staged in and around the home. Dingus has kept her childhood home in the woods both as her studio and an evolving environmental installation festooning walls, beds, and the backyard. The works on view are early pieces by the artist but the use of scavenged materials and recyclables is ongoing.

Description of *Scissor Basket*:

This basket was designed in artist Marita Dingus's signature mixed media style like the others in this exhibition. It's a collection of different types of metal objects with their own everyday uses that come together with new purpose in this sculpture. The objects are sewn together by lengths of metal cables that twist and go through, in, and around the various parts, which include the back grill of an oscillating fan, metal netting, and old scissors.

The oscillating fan's back grill serves as the basket's three-inch-tall base. At the middle of it is a copper disc with a perfect circle cut out of its center and gleaming silvery spokes whose tips are welded close together around the disc's outer edge. The disc floats half-an-inch off the pedestal it sits on, and a stable base is made by the spokes fanning out and arcing down to touch the pedestal. They then bend and continue up and outward in pairs. They connect at their ends to a shiny circle of metal that's nine inches around, or about the width of a sheet of paper, and this circle creates the lip of the basket's base.

The base is shallow compared to the rest of the sculpture, which is a cylinder of stiff, thin wire netting that rises up more than twice as high as the base, circling it like a fence. The netting is made of single metal strands woven with double strands in a grid pattern. The weave is naturally loose enough that it doesn't hide objects on the other side of it, and where it has become bent, the grid is warped. Like the base, the netting is bright silver, but imprecise, scraggly, and torn in places. A stiff metal wire about as thick as a smartphone charging cable secures the netting to the base. Long exposure to the outdoors has left this wire dull and dark.

Almost evenly spaced around the netting stand five pairs of old children's scissors without rubber grips on the handles, like fence posts. Their blades point up, some open just a touch, some in a wider V shape. While the handles gleam, the blades have spots and patches of rust here and there. The dull, dark wire twists through the scissors' handles to hold them to the ring of the basket's base, and higher up, the blades are tied to the netting by very stiff metal wires, some thick, some thin as fishing line. Strands of slender, fully rusted wire are threaded around the netting, providing spots of reddish color.

Scissor Basket is a mix of shiny, rusty, and dull, some parts precise and stiff, and some bent and broken with age and use. This basket fits into longstanding traditions of basket weaving in the Pacific Northwest while showcasing that even discarded objects still have meaning and purpose.

Artist Bio:

Marita Dingus was born in 1956 in Seattle, WA and currently lives and works there. She considers herself an African-American Feminist and environmental artist. Her approach to producing art is environmentally and politically infused: neither waste humanity nor the gifts of nature. She is primarily a mixed media sculptor who uses discarded materials. Her art draws upon relics from the African Diaspora. The discarded materials represent how people of African descent were used during the institution of slavery and colonialism then discarded, but who found ways to repurpose themselves and thrive in a hostile world. She seeks to use recovered materials, reconfiguring and incorporating them into pieces of art where possible and

appropriate, and to mitigate waste and pollution in all her work. This is a creative challenge, but a commitment she incorporates into her professional and personal activities.

2. Warren Dykeman

About the work in this exhibition:

Over the last decade Warren Dykeman has developed a visual lexicon of what might be described as *cottage core:* silhouetted figures in peasant garb, decoy ducks, hand-lettering. Though cryptic message-wise, its directness style-wise aligns with the self-taught, graffiti, and Northwest Indigenous art he admires. Cold War-era Americana that was popular in his youth is another reference point; Dykeman grew up in Eastern Washington just outside the Hanford Nuclear Reservation.

Description of *So What*:

This framed acrylic painting features many aspects that show up in a lot of Warren Dykeman's work: a combination of everyday forms with smears of color, blocky letters, and unexpected color combinations. The main character in *So What* is a person in silhouette caught mid-stride as she walks toward the right side of the painting. Her head very nearly touches the top edge, and her feet are close to the bottom of a sheet of paper that's five feet tall and four feet across. Capital letters and fat punctuation marks are scattered like clouds. Although the silhouetted figure and these shapes are very attention-grabbing, this description will explore the painting in five distinct layers starting with the background and ending with those shapes, then the main character.

The background is pale, with wide brushstrokes that deliberately applied paint unevenly. At the top half, the colors are sandy beige, and the bottom incompletely blends light pink, beige, and white. The next layer uses darker paint and brings distinguishable shapes in the top third. On the left, a cloudy white streak, and on the right, arcing bands like sand dunes in gold, salmon-pink, and gray.

In the next background layer, the prominent imagery is thick, muddy brown lines. It seems like the brush was pulled hard across the paper, leaving streaks that get speckly on the ends when the brush bristles had little paint left on them. At the center third of the paper, a smear runs all the way across like a stretch of dirt with a post standing straight up on the far left. By the post, more brown lines like a small letter W and a small L with white stripes. Below the dirt, a patch of black has been laid down, and a brush with white paint pressed across it until an uneven gray emerged.

The next layer up introduces bright colors that pop against the pastel, earth-toned background layers. To the left of the main character's head, a black W, thick on its left and thinning toward its right. Below that, a large, vibrant red comma hangs in the air by her right shoulder. The letters A, T, S, and O are in front of the figure. These and the W behind her all have uneven edges, some sharp and jagged and others rounded. The A and the S are painted in white and encased in a black or gray rectangle like blocks of moveable type used in letterpress printing, while the others are free-floating. In front of the figure's face is a bubbly white single quotation mark larger

than her head that bumps up against a big, dark green apostrophe. Below those, a six-sided geometrical shape with a lemon-yellow center and rings of white, gray, and black hovers next to a super-wide baby blue single quotation mark. Below the blue mark, a five-banded shape like a warped letter M with wide, round humps.

And now to the main character who is painted all in black with gray stripes. While very recognizable as a person, she's stiff and abstracted with no bend in her knees, no left arm, no right hand coming out of her striped cuff, and her right arm hanging down behind her with only a small point of contact to her body as if it were snapped into place like a doll arm. The edges of her ponytail, face, and ankle-length dress are wavery, their edges like puffy clouds. She wears black and gray striped stockings that match her sleeve cuff, and her loafers have sharp soles like a serrated knife edge. The most remarkable feature is a set of five rectangular windows cut out of her dress and body. Each is partly filled by black or gray oval blobs, and the pale background layers show through around the blobs. Toward the bottom of her skirt, two gray circles are painted to mostly match her stocking and cuff stripes, but not precisely.

It's notable that the letter H is not discoverable in the painting, and that if read from left to right, the painting says, "W AT SO" at the top rather than spelling out the artwork's title, *So What*. As with the nonchalant tossing of the five letters into the sky, our central character faces the edge of the painting rather than facing front as in most portraits, as if to say herself, "so what."

Artist Bio:

Warren Dykeman was born in 1967 in Laguna Beach, CA and lives and works in Seattle, WA. There's a diverse range of subject matter in his work. Sometimes non-objective shapes, design, and architectural elements fill his paintings and drawings, but he sees himself as a figurative painter. He is interested in the form and contour of the figure and reworking the line, pushing the bounds of what is shape, and what is icon. He erases and adds to the edges of the form, as a designer would adjust a typeface or geometric object. He sometimes uses the computer as a gathering place for many individual forms. Compositions come together and can be used as studies or directly projected onto the surface. He is informed by folk art, primitive art and all forms of graphic art, from information design to corporate identity systems. He wants his work to contain an awkwardness that has a rhythm between shape, contrast, color and inaccuracy.

3. Joe Fedderson

About the work in this exhibition:

While his repertoire encompasses glass, basketry, and large-scale installations, printmaking—in which the artist holds a BFA.—continues to anchor Joe Feddersen's practice. For *Indie Folk*, the artist has three monoprints on display as well as two baskets. Monoprinting is a simple process yielding a unique print as opposed to multiple impressions. Besides mixing mediums, Feddersen mixes motifs, combining the Euro-American modernism with artistic traditions of the Columbia Plateau, where he was raised. Similarly, his imagery time travels from pictographic canoes and elk to transmission towers and skyscrapers. Feddersen says he added the Abstract Expressionist drips à la Jackson Pollock to comment on perceptions of Indigenous art as

ethnographic artifacts as opposed to “fine art,” riffing off Andy Warhol’s quip that goes something like “without the drips it’s not art.”

The parking lots and other serial features of the built environment adorning these baskets make convincing stand-ins for traditional Columbia Plateau basket designs. Historically, these so-called “sally bags” for collecting roots featured geometric designs that echoed the surrounding landscape, flora and fauna. Feddersen’s designs reflect his homeland as it appears now.

Description of *High-Voltage Tower*:

High-Voltage Tower is a tightly woven cylindrical basket about the size and shape of a coffee tin, but supple and softer in shape. Alongside another basket of Feddersen’s, it sits under plexiglass atop one of the gallery’s square white pedestals. Overall, pale tan fibers alternate with medium brown ones to make up the sides, except for the tall geometric drawings that stretch top to bottom, span nearly to the full width, and repeat around the sides. Composed of parallel and alternating medium and dark brown fibers, the pattern could pass as simply decorative, but for the artwork’s title as a hint or guide. With that guidance, the patterns unmistakably depict the giant electrical transmission towers that extend in succession for miles into, out of, and along the Columbia River Gorge, where Feddersen lives and works. They hold aloft high-voltage power lines which, from a distance, seem to drape over them from one to the next, slightly sagging in between. The design of Feddersen’s towers evokes a torso and long legs like a person’s, which are spread wide, and each taper to a point at the base of the basket. The adjacent towers touch at just these points in their repetition around the basket. The arms at waist height and across the top resemble old-fashioned railway bridges: A slender trapezoid zigzagged by struts. A line of the same dark brown as the towers encircles the base at the edge, and another medium brown line encircles the brim. A narrow fabric strip like the inner band of a hat has been hand stitched lightly just inside.

Artist Bio:

Joe Fedderson was born in 1953 in Omak, WA and currently lives and works there. Celebrated artist Joe Feddersen (Okanagan and Arrow Lakes) explores Indigenous landscapes and icons, and the complex relationship between contemporary and native symbolism. He creates artworks in an array of mediums, including painting, printmaking, photography, collage, and works in glass. Feddersen was a professor of art at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Western Washington, from 1989 to 2009 and is Emeritus Faculty. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Washington in Seattle and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He lives and works in the small town of Omak, in Northeastern Washington. He is a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation.

4. Jessica Jackson Hutchins

About the work in this exhibition:

In 2005, shortly after moving to Portland, Jessica Jackson Hutchins decided she wanted a change and started working with clay. Up to that point she had been painting and working with

papier mâché, plaster, and found objects. Gradually the clay took over, leading to the sprawling, acrobatic sculptures that have come to characterize her practice. In many, ceramic elements are appendages to or fuse with sofas, chairs, and other large household items. In this work, *Mourner*, painting reemerges as another malleable material to choreograph. Here, an unstretched painted canvas functions as a tablecloth on which a ceramic vase sits as precariously as a Dr. Seuss fishbowl. It might also be construed as a shroud draped over the folding ladder that forms its elongated, casket-like base. The artist's inspiration for the piece is the famous medieval tomb of a Burgundian duke with its procession of mourning figurines draped in voluminous robes.

Description of *Mourner*:

A sprawling unframed painted canvas drapes like a tablecloth over a long and steeply tilted tabletop or coffin-shaped box. An unusual V-shaped metal support is mostly hidden by the canvas and appears tilted like the top. About six and a half feet tall at the high end, the draped object slopes 45-degrees to the floor, where the hem has been trimmed to curve around it and flare out slightly like the suede of a simple shoe ready for stitching to its sole. At the high end, the hem hangs in the air like the elevated heel of a shoe in stride, or a high-heeled pump. A crocheted ceiling hanging for a house plant lies flopped across the top about where laces or a ribbon would go. Subtly nestled into the top higher up is a droopy, wide-bottomed ceramic vase shaped a little like an African gourd squash. Its roughly textured white glaze is smudged with pale color and starkly marked by a few broad black strokes that cross in places.

The painting on the canvas is an earthy mix of dark and light, and of thin layers roughly washed on, and small detailed areas of cut, torn, and oddly reassembled photographs from magazines. Bright zones tinged with blue evoke views of the sky above and between tall buildings in a city—photos of which appear in some of the fragments. Others show pieces of green hillside photographed from the air. Another shows glittery orange and golden evening gown fabrics in close-up.

A disorienting realization occurs on closer inspection of the piece, which is that there is actually neither a table nor a box beneath, but an upside-down collapsible ladder, that has been partially unfolded into a kind of strange scaffold. The realization arrives looking along the metal girder-like legs of the V to where they disappear behind the canvas. Just there, painted in outline with a narrow brush, the canvas depicts how the legs continue behind like an X-ray. The ladder legs zigzag in an odd configuration end to end across the canvas, washed over by the colors of each section and in places hard to discern. The central hinge that would be the top or apex of an old-fashioned step ladder here functions as the base, on which the whole piece teeters and tilts. Behind the canvas, and according to the X-ray, the two ladder legs extend to the top and kink out to either side to support or supply the high and low ends of the seeming tabletop. But a slight sag in the top above the V reveals there is nothing beneath but the ladder. The nestled appearance of the vase makes sense now as the result of it sinking between rungs. At the two ends, the legs are not fully extended but folded flush underneath. In addition to the faint X-ray of the parts underneath, the V-shaped base is depicted in the sky-like section between the legs of the actual V, life sized and identical in the orientation and amount exposed. Shaped like an arrow, it could be a guide to realization.

Artist Bio:

Jessica Jackson Hutchins was born in Chicago, IL in 1971 and currently works in Portland, OR. Hutchins produces sculptural installations, assemblages, paintings, and large-scale ceramics that often transform everyday household objects. She has recently had solo exhibitions at Columbus College of Art and Design in Columbus, OH (2016); the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum (2014); the Hepworth Wakefield Museum (2013); the Broad Art Museum in East Lansing, MI (2013); and the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, MA (2011). Significant group exhibitions include Makeshift at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, where Hutchins first premiered her performance work; the 55th Venice Biennale, The Encyclopedic Palace (2013); and The Whitney Biennial (2010). Her work has been incorporated into public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Brooklyn Museum, New York; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Margulies Collection, Miami; and the Portland Art Museum, Portland. Hutchins holds a BA in Art History from Oberlin College and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She lives and works in Portland, Oregon.

All of the artists and works on display

Here are all seventeen artists listed in alphabetical order and their artworks at the Museum of Craft and Design for *Indie Folk*, without image descriptions.

1. Brian Beck

Untitled (crow leaving barn), 2019, *Hemlock Tracktorberg*, 2019, and *The Seventh*, 2021

2. Marita Dingus

Silver Fence, 2003, *Scissor Basket*, 2003, *Fabric Basket*, 2003, and *Metal Basket*, 2003

3. Warren Dykeman

So What, 2020 and *Lago*, 2019

4. Joe Feddersen

Blue Chief at Elk Crossing, 2018, *Drizzle*, 2018, *Red Star*, 2016, *High-Voltage Tower*, 2015 and *Parking Lot*, 2018

5. Gaylen Hansen

Kernal with Four Red Grasshoppers, 1980 and *Kernal and Grasshoppers*, ND

6. Andrea Joyce Heimer

Driving Through Yellowstone During Buffalo Calving Season We Would Strain To Catch A Glimpse Of The Small Chocolatey Calves Fighting Out Of Their Mothers Beneath The Hard Montana Sun, 2022

7. Sky Hopinka

Jáaji Approx., 2015

8. Denzil Hurley

Notch Glyph #2, 2015–2016, *Glyph Frame #6,* 2019, and *“Shovel”/Glyph*, 2019

9. Jessica Jackson Hutchins

Mourner, 2013, *Butterfly Kiss*, 2019, and *Cloud*, 2019

10. D.E. May

Untitled, 2011, *Untitled*, date unknown, *Untitled*, 2010, *Testbed (P)*, 2014, *Untitled*, 2015, *Untitled #223*, 2019, *Untitled*, 2012, *Untitled*, late 1980s-early 1990s, and *Untitled*, 1993

11. Jeffry Mitchell

Pretzel Pot, 2012 and 2020 *Alphabet*, 2020

12. Blair Saxon-Hill

Wholly Is Half Manner, 2018 and *Red of Two Mouths*, 2018

13. Vince Skelly

Linnton, 2021, *Aurora*, 2021, and *Catsop*, 2021

14. Whiting Tennis

Quilt #2, 2014, *Blue and Red Abstract*, 2020, *French Collage*, 2017, and *Potted Plant*, 2020

15. Cappy Thompson

Blue Tree Keeper, 2015, *Beekeeper*, 2015, *Guardian Angels*, 2015, and *Reverie*, 2021

16. Joey Veltkamp

The Blue Angels, 2018 and *Bellevue Exit (520)*, 2018

17. Mary Welcome

Ukiah, Oregon (97880), 2013, *Winthrop, Washington (98862)*, 2020, *Crescent, Oregon (97733)*, 2020, *Carlton, Washington (98814)*, 2020, *Elgin, Oregon (97827)*, 2015, and *Shaniko, Oregon (97057)*, 2020

Thank you

Thank you so much for visiting the Museum of Craft and Design. You can also check out an audio tour for the *Mr. Roboto* exhibition both online and onsite. That exhibition is up through June 30th, 2024 as well. We hope you enjoyed the artwork and that you’ll visit us again!

This guide was written by Cheryl Green and Oliver Baker and narrated by Cheryl Green. Blind QC (script quality control) by Nefertiti Matos Olivares and Rick Hammond. Produced by Social Audio Description Collective.