



San Antonio
Museum
of Art

San Antonio Museum of Art Announces New Acquisitions Focused on Work by Texas-Based Artists

Newest Acquisitions Continue Museum's Emphasis On Reflecting and Supporting Its Community

San Antonio, TX—June 22, 2021—The San Antonio Museum of Art (SAMA) announced today that it has acquired eight artworks by seven San Antonio-based artists, including **Jennifer Ling Datchuk, Jenelle Esparza, Joe Harjo, Jon Lee, Ethel Shipton, Chris Sauter, and Liz Ward**. The acquisitions are part of the Museum's *Initiative to Acquire Art by Contemporary San Antonio Artists*, which was developed to enhance the Museum's commitment to support the city's visual artists by acquiring works for its collection. The artists were chosen with the support of an Advisory Committee comprised of San Antonio-based visual artists, professors, collectors, arts leaders, and Museum staff and Trustees, who have also made recommendations for additional artists whose work could be purchased in the future. The Committee was Co-Chaired by SAMA Trustees Katherine Moore McAllen, PhD, and Dacia Napier, MD. All of the artworks, which include textiles, painting, photography, prints, and sculpture, mark first entries by the artists to SAMA's collection. The new acquisitions are slated to go on view at the Museum in late fall, with more details about the presentation to follow.

Over the past several years, as part of its vision to diversify its collection and best represent its community, SAMA has placed a particular emphasis on acquiring works by artists from San Antonio as well as from across Texas. Recent acquisition announcements have included works by Texas-based artists Ana Fernandez, Kirk Hayes, Earlie Hudnall Jr., Michael Menchaca, Marcelyn McNeil, Daniel Rios Rodriguez, and Liz Trosper. In 2020, SAMA also presented *Texas Women: A New History of Abstract Art*, which focused on women artists from across the state that have and continue to contribute to the development of abstract art—a subject that previously had not been explored in depth. Artist Liz Ward, whose acquisition was announced today, was among the artists featured in the exhibition.

“The group of artists announced today represents an incredible range of conceptual and formal approaches and come from a multitude of backgrounds that have shaped their artistic practices. Their work brings new dimension to SAMA's collection and allows us to expand and deepen narratives about art across culture, medium, and style, and positions Texas as a dynamic hub for artistic innovation,” said Lana S. Meador, Assistant Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art. “Collecting the work of artists from Texas, and in particular San Antonio, is an essential part of our responsibility to reflect and support our community, and we look forward to continuing to enhance our holdings of artists based in our city and region and to sharing their voices with our many audiences.”

More details on each of the artist and artworks follow below:

Jennifer Ling Datchuk (American, born 1980)

Enter the Dragon, 2020

Porcelain, ceramic decals from Jingdezhen, China, wood, gold mirrors

65 × 16 × 5 in. (165.1 × 40.6 × 12.7 cm)

San Antonio Museum of Art, Purchased with The Brown Foundation Contemporary Art Acquisition Fund and funds provided by Dr. Katherine Moore McAllen, Dr. Dacia Napier, Edward E. (Sonny) Collins III, and The Sheerin Family, 2021.2

Trained as a ceramicist, Jennifer Ling Datchuk’s practice is grounded in explorations of identity, beauty, and femininity—drawing from her own experience as an Asian American woman. Utilizing found and handmade ceramics and porcelain motifs in her sculptures, installations, performances, and photographs, Datchuk calls attention to both historic and contemporary cultural appropriation, while also blurring the boundaries between craft and fine art. *Enter the Dragon* incorporates traditional floral decals from Jingdezhen, China (the birthplace of porcelain) on a pair of nunchucks handmade by the artist, which are hung on a mirrored mosaic surface that integrates the viewer’s reflection. The sculpture explores the tension between the masculine and feminine and strength and weakness, and also makes further reference to themes of cross-cultural exchange and identity. Datchuk was named 2021 Texas State Three-Dimensional Artist by the Texas State Legislature.

Jenelle Esparza (American, born 1985)

Continent, 2017

72 × 100 in. (182.9 × 254 cm)

Handmade quilt, recycled fabric and clothing, embroidered blocks, batting, cotton blends
San Antonio Museum of Art, Gift of Zoe A. Diaz, 2021.8

Jenelle Esparza’s multidisciplinary practice examines the connections between agriculture, gender, race, and bodily experience. Through photography, textiles, and installations, Esparza uncovers the history of cotton farming in South Texas and its principally Mexican American labor force. Her materials are imbued with memory, exemplified in the quilt, titled *Continent*, for which she interweaved generational histories, including that of her own family and in particular her grandmother. For Esparza, the work “represents a collection of women’s experiences all quilted together—a ‘continent’ of all the joys, heartaches, and work that women live every day.” The quilt also borrows its composition from the American flag: alternating red and white stripes are replaced by colorful, patterned fabrics, while the fifty stars are substituted with embroidered imagery featuring the female body.

Joe Harjo (Muscogee Creek, born 1973)

The Only Certain Way: Faith, 2019

24 Pendleton beach towels, 24 custom memorial flag cases

78 × 104 × 4 in. (198.1 × 264.2 × 10.2 cm)

San Antonio Museum of Art, Purchased with The Brown Foundation Contemporary Art Acquisition Fund and funds provided by Dr. Katherine Moore McAllen, Dr. Dacia Napier, Edward E. (Sonny) Collins III, and The Sheerin Family, 2021.3

Joe Harjo is a multidisciplinary artist from the Muscogee Creek Nation of Oklahoma. His practice redresses the historic erasure of Native American art, culture, and people. Through photography, sculpture, performance, and installation, Harjo explores Native American identity, debunks stereotypes and myths surrounding Indigenous People, and asserts the vibrant,

contemporary presence of Native communities. *The Only Certain Way: Faith* is comprised of Pendleton beach towels, which feature Native American art designs the company has become known for and appropriated in the past. The towels are folded and placed into memorial flag cases and arranged as a cruciform on the wall. The work's title references a journal entry by sixteenth-century Spanish conquistador Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca. Discussing religious conversion and assimilation, he wrote that the Native Americans "must be won by kindness, the only certain way."

Jon Lee (American, born South Korea, 1968)

O1701, 2017 and *O1702*, 2017

Woodcut

17 × 12 in. (43.2 × 30.5 cm), each

San Antonio Museum of Art, Purchased with The Brown Foundation Contemporary Art Acquisition Fund and funds provided by Dr. Katherine Moore McAllen, Dr. Dacia Napier, Edward E. (Sonny) Collins III, and The Sheerin Family, 2021.4.1-2

Jon Lee's woodcuts explore the poetic subtleties of color and line, reinventing traditional printmaking processes and materials. Born in Seoul, he draws on his native Korea's rich and long history of printmaking, which includes the implementation of moveable type predating Gutenberg's fifteenth-century printing press. For over ten years, his practice has focused on a traditional Japanese woodcut technique called *mokuhanga* that he honed during residencies at the Mokuhanga Innovation Lab in Japan, where *O1701* and *O1702* were printed. Inspired by the process of origami, these woodcuts are derived from a larger body of work that reference the folding and unfolding of a sheet of paper in their compositions. Lee's practice engages the artist's hand from start to finish: each tool is crafted by hand; the blocks are hand carved; and the paper for each edition is handmade and printed by the artist using hand-mulled inks.

Chris Sauter (American, born 1971)

Shape of the Universe, Kandariya Mahadeva, 2013

Cut acrylic mounted photography, Sintra

60 × 30 in. (152.4 × 76.2 cm)

San Antonio Museum of Art, Purchased with The Brown Foundation Contemporary Art Acquisition Fund and funds provided by Dr. Katherine Moore McAllen, Dr. Dacia Napier, Edward E. (Sonny) Collins III, and The Sheerin Family, 2021.5

Chris Sauter is a multidisciplinary artist whose work explores connections between biology and culture, science and religion, the personal and the universal, and the past and the present. He often deconstructs materials in order to reconstruct them in new ways that challenge viewers' perceptions. The acquired work is one of four in a series for which Sauter reproduced images of deep space, captured by the Hubble Space Telescope, in the shape of architectural plans for religious buildings representing four major world religions: Borobudur (Buddhism), Dome of the Rock (Islam), Kandariya Mahadeva (Hinduism), and St. Peter's Basilica (Christianity). In connecting these images and forms, Sauter explores how we consider these subjects and offers alternative modes of expression where seeming dualities coexist.

Ethel Shipton (American, born 1963)

The Valley - RGV, 2021

Archival digital prints on Hahnemühle German Etching Matte paper

Series of 6 prints, Edition 1/8

24 × 36 in. (61 × 91.4 cm), each

San Antonio Museum of Art, Purchased with The Brown Foundation Contemporary Art Acquisition Fund and funds provided by Dr. Katherine Moore McAllen, Dr. Dacia Napier, Edward E. (Sonny) Collins III, and The Sheerin Family, 2021.6.a-f

Ethel Shipton is a conceptual artist, who works across painting, installation, printmaking, photography, and text. She grew up in Laredo, TX, and her experience of a fluid US-Mexico border informs her practice, which focuses in particular on place, space, language, time, and movement. Her focus on signage observed along Texas roadways is an ongoing body of photo-based works on paper that began in 2014. Its most recent iteration is a series of six limited-edition prints titled *The Valley - RGV* that feature highway scenes from South Texas's Rio Grande Valley communities of Alice, Brownsville, Falfurrias, Kingsville, McAllen, and San Benito. By transforming the photographs into monochromatic prints, Shipton makes the graphic quality of the setting and elements of the built environment primary. Her images call attention to places in South Texas that have often been overlooked, emphasizing the significance of local and regional communities, particularly during the past year of pandemic isolation. The series presents a journey—suggesting The Valley as a site of ongoing movement, access, and possibility.

Liz Ward (American, born 1959)

Ghosts of the Old Mississippi: Dismal Swamp/Northern Lights, 2015

Watercolor, gesso, silverpoint, pastel, and collage on paper

71 5/8 × 31 7/8 in. (181.9 × 81 cm)

San Antonio Museum of Art, Purchased with The Brown Foundation Contemporary Art Acquisition Fund and funds provided by Dr. Katherine Moore McAllen, Dr. Dacia Napier, Edward E. (Sonny) Collins III, and The Sheerin Family, 2021.7

Liz Ward's practice—which includes paintings, drawings, and prints—is informed by natural history and our current environmental crisis. *Ghosts of the Old Mississippi*, a series of fifteen large-scale drawings, is based on maps of the ancient courses of the Mississippi River and reflects on society's relationship to the environment. Drawing from geologist Harold Fisk's 1944 publication *Geological Investigation of the Alluvial Valley of the Lower Mississippi River* that illustrates the river's history through overlays of its ever-changing path, and influenced by her own family history in Louisiana, Ward reveals the river as a metaphor for memory and the passage of time. The sinuous lines of the river's changing flow bisect each work, recalling the gestural paint skeins of Abstract Expressionism and saturated stains of Color Field painting. Ward connects the river's history with the formation of American identity, tapping into its beauty and horrors—from the river's settlement by various cultures to its usage for commerce, including the slave trade, and containment by engineering.

About the San Antonio Museum of Art

The San Antonio Museum of Art serves as a forum to explore and connect with art that spans the world's geographies, artistic periods, genres, and cultures. Its collection contains nearly 30,000 works representing 5,000 years of history. Housed in the historic Lone Star Brewery on the Museum Reach of San Antonio's River Walk, the San Antonio Museum of Art is committed to promoting the rich cultural heritage and life of the city. The Museum hosts hundreds of events and public programs each year, including concerts, performances, tours, lectures, symposia, and interactive experiences. As an active civic leader, the Museum is dedicated to enriching the cultural life of the city and the region, and to supporting its creative community.

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