Wendy Red Star

A RILEY CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS PROJECT GALLERY EXHIBITION

January 30 through April 25 at Joslyn Art Museum

(Omaha, NE) – Wendy Red Star (Apsáalooke, born 1981) works across media to explore the intersections of Native American ideologies and colonialist structures, both historically and in contemporary society. Her installations and photographic practice build upon years of research in photographic archives and museum collections of historical Apsáalooke artwork.

Red Star's Karen and Doug Riley Contemporary Artists Project (CAP) Gallery exhibition at Joslyn Art Museum engages the history of the 1898 Indian Congress, a gathering of citizens of thirty-five Native American nations in present-day North Omaha. The unprecedented convening coincided with the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition, Nebraska's world's fair. Over two million fairgoers viewed Expo displays showcasing American

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Wendy Red Star at Joslyn Art Museum

tagriculture and industry. They also toured Native American encampments and attended Wild West shows, events that entwined anthropology and entertainment. Marking the end of a devastating century of Federal Indian policy, fair organizers intended to celebrate the United States’ expansion into Indigenous territories.

Red Star engages these complex historical dynamics with a life-size replica Expo booth of the kind that displayed farm produce, accompanied by American flags and fanfare. In place of apples and potatoes, Red Star arranged hundreds of meticulously-cut out photographic reproductions of Indian Congress members’ portraits taken by Frank Rinehart (1861–1928) in his studio in downtown Omaha. Exceptional for his time, Rinehart recorded these individuals’ names and tribal affiliations, preserving an invaluable record of delegation members and their families. Grouped by sovereign Native nation on tiered display tables spanning the gallery’s length, the portrait cut-outs manifest the magnitude of this Indigenous gathering.

Many citizens of Red Star’s Apsáalooke (Crow) community posed for Rinehart, including White Swan, an artist and U.S. military scout whose larger-than-life portrait welcomes visitors into her reimagined exposition. Through the intimate process of cutting out full-length, bust, and profile portraits, Red Star acquainted herself with Rinehart’s sitters. Details of their poses and attire raised questions about their experience during the Indian Congress and how their attendance might have been a quiet act of resistance. Fair organizers positioned Indigenous people as ethnographic foils to the so-called American progress on display at the Expo. However, Red Star’s arrangement of the photographs inverts this logic by emphasizing the agency of the individual and the power of the collective.

One year after the Indian Congress, Rinehart photographed Apsáalooke people on their homelands in Pryor, Montana—Red Star’s hometown. Primarily taken by Rinehart’s assistant Adolph F. Muhr (later the assistant to photographer Edward Curtis), these stereographs picture community members near summertime gathering locations and culturally-significant sites. The artist positioned this second group of images on a separate table decorated with gold-tipped goose feathers and framed by velvet curtains. Behind it, Red Star’s photo mural depicting modern-day Baähpuoo (Where They Shoot The Rock), a sacred site and home to powerful beings known as the Awakkulé (Keepers Of The Land), reorients gallery visitors within Apsáalooke lands.

Red Star’s visual scholarship weaves together images of the past with her own experiences. Her reclaimed Expo booth metaphorically reunites the Indian Congress, reconfiguring the history of American empire to honor Indigenous individuals and their stories.

This immersive, site-specific installation draws from the Omaha Public Library’s significant collection of photographs taken by Frank Rinehart (1861–1928) and reframes Red Star’s research into exposition photographs, memorabilia collections, and historic sites in Omaha and Montana.
On view at Joslyn January 30 through April 25, _Wendy Red Star_ is included in free general Museum admission. Riley Contemporary Artists Projects Gallery exhibitions are supported by Douglas County, Catherine & Terry Ferguson, and Sara Foxley.

**About the Artist**

Baaéetitchish (One Who Is Talented), references the Apsáalooke name Wendy Red Star received while visiting home. It is the original name of her grand-uncle, Clive Francis Dust, Sr., known in the family for his creativity as a cultural keeper. Raised on the Apsáalooke (Crow) Indian Reservation in Montana, Red Star’s work is informed both by her cultural heritage and her research into archives and historical narratives. Through photography, sculpture, video, and fiber arts, Red Star seeks to present and reframe her research, offering new and unexpected perspectives that are at turns inquisitive, witty, and unsettling. Red Star holds a BFA from Montana State University, Bozeman, and an MFA in sculpture from University of California, Los Angeles. Her work can be found in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Saint Louis Art Museum, Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Autry Museum of the American West, among many others. She lives and works in Portland, Oregon.

**About Joslyn’s Riley CAP Gallery**

A 500-square-foot space in the Scott Pavilion suite of galleries, the Riley CAP Gallery showcases nationally- and internationally-recognized artists, as well as emerging talent, selected by Joslyn curators. A rotating schedule of carefully focused exhibitions will examine how artists engage with the world and respond to the issues that challenge them creatively, bringing new perspectives on contemporary art to Nebraska. Riley CAP Gallery artists will be invited to Joslyn for lectures and other public programs, giving audiences the opportunity to gain insight into creative processes and contribute to an expanded dialogue about new art. The first Joslyn gallery dedicated exclusively to living artists, the Riley CAP Gallery represents an important step in making contemporary art an even more integral component of the Museum’s exhibition programming.

_Pictured: (Page 1) Wendy Red Star (Apsáalooke, born 1981), _The Indian Congress_, 2021, mixed media installation._

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**Our Mission** — Joslyn Art Museum collects, preserves, and interprets the visual arts of the highest quality, fostering appreciation and enjoyment of art for the benefit of a diverse audience.

**Our Vision** — To be cherished and respected as a premier art museum.

Joslyn Art Museum showcases art from ancient times to the present. The Museum was a gift to the people of Omaha from Sarah Joslyn in memory of her husband, George, who made his fortune as president of the Western Newspaper Union. The Museum’s original 1931 building is one of the finest examples of Art Deco architecture in the nation, with 38 types of marble from seven countries. The Walter and Suzanne Scott Pavilion, a 58,000-square-foot addition built in 1994, was designed by renowned British architect Norman Foster as his first U.S. commission. The Museum features galleries, a

Current General Museum Admission: Free with advance timed ticket reservation.
Current Temporary Museum Hours: Wednesday through Sunday, 10 am–4 pm; closed Monday, Tuesday, and major holidays.

www.joslyn.org | (402) 342-3300 | 2200 Dodge Street | Omaha, NE 68102