

Twisted Path: Contemporary Native American Artists Walking in Two Worlds is the inspiration of artist, Rick Hunt, Abenaki. According to Rick, the exhibit “is about Native identity in this society at this time, and the challenges one experiences living ‘Indian’ in our various ‘worlds’. How are we defined by the society at large and/or by our own peoples? What does being Native mean in a techno world? How does one live in balance in a very unbalanced society? This theme can be interpreted in many different ways. I am interested in how the invited artists view their Native selves through the lenses of their art. Am I an Abenaki artist, or an artist who is Abenaki? What are the ‘new’ traditions? How do we walk in two (or more) worlds and maintain a balanced sense of self in a whirlwind of images, cars, machines, cell phones, computers, steak-ums, fast food, fast everything!”

Eight artists have been invited to participate in *Twisted Path*, each respected in both Native and non-Native communities. Each artist will select a series of pieces s/he would like to include in the show, including an artist statement about the work and what it represents. The artists work in diverse mediums, and represent many different tribes. Pam Cunningham, Penobscot, is concerned about the impact the emerald ash borer beetle, an invasive species, will have on the ash trees she relies on to carry forth her traditions. In response, Pam is using art to communicate the need for awareness

and conservation, by weaving baskets made from plastic bags. Pam received a grant to support her work experimenting with non-traditional weaving materials. Painter George Longfish, Seneca/Tuscarora, is interested in how one defines Native identity- through blood quantum, or cultural upbringing, and his series of paintings examining this theme

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touches home for every federally recognized tribe in the United States. Each artist brings equally unique, yet universal concerns to this exhibit.

There are hundreds of sovereign Native American Nations in the United States, with unique languages, religions, and cultures. History and federal policy link these different people together; whether from Alaska or Maine, most Native people have experienced similar historic events, and face similar challenges in today's society. As Rick points out, the challenge of balance is universal. Balance between the realities of a modern life with that of traditions passed on for generations. Art is a unique and powerful means of expressing this challenge, ranging from traditional methods, materials, and forms such as ash and sweetgrass basketry or walrus tusk, to contemporary works in neon or on canvas.

The Abbe is dedicated to Maine's Native people, and this exhibit is founded with artists from the Wabanaki Confederacy- Pam Cunningham, Penobscot, Teresa Marshall, Mi'kmaq, Rick Hunt, Abenaki, Lenny Novak, Abenaki, and Cheryl Savageau, Abenaki. The experiences of these New England and Canadian artists will be complimented with works from artists across the country, including George Longfish, Seneca/Tuscarora, Marie Watt, Seneca, Susie Silook, Siberian Yuipk/Inupiaq, and Nicholas Galanin, Tlingit.

The overall goal for this show is to start a dialouge about life, art, and what being a Native person means to each of these artists. This show will bring a national conversation to Maine and highlight our regional artists and include their input on this imoprant theme.