

ASCENDING

HORIZONS



January 8th – June 20th, 2025
Curated by Alex Jacobs-Blum
& Kim Anderson

M(M)A

Birthing Futures from Earth to Sky

By Alex Jacobs-Blum and Kim Anderson

With the 21st century hitting the quarter mark in 2025 and amidst the challenges this time presents, *Ascending Horizons* is an offering of the beauty, hope and vision of Indigenous women; a layering of pathways into the future. We are moved by the words of Mvskoke scholar Laura Harjo, that "... cultural workers are creating futurity in the present moment, dreaming of a (re) imagined future where narratives about Indigenous people are more complex and aligned with lived, felt knowledge."¹

Seeking knowledge grounded in our own territories and traditions and situated as we are in the Dish with One Spoon territory², we chose to curate works from Haudenosaunee (Jacobs-Blum) and Algonquian (Anderson) women artists. Our curatorial approach is nonetheless informed by a growing global body of Indigenous feminist theories and practices that speak to the strength of relationships, otherwise defined as Indigenous "kinship."³

As Indigenous peoples have always practiced, we turn to the natural world for the horizons we seek. In this exhibition you will see connections to the Earth, waters, plant and animal relations, sunrise, winds, moon, sun and sky world, represented by natural materials including corn husk, clay, cedar, sand, rocks, fur and copper. We have also selected works that evoke the natural world with new materials (Claus) along with those that nest us in traditional comforts and practices of Indigenous women, involving beadwork (Allison, Vickers), blankets (Watts), and shared sewing circles (Watts, Vickers). The art works presented are in keeping with Sherry Farrell-Racette's

¹ Harjo, Laura. *Spiral to the Stars: Mvskoke Tools of Futurity*. University of Arizona Press, 2019, pp. 30

² Hill, Rick. "Ecological Knowledge & the Dish with One Spoon - Conversation in Cultural Fluency #2." *YouTube*, uploaded by Six Nations Polytechnic, www.youtube.com/watch?v=RL83GvOO_CO

³ Anderson, Kim. "Multi-Generational Indigenous Feminisms: From F Word to What IFs" *Routledge Handbook of Critical Indigenous Studies*, edited by Brendan Hokowhitu et al., Routledge, 2021, pp. 37–51.

observation of the “growing movement of artists reclaiming the materials of their grandmothers, reinvigorating traditional practices, and moving them from the past to the future.”⁴

There is wisdom in the cycles and seasons of women here. As the story of Sky Woman (Doxtator) demonstrates, creation begins with a woman. *Ascending Horizons* thus honours the transformative capacities of birth, and we are reminded of how women care for all waters (Adams, Allison). We see the capacities for healing in the body, in how we adorn ourselves through tattoos (Allison) or the jingle dress (Anderson), demonstrating how we move, how we ascend.

Attuned to the natural rhythms of the Earth through our bodies, time unfolds as a spiral, where the horizon also symbolizes the simultaneous connection of past, present, and future. This reflects the Indigenous understanding of time as cyclical and continuously flowing, emphasizing a worldview grounded in relationality. Spiraling forward, we leave tracks (Vickers), situating ourselves along horizons and sunrises (Watts), in the transformative power of the winds (Claus) that bring shape to our movement from Earth to sky. Returning to the words of Laura Harjo, “Futurisms means that we do not have to wait to see hopeful possibilities materialize in our communities.”⁵ May you dream on it here.

Cover: Installation view of *Ascending Horizons* at McMaster Museum of Art, 2025. Photo by Laura Findlay.

⁴ Farrell-Racette, Sherry. “Tuft Life: Stitching Sovereignty in Contemporary Indigenous Art,” *Art Journal*: 76:2, 2017, pp. 114-123.

⁵ Harjo, *ibid.*