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GREAT BASIN ARTIST-ACTIVIST JEAN LAMARR HONORED WITH EXHIBITION AND BOOK RECOGNIZING HER ARTWORK COMMITTED TO SOCIAL JUSTICE AND NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN'S ISSUES

Jean LaMarr's colorful and seductive, yet hard hitting satirical artworks challenging long held cultural stereotypes and preconceptions about Native American people and cultures will be on view at the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno beginning February 2021.



Reno, Nev.– Jean LaMarr is an internationally recognized artist, educator, and Native American advocate with ancestral ties to Pyramid Lake, Nevada, and Susanville, California. For decades, her work has sparked powerful and important conversations about cultural stereotypes, representations of Native women, legacies of colonization, and environmental justice. Featuring more than 100 artworks including paintings, prints, and sculptures spanning from the 1970s to the present, *The Art of Jean LaMarr* honors this important artist and introduces new audiences to her work. The exhibition, accompanied by the publication of a 200-page hardcover book, will be on view at the Nevada Museum of Art in downtown Reno from February 6 through August 8, 2021.

Jean LaMarr (born 1945) is descended from *wadatkuta numa* (Northern Paiute) and *Illmowi, Aporige, and Atsugewi* (Pit River) ancestry, with strong family ties to Northern Nevada and Northern California. She was born and raised in Susanville, California, and is an enrolled member of the Susanville Indian Rancheria where she still lives. In 1964, LaMarr relocated to San Jose, California, as part of the Indian Relocation Act. In 1976 she graduated from UC Berkeley, where she became involved in activist politics and participated in protests including the American Indian Occupation of Alcatraz (1969) and the Pit River Occupation in Shasta County (1970). LaMarr founded the Native American Graphic Workshop in Susanville in 1994 to help engage Native American youth and community members in artmaking.

LaMarr largely built her artistic reputation as a skilled printmaker while teaching and practicing as an artist in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1970s and 80s. She went on to teach at the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe for many years before returning to Susanville.

For nearly a decade, LaMarr designed the popular Bear Dance posters for the annual Maidu gathering held in the mountain community of Janesville, California, just an hour north of Reno. Many of LaMarr's screenprints feature bold graphics and bright colors that communicate a direct message to viewers.

My art is a "rejection of the idea of the vanished American Indian," LaMarr says, explaining that contemporary Native American people are a vibrant and living culture.

While her paintings, prints, and installations celebrate and honor ancestors and cultural traditions, they also confront racist stereotypes of Native American people, such as those perpetuated by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in his epic 1855 poem *Song of Hiawatha*, or Slim Whitman's popular 1924 song *Indian Love Call*.

In her *Cover Girl* series and in many other artworks, LaMarr has worked tirelessly to reclaim the dignity of Native American women, whose bodies were often exploited by early twentieth century non-Native anthropologists and photographers and later appropriated for use on consumer product packaging. Another strand of LaMarr's work tackles legacies of colonialism, including the impacts of ongoing environmental threats to tribal communities in the American West.

"Jean LaMarr speaks from a place of fierce pride in her indigeneity, and a willingness to challenge the erasure and structural racism that Indigenous Peoples face in their lives. Her work has that razor-sharp political commentary, yet can transmit the softness and beauty of our cultures, particularly of Indigenous women," comments Debra Harry, Associate Professor of Indigenous Studies, *Gender, Race, and Identity Department*, at the University of Nevada, Reno.

In conjunction with this exhibition, the Nevada Museum of Art will publish a hardcover book, including an essay by Ann M. Wolfe, Andrea and John C. Deane Family Senior Curator and Deputy Director at the Nevada Museum of Art, with contributions from Allan L. Edmunds, Mary Lee Fulkerson, Debra Harry, Ph.D., Archana Hortsing, Lucy Lippard, Judith Lowry, Susan Lobo, Ph.D., Malcolm Margolin, Raymond Patlan, Jan Rindfleisch, and Peter Selz, Ph.D.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a short video about LaMarr produced and directed by Tsanavi Spoonhunter, a descendant of the Northern Paiute, Lakota and Northern Arapaho nations. Spoonhunter just completed her master's degree from the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley with a focus in documentary filmmaking.

"The Nevada Museum of Art is proud to present this major exhibition of work by Jean LaMarr, who has been a respected artist involved in the Great Basin arts community for decades," says Ann M. Wolfe, curator of the exhibition. "While Jean lives and works in the relatively secluded rural community of Susanville, she has exhibited her work widely and is highly regarded by scholars, curators, and artists around the world."

The Art of Jean LaMarr will be on view February 6 through August 8, 2021, at the Nevada Museum of Art, located at 160 W. Liberty Street, Reno, Nevada. A suite of online programs will take place during the run of the exhibition, providing people around the world an opportunity to meaningfully engage with the content. The exhibition is sponsored by:

Sponsors: The Phil and Jennifer Satre Family Fund at the Community Foundation of Western Nevada; **Additional Support:** In memory of Bernadette Kaye, sharing her culture.

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