



Spring 2010

JCCC Collections Focus Contemporary American Indian Art

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Recommended Citation

Hartman, Bruce (2010) "JCCC Collections Focus Contemporary American Indian Art," *Many Voices - One Community*: Vol. 1: Iss. 4, Article 10.

Available at: <http://scholarspace.jccc.edu/mvoc/vol1/iss4/10>

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JCCC COLLECTION FOCUS CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN INDIAN ART

Bruce Hartman
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Since its dedication in November, 2009, the college's Contemporary American Indian Art installation is the most visited collection site on campus for all docent-guided educational tours. Its location (immediately adjacent to the Nerman Museum) and diverse cultural content virtually assures that schools request a tour of this area, as do numerous other groups when scheduling museum visits. And, as the Regnier Center hosts innumerable events on both the first and second floors, many campus visitors casually tour the installation each day or evening.

Contemporary American Indian Art brings to nine the number of permanent collection focus areas on the campus, places where students, staff and visitors can encounter art during their daily activities. The Regnier Center houses the three newest installations — contemporary painting (first floor), contemporary American Indian Art (east wing, second floor) and contemporary Latino Art (west wing, second floor).

The American Indian Art Focus Area was envisioned when the college decided to initiate a collection, as a consequence, we began collecting works in mediums not previously acquired — beadwork, textiles, glass, metalsmithing, and basketry. With funds specifically allocated for art in the Regnier Center, JCCC began acquiring contemporary American Indian art more than three years ago. Most recently, donors Mary Cohen and Dean Thompson have each gifted important works to enhance the installation.

Approximately 50 works of American Indian art — spanning a diverse range of cultures and geography (extending from the Pacific Northwest, to the Southwest and Plains) — are on permanent view. The collection showcases a variety of mediums — clay, beadwork, glass, textiles, sculpture, basketry, painting, and photography. And, a range of ideas and content are presented within the American Indian art installation. Self-guided tours of the collection are possible with the aid of interpretive labels which include the artists' biography and provide insights to each work.

Ultimately, the installation celebrates the extraordinary accomplishment and vitality of contemporary American Indian artists. It serves as an invaluable educational resource

for students, faculty, and visitors, as well as furthering the college's diversity initiatives.

The overwhelming popularity of this installation has resulted in plans for *Collection Focus • Contemporary American Indian Art* to expand to the east wing of the Regnier Center's third floor. Once complete, JCCC's emphasis on contemporary American Indian art will establish our campus as a regional (and national) destination for students, scholars, collectors, the general community — and perhaps most significantly — American Indian artists and visitors.



Lakota artist Tom Haukaas holding his recently completed *Economic Conundrum cradle*, 2010, beads, hide, cloth, Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art — JCCC, gift of the Barton P. and Mary D. Cohen Charitable Trust



Collection Focus: Contemporary American Indian Art, installation view, Regnier Center, 2nd Floor, Johnson County Community College



Kenneth Williams, Strength to Overcome, 2009, beads, ermine skin, horse hair, metal bells, deerskin, cloth, satin ribbon, human hair, 21.5 x 10.5", Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art – JCCC, image depicts Runs Medicine a relative of the artist