

## **Announcing “Local Ties” acquisition of contemporary works by Seattle artists**

*Works by Gretchen Frances Bennett, Dawn Cerny, Marita Dingus, Wynne Greenwood, and Hanako O’Leary to enter the collection for the first time*

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**Seattle, WA**  
**January 17, 2024**

The Frye Art Museum is pleased to announce the acquisition initiative Local Ties, intended to underscore the museum’s identity as an ‘artist’s art museum’ and a commitment to collecting work made by artists who live in or hold deep ties to the city of Seattle. Chief Curator and Director of Exhibitions Amanda Donnan has selected six works for the museum’s permanent collection by artists not yet represented in the Frye’s holdings: Gretchen Frances Bennett, Dawn Cerny, Marita Dingus, Wynne Greenwood, and Hanako O’Leary. The works were purchased directly from the artists’ studios and from Seattle’s Traver Gallery; piloting support for this initiative is provided by Lucy and Stuart Williams, who is the new President of the Board of Trustees for the Frye.

“I’m proud to mark the start of my first full year at the Frye with this meaningful investment in Seattle’s creative economy,” says Executive Director Jamilee Lacy. “I believe it’s critical that the Frye finds diverse and impactful ways to support the talented artists of our city beyond presenting their work in special exhibitions. With Local Ties, we continue the museum’s tradition of championing local artists and further enrich our collection with a group of artworks that will help the Frye document and promote our city’s ongoing contributions to the history of art.”

“The leadership at the Frye Art Museum has yet again demonstrated their commitment to supporting the art community of the Pacific Northwest,” says Sarah Traver, Director of Traver Gallery. “With their direct purchase from a regional gallery, the Frye confirms their dedication to the local galleries that exhibit, support, and sustain the exceptional artists of the Pacific Northwest. Our region’s arts are defined, celebrated, and upheld through such partnerships. We are thrilled to work with the Frye on this important acquisition and are delighted that Marita Dingus’s work will be in the permanent collection of this essential Seattle museum.”

The Local Ties acquisition speaks to the Frye’s objective to support local artists from the emerging through established phases of their careers. While the five selected artists take an experimental approach to a wide range of mediums—from video and performance to drawing, assemblage, and ceramics—all artists display a sustained commitment to their individual throughlines of research.

“This is a very intentional grouping of artists and works,” shares Donnan. “Video and sculpture are especially underrepresented in the Frye’s holdings yet are critical to telling the full story of contemporary art. This is also an opportunity for the museum to add to its collection the work of several artists who have been the subject of presentations at the Frye, but who we missed acquiring work from at the time.” Greenwood and Bennett were the subject of solo exhibitions at the Frye in 2006 and [2019](#), respectively, and [O’Leary’s first museum solo show](#) closes at the Frye on January 28.

The Local Ties acquisition joins recent gifts to the collection that have also bolstered the Frye’s representation of local and regional contemporary artists. In late 2023, collectors Dennis Braddock and Janice Niemi donated seven works to the museum, including sculptures by Chiloquin, Oregon artist Natalie Ball and Vancouver-based Liz Magor. In January 2024, collectors Michael and Cathy Casteel gifted six works by Pacific Northwest artists Jessica Jackson Hutchins, Ellen Lesperance, Margie Livingston, Jeffrey Mitchell, and Dan Webb. The museum’s holdings of Pacific Northwest artists now comprise approximately 40% of its collection. Since opening in 1952, the Frye has remained steadfast in exhibiting and collecting artworks by contemporary artists, especially those living and practicing in the city of Seattle and surrounding region. [Read more about Recent Acquisitions to the collection.](#)

**A full list of the acquired works follows.**

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## ABOUT THE LOCAL TIES ARTWORKS



### **Gretchen Frances Bennett**

*Ginkgo biloba*, 2023

Color pencil on paper

Working primarily in drawing, Gretchen Frances Bennett (b. 1960) explores visual perception at the intersection of personal and collective memory. Her atmospheric color pencil translations of photographs and artifacts of popular media convey the emotional potency of everyday moments, attempting to articulate the ineffable aspects of subjective experience. Acknowledging the fragmentary and intermediary nature of her source material, Bennett often includes “surface evidence” within her drawings, like accidental tears in the original photograph, the grain of lo-fi digital video imagery, or the color imbalances of inkjet printouts. Bennett was the subject of a solo exhibition at the Frye Art Museum in 2019.

In her recent “Garden” series, Bennett renders elements of landscape in intricate layers that seem to be off-register, establishing an open and interpretive space in the overlap between the external natural world and her interior experience. The series focuses on plants known to have calming effects on people, such as calendula, jasmine, mugwort, and, as in this work, ginkgo biloba. Created through a slow, meditative process, the drawing is based on photographic printouts of a colossal ginkgo tree near the artist’s studio. Amanda Donnan and the artist as a playful yet impactful primary on Jackson Hutchins’s influences, approach, and philosophy of artmaking.

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## ABOUT THE LOCAL TIES ARTWORKS



### **Dawn Cerny**

*Covid March (after unemployment, the park, then home)*, 2021

Wood, drawings, textiles, clipboard, Apoxie Sculpt, polymer clay, paint, found ephemera from studio of Nancy Shaver

17 x 12 x 14 inches

*The Edith Wharton you can afford*, 2021

Wood, plaster tape, textiles, found ephemera from studio of Nancy Shaver, Apoxie Sculpt, paint  
13 x 8 x 8 inches

Dawn Cerny (b. 1979) takes as subject matter economies of the home and the family, incorporating misunderstandings and ambivalent gestures into a process of making do with what is available. The artist's practice is animated by an interest in sculpture as a form of freestanding drawing, built with fast and readily available materials such as wood, cardboard, and yarn—preschool handicraft materials, as she describes them. Her recent work starts with the idea that “furniture” and “mother” are figures that gain value (to others) for their potential to hold, display, or be absent-mindedly left with things.

These two sculptures are typical of Cerny's recent tabletop works, which posture as holders for the detritus of chaotic, everyday domesticity and can be read as humorous and touchingly personal still lifes. Juxtaposing utility bills and household fasteners with collaged materials and remnants of artistic collaboration (with Jefferson, NY artist Nancy Shaver), the works suggest an absence of boundaries between home and professional life.

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## ABOUT THE LOCAL TIES ARTWORKS



### **Marita Dingus**

*Sister Totem*, 2023

Ceramic and mixed media

67 x 19 x 19 inches

Marita Dingus (b. 1956) is a mixed media sculptor who has been using discarded materials since the 1980s, when she worked as a road crew supervisor for the Department of Ecology while in graduate school at San Jose State University. She considers herself an Afro-centric feminist and environmental artist whose upcycled work not only mitigates waste but speaks to “how people of African descent were used and then discarded but found ways to repurpose themselves and thrive in a hostile world.” Working on the 7-acre farm in Auburn, Washington where she was raised, Dingus most often incorporates scrap metal, fabric, packaging, and household items into figurative sculptures of varying scale. She has exhibited nationally and internationally over her nearly forty-year career.

*Sister Totem* brings together three figures, arms and legs akimbo and eyes softly closed, with similar features and individual quirks of composition and expression. All have a handmade ceramic face and limbs of rolled insulation fabric, while their bodies comprise different found materials in black and white: light switch covers, pens, rubber strip, and more held together with colorful bits of wire.



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## ABOUT THE LOCAL TIES ARTWORKS



### **Wynne Greenwood**

*Tracy + the Plastics*, Frye, 2006/2014

Video (color, sound); 10:52 min

Wynne Greenwood (b. 1977) is a queer feminist artist working with video, performance, music, sculpture, and installation. After studying video production and art history at Rutgers University, NJ, in the late '90s, Greenwood moved back to her home state of Washington and began performing the art-band *Tracy + the Plastics* in 1999. For this project, Greenwood played the parts of all three band members, live as Tracy (singer) and in pre-recorded video images as Nikki and Cola (keyboards and drums). She toured the project extensively and in 2004 *Tracy + the Plastics* was invited to perform as part of the Whitney Biennial. The project ended in 2006.

The performance featured in this video was developed at the Frye Art Museum in conjunction with Greenwood's solo exhibition at the museum in 2006, *Tracy + the Plastics 101*. Greenwood notes that she "used the performance to continue working out ideas around being a touring band—connection and disconnection, liminal spaces, frozen-ness, and embodiment." She re-performed the piece for video at the Cooley Gallery at Reed College in 2014 while her exhibition *Stacy...Kelly* (a partnership with the New Museum) was on view there.

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## ABOUT THE LOCAL TIES ARTWORKS



### **Hanako O'Leary**

*Venus Jar 4: My Mothers*, 2020

Ceramic

27 x 20 x 20 inches

In her solo exhibition *Izanami* (on view November 11, 2023–January 28, 2024) at the Frye Art Museum, Seattle artist Hanako O'Leary (b. 1988) revives and reinterprets the legacy of the Shinto goddess of creation and death. As the ruler of the underworld, *Izanami* is a central and powerful figure within Shintoism, Japan's indigenous belief system. Named for the goddess, O'Leary's series of vessels and masks enacts a contemporary feminist mythos derived from *Izanami*'s story and the artist's diasporic Japanese American identity. Myriad historical and contemporary sources inspire O'Leary's hand-built ceramics, including internet memes, ancient fertility icons, Buddhist mudras (prayer hand gestures), and Hannya masks (archetypes of vengeful female demons from Noh theater traditions).

The artist mines the triumphs and tragedies of myths such as *Izanami*'s, together with her own experiences and matriarchal lineages, to reveal the ways they resonate with contemporary femininity. In the artist's words, *Izanami* "embraces the mystical feminine realm in its entirety and celebrates the right to create or destroy what lies within our own underworld." "Venus" in the title of this work refers to Japan's long history of clay figures, the oldest of which is known as the Jōmon Venus. "Jōmōn" is used to categorize the oldest period in Japan's history.

## **About the Frye Art Museum**

Founded in 1952, the Frye is Seattle's only free art museum, bringing together art and new ideas within a stunning Olson Sundberg Kundig-designed building in historic First Hill. A founding collection of turn-of-the-century oil paintings is bolstered by a wide range of modern and contemporary art holdings, reflecting our region's evolving identity and a commitment to exploring the art of our time. Learn more at [fryemuseum.org](http://fryemuseum.org).

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