

Seattle, WA
October 7, 2025



Beau Dick: Insatiable Beings

October 25, 2025–January 18, 2026

The Frye Art Museum is proud to present *Beau Dick: Insatiable Beings*, the first US museum survey of works by the late Beau Dick, Kwakwaka'wakw Hereditary Chief and master carver. This landmark exhibition offers a rare opportunity to experience the depth and breadth of Dick's artistic contributions, showcasing his multifaceted approach to carving, storytelling, and activism.

Known as one of the most versatile wood-carvers working with formline aesthetics, Dick created an array of masks devoted to Kwakwaka'wakw customs and stories and bound to the protocols of the Potlatch ceremonies where they are worn and danced. Through his artworks, Dick explored themes of community responsibility, spiritual forces, and the critique of exploitative capitalism.

The exhibition will feature a selection of Dick's masks, carved from western red cedar and adorned with horsehair, bark, and other natural materials. They represent abstracted forms of supernatural characters, including cannibal birds, shapeshifters, and spirits of war and the forest. Created for ceremonial use, these artworks animate stories and bring spiritual entities to life.

For Dick, the act of creation was intrinsically tied to destruction. Many of his works were ceremonially burned, reflecting his desire to return them to the ancestors and disrupt

capitalist cycles that conflicted with the values of the Potlatch—a gift economy focused on the redistribution of wealth as a tool for building solidarity. In 2012, Dick made headlines when he removed forty *Atłakim* (Forest Spirit) masks from his solo exhibition in a Vancouver gallery. He returned them to his community in Alert Bay, where they were danced for a final time before being burned. As the artist stated, “What we have to do is re-create them—and that keeps them alive.” By destroying works with significant exhibition histories and affiliated monetary worth in the art market, Dick profoundly shaped the contemporary art canon while simultaneously rejecting its enshrined value systems.

Centering Dick’s voice, this exhibition traces the evolution of his artistic practice, from his mastery of Kwakwaka’wakw carving style, informed by tradition and ceremonial function, to his innovative, contemporary approach to abstraction. This vast gathering of artworks, spanning childhood carvings to the artist’s last unfinished artwork, celebrates the Kwakwaka’wakw stories and characters that Dick brought to life, giving his works a layered context and the kind of non-commercial display and interpretation he frequently endorsed over his decades-long career. The inclusion of fifteen *Atłakim* masks by the artist’s longtime apprentices Alan Hunt, Cole Speck, and Aubrey Johnston Jr. exemplifies Dick’s devotion to teaching and sharing ancestral knowledge through mentorship of younger artists.

Despite his acclaim in Canada and internationally, *Beau Dick: Insatiable Beings* marks the first major exhibition of his work in the United States. By bringing together diverse voices from Dick’s community, including his longtime gallerist LaTiesha Fazakas, the exhibition offers an intimate and rigorous retrospective that honors his unique legacy.

"My relationship with Beau has been one of deep reciprocity and learning, profoundly shaping how I see and navigate the world," shares Fazakas. "Beau's approach to life and art not only nurtured the Indigenous movement of today but also had a transformative impact on the contemporary art world. His work bridged cultural boundaries, challenged perceptions, and reshaped the dialogue around Indigenous art. As a catalyst for the growing awareness we see today, it is timely that we reflect on both his historical contributions and his enduring influence on future generations."



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Chief Beau Dick, known as Walas Gwa'yam (Big Whale) (1955–2017, born Alert Bay, British Columbia) was a Kwakwaka'wakw (Musgamakw Dzawada'enuxw First Nation) activist and leading figure in the Northwest Coast artistic community. A prolific carver, Dick studied under notable mentors such as his father, Benjamin Dick, and worked alongside renowned carvers Robert Davidson, Tony Hunt, and Bill Reid. Dick's activism extended beyond the art world; in 2013 and 2014, he performed copper-breaking ceremonies in support of the Idle No More movement, symbolizing his commitment to Indigenous rights and sovereignty. His public works include the transformation mask for the Canadian Pavilion at Expo 86 and the Ga'akstalas Totem Pole in Stanley Park, Vancouver.

His work has been shown in exhibitions around the world, including Canada House, London (1998); the 17th Biennale of Sydney (2010); documenta 14 in Athens, Greece, and Kassel, Germany (2017); and White Columns, New York (2019). He was the recipient of the 2012 VIVA Award and was artist-in-residence at the University of British Columbia's Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory from 2013 to 2017.

Beau Dick: Insatiable Beings is organized by Georgia Erger, Curator, with curatorial advisory support by LaTiesha Fazakas.

Generous support provided by the Raynier Institute & Foundation, ArtsFund, and Frye Members. Media sponsorship provided by The Seattle Times and Cascade PBS.

Seasonal support provided by 4Culture.



Images: Beau Dick. *Atlakim Masks*, 1990. Red cedar, acrylic, cedar bark. Three parts, 19 x 12 in. each. Gochman Family Collection. Courtesy of Fazakas Gallery, Vancouver, BC. Photo: Anthony Sam; Beau Dick. Courtesy of Fazakas Gallery, Vancouver, BC

About the Frye Art Museum

Founded in 1952, the Frye is Seattle's free art museum, bringing together art and new ideas within a stunning Olson Sundberg Kundig-designed building in historic First Hill. The museum connects Seattle with the art and artists of our time. We collect, exhibit, program, and build community around a wide range of modern and contemporary art, with a special focus on amplifying the voices of living artists. Learn more at fryemuseum.org.

Press Contact

Ingrid Langston, Director of Communications & Strategic Planning
press@fryemuseum.org