

Bockley Gallery



Bockley Gallery proudly presents *Tom Jones: Strong Unrelenting Spirits*

Exhibition: September 1 through October 16, 2021

Gallery Hours: Tuesday through Saturday, noon to 5 pm

After including Tom Jones' striking Eliza Leonard photograph in our fall 2020 exhibition, Bockley Gallery is honored to present a larger selection of works from his recent portrait series *Strong Unrelenting Spirits*, shown earlier this year at the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, NM. Each of the nine digital photographs on view is a vivid exploration of Jones' Ho-Chunk identity. His subjects look directly into the camera lens with a steady gaze, or just slightly away, thus implicating the viewer in their lives. Jones has embellished the black ground of each portrait with designs made from beads, thus animating and deepening the cultural texture of his work.

"I extend the boundaries of photography by incorporating beadwork directly onto the photograph. The use of Ho-Chunk floral and geometric designs is a metaphor for the spirits of our ancestors who are constantly looking over us," states Jones.

Jones further explains the inspiration for incorporating beadwork into his portraits. "As a child, I went with my mother to see a Sioux medicine man on the Rosebud reservation. We sat on the floor along the walls with many other people, when the lights were turned off the women started to sing. They were asking for the spirits to come in, it was at this time that small orbs of light began to float around the room. I have visually incorporated this experience through beadwork, in order to give a symbolic representation of our ancestors and to present the pride, strength and beauty of my people."

In *Strong Unrelenting Spirits*, Jones, who is a Professor of Photography at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, effortlessly weds past cultural modes of representation with present ones to explore identity and geographic place. His subjects wear a mix of contemporary and traditional dress, and range in age and identity from an infant to an elder, a Marine Corps veteran to a young male drum dancer in full regalia, a little girl grasping feathers to a handsome tattooed man wearing a chef's apron. Viewed collectively, Jones' portraits create a narrative of Ho-Chunk identity that reveals its beauty and complexity.

About Tom Jones

Jones, 57, has been teaching at the U of Wisconsin since since 2005 and is now a full professor in the art department. He has a Master of Fine Arts in both Photography and Museum Studies from Columbia College, Chicago, IL. He has received numerous awards and residencies, and his work has been featured in dozens of solo and group exhibitions, and has been the subject of numerous published reviews. Jones' work is found in corporate, private and public collections, including those of Microsoft Corporation, Redmond, WA; the Minneapolis Institute of Arts; the Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, Santa Fe; the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C.; the Nerman Museum, Kansas City, MO; Polaroid Corporation, Waltham, MA; Tamarind Institute, Albuquerque; and, the Tweed Museum of Art, University of Minnesota-Duluth.

About Bockley Gallery

Founded in 1984, Bockley Gallery represents artists from across Minnesota and North America, including Andrea Carlson, Jim Denomie, Pao Houa Her, Postcommodity, Cara Romero, and the estate of George Morrison. Its space since 2005, in Minneapolis's Kenwood neighborhood, offers an intimate experience with art, while its outreach programs to local, national, and international museums and biennials expands the dialogue around what it believes to be the most relevant ideas in art today.

Media Inquiries

For further information please contact Bockley Gallery.