

PRESS RELEASE

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**New Exhibit at the Missoula Art Museum Showcases Abstract Works by Neal Ambrose Smith  
Neal Ambrose Smith Combines Pop Culture References with Traditional Native American Imagery**

MISSOULA, Mont., August 24, 2021

The Missoula Art Museum presents *Neal Ambrose Smith: č'č'en' u kwes xwúyi (Where Are You Going?)*. This exhibit is on view in the Lynda M. Frost Contemporary American Indian Art Gallery from August 31, 2021, to February 26, 2022.

Neal Ambrose Smith is a descendent of Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nation of Montana. His paintings mix concepts of Indigenous identity, pop culture, and existential questions about contemporary society. Drawing on inspiration from abstractionists like Wifredo Lam (1902–1982) and Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Neal Ambrose Smith employs bold, bright colors with layered imagery. The title of the show is borrowed from a large-scale neon sculpture, which will feature prominently in the show. The title is written in both Salish and English. Smith also reimagines traditional Native American figures like Coyote and Badger, with popular American and English characters like Alice from *Alice in Wonderland* and Max from *Where the Wild Things Are*.

"Ambrose Smith is one of the major artists we've wanted to work with for a long time and with whom we have been diligently working to develop an exhibition," said Brandon Reintjes, senior curator at the museum. "His work takes on large, complicated themes such as the arc of human existence, our interdependence with one another, and the future direction of the planet in an accessible, tongue-in-cheek way that connects to audiences."

Neal Ambrose Smith is a contemporary Native American painter, sculptor, printmaker, and professor at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He has also developed an app Artist Ideas with 100 ideas for making art, available for Android and Apple. His work is included in the collections of many national and international museums and institutions, including the New York Public Library, the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, Galerie municipale d'art contemporain in Chamalières, France, and Hongik University in Seoul, Korea. He received his BA from the University of Northern Colorado and MFA from the University of New Mexico.

*Where Are You Going* coincides with a residency at MATRIX Press at the University of Montana this October. This exhibition is also one of the cornerstones of the 2021–22 Fifth Grade Art Experience, MAM's free field trip program for fifth graders in Missoula County and beyond. A catalog of his work will be published in fall 2021. This exhibit is sponsored by Dick Anderson Construction, and funding for the exhibition and catalog is generously supported by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

Images: Neal Ambrose Smith, *Where Are You Going*, 2021, neon, wood, transformers, timer, 120 x 180 x 48," copyright the artist.

Neal Ambrose Smith, *Coyote Whispers In Italian*, 2019, oil, acrylic and collage, 36 x 36," copyright the artist.

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**About MAM:** Founded in 1975 and accredited by the American Alliance of Museums since 1987, MAM is emerging as the leading contemporary art museum in the Intermountain West. MAM is situated on the traditional, ancestral territories of the Séliš (Salish or “Flathead”) and Qlispé (upper Kalispel or Pend d’Oreille) peoples. MAM is committed to respecting the indigenous stewards of the land it occupies. Their rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Montana and to the work of MAM. MAM is a fully accessible, free public museum boasting eight exhibition spaces, a library, and an education center in the heart of Missoula’s historic downtown.