

**The Hood Museum of Art Presents the Exhibition *Kent Monkman: The Great Mystery* Including New Commissions Responding to Works in the Collection**

**Monkman Will Present the Annual Dr. Allen W. Root Contemporary Distinguished Art Lectureship at Dartmouth College in October 2023**



**March 9, 2023—Hanover, N.H.**—The Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College presents an exhibition featuring a new body of work by Cree artist Kent Monkman. There are nine works in this exhibition: four new paintings by Monkman and five works in the Hood Museum’s collection that inspired them, by Hannes Beckmann, T.C. Cannon, Cyrus Edwin Dallin, Mark Rothko, and Fritz Scholder. Two of the new Monkman paintings will be acquired by the Hood Museum: *The Great Mystery* (2023) and *Ghostflower* (1997-2022). On view from April 8 through December 16, 2023, [\*Kent Monkman: The Great Mystery\*](#) serves as both an introduction to and a revisitation of Monkman’s early interest in Abstract Expressionism. The exhibition is organized by Jami Powell, the Hood Museum’s Associate Director of Curatorial Affairs and Curator of Indigenous Art.

Explains Powell, “The Hood Museum approached Monkman in 2020 to commission a large-scale painting based on work in the Hood Museum’s permanent collection. I

assumed he would be drawn to our historical collections, as his work for the past two decades has largely focused on large-scale history paintings. Instead, he made several paintings—an entirely new body of work—that represent a significant shift in his practice. These works are conversations with modernist and abstract works by Rothko, Beckmann, and Scholder, and they represent a return to the style of the lesser-known Abstract Expressionist paintings Monkman himself created in the 1990s.”

Known for his provocative interventions into Western art history, Monkman explores the complexities of historic and contemporary Indigenous experiences across painting, film, performance, and installation. Monkman’s gender-fluid alter ego, Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, often appears in his work as a time-traveling, shapeshifting, supernatural being who reverses the colonial gaze and challenges received notions of history.

Says Monkman, “In the beginning of my professional painting career, I pursued abstraction as the painterly vocabulary I used to express myself. Influenced by the Abstract Expressionists, I made my own unique mark with paint, but failed to communicate the weight and violence of themes that were important to me—colonialism, aggressive evangelization, genocide, and colonized sexuality. It was only later, when I moved into figurative painting, that I could bring our shared histories, and my rewriting of them, into the conversation.”

“In the process of writing *The Memoirs of Miss Chief Eagle Testickle* with my writing collaborator Gisèle Gordon (to be published in November 2023), based on my body of paintings over the past two decades,” continues Monkman, “I realized that I didn’t have imagery to communicate Miss Chief’s entry into the state of *mamahtâwisiwin*—a Cree concept which can be partially described as a state of being in which one is tapped into the great mystery of the universe, of spiritual interconnectedness of all life, and of unknowingness. I returned to abstraction as the perfect painting vocabulary to capture the in-between states beyond consciousness.”

Monkman’s newest body of work marks a significant shift in his artistic practice and represents a series of contemplations on *mamahtâwisiwin*, here interpreted as an invitation that connects us all through our shared desires and disparate attempts to achieve an understanding of our place in and connection to life, (un)knowing, and being.

*Ghostflower* is a painting which Monkman originally created in 1997 and completed in 2022 by in-painting Miss Chief into a space representative of *mamahtâwisiwin*. For Monkman, the goal of his artistic practice has always been about the creation of pathways for multiple and shared understandings of histories across cultural divides. That is why he chose to revisit the works of Western abstract artists such as Mark Rothko as an alternative means of representing *mamahtâwisiwin*.

In Monkman’s painting *The Great Mystery*, Miss Chief is placed on horseback—a playful challenge to and reinterpretation of the Hood Museum’s Cyrus Dallin sculpture *Appeal to the Great Spirit*—in the center of the canvas. With her elbows bent and a quizzical expression on her face, Miss Chief contemplates the great mystery of the

universe but also the gap in understandings between Indigenous and Western value and knowledge systems.

Adds Powell, "Through his masterful technique, generosity, and humor, Monkman uses his paintings to go beyond a simple retelling or restaging of art and its histories and create a shared intellectual space capable of encompassing multiple perspectives and interpretations. The commissioned paintings certainly disrupted my initial expectations for the exhibition and helped me to develop a greater appreciation for and understanding of the abstract paintings in the Hood Museum's collection. I am excited to share *The Great Mystery* and *Ghostflower* with our audiences through this exhibition and for years to come."

*This exhibition is organized by the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth, and generously supported by the Katharine T. and Merrill G. Beede 1929 Fund.*

## **Hood Museum - Related Events & Programs**

### **April 19**

Jami Powell, Associate Director of Curatorial Affairs and Curator of Indigenous Art, and Michael Hartman, Jonathan Little Cohen Associate Curator of American Art, will explore how artists construct and critique history through two exhibitions, *Kent Monkman: The Great Mystery* and *Historical Imaginary*.

### **October 13, 2023**

Kent Monkman will be at the Hood Museum of Art to discuss his work at the museum's annual Dr. Allen W. Root Contemporary Distinguished Art Lectureship.

### **About Kent Monkman**

Kent Monkman (b. 1965) is an interdisciplinary Cree visual artist. A member of Fisher River Cree Nation in Treaty 5 Territory (Manitoba), he lives and works in Dish With One Spoon Territory (Toronto, Canada). Monkman's painting and installation works have been exhibited at institutions such as The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal; Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; The National Gallery of Canada; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art; Hayward Gallery; Witte de With Centre for Contemporary Art; Musée d'art Contemporain de Rochechouart; Maison Rouge; Philbrook Museum of Art; and Palais de Tokyo. He has created site-specific performances at The Metropolitan Museum of Art; The Royal Ontario Museum; Compton Verney, Warwickshire; and The Denver Art Museum. Monkman has had two nationally touring solo exhibitions in Canada, *Shame and Prejudice: A Story of Resilience* (2017-2020), and *The Triumph of Mischief* (2007-2010). Monkman's short film and video works, collaboratively made with Gisèle Gordon, have screened at festivals such as the Berlinale (2007, 2008) and the Toronto International Film Festival (2007, 2015). Monkman is the recipient of the Ontario Premier's Award for Excellence in the Arts (2017), an honorary doctorate degree from OCAD University (2017), the Indspire Award (2014), and the Hnatyshyn Foundation Visual Arts Award (2014).

## **The Hood Museum’s 2023 Theme: “Art and the Construction of History”**

The Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth, will present a series of exhibitions in 2023 grouped under the theme “Art and the Construction of History,” inviting viewers to consider the role of art and artists in the framing of historical narratives. This thematic throughline resonates with the museum’s strategic priority to forge meaningful connections across disciplines, peoples, and local and global communities while seeking to reimagine the collection’s influence and potential.

John R. Stomberg, the Virginia Rice Kelsey 1961s Director of the Hood Museum of Art, explains, “In 2023, the Hood Museum will feature several shows exploring the many, many ways that art has given history its imagery. In creating these images, artists have in fact shaped the popular understanding of countless past events, places, and people. Even when written evidence contradicts their versions of stories, the power of their images can persist. Our goal in presenting this series of exhibitions is primarily to deconstruct these visual histories and reconstruct—to the extent possible—the original people, places, and events based on current research.”

For more information, visit:

<https://hoodmuseum.dartmouth.edu/news/2023/01/presenting-exhibitions-2023-under-umbrella-art-and-construction-history>

## **About the Hood Museum of Art**

The Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth, centers art and people in teaching and learning through inclusive and robust academic, cultural, and civic engagements with art and its histories. It seeks to advance learning, care, and connections through the reach and relevance of visual art and material culture as a nexus for the exchange of ideas. With its renewed focus on serving Dartmouth’s faculty and academic mission, the museum’s expanded facility broadens its reach to students, faculty, and departments across campus, while deepening its engagement with its longtime stakeholders. It also makes a bolder statement about the significance of the arts within the life of Dartmouth and provides the arts district with an arresting front door to the Green.

## **About Dartmouth College**

Dartmouth College educates the most promising students and prepares them for a lifetime of learning and of responsible leadership, through a faculty dedicated to teaching and the creation of knowledge. The Dartmouth model is unique in higher education: the fusion of a renowned liberal arts college and robust research university where students and faculty partner to take on the world’s great challenges. Since its founding in 1769, Dartmouth has provided an intimate and inspirational setting where talented faculty, students, and staff—diverse in background but united in purpose—contribute to the strength of an exciting academic community that cuts easily across disciplines.

## **Media Contacts:**

Meg Blackburn, [meg@blackburncreative.com](mailto:meg@blackburncreative.com)

Hood Museum of Art

Anna Kaye Schulte: [anna.kaye.m.schulte@dartmouth.edu](mailto:anna.kaye.m.schulte@dartmouth.edu) • (603) 646-2821

Dartmouth College Office of Communications

(603) 646-3661 • [communications@dartmouth.edu](mailto:communications@dartmouth.edu)

**Social Media:**

Connect with the Hood Museum of Art on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#) @HoodMuseum and using the hashtags #TheGreatMystery and #HoodMuseum

**Image caption:**

Kent Monkman, *The Great Mystery*, 2023, acrylic on canvas. Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth: Purchased through the Miriam H. and S. Sidney Stoneman Acquisition Fund; 2023.18.1. Image courtesy of the artist.