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Shelley Niro

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Main description

Shelley Niro is widely known for her ability to explode myths, transgress boundaries and embody the ethos of her matriarchal culture in a wide variety of mediums including photography, installation, film and painting. Niro creates photographic series that emphasize the medium's inherent capacity for narrative and representation. She pushes the limits of photography by incorporating Mohawk imagery, re-appropriating traditional stories such as *Skywoman* and *The Peacemaker*, and by focusing on contemporary subjects with wit, irony and campy humor.

Niro marries portraiture, performance art and satire by having her subjects and herself perform for the camera in ways that gently invite audiences to rethink their beliefs and preconceptions about indigenous peoples and themselves. With compassion and deep insight, Niro opens up the fault lines and desires of gender, sexuality and culture to create images of freedom from the status quo in representation. Photography was a medium that helped subjugate indigenous peoples, but in Niro's revolutionary hands it empowers.

Biography

Born in Niagara Falls, New York, Shelley Niro currently lives in Brantford, Ontario and is a member of the Six Nations Reserve, Bay of Quinte Mohawk, Turtle Clan. Her multimedia practice, which involves photography, painting, beadwork and film, is directed toward realistic and explorative portrayals of indigenous people. Niro graduated from the Ontario College of Art with honors and received her M.F.A. from the University of Western Ontario. In 2012 she was the inaugural recipient of the Aboriginal Arts Award presented through the Ontario Arts Council. In 2017 Niro received the Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts, the Scotiabank Photography Award, the Hnatyshyn Foundation's REVEAL Indigenous Art Award, and the Visual Arts Award from the Dreamcatcher Charitable Foundation.

Bibliography

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English

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