

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS ST. PETE

THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG (MFA) ANNOUNCES POWERFUL NEW EXHIBITION
TOM JONES: HERE WE STAND

The MFA's New Exhibition Will Be On View May 13, 2023 – August 27, 2023



ST. PETERSBURG, FL (May 11, 2023) – The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg (MFA), is pleased to present *Tom Jones: Here We Stand*, on view May 13 through August 27, 2023. Featuring more than 100 works spanning 1998–2021, the exhibition is the first major retrospective of the Ho-Chunk photographer's work. A talk with the artist and Senior Curator of Photography, Dr. Jane Aspinwall, will be held on Saturday, May 13, from 11:00 am–12:00 pm.

For over twenty years, Tom Jones has created a visual record and exploration of his Ho-Chunk community. Born in North Carolina and raised in Orlando after a short stint in Minneapolis, Jones returned to the Midwest, moving to Wisconsin at age 15. He then made his way to Chicago for graduate school at Columbia College. Jones's father worked with Kodak and owned a photography lab, helping shape the artist's understanding of the practical aspects of photography from an early age. During graduate school, Jones began an ongoing photographic essay on the contemporary life of his Ho-Chunk community, beginning first with the elders.

The show comprises over a dozen series, ranging from the documentary to the conceptual. Of his series on Veterans' memorials at the annual Black River Falls Pow-Wow, Jones says, "I was interested in the way families made very conscious decisions about how they want their loved ones memorialized." Other series include the emotionally intimate, though larger than life, beaded portraits. "Beading is a metaphor for our ancestors watching over us. I am also referencing an experience I had when I was about 8 or 9 years old. My mother took me to see a Sioux medicine man named Robert Stead. He led the call to the spirits, the women began to sing, and the ancestors appeared as orbs of light. This event inspired the series *Strong Unrelenting Spirits*."



Jones's photographs examine identity and geographic place with an emphasis on the experience of Native American communities. He is interested in how American Indian material culture is portrayed through commodification and popular culture. Much of his work counteracts and corrects decades of

misinformation and misrepresentation of American Indians, particularly targeting the field of U.S. history. Jones's critical assessment of the romanticized representation of Native peoples in photography re-examines historic pictures taken by white photographers. This reassessment questions the assumptions about identity within the American Indian culture by non-natives and natives alike.

“While each of Jones’s series is distinctly different, the message remains consistent: the Ho-Chunk are not vanishing or frozen in time,” said Dr. Jane Aspinwall, Senior Curator of Photography. “Jones’s photographs emphasize a solid, generational commitment to family, tribal community, and land. His photographs reclaim appropriated images and set the historical record straight.”



Tom Jones: Here We Stand originated at the Museum of Wisconsin Art in West Bend, Wisconsin. The exhibition was co-curated by Dr. Jane L. Aspinwall, Senior Curator of Photography at the MFA, and Graeme Reid, Director of Exhibitions at the Museum of Wisconsin Art. A catalogue, including a major essay by Aspinwall, accompanies the exhibition.

RELATED PROGRAMS

[*Tom Jones: Here We Stand* Exclusive Member Preview Day](#)

Friday, May 12, 2023

10:00 am–5:00 pm

Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg

[Artist Talk with Tom Jones and Senior Curator of Photography Dr. Jane Aspinwall](#)

Saturday, May 13, 2023

11:00 am–12:00 pm

Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg

IMAGES (from top to bottom, left to right)

Tom Jones, *Peyton Grace Rapp*, from *Strong Unrelenting Spirits* series, 2018, Inkjet print and beadwork, Collection of Ken Karol and Greg French. Image credit: Museum of Wisconsin Art, West Bend, Wisconsin.

Tom Jones, *Dear America: My Country Tis of Thee*, 2002, Inkjet print and ink, On loan from the Artist. Image credit: Museum of Wisconsin Art, West Bend, Wisconsin.

Tom Jones, *Fire Pit*, from *I am an Indian First and an Artist Second* series, 2008, Inkjet print, On loan from the Artist. Image credit: Museum of Wisconsin Art, West Bend, Wisconsin.

Tom Jones, *Jim Funmaker with Gourds*, from *The Ho-Chunk People* series, 2001, Gelatin silver print, On loan from the Artist. Image credit: Museum of Wisconsin Art, West Bend, Wisconsin.

***Tom Jones: Here We Stand* is organized by the Museum of Wisconsin Art.**

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ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

The MFA at 255 Beach Drive NE is one of the largest encyclopedic art museums in Florida. The collection includes works of art from ancient times to the present day and from around the world, including ancient Greek and Roman, Egyptian, Asian, African, pre-Columbian, Native American, European, American, and contemporary art. The photography collection is one of the largest and finest in the Southeast. For more information, please visit mfastpete.org and follow @mfastpete on social media.

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