

# CATHARINE CLARK GALLERY



Above: Marie Watt, *Companion Species (Catenary)*, 2021. Vintage Venetian glass beads, thread, cotton twill tape, industrial felt. Photo: Kevin McConnell.

## Marie Watt: *Companion Species (Calling Back, Calling Forward)*

January 8 – February 19, 2022

**Media Room Presentation:** Ana Teresa Fernandez: *Borrando la Frontera (Erasing the Border)* and *Erasure*

**Opening reception:** Saturday, January 8 from 2 – 5pm

San Francisco, CA: Catharine Clark Gallery opens its Winter 2022 program with *Companion Species (Calling Back, Calling Forward)*, the gallery's debut solo exhibition with acclaimed artist Marie Watt. A member of the Seneca Nation of Indians with German Scots ancestry, Watt's interdisciplinary work draws from history, biography, Iroquois proto-feminism, and Indigenous teachings; in it, she explores the intersection of history, community, and storytelling. Through collaborative actions, she instigates multigenerational and cross-disciplinary conversations that create a lens and conversation for understanding connectedness to place and one another.

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Above: Marie Watt, *Skywalker/Skyscraper (Forest)*, 2021. Reclaimed blankets, reclaimed cedar, steel I-beams. Photo: Kevin McConnell.

The exhibition's title draws on the concept of "companion species," a belief held by Seneca people in the symbiotic and reciprocal relationship between humans and animals. Watt describes that the Seneca "believe animals to be our First Teachers;" by extension, this concept foregrounds the connections that "humans have with nature, and our responsibilities as stewards."<sup>1</sup>

Watt's material choices — blankets, steel I-beams, reclaimed cedar blocks — draw on Indigenous narratives and the transmission of personal and collective stories from one generation to another. The forms in her work, particularly the towering stacks, also reflect on the tensions between natural and built environments, particularly through histories of contact and industrialization.

Blankets are particularly important in Watt's practice as a material central to Indigenous populations in the Americas. Watt notes that blankets "are everyday objects that can carry extraordinary histories of use;" within Indigenous communities, "blankets are given away to honor those who are witness to important life events." The blanket stacks and patched works in the exhibition, by extension, suggest a multiplicity of stories, histories, and life's events brought into conversation and contact with one another.

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<sup>1</sup> Lukavic, John. *Each/Other: Marie Watt and Cannupa Hanksa Luger*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2021. Pg. 52.





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**Above:** Ana Teresa Fernandez, video still from *Borrando la Frontera (Erasing the Border)*, 2011. Single-channel video with sound; 3:38 minutes.

Watt notes that in Gaye's song, "I hear what I interpret as an intersection between Marvin Gaye's knowledge and traditional Haudenosaunee/Indigenous knowledge about our relatedness. Gaye opens the song by calling out, 'Mother, mother,' and addresses his listeners as if they were his family: 'Brother, brother... Sister, sister... Father, father.' From a Haudenosaunee and Indigenous perspective, this call would extend to include, "Grandmother, grandmother... Grandfather, grandfather... Auntie, auntie... Uncle, uncle.' In *What's Going On*, Gaye sings each name not once, but twice. He is calling out, and it's an emphatic call and urgent call, hurling the words out further and further in an attempt to link us with our ancestors and with future generations, begging us to act."

Watt's exhibition is complemented a special Media Room presentation of two powerful video works by Ana Teresa Fernandez, *Borrando la Frontera (Erasing the Border)* (2011) and *Erasure* (2015), which reflect on bodies and borders, post-colonial landscapes, and the psychological barriers to empathy. *Borrando la Frontera (Erasing the Border)* documents a site-specific action/intervention in which the artist spray painted the border wall separating Playas de Tijuana from San Diego's Border Field State Park in an attempt to "erase" the border wall at a time when Sunday family visits at the border were stopped by the Obama administration. *Erasure*, by contrast, depicts a performance in which Fernandez painted her own body with black paint in an act of self-erasure. Staged in response to the 2014 disappearance of 43 young male students from Ayotzinapa, Mexico, who were presumably killed for staging protests that disrupted their small town, *Erasure* commemorates these people, still missing and unaccounted for.



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**MARIE WATT (born 1967, Seattle, WA)** is an American artist whose interdisciplinary work draws from history, biography, and Iroquois proto feminism. Watt holds an MFA in painting and printmaking from Yale University, as well as degrees from Willamette University and the Institute of American Indian Arts. In 2016, Watt was awarded an honorary doctorate from Willamette University. Watt serves on the board for VoCA (Voices in Contemporary Art) and on the Native Advisory Committee at the Portland Art Museum, and in 2020 became a member of the Board of Trustees at the Portland Art Museum.

Watt's work is held in many public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Seattle Art Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Yale University Art

Gallery, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian and Renwick Gallery, the Tacoma Art Museum, the Denver Art Museum, and the Portland Art Museum, among others.

In February 2022, Watt is the subject of a monographic survey exhibition at the University of San Diego, *Storywork: The Prints of Marie Watt* (on view February 4 – May 13, 2022), curated by Derrick Cartwright and drawn from the collection of the Jordan D. Schnitzer Family Foundation. Marie Watt lives and works in Portland, OR and has exhibited with Catharine Clark Gallery since 2019. *Companion Species (Calling Back, Calling Forward)* is her first solo exhibition with the gallery.



**ANA TERESA FERNANDEZ (born 1981, Tampico, MX)** is a Mexican American artist whose work explores the politics of intersectionality through time-based actions and social gestures, translated into masterful oil and gouache paintings, installations, and videos. Fernandez holds an MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute, and her work has been collected by the Denver Art Museum, Nevada Museum of Art, and the Kadist Art Foundation, among other institutions.

In 2021, the Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas, Austin acquired Fernandez's iconic video work *Borrando la Frontera (Erasing the Border)* as well as the related suite of three photographs. Fernandez's debut solo exhibition with the gallery opens in Summer 2022. Based in San Francisco, Fernandez has been represented by Catharine Clark Gallery since 2021.