



Explore Frye Art Museum's intriguing new exhibit through these 5 works

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 **1 of 2** | A visitor to the Frye Art Museum views "winter in america_no door_âkamenimok," Duane Linklater's 2020 work created from digital print on... (Jonathan Vanderweit) [More](#) 

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A&E Pick of the Week

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Some artists let you know exactly what they're up to. Locally, I'm thinking of [Anthony White](#) and his loud, bonkers, plasticky paintings of baubles, preening bodies, sunglasses, jewelry, drugs, junk-food wrappers and phones, phones, phones — it's a frenetic (but not shallow) [inquiry into image, consumption, distraction](#).

Other artists are more mysterious. I can only fumble through the mist of what, if anything, is encoded in the shapes and shades of geometricians like [Victoria Haven](#) — but that doesn't mean I don't love them.

The Ontario artist [Duane Linklater](#) (Omaskêko Cree) hovers somewhere between the obvious and the obscure. There are stories and ideas in "[mymothersside](#)," currently occupying several rooms at Frye Art Museum, but we only catch fragments and echoes, like we're overhearing something — or being permitted to overhear little bits of something that isn't ours to fully comprehend.

There is sorrow here, and loss: stained teepee covers hanging on walls and draped across the floor; white and weathered teepee poles, some bundled and stacked like bones in an ossuary; animal skins, some hanging by their eyeholes. But there's also hardness and defiance: a dyed-pink logo of the American Indian Movement (AIM); graffiti from AIM's occupation of Alcatraz Island reading "Custer had it coming"; video footage of Linklater, artist Brian Jungen (Dane-zaa) and Jungen's uncle hunting and butchering a moose; living houseplants that belonged to Linklater's mother; blueberry bushes he's planted in the Frye's courtyard.

Linklater's work seems to ask questions about what has been erased and ruined — and what remains. In fact, let's approach "mymothersside" in five objects, the first of which literally asks that question.

1. **"What Then Remainz":** The words are spelled in red on steel metal studs against a partially demolished wall on the Frye's eastern flank — stripped of its drywall, with the electrical system exposed. The quote comes from a rhetorical question asked by Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor during *Dollar General Corp. v. Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians*, a 2016 case that became an argument about Native sovereignty. When "mymothersside" closes, Linklater and the Frye will leave the artwork, covering it in drywall, hiding it inside the museum.



Visitors to the Frye Art Museum view Duane Linklater's "What Then Remainz." (Jonathan Vanderweit)

That gesture echoes questions about the way non-Native institutions have been built on, and swallowed up, Native land and artworks, including natural history museums with extensive collections of Indigenous artworks in their vaults. It's also a counterpoint for the piece "A blueberry garden for Seattle" — bushes Linklater planted in the Frye's courtyard as something living, and highly visible, that will stay when he goes.

2. **"UMFA Installation"**: Speaking of Indigenous artworks in museums: In 2015, the Utah Museum of Fine Arts (UMFA) invited Linklater to make something new for an exhibition. He studied the museum's collections database, looking for relatively recent Indigenous pieces (1875-1978) without an individual artist's credit — the familiar "artist unknown." Linklater found some and made crude copies: He 3D-printed masks, pots and other sculptural objects (3D printing was far rougher back then) and photographed textiles, then printed the images at original scale. The result is a room full of hauntingly faded ghost objects, their stories and individual vibrancy eroded. A Navajo serape looks like you need reading glasses. The 3D-printed sculptures (a Kwakiutl raven mask, a Hopi kachina, more) are bleached, worn away and pixelated, like driftwood that has been tumbled and scoured in a digital ocean.

3. **"dislodgevanishskinground"**: This teepee, mounted sideways against the wall, started as a clever adaptation. In 2019, Linklater had wanted to install an 18-foot-tall teepee at Artists Space in New York — but the ceiling was too low, so he flipped it on its side and suspended it from the ceiling. But, of course, the dislocated, disoriented teepee (along with the work's title) is an ominous emblem of physical and cultural displacement.

4. **"foiled (vers 1)"**: Each film element of "mymothersside" is powerful in an understated way, particularly the quiet, almost gentle moose hunting and butchering sequences with a Dane-zaa elder in British Columbia. But the slow, frame-by-frame boxing video "foiled (vers. 1)" has a sharper poignancy. Two men — one in red and one in blue — duke it out, landing punches in slow motion. Is this an allegory for history itself? Who's winning? Who wins?

It's hard to tell in the video, but the backstory is astounding. In 2012, a then-junior politician named Justin Trudeau (the fighter in red) arranged to box, and beat, young Indigenous senator Patrick Brazeau (Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, and the fighter in blue) as a charity fundraiser/publicity stunt. In a [2017 Rolling Stone profile](#), Trudeau said: "I wanted someone who would be a good foil, and we stumbled upon the scrappy tough-guy senator from an indigenous community. He fit the bill ... I saw it as the right kind of narrative, the right story to tell." Understandably, the disclosure that Trudeau (who is white) used an Indigenous colleague as a literal political prop and thought beating him would be "the right story to tell" was [swiftly and heavily criticized](#).



Visitors to the Frye Art Museum view Duane Linklater's "action at a distance," created from painted teepee poles, nylon rope, plants, ceramics, sandbags, 12 framed digital prints and framed mirror. (Jonathan Vanderweit)

5. **“action at a distance”**: This collection of objects feels like the most intimate moment of “mymothersside”: 12 teepee poles leaning against the wall, nine living houseplants belonging to his late mother Pauline Linklater, eight yellow plastic bags of something (soil?), an octagonal mirror on the floor and 12 images in frames — details from Goya’s “Disasters of War” etchings, a still from Andy Warhol’s “Screen Test: Edie Sedgwick,” a still from avant-garde auteur Chantal Akerman, a photo of a living deer with an arrow stuck through its head, another photo of revered Ojibwe contemporary artist Norval Morrisseau. What does it all add up to? An impression of Duane Linklater — but, as in the rest of “mymothersside,” we know it’s only a fragment of the whole.

Duane Linklater: ‘mymothersside’

Through Jan. 16, 2022. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesday-Sunday; Frye Art Museum, 704 Terry Ave., Seattle; free; face coverings required for all visitors 3 and older, regardless of vaccination status; 206-622-9250, fryemuseum.org

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