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## **Native Artists Explore Skin as a Subject**

Eight Native artists who investigate skin as subject matter will be presented in “HIDE: Skin as Material and Metaphor,” a two-part exhibition opening at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian in New York. Through various media, the artists use and depict skin, questioning identities and stereotypes and evoking images of landscapes, shields and fragility.

The first part of the exhibition will open Saturday, March 6, with solo exhibitions by Sonya Kelliher-Combs (Inupiaq/Athabaskan) and Nadia Myre (Anishinaabe), and close Aug. 1. The second segment, opening Saturday, Sept. 4, and closing Jan. 16, 2011, will include a solo exhibition by Michael Belmore (Ojibway) and a photographic installation with work by Arthur Renwick (Haisla), KC Adams (Métis), Terrance Houle (Blood), Rosalie Favell (Cree Métis) and Sarah Sense (Chitimacha/Choctaw). Video works by Myre and Houle will run in the gallery throughout the entire course of the exhibition.

“Skin is a complex and weighty subject that directly addresses issues of Native identity and history,” said Kevin Gover (Pawnee/Comanche), director of the National Museum of the American Indian. “The artists in this exhibition all wrestle with this engaging question, each arriving at different places, but all contributing to an understanding of contemporary Native identity.”

“There is a double meaning at play here in ‘HIDE.’ There is the actual material—hide—and the reference to that which is hidden, disguised and out of view,” said John Haworth (Cherokee), director of the Heye Center. “Loaded with meaning as well as misrepresentation, skin is part of our identity and a cover for our inner selves.”

### **About the Artists**

Kelliher-Combs creates sculptural and mixed-media work that captures both vulnerability and strength in her use of organic and synthetic materials. The only artist in the exhibition who incorporates animal hides and innards into her work, she creates compelling, ambiguous forms.

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Myre explores scars, both personal and communal, in her mixed-media and video creations. Included in the exhibition will be her epic cooperative work, “The Scar Project,” comprising hundreds of canvases that each represents an individual scar story.

Belmore’s sculptural works in stone and hammered copper are meditative reflections on North American topography. In “Dark Water, Origins” and “Shorelines,” he has transformed inert, heavy-metal sheets into thin, undulating membranes.

Adams creates photographic images of people who are racial hybrids (with Native and European ancestry) and function as cyborgs (part human/part machine).

Favell photographs Native artists and curators, celebrating their individuality and their participation in a global indigenous community.

Houle’s narrative images walk visitors through a “normal” day for an urban Indian, completing everyday tasks (working in an office, grocery shopping) dressed in full dance regalia. His short film, *Metrosexual Indian*, approaches the subject from yet another humorous but serious angle.

The subjects of Renwick’s portrait series each chose to alter their appearance by stretching, squeezing and distorting their skin. As a result, their faces appear quite literally as masks.

Sense weaves together virtual hides out of digital prints, creating narratives that integrate her family’s complex histories.

### **About the Exhibition and Publication**

“HIDE” was organized by Kathleen Ash-Milby (Navajo), curator at the National Museum of the American Indian. An accompanying publication will be available in March.

### **Public Programs**

On Saturday, March 6, Kelliher-Combs will discuss her work at 12 p.m., and Myre will lead a Scar Project Workshop with visitors at 1 p.m. For more details, please visit the Web site at [www.americanindian.si.edu](http://www.americanindian.si.edu).

### **About the National Museum of the American Indian in New York**

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian in New York, the George Gustav Heye Center, is located at One Bowling Green in New York City, across from Battery Park. The museum is free and open every day from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Thursdays until 8 p.m. For information, call (212) 514-3700 or visit [www.americanindian.si.edu](http://www.americanindian.si.edu).

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