

Transcript

Title: *'namaxsala (To Travel in a Boat Together)*

(Lee-Ann Martin, Curator of Contemporary Canadian Aboriginal Art)

We're very excited to welcome Mary Anne Barkhouse's new sculptural commission *'namaxsala*. It's a very important work that recognizes Mary Anne's international stature as a sculptor. It tells a story that relates not only to the Museum, but to her family history and some of the objects that are in our collection.

(Mary Anne Barkhouse, 'Namgis First Nation Artist)

The story that inspired this particular piece of work was one that my grandfather told me many years ago. And it concerned the time that he helped a wolf get across a particularly treacherous stretch of water out on the Northwest coast somewhere between the mainland and Vancouver Island.

Further to that, I started thinking about what does it take for someone to help a wolf? And not only help a wolf, but let it get into a boat with them and take it to shore. That's a huge leap of faith! So I thought it took a lot of independent thought and it took a lot of compassion for other living things.

(Lee-Ann Martin, Curator of Contemporary Canadian Aboriginal Art)

The work relates to the Museum's permanent collection of historical objects from her family, from the Kwagiulth community. It also really demonstrates Mary Anne's mastery of a variety of materials and how beautifully they work together aesthetically.

(Mary Anne Barkhouse, 'Namgis First Nation Artist)

I went back to some traditional materials: the copper for example has a huge cultural significance for the Kwagiulth people. It's a symbol of wealth, of power. And I think also because of its conductive nature, there's a continuity issue with that as well.

On top of which I just love the life cycle that both copper and bronze have. Because they do have a life, that they change over time. And I think that's a really important part to my art practice now as far as the narrative that I want to develop with these works as time progresses.

A lot of artists, when they get a piece cast at a foundry, have the foundry do the patina. For me, that would be, say, like that's the most fun part. I do that myself. It is magic. You have to get into the Zen moment, because it's a very complicated process, but something that is so rewarding.

(Lee-Ann Martin, Curator of Contemporary Canadian Aboriginal Art)

'namaxsala, Mary Anne Barkhouse's sculpture, enters the collection after a long history by the Museum of collecting and actually commissioning contemporary Aboriginal art over the past forty or fifty years.

(John and Bonnie Buhler of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Patrons of the sculpture)

When I saw this wolf in a boat, I thought: "How unique! I'd love to learn more about it. And when you've been given an opportunity to give to something so worthwhile, we had no choice but to say yes."

This is actually the very first major piece that we have donated outside of Manitoba.

So it had that very original appeal, mostly because it was unbelievable and today the unbelievable became a reality. And I think it's one of the most meaningful pieces of art that I have ever seen.

I love it!