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A Design Key Guide to the Exhibition

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INDIGENOUS APPALACHIA



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“As a visual strategist and communicator, my observance of the graphic representations and aesthetics of diverse cultures and ethnic influences allows my design approaches to be inclusive and honest. My personal story—as one who is a “multi culti” (Native American, African American, and of French/Dutch ancestry)—informs and guides my appreciation and understanding of traditional symbols and contemporary iconography to present honest presentations of those heritages, values, and societies. By recognizing our differences—and also, our similarities—I look to connect each visitor to worldviews that may appear unfamiliar yet are at the heart of being American.”

— Maryam Marne Zafar, IA Lead Designer, 2022

Whether a symbol, a photograph, an illustration, or in colors, the imagery used speaks to a culture and its people, its lifeways, its mores. Following is a descriptive design key guide of the various graphic elements seen throughout the contextual panels and artist banners that convey an inherent understanding of the peoples of this land.

- ① **TYPE FONT** Throhand was inspired by the 16th Century type font created by Claude Garamond and Hendrik van den Keere. It is reflective of the classicism seen in printed broadsides, pamphlets, and books that originated in England, and were distributed to those fortunate to be literate as well as to the businessmen and scholars of the day. It was chosen as it feels “of the age” yet is contemporary in its ease of readability.
- ② **TOPOGRAPHIC MAP** A two-dimensional representation of Turtle Island’s (Earth’s) three-dimensional landscape, it is used on these panels as a background for the exhibition’s title as its contours reflect the ebb and flow of the land.
- ③ **LANDSCAPE** Grounding the panels throughout are photographs of the Appalachian mountains, lakes, valleys, skies, and sun that are part of the land of the Indigenous peoples (and all of those) who live throughout Appalachia. The photos shown were taken in West Virginia, Virginia, and the Carolinas.
- ④ **WAMPUM** Shell beads have been an integral part of Indigenous life for both cultural and ceremonial practices. Created from both the white Whelk and the purple Quahog shells, wampum beads are painstakingly drilled with awls and woven into strands, belts, sashes, and as accessories to convey meaning (spiritual) and important messages (treaties). Both secular and sacred, wampum patterns were “marks of remembrance” to call up recollections of significant events, communicate the truth (when carrying messages), and visually proclaim the authority of said messages. One of the most important wampum belts is the “Hiawatha Belt” (an illustration appears on the I Haudenosaunee panel) that shows the agreement to live in peace together. When thought of only as Indigenous currency it reduces wampum to be divorced from its role as a symbol of life, of connective-ness and of deeply-held cultural traditions; wampum carries “a body of knowledge capable of being adapted into spoken words that surpass the ability of printed text.” (Dr. Joe Stahlman)
- ⑤ **BIRCH BARK** For much of Native North America, the bark of the Birch Tree is valued for its medicinal properties. Long lived, the bark is associated with guidance, protection, and strength as it is “tough and waterproof” and when burned it is considered cleansing. This bark was vital to create just about everything from spiritual scrolls to utensils, boxes, and cookware to an important mode of transportation, canoes.
- ⑥ **BEADWORK** Considered the second traditional approach (after quillwork) for patterning and decorating clothing, home utensils, and ceremonial objects, beadwork has been created and traded “forever”. Made of shell, wood, copper, silver, and since the arrival of Europeans, of glass (and now, plastic), beads allow for intricate detail work in incredibly vibrant colors. The beads seen throughout connect Indigenous colors with the profound significance of the circle, a sacred symbol of the interdependence of life, of equality among all on Earth as ... we are all connected.

