

Art is powerful. It has the ability to take an idea, a concept, and mold it into an object. It can become the physical embodiment of an emotion. Art may change perceptions or even cause pain, but it can also heal. The works of Luzene Hill and Brenda Mallory serve many purposes. Like the artists themselves, the installations presented here are complex, reflective, and beautiful. While art is powerful, it is the artists who must harness and manifest this power for the viewer.

Connecting Lines is a visual representation of two Cherokee women artists. It documents their struggles, fears, hopes, and successes. Each work presents concepts of survival, culture, and self-representation. The end result is an exhibition of contemporary Cherokee identity and continued connections to the past.

—Ashley Holland, Cherokee Nation

ENATE

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“In the beginning ...” implies both what I seek (the genesis of indigenous culture in the Americas) and what I reject (a patriarchal foundation).

Enate is an exposition of the numbers of Native American women who are sexually assaulted each year, presented as material volume—6956 silk taffeta female figures. The silhouettes, dyed with cochineal, are motifs from the earliest (4,000–3,500 BCE) images of females in the Americas. 6956 is the average *reported* number of Native American women sexually assaulted each year. These figures are layered in threes. Native women are three times more likely to be assaulted than other women in the United States and the majority of the assaults are by non-Native men. Each trio forms a cluster, resembling feathers, and is attached to the cloak, metaphorically unifying the women into a solid mantle of protection and empowerment.

—Luzene Hill

Cochineal

Cochineal, a type of scale insect, was cultivated and used extensively as a dye in the Americas to denote sacred life and death, generally reserved for ceremonies. The intense red hue, carminic acid, is found only in the female and serves as a deterrent to predators. When the Spanish came upon this resource (a commodity to them), they plundered it, as they plundered the land and people. It became a major export to Spain, where it was used in garments to symbolize power and wealth (notably Cardinals' robes in the Catholic church and British Redcoats). Titian, as well as other major European artists, used cochineal pigment.

For almost a hundred years, the Spanish held a monopoly on cochineal by keeping its origin a secret. Until the microscope was in common use, no one in Europe knew exactly what cochineal was—plant or animal, or how it was harvested. This secret allowed Spain to control the market, and cochineal was their second most important export, after silver, from the Americas.

—Luzene Hill

