



P Jeffrey Gibson: *They Come From Fire*

Reflection & Learning

Jeffrey Gibson's *They Come From Fire* is an immersive, site-responsive installation that celebrates Portland's Indigenous history, presence, and vitality and transforms the space of the Portland Art Museum. Gibson's artistic practice is deeply collaborative: He worked with local, Indigenous, BIPOC, and queer artists and community members to develop TIMELINE, a representation of Portland's Indigenous history which appears in the Museum's front windows, and to create the photographic portraits seen in the large mural in the Museum's central, indoor courtyard. His use of text continues this collaborative spirit, inviting us to read, say, and reflect on the brilliantly illuminated phrases on the glass panels suspended before the mural. In this guide, we offer prompts for reflection and discussion.

1. TIMELINE

Read the entries on the timeline in the front windows or in pam.to/Timeline (available under the Resources tab on the exhibition webpage). What do you notice about the moments represented here? How does this timeline resemble or differ from other timelines you've encountered before? Why do you think Gibson and community members chose to include personal and familial events alongside national and political events? How does this timeline ask us to think differently about history?

Think of a community that you are part of. How would you represent that community's history in a timeline?

Is there an event from your local or personal history that you would like to contribute to Jeffrey Gibson's TIMELINE? Complete the online form at tinyurl.com/PAMTimeline2 to share your idea.

2. MONUMENTS

During social justice protests against racism and colonialism in 2020, monuments and statues in Portland and around the country were taken down. On the South Park Blocks between the Portland Art Museum and the Oregon Historical Society, protestors toppled statues of Presidents Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt. The City of Portland is planning a public process to determine what to do with the statues, which are currently in storage. In the meantime, the pedestals on the Park blocks stand empty. Jeffrey Gibson worked with the Museum, the Regional Arts and Culture Council, and Portland Parks and Recreation to secure permission to stage a temporary artist intervention. He invited Indigenous, BIPOC, and LGBTQ+ artists and community members to be part of photographs on and around the empty monument pedestals. Participants chose how they would dress and pose, and the people and objects that would be with them.

Look closely at the mural. You may recognize some of your friends, elders, and heroes here. Reflect on the following questions:

- What is the purpose of a monument?
- Who or what would you like to see honored or memorialized through art?
- Would you choose to create a statue on a pedestal or would your memorial take a different form? Describe or draw what you envision.

3. WRITING

Take in the suspended glass panels from many different perspectives, both in the courtyard and on the second floor overlook. Read the phrases and think about how the panels relate to the other elements of the installation.

How do the glass panels interact with the photomural and the timeline—both visually and conceptually? How do they respond to the questions: Whom do we choose to celebrate? How do we celebrate them?

Choose one phrase from the panels to use as a writing prompt. Set a timer for three minutes and write whatever comes. (While you're up there on the second floor, be sure to visit Gibson's *To Name An Other*.)

*They Come From Fire. The Future Is Present. They Rewrite Their Story.
Speak To Your Ancestors. They Protect The Water. They Choose Love.
They Choose Family. They Protect The Land. The Spirits Are Present.
Our Bodies Our Rules. Their Children Stand Tall. Dancing Singing Drumming.*

4. INDIGENOUS IDENTITIES

Jeffrey Gibson created *They Come From Fire* to be in dialogue with *Dakota Modern: The Art of Oscar Howe*. What connections do you see between Gibson's and Howe's artwork? How does each artist engage with Indigenous cultural knowledge, community, and artistic practices? How do these artists raise and respond to questions about what it means to be Indigenous today and in the future?

For additional resources, please visit the exhibition webpage at portlandartmuseum.org/exhibitions/jeffrey-gibson-they-come-from-fire.