

Another Crossing: Artists Revisit the Mayflower Voyage

This limited edition catalogue has been created by students and staff at Plymouth College of Art, UK, in response to the artists' work in **Another Crossing: Artists Revisit the Mayflower Voyage** exhibition, which took place at Fuller Craft Museum in Brockton, Massachusetts, US, 2021 and The Box, Plymouth, UK, 2022.

Participating students and staff were:

Sue Bown in response to **Allison Smith**
Linda Brady in response to **Michelle Erickson**
Charley Dyson in response to **Christien Meindiertsma**
Claire Gladstone in response to **Sonya Clark**
Zoe Harrison in response to **Katie Schwab**
Jo Haskins in response to **Jonathan Perry**
Eleanor Keith in response to **David Clarke**
Shereon Knowles in response to **Jeffrey Gibson**
Kyra Leigh-Lanfear in response to **Annette Bellamy**
Sarah Voysey in response to **Jasleen Kaur**

Indigenous communities across Turtle Island (North America) have shared stories that reference great beings that carry lessons of the dangers of taking too much or improperly wielding power, which leads to the imbalance of society. For Wampanoag people, these stories seem to have manifested in the last 400 years since the Mayflower arrived on the shores of Wampanoag homelands. We now bear witness to the aftermath of the imbalance formed at that collision point in history. Today, there are over 35 million Mayflower descendants and less than 6,000 Wampanoag people in existence. As a nation, we commemorate the arrival of strangers in this land, but we must also reflect upon the heaviness and the mourning that the land, the water, and the Wampanoag people hold. We must look at the past and correct our course for the future. Our traditional stories tell us that the Crow always has one eye on the past and one eye on the future, that way he will always fly straight. This 400-year demarcation must not be a simple moment for reflection, but a call to action for healing.

As you move throughout this exhibit, take the time to reflect not only upon the craftsmanship displayed by these master artists, but also consider the conversation these pieces have with the arrival of the English immigrants on the shores of Turtle Island. Take a moment to look introspectively at yourself, your home, and your community and ask, 'what is my ancestor's role in this story, how has this patterned my existence, and how do I ensure a better future?'

Jonathan James-Perry (Aquinnah Wampanoag)

ANOTHER CROSSING INTRODUCTION AND ARTIST INFORMATION

by Glenn Adamson

In 1620, the *Mayflower* embarked from Plymouth, England, with a crew and 102 passengers. Many were English non-conformists, leaving their homelands for fear that their separatist religious communities would otherwise perish. These self-described “saints” sighted land some two months later. They established a settlement, naming it after the last place they had seen in Europe. Within a year, half were dead. The survivors were among the first to build a permanent home in what seemed to them a “new world.”

But of course this site was already long inhabited. The Wampanoag people lived in the region, which to them was Patuxet. Many stories have been handed down about this population and its interactions with European settlers – some about mutual reliance, some about conflict. The long-term consequences, however, are not in debate: for the settlers, increasing political dominance; for the Indigenous population, widespread disease, death, and displacement.

The implications of the Mayflower crossing are so far-reaching that they are difficult to comprehend in retrospect. From one point of view, by far the dominant one in American culture, the voyage is a national origin story. For Indigenous peoples, it is just one event within a long and tragic history, its anniversary an occasion for mourning. There is common ground, here, in the very act of remembrance. But in 2020, four hundred years after the Mayflower set sail, the distance between those two perspectives can feel vast indeed, more difficult to navigate than an ocean in a wooden boat.

Another Crossing charts a course through this abyss nonetheless. The project is itself a transatlantic collaboration – organized by the Plymouth College of Art and The Box in Plymouth, England, and Fuller Craft Museum, which is in Plymouth County, Massachusetts. (During the exhibition’s development, the artists traveled to both sites to better understand the historical context by visiting key locations, and meeting historians, academics and museum curators.) The premise of the show

is simple: each participating artist has created work in response to the Mayflower anniversary, utilizing only technology that existed in 1620. Every work was realized with tools, materials, and processes that were available in the early seventeenth-century.

There were several reasons behind this rather demanding parameter. First, it highlights the sophisticated practices that were in use in 1620, like beadwork, joinery, metalsmithing, leatherwork, and pottery. In some ways, people then possessed a greater material intelligence than we tend to today. This is particularly true of Wampanoag and other Native peoples, who possessed complex arrays of artisanal knowledge and artistic *métiers*. The colonists, too, embarked on their voyage with an extensive range of skills in hand, among them textile crafts and printing.

There is also a more metaphorical intention behind the exhibition’s craft-based time travel: another kind of crossing. Each work in the exhibition simultaneously inhabits two moments – 1620 and 2020 – or at any rate, vibrates resonantly across that period of four centuries. One cannot fully inhabit a prior moment in time, any more than one can assume another person’s perspective. Each artist had to make their own separate peace with this fact, deciding where and how to draw the boundaries around their project’s period-specificity.

In the exhibition, visitors encounter ten artists, joined together in a collective journey of discovery. The works that they have created are by turns introspective, outraged, sad, funny, surprising, and humane. Each offers its own complex commentary, a bit of wisdom that may help us traverse this anniversary year.

It’s been four hundred years since the Mayflower sailed across the Atlantic, to an uncertain future; four hundred years since the Wampanoag witnessed strangers arriving on shore. We are just beginning to understand what happened next. Hopefully, this project makes a modest contribution in that direction.

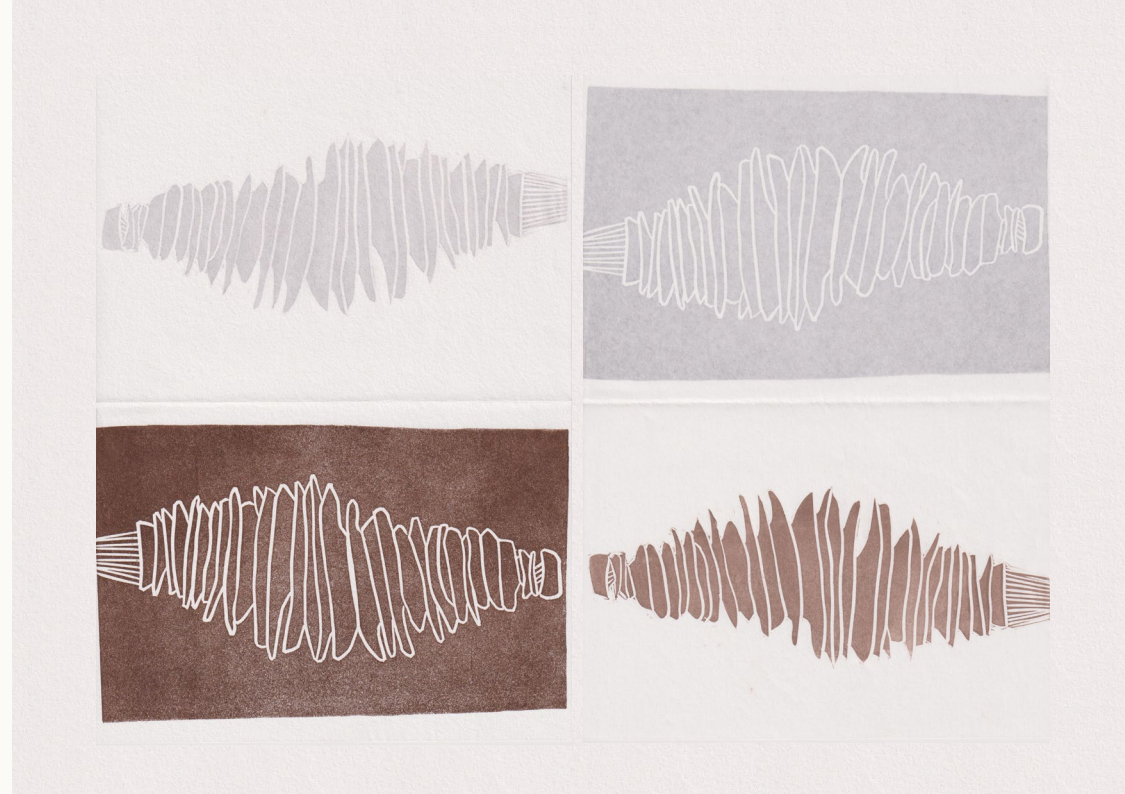
ANNETTE BELLAMY

Every participant in *Another Crossing* faced the same question: how to speak to an event that changed so much for so many, without presuming to speak for them? As we will see, several artists were prompted to collaboration, as a way to complicate their own gesture of authorship. Annette Bellamy undertook a particularly ambitious approach, working with Indigenous artists to realize an installation of boat forms, floating in suspension from the ceiling.

Bellamy is based in Alaska, where she works both as a commercial fisherwoman and a sculptor. Often, these two identities merge, as in a series of works she has made from the skins of salmon she has caught and eaten, and in nautical images – weights, hooks, and vessels – made from ceramic, wood, and other materials.

For *Another Crossing*, Bellamy invited six Alaskan Indigenous artists to join her in a shared act of making. Apart from a few basic parameters—the basic shape of a boat, scale, and the use of historic techniques—Bellamy did nothing to constrain her collaborators' creativity. They responded with a wondrous diversity of forms, which allude to multiple traditions and trades.

Lena Amason-Berns made her boats from oak barrels salvaged after a tsunami destroyed her family's village; Tommy Joseph, a scaled-down dugout canoe of Tlingit design, entitled *Is This Our Last Journey?*; Rebecca Lyon, a capsized ark featuring the image of a polar bear (a reference to climate change); Heidi Senungetuk, a piece influenced by *Qelutviaq*, an Indigenous musical instrument; Da-Ka-Xeen Mehner, a dugout that is charred on its exterior and deep red within, a graphic depiction of the impact of colonization; and Sonya Kelliher-Combs, an interwoven vessel bearing the veiled names of the 573 federally recognized Native Tribes of



Kyra-Leigh Lanfear

the United States, including an extra space for those unrecognized. Bellamy's own boat is carved from cedar with a spine of ceramic bowls running down its center. The internal intervals of the work resonates with the title she chose for the overall project: *Wood, Water, and Distance*.

"On maps, Alaska seems far away from where the Pilgrims settled," Bellamy says. "But there is no far away: the Mayflower's voyage remains an iconic event in a history of colonization begun decades earlier... I believe, by bearing witness to this generational wounding, we can help in the healing process. Everything has an impact: the faraway is the nearby."

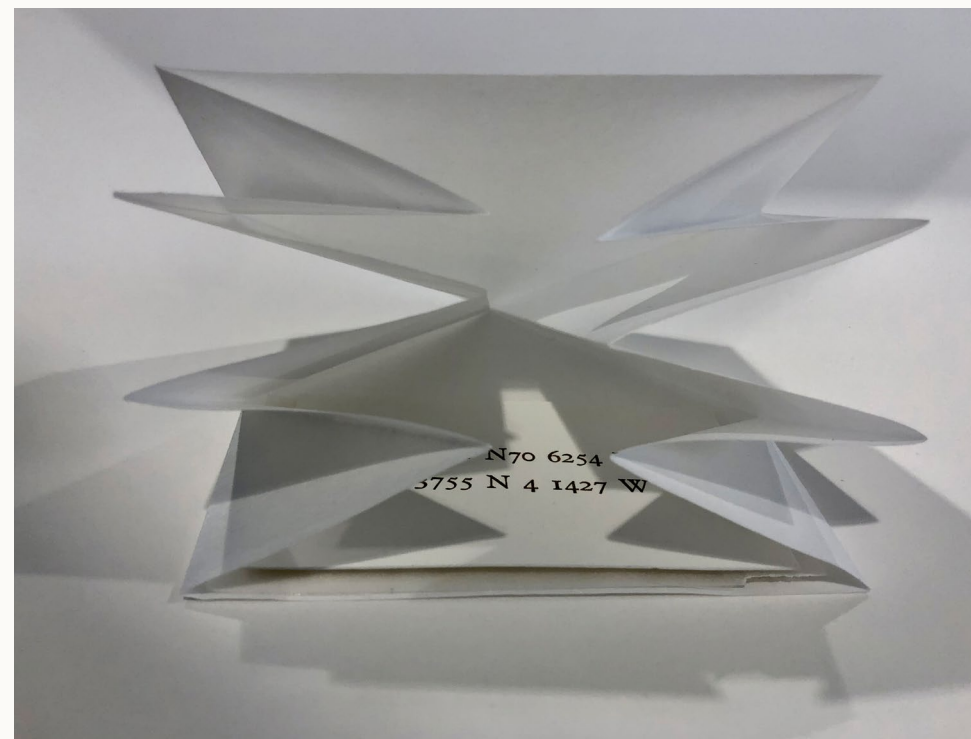
ANNETTE BELLAMY

SONYA CLARK

Legibility – the ability to comprehend oneself and others – has always been central to the work of Sonya Clark. She investigates the systems of meaning by which culture is organized. Among these: flags, as emblems of belonging and exclusion; the eloquent and expressive hairstyles of African-American women; and beadwork, one of the most ancient forms of communication and embellishment. Through these mediums, Clark shows how personal hopes and fears break like a wave against multiple shores, the collective alignments of nation, ethnicity, and gender.

Some years ago Clark developed a font called *Twist*, based on her own hair, with kinky, seemingly abstract forms instead of conventional letters. Given sufficient time and study, a reader can learn to decode the typeface. But at first it is totally indecipherable – a potent metaphor for the mostly unwritten story of Black America.

For her contribution to *Another Crossing*, Clark has adapted this “hair font,” having its forms cast in hot metal by her collaborator Ed Rayner of Swamp Press. She then used this handmade type to produce a limited-edition print. Its design is based on a seventeenth-century broadside – the sort of document that might have disseminated political information, satirical commentary, or religious instruction. Clark claims this format, re-setting it on her own terms. In so doing, she inserts herself into a history that has too rarely made space for African-American subjectivity. She steps into the current that flows forward from the Mayflower voyage, adding a new whorl to its movement – intimate, intricate, and arcane.



Claire Gladstone

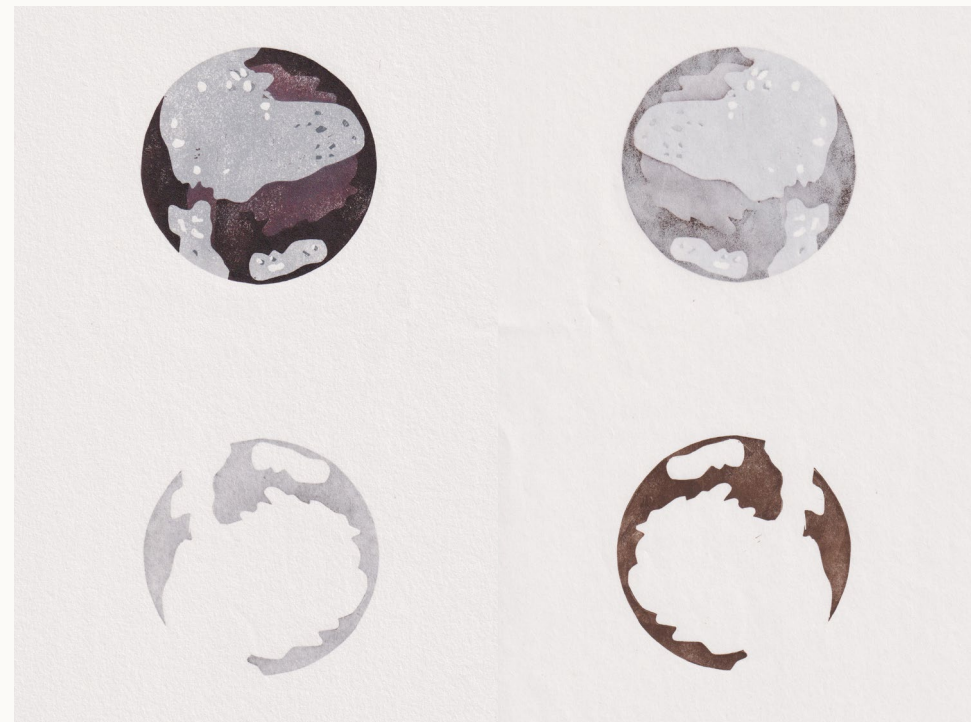
SONYA CLARK

DAVID CLARKE

The work of British metalsmith David Clarke is a beautiful contradiction. Meticulously crafted, it can also be intuitive, immediate, and emotionally intense. He often works with antique objects, left to us from the days when silver was an essential status symbol. By operating on these artifacts in various ways—cutting, rejoining, encrusting, and dissolving them—he excavates the narratives that lie within them, the lives they touched. In his hands, old things are made spikily new; sentimental keepsakes become ammunition.

From the moment that he began thinking about the Mayflower voyage, Clarke knew that he wanted to address the traumatic history that spilled forward from the event. Given his métier; he could not help but think about the intertwining of metal and violence: the guns brought to America by the colonizers; the projectiles fired into the bodies of the indigenous population. He also wanted to arrive at an object that felt like a “mutual agreement, place of contact between Native American and European cultures.”

The haunting object that resulted from this thought process bears the title *Poor Trait*. Oval in form—with the approximate dimensions of the famous depiction of Pocahontas, now in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington—it suggests a painting, but also a mirror; and perhaps a grave marker. It is made by adhering lead (the lowest metal in the hierarchy, both in European and Native reckoning) melted down from gunshot to



Eleanor Keith

a handwoven linen canvas dyed with oak gall ink (another non-innocent choice, as galls are infestations of trees). The accumulation of the metal suggests, as Clarke puts it, “a suffocation, a takeover, a total disregard for the other.”

Instead of depicting a specific individual, the work is a “portrait in reverse”: a critique of the veneration of perpetrators, a representation of cross-cultural conflict itself. Fittingly, Clarke has hung it from a butcher’s hook, like a carcass. The presentation is matter-of-factly mute and abstract. It is a tough thing to look at. Peer closely enough, and you might just be able to see your own reflection.

DAVID CLARKE

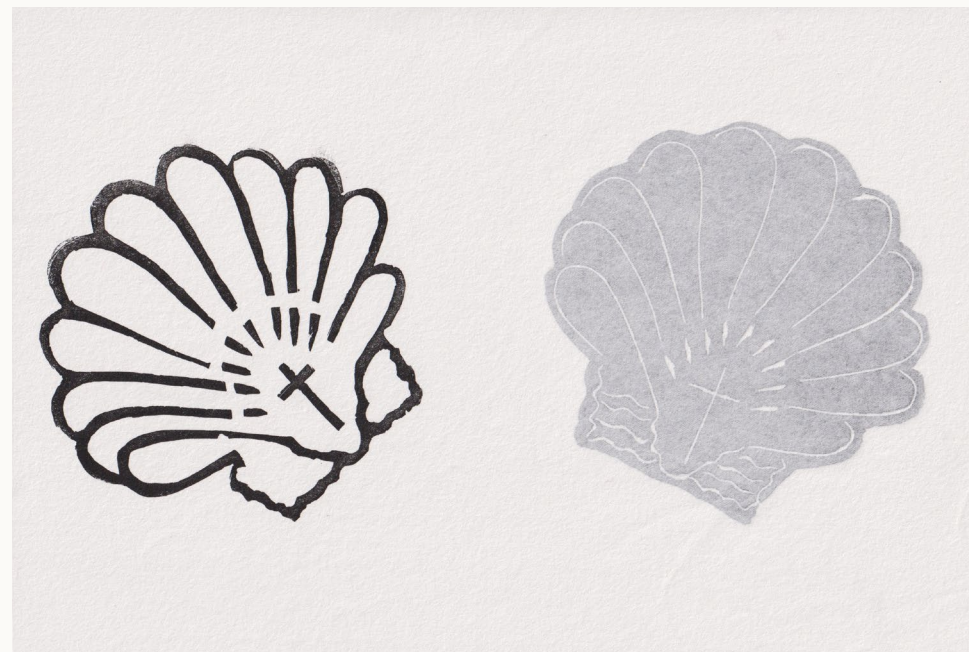
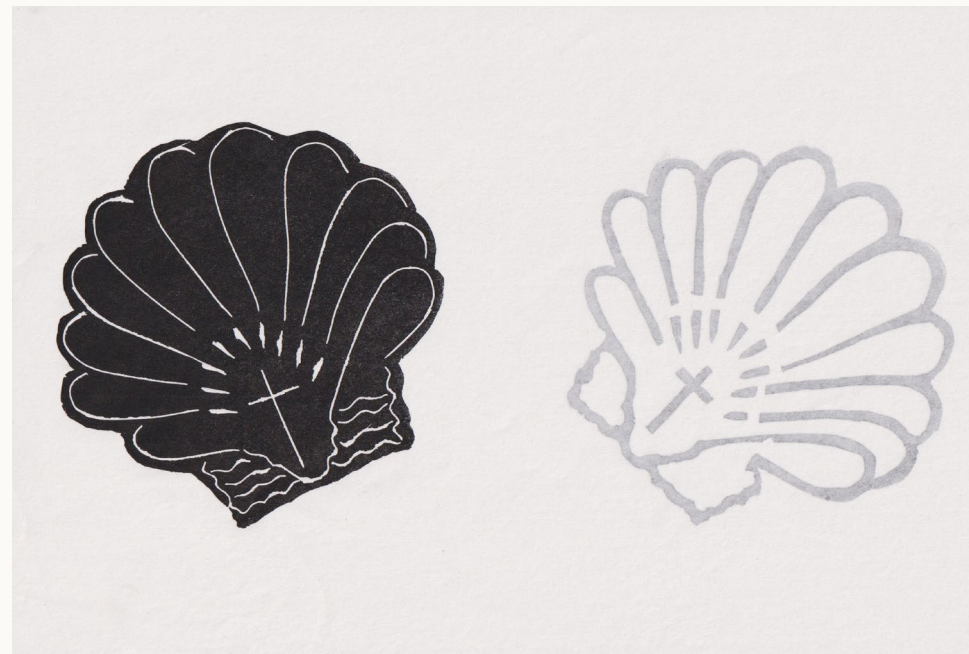
MICHELLE ERICKSON

In the context of *Another Crossing*, Michelle Erickson is something of a ringer. Her career has been devoted to the reverse-engineering of historical ceramic techniques, which she redeploys to address present-day issues—linking together, for example, the 18th century China trade with contemporary globalism, or plutocrats of the Georgian era and our own.

So Erickson was on familiar ground in this exhibition. Even so, she wanted to expand her horizons. She applied herself to the project with her customary rigor, using materials, forms, and firing methods that are very old, but in some cases new to her. The resulting pots – collectively titled *PlyMYTH* – are equally informed by Asian, European, and Native American traditions.

Appropriately, the pots are themselves diverse, made from a range of unpredictable indigenous clays. A commonality is the use of cast shells—including quahog, from which Native Americans made wampum; and scallop, an emblem of Christian pilgrimage (as well as Shell Oil, nowadays). The theme of transit informed Erickson's choice to make a "pilgrim flask." A centerpiece of sorts is the wood-fired cauldron, based on an object thought to have belonged to the early settler Miles Standish.

"There were many experiences in Plymouth to inform and inspire us as artists," Erickson says of her research for the exhibition, "but for me the most striking reality was all around us and under our feet." The complexity of this land and its history are fully present in her objects. One might say they are imaginary relics of a mutual cultural exchange—one that tragically never came to pass.



Linda Brady

JEFFREY GIBSON

The luminous works of Jeffrey Gibson are imbued with a stirring sense of interior life. Very often, they literally speak to us, in words borrowed from literature or music: *THE ONLY WAY OUT IS THROUGH. STAND YOUR GROUND*. Or simply, *HALLELUJAH!* His work is equally animated in its materiality. It is festooned with beads and jingles, vibrant colors, and abstract forms, a vocabulary inspired equally by Native American performance garments, modernist painting, and pop graphics. This uplifting visual orchestration is complicated, though, by darker notes. Among his breakthrough works were a series of punching bags, which connote both merciless violence and ongoing resilience. More recently he has staged costumed performances that veer unpredictably from the traumatic to the ecstatic, traversing the full spectrum of human experience.

Gibson's artistic trajectory happened to coincide beautifully with that of *Another Crossing*, as he had already been researching historic Native American techniques to supplement the beadwork that he has long used. The masks that he has created for the exhibition incorporate several materials new to his practice – porcupine quill, birch bark, river cane reed. ("Any material that comes through the door can be used to invent with," Gibson says, "and usually that means self-invention.") He has used them to make what he describes as "cages for the head," both protective and constraining. And they are typically omnivorous in their sources, with allusions to Native headdresses from several different nations, as well as European baroque armor, Las Vegas showgirl spectacles, and science fiction films. What it all adds up to is a potent statement of empowerment: half exuberance, half exorcism.



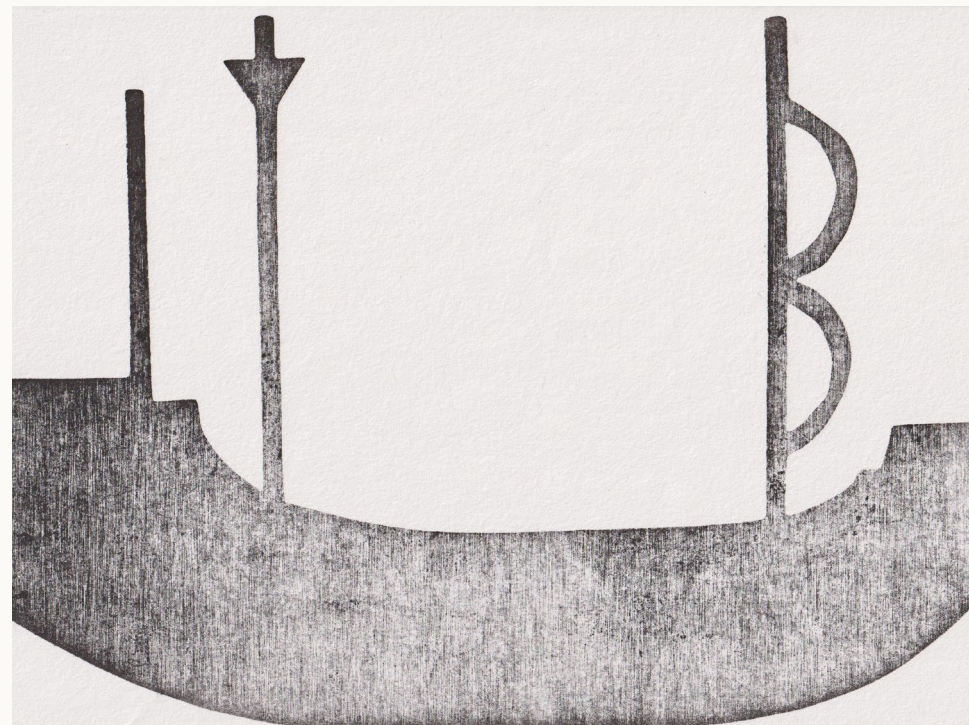
Shereon Knowles

JASLEEN KAUR

In the popular American imagination, the Mayflower voyage led directly to the first Thanksgiving, marking the friendship between European colonists and Native Americans. This origin story of our national holiday is largely mythical, of course, obscuring a troubling history of warfare and displacement. But mythology is one of Jasleen Kaur's abiding concerns. Often drawing on her own family's experiences as South Asian immigrants to Scotland, her work explores the layering of narratives—both inherited and imagined—that shape cultural identity.

For her contribution to *Another Crossing*, Kaur invited the prominent British woodcarver Eleanor Lakelin to collaborate with her in the creation of two sculptures: a turkey and a sailing ship. They bear the joint title of *Re-Rites*, "a nod to cleansing rituals, a ceremonial burning perhaps," as Kaur puts it, "but also a call to action — to rewrite the narrative, to question how we remember and how we memorialize."

The works are fitted with diffusers that emit the scent of burning wood, evoking both the olfactory ambience of the seventeenth century, and the smoke screen generated by legends which occlude the facts.



Sarah Voysey

The two images are carefully chosen, both being emblems that inhabit the cultural imaginary. The turkey, of course, is an allusion to Thanksgiving — which, we should remember, many Native Americans mark as a National Day of Mourning. The boat could represent the Mayflower itself, though we do not know what the famed vessel actually looked like. This has not prevented many antiquarian painters and model-makers from creating their own impressions of it, however; Kaur's version stands in oblique relationship to those other imaginary replicas. It is perhaps best understood as a ghost ship, hovering here in our present, yet still shrouded in the mists of time.

JASLEEN KAUR

CHRISTIEN MEINDERTSMA

Not to be forgotten, in the Mayflower story, is the role played by the Dutch. The Puritan “saints” who set sail from Plymouth in 1620 had spent the previous decade in the free-thinking city of Leiden, in the Netherlands; several of the younger passengers had been born there. This is one reason why it made sense to invite the Dutch designer Christien Meindertsma to participate in the exhibition – but far from the most important one. For she is pre-eminent, among contemporary designers, in her investigation of flow. Whether tracing the uses of a single pig or transforming a whole farm’s worth of flax, she brings poetic sense to commodity chains, and the opaque matters of supply and demand.

Given Meindertsma’s interest in movement, it is not surprising that she focused on beadwork in her contribution to *Another Crossing*. Glass beads functioned something like currency in the seventeenth century, and they traveled far and wide. Made primarily in Italy and Bohemia (now the Czech Republic), once circulating in the Americas they supplemented wampum as a medium of embellishment and exchange. Meindertsma retraced these pathways across the ocean—a transit mirroring the Mayflower’s, and equally consequential.

At either end of Meindertsma’s beadwork “map” is a lump of glass, which she sourced at a Czech factory that manufactures beads roughly in the same way that they were made hundreds of years ago. There is also a beaded cuff, made by the Native master jeweler Elizabeth James-Perry



Charley Dyson

(sister of Jonathan James-Perry, also featured in the exhibition). The chart is an image of transformation, from the raw to the refined to the artistic. It can be read either way round, for a map is inherently non-directional—a means of navigation, not a set itinerary.

Another thing that happened, in the years surrounding 1620, was the dawn of global capitalism. Meindertsma’s red thread of beads helps to orient us within that complex story. It is one single, slender contour of the leviathan.

CHRISTIEN MEINDERTSMA

JONATHAN JAMES-PERRY

For everyone involved with *Another Crossing*, Jonathan James-Perry has been a generous presence: not just a participating artist, but also the project's historian, interlocutor, and conscience. Of Wampanoag heritage, he has devoted his life and career to the preservation and dissemination of his people's knowledge, through many different routes. He has worked as an interpreter at Plimoth Plantation, advised with numerous other organizations, and maintained his own artistic practice, mastering boatbuilding, jewelry, pottery, leatherwork, weaving, and other skills.

When invited to participate in the exhibition, James-Perry—alone among the participating artists—knew what he wanted to make immediately: a rescue vessel. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many Wampanoag and other Native people were transported to Britain, most famously Matoaka (known today as Pocahontas), who died there in 1617. Moved by the fact that whatever he made for the show would cross the Atlantic and come back home, James-Perry decided to create a vessel offering symbolic return to these long-ago Native spirits. He was also in no doubt about the appropriate form for this gesture. He would make a *mishoon*, a type of dugout canoe, which is created by hollowing a tree out by burning, and then carving its exterior.

The boat hangs from the ceiling of the exhibition, presiding from on high. It is made from a log that James-Perry chose specifically because it had old insect damage. "It has been colonized," he notes, "but it is still sturdy and with proper care it can be fixed." An excellent example of Wampanoag craft efficiency—fire does the work far faster than steel tools—a *mishoon* is also a highly significant object within indigenous belief systems, as it connects land and water. Used for fishing, it is a way of drawing forth sustenance from unseen depths. In the context of *Another Crossing*, it takes on yet another meaning: it is a mirror image of the Mayflower. 400 years ago a boat came west, bearing colonists. Now another will go east, bridging its own distance of time and space.



Joanna Haskins

In this passage, it performs a perhaps unexpected role — offering the colonizing culture an opportunity to heal itself. James-Perry assembled four bundles of medicine to accompany the *mishoon*; he had been reflecting on the decision made by the Mayflower voyagers to leave their own homes, which "to Native societies is the worst thing that could happen." He was thinking, too, of the immeasurable harm that the colonizers had wrought: "this was a society that was so hurt that it felt the need to strip my ancestors of what belonged to them." James-Perry and other Indigenous people bear daily witness to the ongoing effects of this history; "driving on lands that we don't have access or right to; not being able to do subsistence living on our lands because they have been polluted; seeing so many people enjoy our birthright, and not be able to have our own rights to it." Remarkably, in the face of all this, he has conceived his participation in the exhibition as a gesture of empathy — one from which all of us, no matter our heritage, have much to learn.

KATIE SCHWAB

How to be generous, when nothing you could give would be enough? This is a question that Katie Schwab asked herself, more than a few times, as she developed her work for *Another Crossing*. Unlike some of the other participating artists, she had no direct connection to the Mayflower story. Like many who will encounter the 400th anniversary this year, she wanted to make some sense of it, but was initially unsure how to do so authentically.

Schwab did so by considering deeply her own experiences of home, migration, and repatriation. The descendant of German immigrants to the UK, she has also previously had a residency at the Plymouth College of Art, which she used as an opportunity to explore the layered histories of the city. This approach was consistent with her career, which has been a continual experiment in working – often collaboratively – to create inhabitable and meaningful spaces, rich in historical reference. After considering many possible ways into the exhibition, Schwab undertook workshops in rush weaving and blacksmithing. She ultimately decided to make two works, simple in appearance but highly complex in meaning.

The first is an oval welcome mat, made by the weaver Felicity Irons, in rush (a type of wetland grass). Based on the colonial revival notion of a “Plymouth rug,” it is exactly two fathoms in length – a subtle reference to the nautical reckoning of distance – and has been allowed to come loose toward one end. It must be looked after while on view, sprayed with water weekly so the rush will remain supple, a quiet metaphor for the necessity of care. The second is a work executed in hand-wrought iron nails (fabricated at Flameworks Creative Arts Facility in Plymouth, UK),



Zoe Harrison

hammered into the wall to spell out the phrase *Weilcom my Freinds*, precisely as Schwab discovered it painted on to a 17th century English Delftware plate.

Both works are gestures of welcome, that much is clear. But here the complexity arises: welcome to and from whom? They could be read, straightforwardly enough, as Schwab's attempt to offer a “safe space” to the viewer – and perhaps to her fellow artists. Yet the mat does fray, and one can almost hear the violent banging of the nails. These are poignant, bivalent images, which evoke the contingency of friendship, an awareness of its fragility, which renders it all the more important.

KATIE SCHWAB

ALLISON SMITH

Though now based in California, Allison Smith has deep family roots in New England – in fact, they are related to Constance Hopkins, who sailed on the Mayflower. This sounds like an amazing coincidence, until you hear just how they are related: Hopkins was the sister of the husband of the granddaughter of Smith's eleventh-great grandfather. By current estimates, it turns out, well over 30 million people are direct descendants of the Mayflower passengers. This statistic cuts both ways: it's a reminder of how many threads lead back to 1620, but also that this is just one thread, shot through an infinite historical tapestry.

Both inspired and bemused by their findings, Smith undertook what they describe as "ancestral lineage repair work," seeking a healing connection with their own deep past. They have approached this in an unashamedly occult manner, developing instruments of magical communication. The "witchiest" object is probably the double besom, a type of broom, made from elderberry and hawthorn – the latter also known as mayflower – which she salvaged at an English church where some of her ancestors are buried. They have also recreated Hopkins' steeple-crowned beaver hat, which survives in the collection of Pilgrim Hall; an elderberry magic wand and a summoner's bell in spun pewter. In each case, they have held true to the spirit of the exhibition, "recovering and re-embodying old knowledge." Along the way, they have probed at its central, paradoxical premise of conceptual time travel: it may not be possible to go back into the past, but we can still leave it better than we found it.



Sue Brown

ALLISON SMITH

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