

# Providence City Hall Gallery to Host “All That You See Is(n’t) Yours”

Opening Reception: January 23, 4:30pm – 6:30pm

Exhibition on View: January 23 – March 16, 2020

Providence has been a unique place since its founding in 1636. As the first colony in the New World with a secular government, it was founded on the ideals of civil equality and religious liberty—and yet it sits atop land that was once shared foraging and hunting grounds of numerous indigenous tribes. This exhibition of new multi-media works explores the life of Providence’s radical founder and the documents that laid the City’s foundation while interrogating the City’s complex colonial legacies.

**Lynsea Montanari**, a Narragansett visual artist, used her art-making as a way into asking questions about the ideological clash of Narragansett spirituality and colonial religion: “What does it mean to ‘Purchase land with love’ from a community that does not have a concept of land ownership? Where do values lie? What happens when these two different communities intersect?”

**Anna Snyder**, says that the exhibition “attempts to remind the viewer that the founding and development of this state and nation, though in some ways radical and inspiring, was facilitated by an unrelenting campaign of deceit, theft and violence, a violence which is to this day apparent in American policy, both foreign and domestic.” Today, as we celebrate colonial Providence, we must also acknowledge this history and our complicity in its invisibilization.

In addition to this exhibition, the Providence City Archives is excited to announce the return of the City’s original founding documents to City Hall on Tuesday, February 18, 2020 at the Third-Floor Gallery during a ceremony that begins at 5:30 PM. The City’s founding documents include the 1648 Town Charter, the 1637 Providence Civil Compact, and the 1638 Deed to Providence. These important historical documents will be housed in a state-of-the-art, museum-quality case that is equipped with climate control, UV and light protection, and an alarm system. In addition, there will be a multi-lingual transcription of the documents and their captions at a touchscreen kiosk that will provide users with an interactive experience.

Ongoing ACT Public Art Residencies place artists in City facilities and offices to engage directly with residents and staff. Through these residencies, artists develop projects that infuse artistic practices and creative problem solving into residents’ lives and the everyday operations of the City.

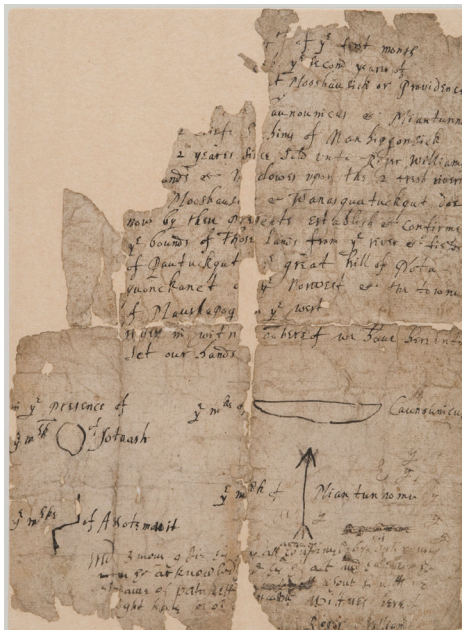
**About the Gallery at City Hall:** Offering space to artists and organizations that might not have a permanent gallery, the Gallery at City Hall exhibits an eclectic array of work that highlights the artistic and cultural diversity found in the Providence community. The Gallery is open to the public during City Hall business hours: Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm and is located at 25 Dorrance Street | 2nd Floor | Providence, RI 02903. For more information go to <http://artculturetourism.com/main-gallery>

**About the Art in City Life Commission:** The Art in City Life Commission was formed to create standardized policies and procedures for public art on publicly held land and set guidelines for private developers. The Art in City Life Commission is staffed by the Department of Art, Culture and Tourism (ACT). In 2018 the Department and Commission released the Art in City Life Plan, Providence’s first master plan for public art which established ACT Public Art under the auspices of the Commission.

## **About City Archives:**

A formal archival program for the City of Providence was established in 1978 as part of a year-long centennial observance marking the dedication of City Hall. The archives, located on the 5th floor of City Hall, house an extensive collections of manuscripts, printed material, maps, blueprints, and photographic images that span

the period from the colony's founding in 1636 to the present. The nearly 40,000-cubic-feet of records detail all aspects of the development and operation of municipal government. These collections offer researchers a unique opportunity to trace the history of the state's capital city. The archives are stewarded by the City Archivist Caleb Horton.



### City of Providence 1638 Deed

digital reproduction on enhanced matte paper  
mounted to 3mil white komatex

24" x 29.5"

scan courtesy of the RI Department of State and the  
City of Providence Archives



### Lynsea Montanari - How can one own Land?

What did land ownership look like for the Narragansett people? This three piece collage grouping was a collaborative effort with myself, a Narragansett woman age 24, my grandmother Dawn Dove, a Narragansett elder, my brother Nkéke Harris, a high school student the age of 16, and a younger brother, Yoyatche, who is currently 9. Using our cultural knowledge and blood memory we sat together and discussed the topic of "What does land ownership mean? Specifically when coming from the perspective of the Narragansett who believed that land could not be owned." There are many concepts described in the first collage piece, such as: communal living, ceremony,

utilizing the land in a way that is sustainable, gardening, seasonal housing, spirituality, sharing the space with all the plant and animal life, giving Thanksgiving, playing games and creating. To summarize: we believed our Mother Earth is here to sustain life and so we must sustain our Mother Earth. How can one own what belongs to all?





### Lynsea Montanari - Warning: You are not on the same page (Clashing Ideologies)

As an indigenous person and a member of the Narragansett tribe it's always perplexing to me how America and Rhode Island hold treaties and contracts with such high regard especially as they pertain to colonial benefit. To look at this document you can clearly see that our chiefs at the time signed the 1638 Deed with drawings and their names had to be transcribed into English. The overwhelming belief is that Canonicus and Miantinomi signed a document that gifts Roger Williams land "on the basis of love" even though their community did not believe in land ownership. America and

Rhode Island choose to believe that the consequences of this document were fully understood by the chiefs. Even when it is known that this document is written in a language that the chiefs could not read or write as is evident by their signatures. This artwork speaks to the contrast in mindset and ideologies on what land ownership means and looks like from a colonial and an indigenous perspective and how those differences most likely resulted in a false belief of mutual understandings between the Canonicus, Miantinomi and Roger Williams. Some of the direct contrast depicted in the piece are valuing indigenous women vs burning indigenous women, sustaining your environment vs deforestation, ceremony and spirituality vs Religion. Note, at this point that the red "C" shape is representative throughout the pieces as meaning death.



### Lynsea Montanari - Repercussions from the 1638 Deed

Every event has a ripple effect. For our final collage we chose to respond to how the Narragansett and the indigenous peoples of America have been and continue to be oppressed since the signing of the 1638 Deed. Events such as burning indigenous villages and shooting indigenous people who are trying to escape their burning homes back into their houses so that they can burn alive (women, children, elders). I like to make the distinction because when women, children and elders aren't fighting but women, children and elders are dying, that does not align with our core tribal values and was documented as such. We discuss topics like missing and murdered indigenous

women. Why when indigenous women go missing nobody seems to care? Hate crimes, displacement, poverty, forced religion, non-consensual sterilization of indigenous women, boarding schools, stripping indigenous children of their homes, families and their cultures. Detrimental stereotyping, If Native American Barbie went missing would somebody look for her? Whitewashing, pipelines, mascots ... the term red skins comes from bounty hunters being paid to scalp us but of course when the NFL uses the term it's meant to be endearing, right? Ignore the murderous history; only acknowledge the wealth it brings. Sexualization and sexual assault of our indigenous women, continued silencing, criminalizing the indigenous person for being indigenous. Through all of this WE ARE STILL HERE and we are continuing against all odds. The purpose of this artwork is not to ask for pity because that is not empowerment. Pitying the "poor Indian" is only to our detriment, making us out as incapable. As if we did this to ourselves and have no way of getting out. Pitying the "poor incapable Indian" (which we are not) is the mindset that leads to oppressive legislation such as claiming us as too incompetent to govern ourselves and using the concept of "saving us" as a tool to continue to take away our sovereign and human rights. These practices are still being attempted across the United States today. I ask only for people to be open-minded and to listen to us. We Need Allies to Break the cycle of oppressing and dehumanizing indigenous people and allow us our rights as sovereign Nations.





### Anna Snyder - Colonial Swine

mixed media

32" x 32"

\$800



### Anna Snyder - To Our Great Misery and Your Own

mixed media

32" x 32"

\$800







**Anna Snyder + Lynsea Montanari - Collision**

mixed media

64" x 32"

\$2,000

**Anna Snyder - To Our Great Misery and Your Own**

mixed media

64" x 32"

\$2,000





### **Lynsea Montanari - Manitou**

Many of our spirits are referred to as manitou and there are many different manitou. I use the illustration of Squanit to represent a spirit world image however through my research I learned about how we would carve Manitou statues and carve Manitou into trees, bowls, spoons, etc. For us these Manitou were a way of manifesting the spiritual world into our physical world. During my time researching in the archives my grandmother Holly Harris unfortunately passed away. Forcing me to root myself deeper into my traditions than perhaps I've allowed myself to in the past. Not only does this image represent the concept of carving and manifesting these manitou into our daily lives but for me it was a way for me to manifest and remind this world of my grandmother's spirit. A holly tree from a beautiful Holly. In reflection, there lies an unintended deepness to this piece. The message rings strong, there is a profound power in the lives of women and grandmothers in our communities. This is something that has been passed down to me from my ancestors who existed before the colonists came to what is now known as America.

My grandmother was a matriarch in our family and a leader in

our community. Carved into the tree are the names of her children and imagery to describe who she was. The flowers are representative of the lives she has touched. Our people believe that you are supposed to impact the next seven generations. Not only does this piece communicate the power in manifesting spirituality but also to how we continue to value our women in our society. These values still exist all these years after forceful colonization, attempted assimilation, and genocide.



### **Lynsea Montanari - Religion through the eyes of a reader of the Geneva Bible**

As an indigenous activist I understand how biases and exclusivity in the way history is told can be detrimental. Which is why it was important for me to try my best to set aside any biases I may have going into this artwork. It was also important that I represent as many people from this time period as possible through my artwork. We researched colonial providence and there are more stories than those of white, adult, christian, men. But how could I include colonial women, elders and children? I used the Geneva Bible (what the colonists read) as a jumping off point for researching the colonial people of the time. I read that Bible with the lens that I was going to try to imagine God given only the Bible as a reference to what God might look like. The only information I could find as it pertained to his appearance was that we were created in God's image. Which is why rather than defining any of God's features I left him as a vague representation of a human - something that we all could vaguely be represented by. In God's hands I painted the people from the Bible who are less perfect than God and that is why their bodies are twisted

and contorted. In the Bible God holds the ultimate power and even justifies killing and death. There are strong repercussions for defying God which is why all of his creations are placed in his hands at a distance from his body looming over the dark. After reading the Bible it actually helped me to understand when through my research war and killing was justified through this religion. What kind of God would justify killing in his name - a god who encourages it.



### **Lynsea Montanari - Squanit**

Similar to the religion piece I thought it was important to depict a Manitou as I might envision them only from what I could understand from my research. Squanit is a spirit of women's medicine. She gifted the Narragansett people cranberries which is why I painted her and a bog of cranberries. The cranberries are so large because squanit is a pukwudgie or a little person. Often our pukwudgie's gifts were under-appreciated. Squanit was married to Maushop (a giant) who you may see in some of my other pieces. Squanit is depicted here in her youth with bangs to cover her eyes. She is the color red for that is often a color associated with the spirit world. Behind her are long blades of sweetgrass, a woman's medicine. The symbol on Squanit's chest is representative of life, as women are the bearers of life. Yet, the faces in the background are representative of children who Squanit might have taken. Just as anything in life, there is a balance with Squanit, there is the gift of life but also the power to take.

### **Lynsea Montanari - Seven hubbub bowls for the seven generations**

Nearly everything we did as indigenous people was spiritual. This included our games. Hubbub is a traditional game that was often used in ceremony. In my community we always talk about making an impact on the next seven generations. The idea is that long after we are gone from this Earth we are still creating a sustainable impact. 7 is a sacred number, I felt compelled to make these seven bowls. Our stories are our lifeways and our philosophies. Not only did I create these bowls as a tool to depict different cultural stories, I use them to depict balance. Six of my siblings are Narragansett. I used them as inspiration for the stories that I would share.



### **Lynsea Montanari - Mashisha hubbub bowl**

My youngest sister's name means the dawn and all the glittering stars. Her bowl is the smallest, representing the youth. The story depicted on this bowl is from when Maushup the giant (Squanit's husband) caught the sun for the Narragansett people. Inside of the bowl is the sun being caught in a net, which was not Maushup's first attempt. On the sides of the bowl are the ocean with traditional basket stamp designs. On the bottom of the bowl is Maushup standing in the ocean depicted as a white rabbit as sometimes that is a form he chooses to be. Maushup is reaching his hands up throwing the net and hopes to catch the sun.





### **Lynsea Montanari - Mishanogqus hubbub bowl**

Mishanogqus, our great star, is only a few minutes older than her younger sister. She is represented by two of our 13 thanksgivings. The Narragansett people traditionally celebrated 13 thanksgiving's a year pre-colonial contact so I laugh at the idea of the first Thanksgiving. Along with Thanksgivings such as maple sugar, harvesting, hunting, green corn, storytelling and first snow, we also had our strawberry and cranberry thanksgivings. Strawberry Thanksgiving represented the first Berry of the season and cranberry thanksgiving represented the last. When I think of the stories of the strawberry and the cranberry, oh, how they represent my darling sister, for she can be as sweet as a strawberry or as sour as the cranberry. But either way we love her all the same.



### **Lynsea Montanari - Yoyatche hubbub bowl**

He who remembers the old ways. This bowl shows traditional creation story of the Narragansett people. Sky daughter is dropped from the sky to go and live with the creatures in the water as at this point in time earth is only water. She is painted red because she comes from the spirit world. In the story grandmother turtle remembers that there is (Auke) Earth located underneath all of the water. Muskrat sacrifices her life to get some of the earth in hopes that sky woman would have a place to rest. The turtle at the bottom of the bowl is grandmother turtle who eventually grows to be turtle island which is the home of the Narragansett people. Obviously this story is important to share for it speaks to our origins but I chose this story to represent my brother because not only does he remember the old ways but he loves turtles (I wonder if that's a coincidence?)



### **Lynsea Montanari - Pummukau hubbub bowl**

He who dances for three fires represented by the three stars in Orion's belt. My little brother Pummukau is definitely a little warrior. When I listen to this story I always imagine him as the main character because although he is young, he sees his strengths and capabilities and not his age. In the story three young boys chase a bear who has been destructive to the village. They chase the bear all the way into the sky. The boys become the tail of the Big Dipper and the bear becomes the base. When that bear gets shot the blood drips down and changes the leaves in the fall and when that bear gets shot again some of that fat drips down and that becomes the snow in the winter.





**Lynsea Montanari - Nkéke hubbub bowl**

When I think of my brother Nkeke I think of The Crow. The Crow is a sacred messenger and simultaneously a trickster; my brother constantly walks that line. Balancing between childhood silliness and his prideful activism and selfless work for his people. This is a story that I have grown up hearing throughout my life and through my research I found that Roger Williams had also documented hearing this story; this demonstrates the power of these lasting oral traditions. According to the story, the Narragansett people had already had squash but we were brought corn and bean as a gift from the Crow. I find that fascinating, while knowing that corn did not originate in the New England area, and yet, we utilized corn in pre-colonial times. Thank you Crow.



**Lynsea Montanari - Sherenté hubbub bowl**

My oldest brother Sherenté Mishitashin (storm)'s story is inspired by the thunder beings, as he is one. My brother was born in a storm with fiery red hair that has been struck with love by the lightning of sky world, as is evident by a blonde patch of hair growing in the shape of a heart. Our two spirits and our thunder beings were held high in esteem for being sacred and spiritual leaders. To represent my brother being a two spirit, the rain is the colors of the rainbow. The woman in the bowl is mourning the loss of her son, who has been called back up into skyworld to live with the thunder beings while she has to remain on Earth. That is why she has cut her hair as the Narragansetts would cut there hair in mourning. She's standing in the cornfield looking up and crying. The bottom of the bowl is representative of the boy's father, thunder being, whose face is seen in the clouds.

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