
Who is ... Jaune Quick-to-See Smith?

Jaune Quick-to- See Smith: visual artist, curator, arts advocate, art educator, political activist

**Born: 1940, St. Ignatius Mission,
Flathead Reservation, MT**



Jaune Quick-to-See Smith is an enrolled member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. She was given the name Quick-to-See by her Shoshone grandmother because of her ability to quickly understand things when she was growing up. She moved frequently around the Pacific Northwest and California because her father, a single parent, was a horse trader who moved between several reservations. Ms. Smith has been an artist since the 1970s and describes her art in this way:

“In my art and life, I really strive to reverse the old adage that what you see is what you get. If I can be Coyote and practice my sneak-up, I can engage the viewers from a distance with one image and lure them in for exposure to another layer, which changes the initial view into a quite different reality. After all, that is what ethnic culture is all about – or even an ongoing relationship, What you see on the surface is never the same again once you begin to plumb the depths” ([AZ quotes](#))

Six things to know about Jaune Quick-to-See Smith

1. She has been a prolific artist and a prolific arts advocate. As an artist, her work has been shown in more than 100 solo exhibitions and more than 600 group exhibitions. As an arts advocate, she has organized and curated more than 30 Native art exhibitions and lectured at more than 200 universities, museums, and conferences around the world, including 5 in China.
2. She is a formally trained artist whose application to the University of New Mexico graduate school was rejected 3 times before it was accepted. She went on to earn a Master’s in Art from the University of New Mexico (1980) and honorary doctorates from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design (1992), the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (1998), and the University of New Mexico (2008).
3. In addition to her individual art, she has worked on several collaborative public art works, including: Ridgedale Library Mural; Terrazzo Floor in the Denver International Airport Main Terminal; Seattle Alki Beach Trail; and Yerba Buena Sculpture Garden in the Moscone Center, San Francisco.
4. She describes herself as a “cultural arts worker” who uses her art to call attention to the mistreatment of Native American communities, both past and present. One example is [Trade Canoe: Fry Bread, 2018](#). This collaboration with her son, Neal Inuksois Ambrose-

Smith, represents the symbolic return of harmful trade goods, including fry bread, Native communities received from white settlers and the government that supported them.

5. Her mixed-media work titled [*I See Red: Target, 1992*](#) was the first work by a Native American artist added (in 2020) to the collection of the National Gallery of Art in Landover, MD outside of Washington, DC.
6. She is an active environmentalist whose art is often based on the principle of taking what you need from the earth and respecting the materials you use. An environmental focus points out that art is often made with toxic materials, requires large storage spaces, and is expensive to ship. In contrast, “nomad art” uses biodegradable or recyclable materials, doesn’t require framing, and is designed to be shipped in small containers and stored in small spaces.

Honors and awards

Ms. Smith’s many awards include:

- 1995: Wallace Stegner Award for art in the American West
- 1996: Joan Mitchell Foundation Award
- 1997: Women’s Caucus for Art Lifetime Achievement Award
- 1999: Eiteljorg Museum Fellowship for Native American Fine Art
- 2002: College Art Association Committee on Women in the Arts Award
- 2008: Women’s Vision Award for the National Women’s History Project in Women’s Art
- 2011: Visionary Woman Award from Moore College of Art & Design
- 2011: ArtTable Artist Honoree
- 2012: Witzer Distinguished Artist Award
- 2012: Living Artist of Distinction Award from the Georgia O’Keefe Museum
- 2014: Woodson Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award
- 2020: United States Artists fellowship

To learn more about Jaune Quick-to-See Smith

The person is the same. But these short biographies highlight different details in Ms. Smith’s life and work.

Art in embassies: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith. [U.S. Embassies & Consulates in Türkiye.](#)

5 Fast Facts: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (2019). [National Museum of Women in the Arts.](#)

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith. [Wikipedia.](#)

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith. [Smithsonian American Art Museum.](#) **NOTE:** This website includes a video (2:33) of Ms. Smith describing her history and work as an artist.

Carolyn Kastner (2013). *Jaune Quick-to-See Smith: An American Modernist*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.

Nadja Sayej (2020). "It's like we don't exist: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith on Native American artists. [The Guardian](#).