NAASA
Solidarity Statement

The Board of Directors of the Native American Art Studies Association stands against systemic racism. We have shared in the pain and frustration witnessing the continued murder of numerous African American and Indigenous American people at the hands of police and racially motivated citizens—most recently George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor, among them.

As an organization whose scholarly focus is on Indigenous American arts practice, we recognize the historical relationships between the Native nations and African American communities in North America. As communities that share the burden of colonialist systems of injustice, the arts document Indigenous and black suffering and survival. Our study of the arts is our best tool to promote the artists, their voices, and their communities.

NAASA is an organization that is built on relationships—between members, institutions, and based upon common interests. Listening with compassion and generosity, we seek to build alliances that foster creative approaches benefiting both communities. NAASA welcomes and supports the participation of Afro-Indigenous, Afro-Caribbean and Black artists and scholars. We hope to build upon a visual and academic affirmation of past and current alliances.
2021 Conference Update – We are Going Virtual!!!

Fellow NAASA Members, we are very excited to share that as a result of the impacts of the covid-19 pandemic, the Board is currently planning a virtual conference for 2021. Details are forthcoming soon… so stay tuned! Please know that we are examining many options to create the best experience for all involved. We recognize that our conferences are valued as important sites for the sharing of research and ideas, and equally important is the fellowship. These values are guiding our preparations.

We have a committee looking at multiple hosting platforms and consulting with conference hosts who made the switch to virtual with very short notice this year. We are learning from them what worked and what did not. We appreciate that our membership wants flexibility and options. These are at the top of our priorities to guide our choices for preferred mechanics. Another committee is looking into innovative virtual experiences to foster our fellowship. Nothing will replace being together during the coffee breaks. But we are exploring some new experiences that will make the virtual experience a special one. Studio visits with artists, bead-ins, and bingo! We are also exploring options to create mentoring and professional development sessions.

These are just a few of the ideas we have… and we invite yours. Drop a short email to any of the board members that you know, or to heathera@famok.org. We are listening to advisors across North America and welcome comments/advice from our membership. This will be unique for many of us. While there will be changes to the conference experience, we are striving to remain committed to our session and paper calls – please begin thinking about your role.

A special thanks to former NAASA Vice President Henrietta Lidchi
Contributed by Kate Morris

Until now, NAASA hasn’t had a formal protocol for thanking our Vice Presidents and acknowledging their invaluable contributions to the organization. Today we wish to right that wrong, and thank Henrietta for her eight years of Board service (2011-2019) – especially the four years she served as Vice President. Henrietta was at the helm of the Program Committee for the Tulsa (2017) and Minneapolis (2019) conferences, and it is thanks in part to her vision that both conferences brought new and innovative programming such as expanded plenary sessions, artist-led panels and roundtable discussions. As chair of the Program Committee, Henrietta insisted that all proposed sessions leave room on their rosters for the inclusion of younger scholars and emerging artists. Her guidance in these matters enabled NAASA to fulfill its potential as an organization dedicated to fostering intellectual exchange and thus enriching the field of Native American art studies.

As former President of NAASA, I wish to personally thank Henrietta for her leadership, for her energy and wise counsel, and for her friendship. I look forward to many more years of conversations over tea (her) and scotch (me) at the end of a NAASA conference day.

Photo credit: Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie. The first time this photo appeared in a NAASA newsletter announcing the election of Kate Morris and Henrietta Lidchi as executive officers, Hulleah graciously cropped herself out. Given Hulleah’s recent installment as NAASA’s Vice President, we have restored her to her rightful place in the picture.
Message from the President
by heather ahtone

What a year… and it’s only July.

I expect many of you are wondering why the Board has made the decision to go virtual for 2021. This is a great opportunity for some transparency. NAASA conferences are the result of a great deal of work by Board members in concert with a strong Local Organizing Committee, hosted and financially supported by an institution. NAASA was in the process of confirming a host institution and setting a plan for 2021 when the pandemic arrived in the U.S. Then the floor fell out.

As many of you are aware, museums across the continent have shuttered to cooperate with advice for best practices from the health field. The financial impact has been devastating for these institutions and have cost many of our colleagues their incomes temporarily, if not permanently. An unfortunate reality is that some institutions will not reopen. We hoped that the tide might shift in our favour. That is not the case. And while we can bemoan the challenge and grieve the change—the Board is taking a different approach.

The founding scholars of NAASA were first convened in 1979 – NAASA is 41! You have probably seen the shift that has taken place in our field with more scholars, many of whom are Indigenous voices, expanding the research and methodologies being employed to better understand the many facets of Native art. Our community has grown and we are very proud of the diverse topics and approaches that are introduced at each conference. Sitting at a table with Ruth Phillips and David Penney in Minneapolis made this clear to me as they shared stories from the first convening and subsequent organizing of our beloved organization. How much the field has changed deserves to be celebrated. And growth calls for some self-examination.

Perhaps you, too, remember feeling like entering your 40s was time for some adulting. This is something that the Board has expressed an interest in exploring. The Board members have reported that they have heard this message from the membership. So, what does our organization want to be now? With a singular mission—to convene every two years—are we doing everything we can to foster fellowship and create engaging dialogue. As an organization whose current membership is close on 500, we also believe that we need to create an internal framework that can support year-round engagement, at least digitally, and support opportunities for our field’s advancement.

Expect change. We are going to take advantage of a year that already has things topsy turvy to implement some small changes to the long-term benefit of the organization. The changes we are looking at include updates to our website and capacity to accept online payments and donations. Our new website will also benefit our capacity to manage our membership database and facilitate improved distribution of information and newsletters. We are looking at comparable sized conferences to see if an alternate fee structure will benefit the many students and independent scholars who pay fees with personal funds. We are also looking at options to offer merchandise – don’t you want to sport a NAASA shirt at your next committee meeting?

All of these positive efforts to create an engaging event and bolster up NAASA as a maturing organization are the result of the strength and commitment of the Board members. You made great choices in electing these folks and it remains my honour to work beside them. [I can hear your applause for their efforts!]

We are not ready to reveal all the magic yet. But you can expect updates soon. We are on the verge of taking the next steps. Holding on to our core values and asserting an infrastructure that will support our special community of scholars, curators, and Indigenous art enthusiasts.

What a year it’s been… so let’s make 2021 the best we can.
Native American Art Studies Association

Membership

Name:

Institutional Affiliation:

Street Address:

City, State, Zip:

Email:                Phone/mobile:

Membership – through 2021. Choose your level:

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If you are at Patron level, may we acknowledge you by name? Yes / No

Would you like to donate to the Travel Award fund? $

Total to be paid in U.S. dollars: $

To pay by check or money order:
US Funds only, payable to “NAASA”
Mail with completed form to:

NAASA c/o heather ahtone
First Americans Museum
659 American Indian Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73129-2199

To pay by credit card:
1) Download form at www.nativearts.org
2) Email form to naasamail@gmail.com
3) You will receive an invoice.
4) Follow instructions to pay with a credit card via PayPal.

Invoice payable upon receipt.
Membership is NOT complete until paid in full.