

Mondays with MoMA



MoMA

Step 1 Look closely

Questions

1. What do you notice about the figure and the objects in this artwork?
2. Watch this video and hear the photographer talk about her culture and how it relates to the process of making this artwork:
youtu.be/Fwy3mKIVeVO?t=118. What story is the artist trying to tell about this person?

Step 2 Learn more

This photograph, called *Wakeah*, is part of the First American Girls series, by Chemehuevi artist Cara Romero, made in response to American Girl dolls. Artist Wakeah Jhane Myers co-designed this life-sized doll box, selecting and placing significant cultural objects connected to her own experience as a modern Kiowa-Comanche woman. She is photographed in a traditional Southern Buckskin dress used to compete in powwows.

When Romero's daughter was born, she wanted to show her a different narrative: "All of the dolls that depict Native American girls that we wanted to give to our daughter to play with were inaccurate. They lacked the detail. They lacked the love. They lacked the historical accuracy. They lacked the incredible diversity of our many tribes in the United States. So there was the impetus for the idea to create these doll boxes and give that love and attention to detail that provides such a stark contrast to what you see in dominant culture."

Through this series, Romero is trying to draw attention to the tension between stereotypes and assumptions that people hold about Native American cultures and the lived experiences of contemporary Native American people. "I think it always goes back to that idea of humanness, and this idea in the feminist picture of equity, but also of power and of knowledge, the power and knowledge of women. For me as an indigenous woman, that is something that I want to scream from the mountain tops, how powerful and how knowledgeable the indigenous women of the world are."

Step 3

Make an empowered self-portrait

Materials: Personal items and a camera

1. Gather clothing and objects that have personal or cultural significance for you and that give you a sense of empowerment.
2. Wear your selected items of clothing and arrange your selected objects. Position yourself within the scene and photograph yourself or ask someone to take the photograph for you.
3. Try out multiple poses and compositions until you have one that feels best to you.
4. Reflection: Spend some time looking at your photograph. Think about your relationship with the objects. How do they tell a story about you, your family, or your culture and community? How do these objects and clothing provide a sense of empowerment?

Step 4

Share!

Share your power portrait with a classmate and tell them about an aspect of yourself or your culture. Or, you can email it to us at MoMA: schoolprograms@moma.org

Teaching Tip: We wanted to share some additional resources that you might find useful for engaging your students about Native American history and culture. The Smithsonian Institution's [Native Knowledge 360°](#) is designed for use in K-12 classrooms and provides support for having respectful and culturally responsive conversations with your students.



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Image: Cara Romero. *Wakeah*. 2018. Inkjet print. Gift of Helen Kornblum in honor of Roxana Marcoci