

October 8, 2020

ALEX MARR

*Native American Art and Ecologies in the Southwest*



Alexander Brier Marr's lecture will focus on two periods of Diné or Navajo art to investigate how Indigenous works depict entanglements between human activity and the Southwestern environment. In the first section, he will discuss how in Diné sand paintings, for instance, designs and materials reference stories about the first humans giving shape to the land. In 1919, Hosteen Klah, who began to learn weaving from his mother and from his sister, and to learn the Navajo medicine ways – chanting and sandpainting – from his uncle, began to weave rugs based on sandpaintings.

This Diné homeland was transformed dramatically through the 20th century by unregulated uranium and coal mines, which led to toxic tailings and catastrophic accidents. In the second part of his lecture, Marr will discuss a number of contemporary Diné artists who respond to such crises by suggesting how Diné peoples might use ancestral understandings about place to redress legacies of environmental degradation.

Photographer Will Wilson invites indigenous artists and other professionals to pose for him in the landscape. He uses an old fashioned, large format camera and the historic wet plate collodion process to create photos that are reflective of historic photographs



Melissa S. Cody, a fourth-generation textile artist, is recognized for her skill in traditional weaving techniques and the perfection of her weaves. Her fusion of eclectic contemporary themes with traditional Navajo tapestry design employs vivid color schemes and produces sharp geometric overlays.

Marr is assistant curator for Native American art at the Saint Louis Art Museum. He received an undergraduate degree in Art History with honors from Beloit College; he holds a master's degree in Visual and Cultural Studies as well as a doctorate from the University of Rochester. He served as Mellon Pre-Doctoral Fellow in Native American Art at the Portland Art Museum.

