

# Stephen Friedman Gallery

**Jaune Quick-to-See Smith**

**5-6 Cork Street  
London, W1S 3LQ**

Friday 6 June –  
Saturday 26 July 2025

Opening  
Friday 6 June, 10am-8pm

Gallery hours:  
Tuesday-Friday, 10am-6pm  
Saturday 11am-5pm



*Tierra Madre: Debra Haaland, 2024-2025*

Stephen Friedman Gallery is pleased to present *Rooted in Memory*, the first UK solo exhibition of Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (1940–2025, citizen of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nation). A groundbreaking visual artist as well as a prominent curator and activist, Smith paved the way for contemporary Indigenous artists over her remarkable fifty-year career. Working across painting, drawing, print and sculpture, her practice blends abstraction and figuration, reinterpreting motifs from canonical American painting to reframe historical narratives and foreground the Native American experience.

The exhibition opens with a room devoted to the *Tierra Madre* paintings, the last body of work which Smith completed in the months before her death in early 2025. These works represent the culmination of her interest in Indigenous empowerment, land rights and environmental justice. Each canvas focuses on a central figure, calling to mind Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man*, but replacing the idealised Renaissance male with a female. The paintings pay homage to female icons known for their political activism: *Tierra Madre: Wilma Mankiller* (2024-25) celebrates the first woman elected to serve as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, while *Tierra Madre: Annie Lennox* (2024-25) honours the Scottish singer and human rights campaigner. The paintings are charged with symbolic power and demonstrate how tirelessly Smith used her practice as a form of advocacy, right through to this final body of work.

Offering a broad survey of works, the exhibition also presents a range of large-scale, historical paintings. In 1992, Smith began the *I See Red* series as a critical response to the quincentennial celebrations of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the US, "to remind viewers that Native Americans are still alive". Speaking of the *Trade Canoe* series, Whitney Museum curator Laura Phipps remarks, "Smith's painted canoe becomes a stage on which the violent and exploitative history of this country is performed, as she masterfully collages historic photographs, zoological illustrations, and clippings from newspapers and magazines". The appropriated imagery and layers of collage are reminiscent of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, demonstrating the artist's ability to combine Indigenous iconography with modernist influences. Smith explains that she employs techniques such as Pop Art because it serves as "a common language" to communicate with a wider audience through familiar imagery "symbolic of American mainstream culture".

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## Contact Us

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Another room of the exhibition is dedicated to Smith's drawing practice, including expressionistic works from the *Petroglyph Park* series (1985-87). Rendered in a vibrant colour palette, these drawings envision various cultural markers from the contested New Mexico landscape. The artist created these in response to plans for a suburban housing development, which threatened to destroy thousands of ancient sacred petroglyphs on the volcanic cliffs near her home west of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

This exhibition is at once a celebration of Smith's legacy and a meditation on the stories and struggles which she championed. At a time of political uncertainty and escalating climate crisis, her work remains more vital than ever.

## Notes to editors

Further paintings from the *Tierra Madre* series can be seen in a concurrent solo exhibition at Garth Greenan Gallery in New York until 20 June. In November 2025, Fruitmarket in Edinburgh will open *Wilding*, the first posthumous exhibition of Smith's work in a public institution.

Her pioneering work earned Smith numerous prestigious awards, including the Academy of Arts and Letters Purchase Award (1987), the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters Grant (1996), the Women's Caucus for the Arts Lifetime Achievement Award (1997), the College Art Association Women's Award (2002), and the New Mexico Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts (2005). Later honours included a United States Artists fellowship (2020), an American Academy of Arts and Letters Award (2021), an Anonymous Was a Woman Award (2022), and the Artists' Legacy Foundation Artist Award (2023).

Smith was the first Native American artist to have a painting acquired by the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (2020), and the first to have a retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2023).

Smith's work is held in the permanent collections of major institutions including the Museum of Modern Art, Quito, Ecuador; the Museum of Mankind, Vienna, Austria; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK; The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota; the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.; the Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among many others.

Stephen Friedman Gallery is pleased to represent the Estate of Jaune Quick-to-See Smith with Garth Greenan Gallery.

## Stephen Friedman Gallery

Stephen Friedman Gallery is a contemporary art gallery that was founded in 1995 with a focus on representing exceptional artists from around the world. Since its inauguration, the gallery has been based in Mayfair, London. In October 2023, the gallery expanded and relocated to Cork Street. In November 2023, the gallery opened its first location outside the UK at 54 Franklin Street in Tribeca, New York.