

Hello. My name is Darien Herndon and I am a member of the Lumbee tribe and I am also affiliated with the Tuscarora Nation. I am a junior here at Duke University and I am studying Biology and Chemistry, and I am also the president of the Native American Student Alliance, as well as an Exec board member of Alpha Phi Omega sorority, which is a Native American sorority.

I am super excited to have the Native Voices exhibit here at Duke University. Especially after all of our activism as native students, trying to get racial equality as a native on campus. Within the past year, we have gotten our own space. We are fighting to get a native faculty member here, as well as a Native American Studies program.

So, to see Duke making the initiative to recognize native people is very promising, and I think this exhibit not only recognizes us as Native Americans, but also works to educate other students on campus about Native people, and I think it does it in a way that helps debunk stereotypes and shed light on the more accurate representation of who we are.

So, a lot of the work in this exhibit is more contemporary and is not what people are used to seeing. You don't see the stereotypical Hollywood images of Native Americans wearing a head dress or that kind of thing. And while some of those images do reflect a small number of individuals from very specific tribe region, it is not reflective of all Natives, especially all the way from Canada to South America. So, what we see in this exhibit is not only work from Native artists that is more of a modern mindset, it's

work that actually sheds light on who we are and shows that we are diverse, and that each tribe has its own culture and artwork, and we are not this pan-Indian image.

I am super excited to see that Duke has brought this exhibit here, because people can walk through and they can finally understand that things are not always as they seem in the Hollywood images, it's very inaccurate. And, each piece is not just a piece of artwork. A lot of these pieces have really important messages. For example, James Luna is a Native American artist who does a lot of art work that involves himself, and the idea of like, the vanishing Indian, or the vanishing race. And, he tries to portray himself in different forms, and tries to like get people to, it was more of a social experiment for one of his pieces, where he stood there in different clothing and people kind of all categorized him as a Native American when he was in Native American attire.

But, it's, like, a lot of his work tries to debunk that and says that 'We are still here, even if we don't exactly like you want us to look like.' And, I think, each art piece tries to like resemble that, because you don't walk in and see just a stereotypical artifact or anything like that, it is an actual art exhibit done by Native artists.

And, there is one piece where there is a woman and she is wearing several pieces of beaded work and they call it a head dress, even if it is not exactly what people would think a head dress was. But, all of the art that she is wearing is traditional art that is done by Native people, and a lot of what she is wearing is something that a lot of

Natives will wear traditionally, whether it be at a powwow or even in everyday life.

Beading is such a huge part of what we are, as far as like, jewelry, not necessarily the stereotypical outfits that you see.

And then, there is another piece by Dana Claxton, called 'Cultural Belongings', and it shows a woman, who although it seems like she is wearing a lot of traditional native jewelry, and native attire. Which, I mean, she is, it's not what most people would expect. She is not wearing a head dress, she is not wearing like a small amount of, like, deer stain clothing or something like that. Even though a lot of clothing is representative of these images, it shows it in a more modern way.

Like yes, she is wearing a dress that might resemble something this made of buckskin, but it is still a very modern dress. She is wearing high heels, that is something that most people don't, like, that is not what they imagine in their head when they think of a Native American in traditional attire. And, a lot of the bead work that is around her face and on her head, which is considered a head dress, as part of this exhibit, is not the stereotypical head dress that you would see in a Hollywood image.

As a matter of fact, most tribes don't even have head dresses. That came from Plains Indians, and there are only a few tribes that have adopted that. And, even if they have, a lot of it is a different version than what we are

used to seeing. So, I think it is good to kind of, contextualize a head dress but like, put that with a different image. So people kind of understand that, this isn't who we are. And that, this is like, who we are now as modern people. It's not what you were seeing in these old, Western movies and that kind of thing.

So, I think, each art piece as an individual piece of art, kind of has its own meaning. But, in the end, it all goes back and reflects on trying to debunk stereotypes etc. around Native people, and doing that in a way that not only brings Native representation into art, but gives Native artists a chance to tell their own stories.