

CURRICULUM VITAE: Barry Ace

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Barry Ace – Anishinaabe (Odawa), b. 1958

Barry Ace is a practicing visual artist and currently lives in Ottawa, Canada. He is a debendaagzijig (citizen) of [M'Chigeeng First Nation](#), Odawa Mnis (Manitoulin Island), Ontario, Canada. His mixed media, assemblage and textile works explore various aspects of cultural continuity and the confluence of the historical and contemporary. Drawing inspiration from multiple facets of traditional Anishinaabeg (Odawa) culture gathered from historical sources, traditional knowledge, found objects and cultural research, Ace creates objects and imagery that utilize many traditional forms and motifs. By disrupting the reading of these works with the introduction of other elements, Ace endeavours to create a convergence of the historical and contemporary. He states, *"My textile and paper works replicate traditional Great Lakes' floral motifs often sourced from reclaimed and salvaged electronic schematics and circuitry (capacitors and resistors) that act as metaphors for cultural continuity (antithesis of stasis), bridging the past with the present and the future. In doing so, my work intentionally integrates traditional cultural art practices, such as beadwork, which is then juxtaposed against contemporary ephemera, breaking new ground as a distinct genre of contemporary indigenous abstraction."*

As a practicing visual artist, Ace has been exhibiting since the 1990s, his work has been included in numerous group and solo exhibitions, including: [Emergence from the Shadows – First Peoples Photographic Perspectives](#), Canadian Museum of Civilization (1999: Ottawa); *Urban Myths: Aboriginal Artists in the City*. Karsh-Masson Gallery (2000: Ottawa); *The Dress Show*, Leonard and Ellen Bina Art Gallery (2003: Montréal); [Super Phat Nish](#), Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba (2006: Brandon); *50 Years of Pow wow*, Castle Gallery (2006: New York); [Playing Tricks](#), American Indian Community House Gallery (2006: New York); *Home/land and Security*, Render Art Gallery (2009: Waterloo); *Meditations on Memory – A Metaphysical Dance*. Alcove Gallery (2010: Ottawa International Airport); *"m̄ntu'c – little spirits, little powers"* Nordamerika Native Museum (2010: Zurich); *Changing Hands 3 – Art Without Reservations* (2012 -2014: Museum of Art and Design: New York); and [Native Fashion Now: North American Native Style](#) (2016 – 2017: Peabody Essex Museum, Massachusetts); [Anishinaabeg Art and Power](#), Royal Ontario Museum (2017: Toronto); [Every. Now. Then. Reframing Nationhood](#), Art Gallery of Ontario (2017: Toronto); [2017 Canadian Biennial](#), National Gallery of Canada (2017:

Ottawa); [We'll All Become Stories](#), Ottawa Art Gallery (2018: Ottawa); [URL : IRL](#), Dunlop Art Gallery (2018: Regina); *Public Disturbance: Politics and Protest in Contemporary Indigenous Art from Canada*, Supermarket 2018 (2018: Stockholm, Sweden).

His work can be found in numerous public and private collections in Canada and abroad, including the *National Gallery of Canada* (Ottawa, Ontario); *Canadian Museum of History* (Gatineau, Québec); *Art Gallery of Ontario* (Toronto, Ontario); *Royal Ontario Museum* (Toronto, Ontario); *Government of Ontario Art Collection* (Toronto, Ontario); *City of Ottawa*; *Ottawa Art Gallery*; *Woodland Cultural Centre* (Brantford, Ontario); *Canada Council Art Bank* (Ottawa); *North American Native Museum* (Zurich, Switzerland); *Ojibwe Cultural Foundation* (M'Chigeeng, Ontario); *Global Affairs Canada* (Ottawa, Ontario) and *Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada* (Gatineau, Québec).

Ace's contribution to contemporary art in Canada is noted in the Art Institute of Canada's [Glossary of Canadian Art History](#).

In 2010, at the invitation of artist Robert Houle, Ace travelled to Paris (France) and undertook [four site-specific dance performances](#) honouring the Ojibwa dance troupe lead by Maungwaudaus (George Henry), whom in 1844 performed in George Catlin's traveling portrait gallery exhibition. Ace's dance performances are documented in Shelley Niro's award-winning film *Robert's Paintings*, chronicling the life and career of Robert Houle. Ace's essay, [A Reparative Act](#), written for Houle's exhibition catalogue from the perspective of a dancer, won the [Ontario Association of Art Gallery's Curatorial Writing Award](#) for 2012. Under special commission by the Ottawa Art Gallery, Shelley Niro and Katharine Asals edited a film short entitled [Homage to Four In Paris](#) from the stock footage that was shot in Paris in 2010 for inclusion in the Ottawa Art Gallery's inaugural exhibition [Ádisòkàmagan / Nous connaître un peu nous-mêmes / We'll All Become Stories](#).

As an accomplished and award-winning writer and educator, Ace has worked in the milieu of visual, literary and performing arts for over 25 years. In the early 1990s, he was Lecturer with the University of Sudbury in the Indigenous Studies Program, and he was principal writer for the distance education manual *Indigenous Arts of the Americas: Retrospect and Transition*. He has also written numerous essays on contemporary Indigenous art and artists, including a series of essays on four contemporary Native American artists for *Manifestations – New Vocabularies in Native Art Criticism* published by the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico. Most recently, he completed a comprehensive essay, [Reactive Intermediates: Aboriginal Art](#).

[Politics, and Resonance of the 1960s and 1970s](#), for (7), a major exhibition of the Indian Group of 7 (Odjig, Janvier, Morrisseau, Sanchez, Ray, Beardy, Cobiness) for the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina. He has also written, presented at conferences and published extensively on Anishinaabe artist Norval Morrisseau.

From 1994 to 2000, Ace served as Chief Curator with the Aboriginal Art Centre, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), and during his tenure, he curated or co-curated numerous exhibitions, including the international touring exhibition, *Transitions: Contemporary Canadian Indian and Inuit Art* (1997). In 1999, Ace and his team won the Deputy Minister's Outstanding Achievement Award for the development and implementation of a ground-breaking artist-in-residence and exhibition program at (INAC) that featured an impressive roster of emerging and established Indigenous artists, including Shelley Niro, George Littlechild, Michael Belmore, Maria Hupfield, Ron Noganosh, Mary Anne Barkhouse, Nadia Myre, Jeffrey Thomas, Greg Stats, Jerry Evans, Rosalie Favell, David General, Roger Simon, and many others. For a complete early history of the Aboriginal Art Centre Program (INAC) read [Presence and Absence: Indian Art in the 1990s](#) by Ryan Rice.

In 2006, Ace co-founded and served as the inaugural Director of the [Aboriginal Curatorial Collective \(ACC/CCA\)](#), an incorporated national non-profit arts service organization in support of the Indigenous critical and curatorial communities with membership in Canada, United States of America, New Zealand and Australia. In 2011, Ace co-founded the Ottawa-based artist collective: [Ottawa Ontario Seven \(OO7\)](#) with local Ottawa-based Indigenous artists to provide opportunities for self-curation, public engagement and critique, and he regularly exhibits under this moniker in Canada and the USA.

In 2015, Ace was awarded the prestigious [KM Hunter Visual Artist Award](#). This award is administered by the Ontario Arts Foundation and given to support mid-career, professional artists who have a reasonable body of work, a fair degree of public exposure, have made an impact in their chosen field and demonstrate an original artistic voice within their artistic tradition.

In 2017, the National Gallery of Canada acquired three of Ace's recent works for the permanent collection and included the work *Healing Dance 2* in the [2017 Canadian Biennial exhibition](#).

In January 2018, Ace completed the month long [Nigig Artist-in-Residency program](#) through the Indigenous Visual Culture program at Ontario College of Art and Design University in Toronto.

During his residency, Ace mentored students, presented in numerous classes on his work and completed in his studio a new work on Indigenous residential schools entitled, *How can you expect me to reconcile, when I know the truth?* This work was included in the exhibition *Public Disturbance: Politics and Protest in Contemporary Indigenous Art from Canada* for SAW Gallery (Ottawa) who invited Ace as the featured artist to Supermarket 2018, an international artist-run-centre art fair in Stockholm Sweden.

In November 2019, Ace's work was included in two exhibitions: one group and one solo exhibition. Ace's *Nigig Makinzinan (Otter Moccasins) (2014)* was in the second largest **scale** survey exhibition of international Indigenous art at the National Gallery of Canada. This group exhibition entitled *Àbadakone | Continuous Fire | Feu continuel*, builds on the first exhibition mounted in 2013 entitled *Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art*, **the first largest**.

The same week as the National Gallery of Canada opening ceremony and vernissage, Ace also launched a solo exhibition entitled *mazinigwaaso / to bead something – Barry Ace's Bandolier Bags as Cultural Conduit* at the Faculty of Fine Art Gallery, Concordia University in Montreal. This exhibition was curated by Lori Beavis and presented for the very first time a survey featuring Ace's two-dimensional and three-dimensional bandolier bags spanning almost a decade of work.

In December 2019, the [National Gallery of Canada](#) installed Ace's work "*For King and Country*" in the [Canadian and Indigenous Galleries](#). The work is on a long-term loan from the Canada Council Art Bank Collection who acquired the work in 2016.

Starting in January 2020, Ace's work will now be available through [Kinsman Robinson Galleries](#) (Toronto); [Heffel Gallery Ltd.](#) (Vancouver) and in Ottawa at [Central Art Garage](#) and [L.A PAI Gallery](#).

Ace recently completed his *Covid-19 Series*, a suite of 19 mixed media works on paper produced during the coronavirus pandemic and global lockdown from March 15 to May 31, 2020. He is currently working on new work for the art galleries who represent his work and for several upcoming group and solo exhibitions in 2022 and into 2024 in Zurich and Geneva (Switzerland), Santa Fe (USA), and Tainan and Taipei (Taiwan).