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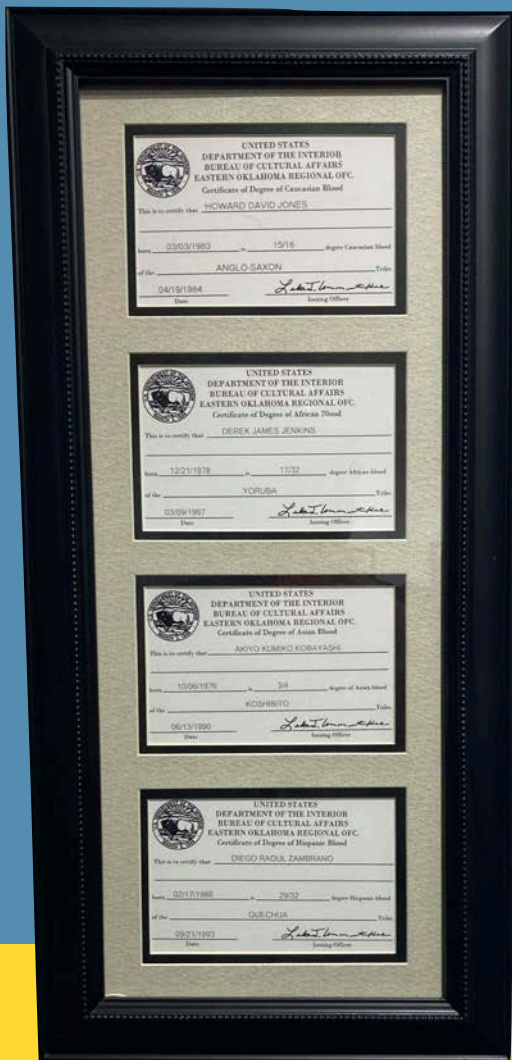




THE ART OF TOM FARRIS

In April of 2022, **The Art of Tom Farris** was on display in the Osborne Family Gallery inside the University of Nebraska at Omaha's Criss Library. Farris (Otoe-Missouria/Cherokee) speaks through the comforting forms of popular culture, but what he's saying isn't always reassuring. As he puts it, "My Trojan Horse of aesthetics interprets the contemporary First American experience using pop iconography of the dominant culture. It starts simply; you recognize something familiar in my artwork and then, before you know it, I have you thinking." Farris's art unsettles stereotypical ideas of Native people and culture, offering a complex and challenging representation of North American Indigeneity in Postmodernity.

Adding significance to Farris's exhibition at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, the show represented a homecoming. While Nebraska takes its name from *Nĩbrathge*, the Otoe phrase for "flat water," Otoe culture was otherwise erased from the region when settler colonialism dislocated the Otoe-Missouria Tribe in the Nineteenth Century. Farris, a member of the Otoe-Missouria Tribe, showed his work for the first time in Nebraska, making the exhibit a moment of aesthetic reconciliation for both artist and audience.



“What’s in Your Wallet?,” digital print

from Farris: “This piece was inspired by my explanations of CDIB cards. A CDIB or Certified Degree of Indian Blood demonstrates the blood quantum of the tribe of the card holder. Many people are unaware that these still exist and that their use is how Native artists can prove their legitimacy. However, I thought it would be interesting to see what the cards for other ethnic groups would be, if they were required to carry such identification.”

“Colonize,” silk screen

from Farris: “This piece is based on signs seen in my neighbor encouraging drivers to ‘drive like your kids live here.’ While the passive aggressive nature of these signs is annoying, they do work to make the driver put themselves into the position of the neighborhood resident. With that in mind, I wondered if the same could be done with the concept of colonization and whether or not those who colonize would put themselves in that position.”

COLONIZE
LIKE YOUR
KIDS
LIVE HERE



“Tools of the Trade,” custom made slot machine

from Farris: “This piece features a game theme of ‘Manifest Destiny’ and the reels feature the methods in which land was taken from Native people – religion, treaties, westward expansion, alcohol, diseased blankets, the decimation of the bison, etc. The game itself represents how tribes are now taking that land back through tribal gaming. However, to illustrate the point that no one really wins this game, it only dispenses wooden nickels.”