

# BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART

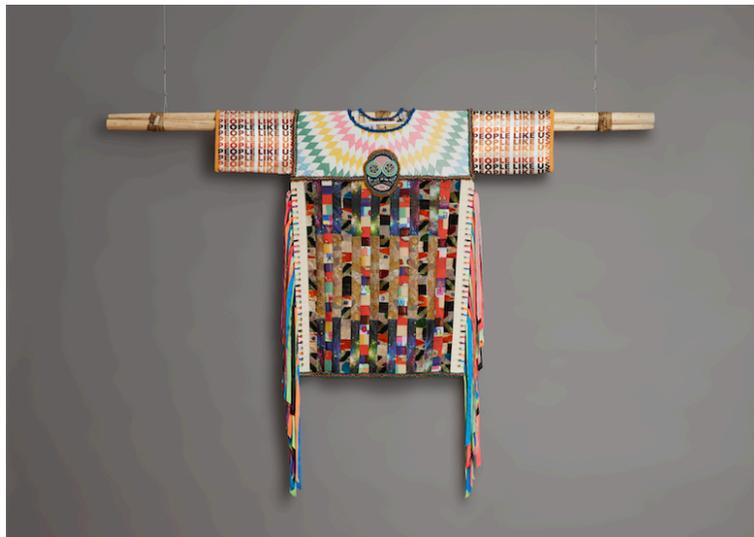
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**BLANTON PRESENTS *JEFFREY GIBSON: THIS IS THE DAY***



***Vibrant exhibition drawn from wide-ranging influences celebrates inclusivity***

AUSTIN, TX—May 16, 2019—The Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin will present *Jeffrey Gibson: This Is the Day* from July 14 to September 29, 2019. This exhibition is organized by the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College, Clinton, New York, and features over fifty works Gibson made between 2014 and 2018 including intricately beaded wall hangings and punching bags, paintings, ceramics, garments, helmets, and a new video commissioned for the exhibition entitled *I Was Here* (2018). Gibson intertwines polyphonic cultural references into works of art that are powerful affirmations of the identities we possess and embody.

“The Blanton is delighted to bring this vibrant exhibition of Jeffrey Gibson’s recent work to Austin,” said Blanton director Simone Wicha. “Gibson’s stunning garments, elaborately beaded wall hangings, and bold paintings are hopeful, celebratory works that are sure to resonate with diverse audiences. While his art is rooted in his own identity and heritage, it also demonstrates the importance of inclusivity and community. We look forward to presenting Gibson’s art to our many audiences, and for the conversations these complex works will foster.”

In his practice Gibson brings together his Choctaw and Cherokee heritage and queer identity with a range of diverse artistic and cultural influences to explore race, sexuality, religion, and gender. Gibson’s art often joins exuberant colors, patterns, and materials with text borrowed from such authors as James Baldwin and Simone de Beauvoir or song lyrics by Grace Jones, Boy George, and other musicians. The

title of the exhibition “This Is the Day,” references the 1983 song of the same title by the band The The, reflecting both the celebratory spirit of Gibson’s recent work and his interest in pop culture, especially during his own coming of age in the 1980s and 1990s. Gibson’s work highlights the unexpected connections between ceremonies and performances found in Native American powwow rituals, dance clubs, drag shows, and fashion shows, underscoring the complex vitality of his eclectic sources.

“The Blanton is thrilled to present Gibson’s work during a such a significant year in his career,” said Blanton curator of modern and contemporary art Veronica Roberts, managing curator of the exhibition. “He is included the 2019 Whitney Biennial on view from May 17 to September 22 and is prominently featured in other museum exhibitions across the country from the Seattle Art Museum to the New Museum in New York. Gibson’s expansive practice will offer many points of connection for our audiences: it demonstrates exceptional craftsmanship and draws from pop culture, queer identity, Native American rituals and art forms, and art history. Presenting *This Is the Day* builds upon our larger mission to build a collection and host exhibitions that reflect diverse cultures and perspectives, while showcasing one of the most exciting contemporary artists working today.”

A major theme of the exhibition is ritual adornment and contemporary dress. Drawing from powwow regalia, movements associated with subcultures, and fashion, Gibson investigates how clothing can be used to communicate and transcend identity. The exhibition includes seven garments that are hung from tipi poles attached to the gallery ceiling. The longest garment is approximately ten feet tall and most are approximately six feet wide with their sleeves outstretched. They are composed from a wide range of materials including plastic beads, jingles, repurposed quilts and other textiles, as well as news headlines and images of Gibson’s previous works digitally printed onto custom fabrics. With their larger-than-life size and deliberately ambiguous gender identification, they are powerful assertions of inclusivity.

“I rarely see my body represented in popular culture,” Gibson explains. “But my practice is where I call the shots, and I am trying to make the world I envision.” Similarly, the helmets weigh between 35 and 55 pounds and are ornamented with organic material such as quartz crystals, an amethyst geode, and coral, as well as found objects such as toys, charms, and cake toppers. Each explores a singular theme of death, love, peace, the ocean, and the archetype of the clown.

The form of the garments references the type of shirt associated with the Ghost Dance movement, a pacifist movement which believed in a peaceful return of land and way of life to Native tribes originating with the Paiute people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and ending with the Wounded Knee Massacre. Practitioners of the Ghost Dance, which was a central ritual of the movement, wore hand-sewn shirts that were believed to repel bullets. At the same time, Gibson cites contemporary struggles for indigenous political autonomy. For example, *Tribes File Suit To Protect Bears Ears* (2018) features fabric printed with headlines of news coverage focused on the recent reduction of the size of Bears Ears public lands in Utah, which are held in common by five tribes.

*This Is the Day* also includes the video work *I Was Here* (2018), which was commissioned by the Wellin Museum of Art for the exhibition. Blurring the lines between documentary and fantasy, *I Was Here* is centered around Macy, a trans woman and member of the Choctaw Nation. Set on the Choctaw reservation in rural Mississippi where Gibson’s family is from, the film explores ideas related to the performance of gender identity, relationship to landscape, spirituality, and rituals. The title comes from the Beyoncé song of the same name, which Macy described as one of her personal anthems; the soundtrack was composed and performed by Tanya Tagaq, a Canadian Inuk throat singer.

The exhibition also includes ceramic sculptures, beaded panels, tapestries, weavings, abstract geometric paintings, and punching bags. Also on view will be *LIKE A HAMMER* (2016), a multi-media installation comprising a video of the artist donning a heavily ornamented robe in which he dances, drums, and creates a series of seven oil stick and graphite drawings, included in the display alongside the adorned cloak suspended from tipi poles. Jeffrey Gibson will speak with Veronica Roberts and Tracy L. Adler, Johnson-Pote Director of the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College and curator of the exhibition, at the Blanton on Friday, July 12 at 6 p.m.

*Jeffrey Gibson: This Is the Day* is organized by the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College, Clinton, New York.

Generous funding for this exhibition at the Blanton is provided by Jeanne and Michael Klein, with additional support from Suzanne Deal Booth and Bridget and Patrick Wade.

### **Public Programs**

Friday, July 12 at 6 p.m. Artist Talk: Jeffrey Gibson with Veronica Roberts and Tracy Adler

Friday, July 26 from 6–10 p.m. *B Scene: A Love Supreme*

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### **About the Blanton Museum of Art:**

Founded in 1963, the Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin is one of the foremost university art museums in the country and holds the largest public collection of art in Central Texas. The museum is recognized for its Latin American holdings, modern and contemporary American collection, Italian Renaissance and Baroque paintings, an encyclopedic collection of prints and drawings, and Ellsworth Kelly's *Austin*. Through exhibitions, educational outreach, and public programs, the Blanton offers thought-provoking, visually arresting, and personally moving encounters with art.

The museum is located at the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Congress Avenue and is open Tuesday through Thursday from 10–5, Saturday from 11–5, and Sunday from 1–5. Thursdays are free admission days and every third Thursday the museum is open until 9. On Fridays from the beginning of May to the end of July, the museum is open until 8.

### **About Jeffrey Gibson:**

Jeffrey Gibson (b. Colorado Springs, 1972) grew up in major urban centers across the United States, Germany, Korea, and England. He received a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1995, and an MA in painting from the Royal College of Art in London in 1998. His work has been featured in solo museum exhibitions at the New Museum (2019), the Denver Art Museum (2018), the Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center (2019), and the National Academy Museum (2013). Recent group shows include *Suffering from Realness*, MASS MoCA (2019), *Desert X* in Palm Springs (2017), *Greater New York* at MoMA PS1 (2016), *Prospect.3: Notes for Now* in New Orleans (2015). He is also included in the 2019 Whitney Biennial. Gibson is the recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant and the Creative Capital Foundation Grant. He is an artist-in-residence at Bard College and lives and works in Claverack, NY.

Admission Prices: Adults \$12, Kids 12 and under FREE, Seniors (65+) \$10, Youth/College Students (13–21) \$5. Admission is free to members, all current UT ID-holders. For additional information call (512) 471-7324 or visit [blantonmuseum.org](http://blantonmuseum.org)

Image caption:

Jeffrey Gibson. *PEOPLE LIKE US*, 2018. Custom-printed polyester satin and neoprene, cotton, silk ikat velvet, wool, repurposed quilt, tapestry, and vestment, with glass, plastic, and stone beads, nickel and brass studs, brass grommets, cultured pearls, nylon ribbon, and artificial sinew on canvas, suspended from tipi poles with rawhide ties, 85 x 74 x 5 in. (215.9 x 188 x 12.7 cm). Courtesy of the artist; Roberts Projects, Los Angeles; Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York; and Kavi Gupta, Chicago. © Jeffrey Gibson. Photograph by Caitlin Mitchell.