

Marie Watt

Sky Dances Light

June 10 – September 30, 2023
Opening Reception June 10, 2023 4:00 - 7:00 PM

Kavi Gupta presents *Sky Dances Light*, a solo exhibition of new works by Marie Watt, whose bold, multi-sensory visual language celebrates and fosters community connections.

Embracing and centering the stories embedded within materials, Watt's debut exhibition with the gallery features her highly anticipated new series of sculptures composed of jingle cones, rolled pieces of tin historically fashioned from the circular lids of tobacco containers.

Suspended in a luminous constellation above the gallery floor, Watt's biomorphic jingle sculptures form an immersive landscape and soundscape. As the works float and turn in relation to each other, the viewer is invited to navigate the space as though stepping around the trunks of elder trees, gazing up at clouds overhead, or brushing against overgrown foliage.

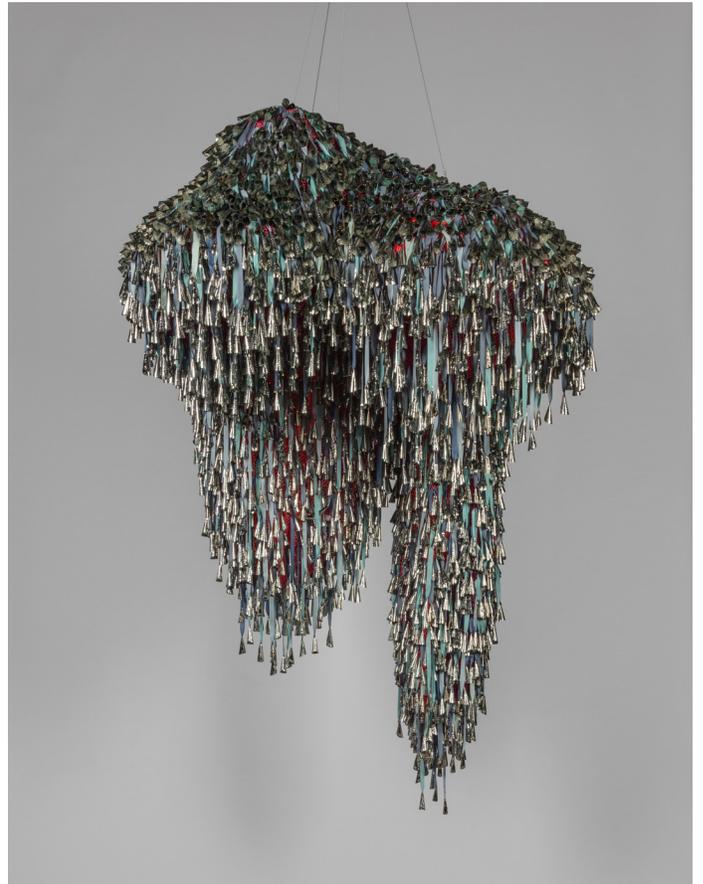
Visitors enter the exhibition through a shimmering curtain of tin jingles. As they cross this threshold their body sets the curtain into motion, generating ethereal sounds and instigating a tactile connection between viewer and art.

"I invite people to walk through something they can activate with their presence, that they can feel and hear," says Watt. "I am hoping to set the table for something that's interactive and reflective."

Inviting people to explore and expand the boundaries of mutual relationships is an essential part of Watt's aesthetic vocabulary. As a citizen of the Seneca Nation and a woman with German-Scots ancestry, her perspective has been shaped by values of connectivity and sharing.

"I am interested in storytelling and ways in which we trade stories," Watt says. "I like to set up situations for stories to be exchanged, shared, amplified, and archived."

The jingle sculptures bring together several important elements of Watt's artistic language, including materials related to Indigenous history and gestures intended to spark healing.



Marie Watt, *Sky Dances Light: Solo XII*, 2023. Tin jingles, cotton twill tape, polyester mesh and steel, 72 x 40 x 40 in.

Though their invention and use as fashion adornments dates at least to the late 1800s, tin jingles became an iconic element of Indigenous dance traditions during the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918.

"One version of the story is that a member of the Ojibwa nation had a sick granddaughter," recalls Watt. "They had this dream in which they were instructed to attach tin jingles to a dress and have women dance around this sick child while wearing the dress. The idea was that the sound would be healing. It's assumed the medicine worked, because the dance was shared with other communities."

Connecting to the present through the legacies of our



Marie Watt, *Sky Dances Light: Solo XII (detail)*, 2023. Tin jingles, cotton twill tape, polyester mesh and steel, 72 x 40 x 40 in.

ancestors, the works in *Sky Dances Light* remind us of the bonds we share with each other and across generations, and the healing that can flow from connection, music, and community.

Marie Watt (b. 1967, Seattle, Washington) received a MFA in Painting and Printmaking from Yale University, an AFA in Museum Studies from the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and a BS in Speech Communication and Art from Willamette University. The exhibition follows recent, critically acclaimed exhibitions of Watt's work at the Denver Art Museum in Colorado and Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University and the inclusion of her works in recent group exhibitions at the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA, Whitney Museum of American Art, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Seattle Art Museum, and the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, among many others.

Watt's work is included in the permanent collections of more than 80 museums and public institutions, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; The Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; Art, National Gallery of Canada Ottawa, Ontario, CA; Albright-Knox Art Gallery Buffalo, NY; and the Baltimore Museum of Art Baltimore, MD.