

For Immediate Release

Novel Exhibition, *Historic Footprints: Native American Ledger Drawing from Fort Marion*, Uplifts Stories of Resilience at Mingei International Museum**Opens April 12, 2025**

February 4, 2025, SAN DIEGO, CA — Footprints of people and animals appear in ledger drawings, artworks made on papers typically used to organize financial transactions, giving new meaning to the keeping of accounts. In *Historic Footprints: Native American Ledger Drawing from Fort Marion*, opening at Mingei International Museum on April 12, 2025, ledger drawings bear witness to history and continue to inspire new generations of Indigenous artists. This exhibition is born of a collaboration with Ross Frank, a University of California San Diego professor of Ethnic Studies, his students, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, the Kiowa Tribe, and the staff of Mingei International Museum.

“We are proud to host and participate in the making of *Historic Footprints*, a project developed in collaboration with living and thriving members of Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, Comanche, and Caddo tribes,” said Jessica Hanson York, Executive Director and CEO. “We thank all contributors, including UC San Diego, for allowing Mingei to continue a legacy of exhibiting the art of the people with and for the communities being recognized.”

Through more than 20 works from archival ledger books and 13 works by living Indigenous artists, *Historic Footprints* tells the story of 73 Cheyenne, Kiowa, Arapaho, Comanche, and Caddo tribal members who were taken as hostages and incarcerated without trial in 1875 at Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida. Among the Native peoples of the Plains, narrative imagery had long been rendered on buffalo robes, shields, tipis, and other media. Drawing on paper developed by the 1860s as a portable form of storytelling often using repurposed accountant ledger books, generally obtained through trade or taken from non-Natives during raids. Ledger drawings, as they have come to be known, represent an adaptation of materials, styles, and images to continue telling stories and recording history.

The historic ledger drawings, in the form of individual pages and bound books, feature scenes of the journey from Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) to Fort Marion, and life within the Fort, such as incarcerated men attending lectures, giving archery lessons to visitors, and repairing the roof of the fort. Drawings also depict life before imprisonment, with scenes of courtship, ceremony, hunting, raiding for horses, and new aspects of life on the reservation.

Contemporary ledger drawings reference the purpose, context, and visual language of the earlier drawings while addressing both contemporary and historical subject matter. Contemporary ledger artists in the exhibition include George and Halcyon Levi, Dwayne Wilcox, Dolores Purdy, Gordon Yellowman, Wakeah Jhane, and others.

Through this exhibition, visitors explore Native perspectives and meanings conveyed in drawings created during a period of great duress for Indigenous people. The hostages incarcerated at Fort Marion preserved cultural continuity and creativity in the face of oppression and imprisonment; they survived, flourished, adapted new forms of expression, and represented their own experiences. Contemporary drawings connect the stories and visual language of these historic footprints to the living and thriving Native nations of today.

The names of the captives and their stories are remembered with reverence; for them and their living descendants, ledger drawings are much more than art.

“*Historic Footprints* presents drawings from Fort Marion, informed by the knowledge and perspectives of the descendants and descendant communities of those incarcerated in St. Augustine, Florida from 1875 to 1878. The co-curatorial team of undergraduate and graduate students from UC San Diego and I are honored to work with members and officials of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes and the Kiowa Tribe, and with the staff of the Mingei International Museum. Together we have designed *Historic Footprints* to offer these extraordinary visual narratives of resilience and thriving in the past and present.” — Ross Frank, Department of Ethnic Studies, UC San Diego

“It is such a privilege to show these works at Mingei International, and to have collaborated with Professor Frank and his students, and the many tribal historians, culture-bearers and artists who have participated in the development of this exhibition.” - Dr. Emily G. Hanna, Chief Curator at Mingei International

Curators

Professor Ross Frank, UCSD
Dr. Emily G. Hanna

Contributors

<i>Curatorial Brief</i>	<i>Exhibition Proposal</i>	<i>Contributors</i>
Hannah Drake Anna Eaton Rhadhika Marwaha Giuseppina Meurer Quinn Nemeth Ivan Rajen Sara Sparks Racquel West	Viviana Ahumada Hedaia Anayah Hannah Drake Anna Eaton Bianna Gil Eugene Larson Sara Lerner Benji Marsden Rhadhika Marwaha Giuseppina Meurer Cassadie Morrish Trace Ridge Ivan Rajen Araceli Romo Avni Sardana Amani Sawyer Sara Sparks Rebeca Villafana Racquel West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ethan Banegas (Kumeyaay) ● Daryl Max Bear, Tribal Heritage Preservation Officer (Cheyenne, Kiowa) ● Dee Bigfoot (Caddo) ● Michael Elizondo (Cheyenne) ● Amanda Hill, Tribal Heritage Preservation Officer (Kiowa) ● Dr. Michael Jordan (Kiowa consultant) ● George Levi (Cheyenne) ● Heather Levi (Kiowa) ● Dolores Purdy (Caddo) ● Rebecca Risenhoover, Director of Resources/THPO (Cheyenne) ● Ah-in-nist Sipes (Cheyenne) ● Norene Starr, Executive Special Projects/Resources (Cheyenne) ● Beau Tsatoke (Kiowa) ● Governor Reggie Wassana (Cheyenne) ● Rainelle Wolfe (Kiowa) ● Gordon Yellowman, Executive Director of Language & Culture (Cheyenne)

Related Programming – More information to come at mingei.org/whats-on

Historic Footprints Gallery Discussion | Indigenous Perspectives on Ledger Art, Culture, and Community Leadership with Curator, Ross Frank

May 3, 2025 from 11:30am - 12:30pm

Included with Mingei General Admission

Curator-Led Exhibition Tour

May 8, 2025 from 1:00pm - 2:00pm

Included with Mingei General Admission

Gallery Talk with Chief Gordon Yellowman

May 16, 2025 from 6:00pm - 7:30pm

Included with Mingei General Admission

Art Break Lecture with Ross Frank

June 6, 2025 from 10:30am - 11:30am

Included with Mingei General Admission

[Download Media Images Here](#)

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ABOUT MINGEI INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM

Mingei International Museum, located in San Diego's Balboa Park Cultural District, celebrates human creativity through multicultural works of folk art, craft, and design. Inspired by the Japanese *mingei* (art of the people) movement, Mingei cares deeply about design functionality, handmade craft, and bringing out the creativity that lives in all of us. In addition to rotating gallery exhibitions and event programming, Mingei's gift shop, theater, education center, restaurant, and café are backdrops for finding inspiration and connecting with the community. As the presenter of San Diego Design Week and a partner to over 50 local artists and art and cultural organizations, Mingei puts celebrating creativity at the core of its mission through workshops, film festivals, lectures and more. Mingei is a nonprofit institution funded by admission, individuals, and institutional support.

Media Contact

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