


PRESTON SINGLETARY

RAVEN AND THE BOX OF DAYLIGHT



 MUSEUM OF GLASS

MUSEUM OF GLASS
TACOMA, WASHINGTON
TRAVELING EXHIBITIONS
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EXHIBITION DESCRIPTION

Raven and the Box of Daylight is the Tlingit story of Raven and his transformation of the world—bringing light to people via the stars, moon, and sun. This story holds great significance for the Tlingit people. The exhibition features a dynamic combination of artwork, story-telling, and encounter, where the Tlingit story unfolds during the visitor's experience.

The glass art of Preston Singletary (American Tlingit, born 1963) is rooted in the narrative of *Raven and the Box of Daylight*. Primarily known for his celebration of Tlingit art and design, Singletary will explore new ways of working with glass inspired by Tlingit design principles. Tlingit objects were traditionally used to show wealth and tell stories by representing elements of the natural world, as well as the histories of individual families. By drawing upon this tradition, Singletary's art creates a unique theatrical atmosphere, in which the pieces follow and enhance the exhibition narrative.

Artwork in the exhibition will be supported by the research of Walter Porter, a Tlingit mythologist and historian. Porter's research provides a unique perspective about Tlingit cultural stories. He was well-known for his comparative work regarding other cultures' mythologies surrounding the Raven story, and his research will be used to draw connections to universal themes and perspectives.

Visitors will be immersed in Tlingit culture through a dynamic, multi-sensory environment. Art objects and exhibition text will be supported by audio and video elements. This will include recordings by storytellers; music; recordings of Pacific Northwest coastal sounds; and a backdrop of shadows and projected images. The exhibition is active, surprising, and dramatic, and engages the viewer through sight and sound.

Oral histories and narratives are an essential part of the survival of Tlingit culture. Recordings of Tlingit storytellers will introduce visitors to the art form of Tlingit oral tradition. These oral performances tell the story of Raven and the light, and include original music and sound effects to further enhance the visitor experience.

Preston Singletary: Raven and the Box of Daylight takes visitors on an experiential journey with Raven, and the transformation of darkness into light.



VISITOR EXPERIENCE

While traveling through *Preston Singletary: Raven and the Box of Daylight*, the visitor encounters five major areas: Entry Way, Nass River, Transformation, Clan House, and World in Daylight.

For each area, the exhibition is composed of complementary elements of glass artwork, sensory details, audio-elements, and wall treatments to immerse the visitor in an experiential journey with *Raven and the Box of Daylight*.

Throughout the first three sections of the exhibition, voices of Tlingit storytellers will be telling several different versions of the *Raven and the Box of Daylight* story (the stories will be a compilation of three archival recordings and two contemporary recordings). Placement allows for the sounds to blend together. The motion caused by the visitor will activate the stories which play on a loop.

ENTRY WAY

As the visitor enters the exhibition, the first piece they encounter will be *Raven and the Box of Daylight* (p. 7), which depicts Raven sitting on a box of treasures, looking down on the wealthy man and his daughter. The white color of Raven symbolizes his place as a spiritual being, existing in the time when he was still white in color. A video projection will be displayed to create the effect of cascading rain. The sound of falling rain will gently welcome the visitor into the area. The walls in this area will be deep gray color representing the beginning of time when the world was in darkness. Raven figures will be placed at the entrance, near the totem, by the river, and then distributed throughout the exhibition.

NASS RIVER

In this area a river that has been built from a series of kiln-cast panels creates a serpentine path guiding the visitor past a school of glass salmon and a life-sized canoe with paddles made of cast glass that has been encircled by the river. Video projections of mist over water and mountains are thrown on a curtain of strings hung from the ceiling behind the river. The movement of the strings emulate the vast expanses of evergreen-covered mountains, low-lying clouds and fog common in Southeast Alaska.

The sound of river water flowing over smooth rocks will be faint as the visitor approaches the river walkway, and increase as the visitor walks along the river form. This area has dark green walls.

At the far end of the river, a glass ladle and feather are placed. These objects represent the moment in the story where Raven hides in the water as dirt and hemlock, trying to trick his way into the clan house.



TRANSFORMATION

From the river, the visitor is led towards the Transformation area. Here they encounter the pregnant young lady, and Raven transforming into a boy. Hanging above the visitor is a glass and metal mobile depicting the figure of Raven deconstructed and broken into individual formline elements: head with beak, wings, legs, and body. The components gradually get smaller, showing Raven's transformation into a tiny hemlock needle.

Beyond this element, the visitor encounters a body which is cast in a basic human form, lacking details of arms and legs, instead having only shoulders and a rectangular body. The figure wears a blown glass hat with sandblasted formline designs. The figure sits on a raised circular pedestal extending at least one foot beyond the base of the figure. The hat is illuminated from above by a video projection which casts formline images downward onto the human form, the circular base, and surrounding floor.

CLAN HOUSE

Welcomed through a dramatic entrance to the Clan House, the visitor walks between the house posts and enters the space through the "front door".

Inside the Clan House, the visitor views the wealth of the powerful man and his family. Objects, treasures owned by the clan, are set on the cedar stairs just as they would be found in an original Clan House. These objects, representing the family history and lineage, include rattles, coppers, baskets, and masks, all made by Preston Singletary. Additional objects are displayed mounted on the wall.

Towards the rear of the Clan House, the visitor approaches three internally lit treasure boxes. Each bentwood box is cast glass, with designs sandblasted onto the sides. The boxes highlight each type of light in a different way. One will utilize fiber optics to show the twinkle of stars, a second will use clear/iridescent globe light with a clear white light to indicate moonlight, and the third will be lit with a red glow, representing the intensity and heat of the sun. Each box has an open bottom and will sit directly over the light sources. As in the story, this section represents Raven as a precocious little boy, finding the boxes of light, and releasing them into the world. This section also illustrates the transformation of Raven to Man and then, consequently, Man to Raven through shadows that morph on the wall.



WORLD IN DAYLIGHT

When the visitor enters the final room, they are in a fully illuminated room and are witness to the brilliance of the daylight. Here, the visitor is faced with four groupings of busts representing four Realms: water, forest, air, and human.

This final room is filled with light, and with the sounds of public Tlingit songs.





Exhibition Specifications

Number of Works: 62 glass sculptures

Installation Requirements: Some site-specific furniture requirements per installation manual; venues will need to cover cost of artist to be present at installation/events if requested

Participation Fee: \$150,000 includes – two installation technicians, wall-to-wall fine arts insurance, crating and packing

Shipping: Pro-rated shipping will be organized by Museum of Glass and be billed at close of venue

Tour Availability

Museum of Glass: October 2018 – October 2019

Wichita Art Museum: February – August 2020

National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC: October 2020 – October 2021

Open Venues: November 2021 and ongoing

Support Material

Exhibition catalog, audio-visual equipment for soundscapes, and related interpretive materials and curriculum.

Contact

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PRESTON SINGLETARY

RAVEN AND THE BOX OF DAYLIGHT



NASS RIVER

"Before here was there, the world was in darkness. Raven decided that he would try and do something about it. As he followed the Nass River up to its source, he encountered the Fishermen of the night."

"Raven approaches the canoe; the Fishermen of the night greet him with their paddles standing straight up in welcome. The Fishermen tell Raven of the wealthy man, his beautiful daughter and the light held in beautifully carved boxes - along with other clan treasures in his house."

"The Fishermen tell Raven the Daughter drinks from the stream each morning. Raven devises a plan to transform himself to a tiny speck of dirt and will float down the river into the young lady's ladle. He will then be able to gain access to the Clan house."

Raven turns himself into a piece of dirt in the water. He floats into the young woman's ladle as she dips it into the water for a drink. Her servants test the purity of the water by dipping a feather plume into the water. Raven in dirt form is discovered and discarded."

Raven notices the color of the ladle is similar to the color of hemlock boughs. He transforms himself into a hemlock needle in his second attempt to float into the Daughter's ladle so she can ingest Raven."



Salmon, 2018

TRANSFORMATION

"Raven is ingested by the Daughter and she becomes pregnant with Raven."

"The family lives in a different time, the immaculate conception is puzzling, but accepted. When it is time for the young woman to give birth, the servants line a shallow pit with fine furs in preparation for the high-ranking baby to be born. The young woman struggles and cannot give birth. A wise woman is summoned and she notices the fine furs. She knows it is the finery that is making the birth difficult; she orders them removed. The furs are replaced with a more humble lining of moss and Old Man's Beard from off the trees. Raven grows into a precocious and precious little boy."



Man at the Head of the Nass River (detail), 2018

CLAN HOUSE

"The Clan House is home to the powerful man, his daughter and his many pieces of treasure."

"Raven is the beloved grandson of the wealthy man. His grandfather spoils him, giving all he asks for and cries for that which he is denied. Even though he is given everything he desires, he tires of being a human and decides it is time to leave."

Three carved boxes contain the wealthy man's most prized possessions: the stars, the moon and the daylight. Raven asks for the boxes and is denied. He cries and cries for the box of stars and eventually his grandfather gives him the box of stars which he immediately opens. The stars slip through the smoke hole and return to the sky.

Raven's grandfather is furious with him. He scolds him and Raven becomes inconsolable. His crying breaks his grandfather's heart and he forgives his grandson for what he has done but Raven will not be comforted. He moves towards the box containing the moon. His grandfather hesitates but forgives his grandson. He gives Raven the box with the moon. Raven's mother did not think Raven should have the box and she argued with her Father. As they argued, Raven opened the box. The Moon silently slips through the smoke hole and returns to the sky."



Gahgahn kook (Sun Box), 2006



Baskets, 2016

"Raven has escaped with the daylight under his wing. He returns to the Fisherman in the Nass River and tells them he has the daylight and asks if they would like to see it. They do not believe he has it until Raven takes the daylight and smashes it on the ground. The light fills the Earth and the people in the dark are able to see the world around them for the first time. Those wearing animal regalia run to the woods and become the animal people. The same happens for those wearing bird regalia, and those wearing water animal regalia. Those who remain become humans."



Clan House, 2008

WORLD IN DAYLIGHT

"Raven has transformed back into bird form. The wealthy man is devastated his treasures have been stolen and released into the sky. He is so angry at Raven he holds onto his feet as Raven tries to escape out of the smoke hole of the clan house. Raven is covered in the soot and smoke of the fire. He is transformed from the white spiritual being into the black bird we know today."



Raven Man, 2017



Frog Man, 2018



PRESTON SINGLETARY

The art of Preston Singletary has become synonymous with the relationship between European glass blowing traditions and Northwest Native art. His artworks feature themes of transformation, animal spirits, and shamanism through elegant blown glass forms and mystical sandcarved Tlingit designs.

Singletary learned the art of glass blowing by working with artists in the Seattle area including Benjamin Moore and Dante Marioni. As a student and assistant, he initially focused on mastering the techniques of the European tradition. His work took him to Kosta Boda (Sweden) where he studied Scandinavian design and met his future wife. Throughout his thirty years of glass blowing experience, he has also had opportunities to learn the secrets of Venetian glass masters by working with Italian legends Lino Tagliapietra, Cecco Ongaro, and Pino Signoretto. In 2010, he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Arts degree from the University of Puget Sound.



Preston Singletary, 2012

Now recognized internationally, Singletary's artworks are included in museum collections such as The British Museum (London, UK), Museum of Fine Arts (Boston, MA), Seattle Art Museum (Seattle, WA), The Corning Museum of Glass (Corning, NY), The Mint Museum of Art and Design (Charlotte, NC), Heard Museum (Phoenix, AZ), and the Handelsbanken (Stockholm, Sweden). Singletary maintains an active schedule by teaching and lecturing internationally. In 2009, Museum of Glass in Tacoma, WA, launched a major mid-career survey of his work, entitled *Preston Singletary: Echoes, Fire, and Shadows*. This exhibition featured *Clan House*, his largest commission to date, and traveled to venues across North America.



IMAGE CREDITS

All objects are by Preston Singletary, American Tlingit, born 1963.
All photographs are by Russell Johnson.
All objects are collection of the artist, except where noted.

COVER

White Raven, 2017

Blown, hot-sculpted, and sand-carved glass
16 1/2 x 7 x 9 inches

PAGE 5

Killer Whale Man, 2018

Blown and sand-carved glass
30 1/2 x 17 x 17 inches

PAGE 7

Raven and the Box of Daylight, 2016

Cast lead crystal, kiln cast glass
37 1/2 x 8 1/2 x 6 1/4 inches

PAGE 8

Salmon, 2018

Blown, hot-sculpted, and sand-carved glass
8 x 24 x 4 inches

PAGE 9

Man at the Head of the Nass River (detail), 2018

Blown and sand-carved glass
27 1/2 x 15 1/2 x 15 1/2 inches

PAGE 10

Gahgahn kook (Sun Box), 2006

Kiln-cast and sand-carved glass
19 1/2 x 28 x 18 inches

Baskets, 2016

Blown and sand-carved glass

PAGE 11

Clan House, 2008

Kiln-cast and sand-carved glass; water-jet cut, inlaid, and laminated medallion

Overall: 120 x 192 x 2 1/2 inches

Collection of Museum of Glass, Tacoma, Washington
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Frog Man, 2018

Blown and sand-carved glass
23 1/2 x 18 x 18 inches

Raven Man, 2017

Blown and sand-carved glass
26 1/2 x 13 x 12 inches