

Cover:

COURTNEY AND BRITTNEY NEFF

Seaton East Gallery

Ryan RedCorn
2021

Each of RedCorn's portraits of Indigenous men and women results from a collaboration between RedCorn and his subject, to whom he gives the power of self-representation. The portraits serve as a counter voice to imagery of Indigenous peoples in the public domain, such as those popularized by photographer Edward Curtis in the early 1900s.

Sisters Brittney and Courtney Neff are members of the Wahzhazhe Nation, like RedCorn. For their portrait, they chose to stand before finger-woven belts created by their grandmother.



Image Credits

Ryan RedCorn, *Courtney and Brittney Neff*, 2021, dye diffusion thermal transfer printing, polyester cloth, silicone, 2025.89

Roger Shimomura, *Guardian*, 2020-2023, acrylic on canvas, 2023.18

Delilah Montoya, *Road to Aztlan* from the series *Sed: The Trail of Thirst*, 2008 (printed 2017), inkjet print, 2017.254

Gordon Roger Alexander Buchanan Parks, *Spanish Fashion*, 1950 (printed 2017), gelatin silver print, gift of Gordon Parks and the Gordon Parks Foundation, 2017.433

John Steuart Curry, *John Brown's Body Lies A-Mouldering in the Grave*, ca. 1946, illustration for *John Brown's Body: A Poem* (New York: Limited Editions Club, 1948), oil with charcoal on paper, bequest of Kathleen G. Curry, 2002.1473

Doug Barrett, *A Beautiful Marriage*, 2020, inkjet print, 2020.16

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Self-guided gallery tour

2026

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We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are

LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.

The Declaration of Independence

1776

In 2026, the United States marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. This anniversary invites reflection on the promises and aspirations expressed in that document, including the enduring ideal of “the pursuit of Happiness.” In Kansas, the state motto, *Ad Astra Per Aspera*, or (“To the Stars Through Difficulties”), reminds us that the pursuit of our highest ideals is often shaped by both hope and hardship.

To commemorate America’s semiquincentennial, we have selected artworks that encourage reflection on what it means to pursue happiness. Look for the 250th symbol or refer to the gallery names in this guide to locate them. Together, these works reveal a range of American experiences and aspirations, touching on themes of freedom, prosperity, well-being, dignity, belonging, and hope.

As you engage with these works, we hope that you see glimpses of yourself or your neighbor. We invite you to consider the engagement questions highlighted throughout this guide.

What does it mean to pursue happiness?
Does it look the same for everyone?



Seaton East Gallery

GUARDIAN

Roger Shimomura

2020-2023

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin Delanor Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which led to the incarceration of more than 120,000 Japanese Americans in concentration camps based on unfounded suspicions that they posed a threat to national security. At age three, Shimomura and his family were incarcerated at Idaho’s Camp Minidoka, where they remained for two years.

In this image, the artist depicts a Japanese warrior crouched before the camp’s barbed-wire fence and tar-paper barracks. The figure resembles a Kabuki actor from the play *Shibaraku* (“Wait a moment!”), in which a heroic character enters to rescue innocent victims from a powerful villain. By placing this iconic theatrical figure within the setting of an American incarceration camp, Shimomura juxtaposes Japanese cultural tradition with a defining episode of anti-Japanese racism in the United States, transforming the hero into a symbol of resistance and justice.

How did the artists portray the following themes?

★ freedom

😊 well-being

♥ belonging

👤 dignity

\$ prosperity

👐 hope

Draw these symbols or create your own in this guide to reflect on the themes you notice throughout the selected artworks.



Seaton East Gallery

ROAD TO AZTLAN

Delilah Montoya
2008

Part of a series begun by the artist in 2004, this work depicts the dangerous migratory route across the Arizona Sonora desert. The ancient Aztecs, ancestors of modern-day Mexicans, believed that they came from Aztlán, a region now encompassed by the American Southwest. By referencing this history in the title, Montoya brings attention to the artificiality of borders drawn across an undivided land—boundaries forged through the territorial conflicts of the United States, Spain, and Mexico.

How do these artworks relate to the pursuit of Happiness?

Seaton East Gallery

SPANISH FASHION

Gordon Roger Alexander Buchanan Parks
1950



This photograph is one of many fashion images created by renowned artist and Kansas native Gordon Parks. At the time it was taken, Parks was living in Paris as a staff photographer for LIFE magazine. The image reflects how far he had traveled from his roots in the segregated town of Fort Scott.

In 1949 LIFE hired Parks as its first African American staff photographer and assigned him to its Paris bureau for two years. Over the course of his career, he expanded his artistic practice across multiple mediums, including photography, prose, poetry, and music.

Seaton East Gallery

JOHN BROWN'S BODY LIES A-MOULDERING IN THE GRAVE

John Stuart Curry

ca. 1946



Curry designed this painting for an edition of Stephen Vincent Benét's 1928 poem, *John Brown's Body*. The image was inspired by a concluding passage about the fiery abolitionist, "The End of John Brown's Song," which Curry affixed to the back of the work:

*Out of John Brown's strong sinews the tall
skyscrapers grow,
Out of his heart the chanting buildings rise,
Rivet and girder, mortar and dynamo,
Pillar of smoke by day and fire by night.*

Seaton East Gallery

A BEAUTIFUL MARRIAGE

Doug Barrett

2020



In this portrait, Barrett reflects on a Manhattan, Kansas, couple whose life together spans decades of personal and civic change. The artist has said of this work:

Mr. Ramon 'Ray' Guliford & wife Ms. Billye Cole have been in Manhattan, Kansas, since 1963 when he came from southern Kansas for better opportunity. Ray retired from KGAS (Kansas Gas) and was the first African American to have worked there. He recalls a time when Blacks couldn't cross over Poyntz Avenue. I asked them how have they managed to adjust to all the changes that they have seen in their time on Yuma Street. They told me that their faith keeps them covered and sustains them!

In what ways do these artworks relate to one another?



Norman Akers
Calling for Home, 2023

Oil on canvas

2023 Friends of the Beach Museum of Art annual purchase 2023.11

Helm Gallery



Thomas W. Johnston
Farmstead, Blue Rapids, Kansas, ca. 1890

Oil on canvas

Funds provided by Cleve Humbert, in recognition of K-State students from rural Kansas, 2007.77

Helm Gallery



Archie Scott Gobber
Kneeling Flag #2, 2018 (fabricated 2022)

Enamel on aluminum

Gift of the artist, 2022.41

Seaton East Gallery



Jesus (Jessie) Manuel Montez

21 with Cube, 2001

Corrugated paperboard with acrylic

Friends of the Beach Museum of Art purchase, 2003.5

Vanier Gallery



Barbara Veroeven

Reinforced Contradiction, ca. 1978

Acrylic on canvas

2021.31

Vanier Gallery



Randy Regier

Little Capitalist, 2003

Wood, plastic, and bronze with engraving

Gift of David and Patrice Lewerenz, 2022.44

Vanier Gallery