

NEWS RELEASE
 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE [1/30/2026]



Tyler Dallis



Casey TZ Smith



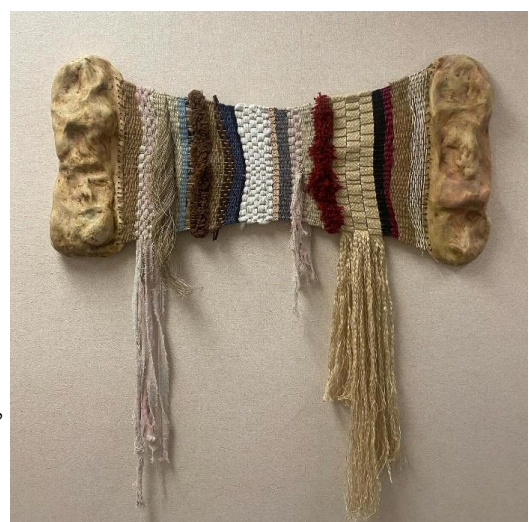
Steve Failows & Dick Bixler

1.30.26 Filley Art Museum Adds Four New Pieces to the Permanent Collection

Pratt, Kansas — The Vernon Filley Art Museum Exhibit and Collections Committee is so very honored to announce the acquisition of several new pieces to the Vernon Filley Permanent Art Collection. Approval of the purchase came unanimously from the Vernon Filley Board of Directors at the January meeting. This significant expansion underscores the museum's commitment to preserving powerful narratives of American history and showcasing the mastery of regional contemporary artists. Among the new acquisitions are evocative works by Tyler L. Dallis, Casey TZ Smith, Dick Bixler, and Steve Failows; local artists who utilize ceramics and mixed media to explore the profound themes of resilience, historical memory, and the human spirit.

About the New Acquisitions

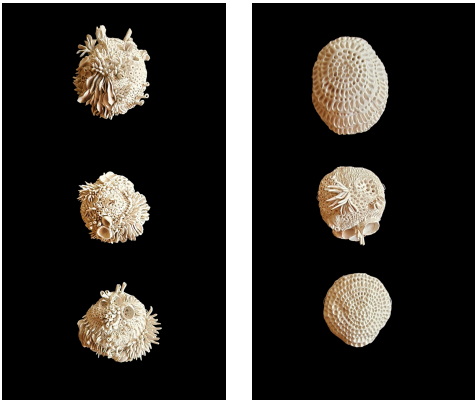
Tyler L. Dallis (Cherokee Nation): *And So We Walked* Dallis's multimedia work (stoneware and various fibers) serves as a poignant exploration of the Trail of Tears. Through abstracted ceramic landscapes and tensioned weaving, Dallis depicts the forced displacement of the Cherokee and other Southeastern nations to the Great Plains. Utilizing natural fibers and blood-stained bandages, the piece captures the "longing and pain" of the 1838 removal—an event scholars identify as ethnic cleansing or genocide. Dallis transforms geographical portraits of the Southeastern Woodlands and the Great Plains into a powerful narrative of ancestral memory. Dallis is currently the art instructor at Pratt Community College in Pratt, Kansas. A Master of Fine Arts graduate (2023), Dallis specializes in ceramic sculpture, collage, and digital photography. Their work explores the complexities of the Indigenous experience in a contemporary world, often confronting difficult personal narratives through tactile media. The Vernon Filley Art Museum feels utterly honored to hold this incredible piece of art in the permanent collection-freezing the footprint Dallis is leaving on the Pratt art community.



And So We Walked
 Tyler L Dallis
 Stoneware and Various Fibers
 3' x 3' x .5'

Casey TZ Smith: *Synthesis 451 & 278* Casey TZ Smith is a South Central Kansas-based artist whose work examines the intersection of ecological resilience and human endurance. Currently an Adjunct Ceramics Professor at Wichita State University and an MFA graduate of Fort Hays State University, Smith's practice draws parallels between the intelligence of the natural world and humanity's capacity to adapt to societal and personal transformation. Her work invites

viewers to consider the wisdom inherent in nature and the evolving story of human survival. Smith was awarded “Best of Show” in the 2025 Ninnescah Art Exhibition at the Vernon Filley Art Museum. Juror of the Show Linda Ganstrom shares this about Casey TZ Smith’s work: "I selected Casey's work for her material mastery and creative use of the porcelain to depict the small landscapes/seascapes inspired by her love and memory of growing up near the ocean. Once art reaches that professional level, the competition shifts to what touches the heart. These tiny landscapes touched by heart as I felt they might be dead coral yet depicted the beauty and importance of the seas and her creatures.”



Left to Right: Synthesis 451 & 278

Casey TZ Smith
Ceramic
17” x 6” x 3”

Dick Bixler with Steve Failows: Steel Kaleidoscope Prototype Local Pratt metal artist Dick Bixler, in collaboration with Arizona artist Steve Failows, combines durable steel with the mesmerizing precision of high-end optics. This work is a celebration of how two contrasting elements can unite to create beauty. Failows has taken a popular toy often found in gift shops and transformed it into a collectible art form sold in exclusive galleries around the country. While many of Failows' designs incorporate stained glass, this specific collaboration replaces traditional glass with a playful, rotating bowl of marbles, allowing the viewer to manipulate the colors and patterns at will.

Each unique kaleidoscope is mounted on a "one-of-a-kind" crystal, fossil, or burl pedestal. Every piece of artwork by Dick Bixler begins with raw metal and is shaped entirely by hand. Bixler



Steel Kaleidoscope Prototype
Dick Bixler In Collaboration with Steve Failows
26” x 18” x 19”

intentionally avoids patterns, jigs, technology, or borrowed ideas—ensuring each sculpture is truly one of a kind. Paired with Failows, this incredible meeting of minds has resulted in a centerpiece that is as much an invitation as it is an observation. The kaleidoscope is a wonderful addition to the Filley, bridging the gap between "fine art" and "functional play." It provides a tangible, hands-on art experience for every visitor, proving that

beauty isn't just something to be looked at—it’s something to be created and shared by everyone who walks through our doors.

"We don't stop playing because we grow old...
... we grow old because we stop playing"

- Steve Failows

The Vernon Filley Art Museum Board of Directors: Dick Bixler, Don Buhler, Betty Chinn, Kerry Enick, Kim Fritzemeier, Rick Gerber, Sue Givens, Cassie Goyen, Lori Jones, Cindy Keller, Kim Krehbiel, Terah Murphy, Dr. Alex Neel, Dr. Harlan Shinkle, Kerry Thieme, and Tonya White

The Vernon Filley Art Museum Committee on Exhibits and Collections: Dr. Harlan Shinkle, Dr. Mike Westerhaus, Doug Brehm, Larry Kahmeyer, Lisa Perez-Miller

Upcoming Events at the Filley:

- Friday, February 6 - Lunch & Learn with Linda Loomis - Committed to Memory
- February 21st through the 27th: Skyline Art Fair Exhibit in Lobby
- Sat. February 28th - Mardi Gras Ball & ART Auction 2026
- The Mardi Gras Ball & Art Auction to Benefit The Filley Art Museum is back - NEW EXCITING OPTION RESERVE A TABLE FOR 8 FRIENDS - TICKETS ON SALE NOW AT THIS LINK:
- <https://vernonfilleyartmuseum.org/mardi-gras-to-benefit-the-filley-art-museum/>
- This event supports the sustainability of the museum and broadens awareness and access of our programs within our surrounding communities. The Mardi Gras Ball & Art Auction will be a night filled with celebrations of the arts featuring renowned musician Kelley Hunt, a live art auction, cajun cuisine sampling with on-site chef exhibitions, and more! We hope you will consider being a sponsor for this prestigious occasion. Tickets sold out last year and we are excited to offer this opportunity again this year at the Pratt Municipal Building.