



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with Linda  
Lomahaftewa, 2020 September 2

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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Linda Lomahaftewa on September 9, 2020. The interview took place in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and was conducted by Lara Evans for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's Pandemic Oral History Project.

This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

The sound quality for this interview is poor throughout, leading to an abnormally high number of inaudible sections.

## Interview

LARA EVANS: This is Lara Evans in Santa Fe, New Mexico interviewing Linda Lomahaftewa, also in Santa Fe, New Mexico on September 9, 2020 for the Smithsonian Institution Archives of American Art Pandemic Project. Hi, Linda, how are you doing today?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: I'm doing good. I'm doing Artists in Residence over here at Vital Spaces here in Santa Fe, New Mexico, so this is a studio space that I'm at right now.

LARA EVANS: Oh great.

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Yeah, yeah [affirmative].

LARA EVANS: —So were there things that are different about your residency because of COVID?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Um—I'm just thankful, uh, that—that with this residency through the Institute of American Indian Arts, uh, gave me the opportunity to get out of the house and—and not so be worried about everything on the news and, um, to come to a place to work so I'm—I'm really grateful for that.

LARA EVANS: Great. And, um, how—how have you felt the impact of, uh, COVID in your life right now?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Um—It's impacted me by, um, not being able to visit my—my family and my—my son, my daughter, my grandkids, so, uh—and my friends, um, so it's been—it's been—scary, but you know, we're all trying to keep safe and protected.

LARA EVANS: So what does that mean? What do you have to do to stay safe and protected and—and what is your family having to do?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Oh well, you know, having to wear masks, um, in public whenever, uh, we go out and, um, make sure that, you know, we wash our hands and things are sanitized, um. Just being careful and not trying to be around too many people [clears throat].

LARA EVANS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And I think you have some family at Hopi. Are they having to take additional measures?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Oh yes, uh—at Hopi the villages have been closed to outsiders so nobody can come in unless you live there. They do a—a checkpoint, um, to—to try and keep the, uh, the people safe. Uh—My sister lives out—out on the reservation and, um, she keeps me, kind of, up to date on what's going on out there.

LARA EVANS: And how are people there weathering it?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Um—Well in our village, um, the village of Shungopavi, Second Mesa, she, uh, she has told me that, you know, a few people have passed away because of the COVID but, um, she didn't tell me who they were so I don't—I don't know. It's just, uh—just keeping me informed that way.

LARA EVANS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: I have [inaudible] other people talking.

LARA EVANS: Are there things that you're not able to do right now that are really having an impact on you?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Um—Only—only that, um, I usually like to, you know, travel someplace through the summer but I haven't been able to do that, just have to stick—sticking close to home.

LARA EVANS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So you're making a lot of work there. What are you thinking about while you're working?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Oh—Yeah so I've been trying to work and, um, getting some new ideas going and to me the best way to start is just to, you know, put something down on paper or canvas or whatever and then, uh, take it from there so—I've, um—either just like small—small, uh pieces that I've started working on and hopefully I can go to a larger size with them, and then maybe even, you know, uh, use them in collage.

LARA EVANS: And were you able to do work, um, before the—the pandemic and then, um, when it started, before the residency?

[00:04:59]

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Uh—Well, because I—I don't have a studio space at home, I basically work from my dining room table and it's—and it's there so, um, I was—I'm really grateful to be able to come over to the studio space and have, you know, more room and space to work from.

LARA EVANS: What's drawing your attention, uh, artistically?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Sorry, say that again?

LARA EVANS: What's drawing your attention artistically? What's drawing your attention artistically?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Oh, um—Again, just the—the, you know, the—the act of putting marks down on paper, uh, just to get something going and then the colors, I guess, would inspire me because it—it—I maybe start working on small pieces, um, uh, with painting. And I like to do collage too. I've been cutting up some of the smaller pieces and collaging on—on canvas.

LARA EVANS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Um—What kinds of things do you miss right now that you look forward to resuming in the future?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Um—Being around other people, socializing more because I'm really a social person, I like, um, meeting with friends and, uh, family and just, you know, being together so I'm—I'm, kind of, I'm looking forward to that I don't know how it's going to be, you know, with—in the future. Like, we just—I guess we just have to be safer in our, um—in how—how we do things like wearing masks and, um, not being around too many people.

LARA EVANS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Are there ways that you, um—I don't know, substituted for that?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Other ways what?

LARA EVANS: That you've substituted—

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: I'm sorry, I didn't—

LARA EVANS: Are there ways that you've substituted?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Substituted? Yeah, I've been doing video chats with some friends and, uh, and then texting also, uh, like, my sister and, you know, other friends of mine that, um—We text each other to tell—letting each other know what's going on, and, um—so—so that's really been helpful. Being in contact that way.

LARA EVANS: And is that something that you did before the pandemic or is it something new?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: It's all new, the video—Well texting before I did, but not the video chats

and that's been really, um—that's been—that's been new, so I like—I like doing that. And then listening to, um, lectures on video chat with, uh, the School of American Research [School for Advanced Research] and Scholl Foundation of different artists and culture, and um, the cultural ways, and their art.

LARA EVANS: What kind of topics are those on?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Um—They've been on beadwork and, uh, the most recent one was, uh, Neebin Southall from, um—well, she lives here in Santa Fe but she's Anishinaabe and she was talking about their cultural, um—the—the ways that—the way that they dress and, uh, beadwork—and birchbark.

LARA EVANS: Yeah, so is it—are you guys looking at artworks or looking at artworks on the screen or how does that work?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Well yeah, whenever the—the speaker is talking, they usually have, uh—she had a really good presentation, PowerPoint presentation, showing the maps of the regions and, um—and then showing, um, examples like, you know, on our board.

LARA EVANS: Hmm [affirmative]. Are they showing works from the collection—

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Same with the Coe Foundation [The Ralph T. Coe Center for the Arts]. Like with the Scholl Foundation, they usually, um, always address with the collection and then, um, the person will talk about, um, that particular piece and then lay the background of where they're from.

LARA EVANS: Great. So it—it makes up in a—in a little bit the, uh [laughs]—the isolation? Keeps you engaged with artists?

[00:10:04]

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Sorry. What was that the question again?

LARA EVANS: Um—Does it keep you engaged in thinking about art and working?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Yeah, because, you know, I was, like, worried about it at home just [inaudible] Native cultures and how they do these, uh, and then, you know, see the—see the similarities of—of, you know, between Hopi and Choctaw.

LARA EVANS: And do lots of people participate or is it just you and a couple of people who you're already friends with?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Oh, there's a lot of people that participate although, um, they don't do Q&A until the end and then people type in questions and then ask some, you know, um, more specific questions. I haven't been able to do that because I don't know how to type in the questions, so I just listen. You know, I'm still learning.

LARA EVANS: I'll—I'll show you how to do it [laughs].

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Ok [laughs].

LARA EVANS: Um—Has your—let me find another question. Has the situation complicated, um, caring for yourself or your family?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Um—comp—only that, you know, it's that separation. Not being able to, uh, see my—my son and my daughter as often as I would like to. I usually like to—my daughter would usually invite me to come over for dinner and then, um, then I could be with her [inaudible] so, you know, we couldn't do that. With my son, um, I stayed with them for a while just to be on the safe side because [inaudible] two little boys [inaudible] we're all trying to be safe, you know, [inaudible] talk to them on the phone or text them [inaudible].

LARA EVANS: Um—So there's—people are talking about, um, the situation on the news and in newspapers and on the radio and I was wondering if there's something you think that's missing from the—the accounts of this crisis. Something people aren't talking about that maybe we should?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Well I think everyone's talking about everything. You know, that, uh—

that's missing, to me, the uh, I think the leadership of our country, um, could have been better—could be better because the President of the United States is not [inaudible] to the [inaudible] and, uh, you know, it doesn't—it doesn't feel good when your leader can't, um, reassure you that things are okay.

LARA EVANS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What kind of leadership are you, um, thinking we should be looking for?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Well, uh—there was one program that I listened to on—on NPR radio, um—uh, not too long ago. It was over the summer about, um, one of the governors in one of the Pueblos—Seven Pueblos Acoma, um, and how he reached out to his people in the village and him and other officials went to, um, people's houses to—just to go see how every—how different households were doing, um. I—I just think that was really commendable and, um, it reassures, you know, the people that, um, you know, they're being cared about.

LARA EVANS: Do you see some overlap between some of the issues that are coming up around Black Lives Matter and the way, um, COVID is impacting Native communities?

[00:15:04]

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: I think so, uh. It brings attention to, you know, that kind of unrest and, you know, because Native America—we're, you know—we, uh, we're always [inaudible] as well and it [inaudible] attention to people of color, how we're treated.

LARA EVANS: Did you lose some opportunities, um, as an artist because of the pandemic?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Um—There's been a couple of, um—I was supposed to give some talks that were paneled, uh, but it worked out as it got rescheduled so that's going to be coming later, but um, everything was just, kind of, shut down for now, uh, you know, which is good. I mean, we—we need to be safe.

LARA EVANS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: So but like I said, now they're—now they're being rescheduled so it—it's just going to happen at a later time—

LARA EVANS: Yeah. Does time—

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: —and it will be, um—it will be virtual.

LARA EVANS: Okay. So completely changing how things work is necessary, yeah?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Yeah.

LARA EVANS: How does that make you feel?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: It's okay. It's like, you know, a new normal we just have to get used to all these changes and how—how we can, uh—how we can do things in the future. I think, you know, kids now have to do that going to school until they can actually get back in the classroom if they—if they ever will. We don't know, um. So we're all having to learn.

LARA EVANS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. As someone who didn't grow up with, uh, this kind of technology that we're using right now, um, what—what do you—what do you think about impacts on the future from—from this big change?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Well like I said, everything's changing now. It's just—it's just—we just all have to learn a new way in how to get around it, um—so it is impactful.

LARA EVANS: Yeah. Imagine what your granddaughter's life will be like in 20 years and how will—it will—how it will be impacted

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: I know. I know. I—Yeah, I have no idea. But I also think about what about the, you know, I mean, now I'm an elder myself but what about those are even older is that, you know, can't get on the computer or don't have access to it. I don't know how it's been for them.

LARA EVANS: Yeah. There's a lot of places in New Mexico with no internet service at all.

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: That's correct.

LARA EVANS: Yeah. Um—You were in San Francisco during the—the '60s and early '70s, um, when there was a lot of social unrest, um. Do you see any parallels between then and now? What's different?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Yeah, it's just—it's been more impactful. And back then it was all the Vietnam War and, you know, peace marches and, um, but now all over it's—to me—or—I don't know if it's because of the media that, you know, we're able to see more of this but, um, protests, you know, all over the—all over the world. It's just that back then, I—I'm not sure, like, um, you know, you saw [inaudible] to me [inaudible] see it online, on the news.

LARA EVANS: Oh. Back then were you concerned for your safety and are you concerned for your safety now?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Um—Back then I [inaudible] you know, um, I mean it was the war—the Vietnam War. And, um, people I know were going over to be in the war, my own brother, I think he was able to come back, and um, uh, but other people I knew went over and, uh—uh, the impact that's left on them after—after being in a war is—is not good.

[00:20:29]

LARA EVANS: Does the scale of change that's happening now feel less than or more than back then?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Back then, um—I—I don't know. I—I would, again, I would have to say it's probably the same, but you just see more of it on the news, uh, today that you—you didn't see so much of back then.

LARA EVANS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah. What do you—where—where do you see your artwork going next?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Um—I'm wondering if my artwork is going to reflect, you know, things that are going on now that with the pandemic and—and the—the protests, um. I'm thinking about it, but I don't—I don't—I don't do it like, you know, visually in my—in my work [clears throat], although I do think about, you know, all these things that are happening.

LARA EVANS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Thank you, Linda, so much for speaking with me today about all these—these, uh painful topics, um. Is there something that you look forward to doing when things get easier?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Um—Again, I look forward to, uh, being able to socialize a little more with—with people, um, but we don't know how that's all going to play out so I'm just thankful that I'm still able to do my art and, um, that I, you know, can share it with other people.

LARA EVANS: All right. Well thank you, Linda. You take care of yourself, okay?

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Okay. Thank you, Lara.

LARA EVANS: Okay. Take care.

LINDA LOMAHAFTEWA: Okay, bye.

LARA EVANS: Bye.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]