



Museums Alaska - Art Acquisition Fund 2019 Round 1  
Alaska State Museum  
Application #AAF2019R10041

Primary Contact: [REDACTED]  
Phone: [REDACTED]  
Email: [REDACTED]

Document Generated: Thursday, March 28th 2019, 11:21 am

## Artwork To Be Purchased (Information)

### Artist Information

#### Artist Name

Lena Snow Amason-Berns

#### Artist Address

[REDACTED]

#### Artist Email Address

[REDACTED]

#### Artist Phone Number

[REDACTED]

### Artwork Information

#### Title of Artwork

Kasa'inaq--Seal Helmet

#### Medium

Western Red Cedar, Acrylic paint, oils, plexiglass, glitter

#### Date Completed

*(If only year is known, enter December 31.)*

2018-12-31

#### Dimensions

9"h x 16.8"w x 10.5" d

#### Artwork to be Purchased From

Lena Snow Amason Berns

#### Price of Artwork

4900

#### Funding Request

*(Provide the dollar amount of your request. You may apply for the full price of the artwork. If the full price of the artwork exceeds the allotted amount [\$35,000 per institution per year], you must provide a detailed fundraising plan and demonstrate that additional funds are secured or in reserves.)*

4900

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## Artwork To Be Purchased (Digital File)



Title: KASA'INAQ--SEAL  
HELMET

Artist 1: Lena Snow

Amason Berns

Created: 2018

Description: A wooden  
Alutiiq/Sugpiaq helmet  
representing a seals head,  
painted with patches of  
color and accented with  
glitter

Dimensions: 9 x 16.8 x 10.5

[Kasa'inaq--Seal Helmet](#)

Title: RESUME LENA  
SNOW AMASON BERNs

Completed: 0

Published: 0

Publisher:

[Amason 2018 Resume.  
pdf](#)



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## Narrative

**RATIONALE:** Please describe how this particular artwork meets the collecting goals of the museum as shown in its collection policy and its collecting plan. Applicant should address such points as the significance of the artist, the quality of the work, the subject, the medium, and the style.

Please carefully review the current guidelines, including footnotes.

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**Describe the artwork: What is it made of, how was it made, what story does it tell, when was it made, has it been shown, where will it be purchased? Clearly explain the artistic merit of the artwork.**

*(5000 characters max)*

This sculpture, entitled Kasa'inaq-Seal Helmet, is based on the helmets worn by Alutiiq/Sugpiaq kayak hunter while hunter seals. These hats are beautifully sculpted and painted naturalistic portraits of seals. Early collections from Alaska in European museums have preserved some original examples of "seal decoy helmets," which are said to help camouflage the hunters as they approach the seals, and to please the spirits of the animals who give their lives so that the people may eat. Amason has taken the form of this sacred object and made it her own with the addition of layers of paint, glitter and oil to reflect the richness of colors and textures inspired by the artist's life at the edge of the ocean. Created in 2018, it has been shown at the Bunnell Street Art Center's group carving show with Alvin Amason, and Nathan Jackson.

The surface is painted in patches of bright colors, reflective of both the intense coloring found in 200 year old Alutiiq/Sugpiaq masks (which utilize bright volcanic pigments processed locally) and the saturated colors used in modern fishing and boating gear. The piece symbolizes the persistence of culture and beauty in the face of forced change. If added to our collection, this piece will become a focal point in an exhibit case devoted to talking about Alutiiq/Sugpiaq history over the past 300 years. The display combines both historical artifacts and contemporary art to help tell the story of resilience, and the size of this piece (unlike many other masks and paintings by the artist) makes it perfect to augment this existing permanent exhibit.

**Describe the artist: Who made the piece, where were they trained and where do they work today, how does the artwork reflect the artist's personal history and body of work?**

*(5000 characters max)*

Amason-Berns earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in painting from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Her carvings and paintings draw upon imagery, textures and patterns found in and around the waters of Kodiak Island. She has received numerous public commissions in Alaska and her work is in the collections of Chateau Musee Boulogne Sur Mer, Alutiiq Museum, Pratt Museum, Alaska Native Heritage Center, Anchorage Museum of History and Art, Baranof Museum, the University of Alaska Museum of the North, and the Museum of Arts and Design in New York.

Amason-Berns was raised in Port Lions, Alaska, and currently lives in Old Harbor on Kodiak Island. Born to a family of artists, her parents Alvin Amason and Kathy Nelson encouraged her to create art from an early age. Today, in her painting, drawing, and carving, she is frequently inspired by sea life around Kodiak Island. She recently participated in a group shows at the Pratt Museum and Alaska Museum, and was recently selected for a solo show at the Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka. She has also participated in group shows with her father and other artists at numerous museum and commercial galleries.



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**Describe the significance: How does this piece fit into the museum's collecting plans? Why is it important to the museum? Clearly state how the proposed purchase conforms to the mission of the institution.**

*(5000 characters max)*

Since 1900, our museum has collected artwork by resident and visiting artists, including work by Alaska Natives, Russians, Euroamerican fur traders, and Americans. The collecting goal is to preserve a range of styles and media from every decade as far back as the 18th century, including work both by professional and amateur artists, to provide an overview of the history of art in Alaska, and show how Alaskan art is connected to, and divergent from, movements and types of work done elsewhere.

Our general approach to collecting contemporary art is usually tied to our Temporary Exhibit and Solo Artist Exhibit Programs. However, we also search for other work appropriate to our collection from other sources, and this piece is an example of a piece we admired after it appeared in a group exhibit at the Bunnell Street Gallery in Homer.

The piece is an outstanding example of her work, as reflected in her Stonington Gallery artist statement, which reveals how the sea-and sea dependent cultures-are reflected in her art: "I work to combine elements of historical design found in ancient Alutiiq objects, with symbols of modern village subsistence and commercial fishing culture. My carvings, paintings, and mixed media wall sculptures reflect the textures and patterns of the natural environment and lifestyle of my Alutiiq land and people. I collect the raw materials for my pieces on beach walks, skiff rides, and from old fishing boats and gear sheds. I combine fluorescent strips of painted buoy, bright shades of plexi-glass and sea scraped marine grade plywood, with the smooth shiny black of baleen from beached whales, and the elegant lines of seal whiskers saved for me by local hunters. Many years ago, during my commercial fishing days, I began to study the way the weather and waves alter work surfaces, and how seasons affect the shades of land water and sky. Today, these patterns are reflected in the painted and carved surfaces of my pieces. These are the textures I reference as I layer acrylic, draw into it with pencil, hit it with sandpaper, and then paint it again with oils."

The surface is painted in patches of bright colors, reflective of both the intense coloring found in 200 year old Alutiiq/Sugpiaq masks (which utilize bright volcanic pigments processed locally) and the saturated colors used in modern fishing and boating gear. The piece symbolizes the persistence of culture and beauty in the face of forced change. If added to our collection, this piece will become a focal point in an exhibit case devoted to talking about Alutiiq/Sugpiaq history over the past 300 years. The display combines both historical artifacts and contemporary art to help tell the story of resilience, and the size of this piece (unlike many other masks and paintings by the artist) makes it perfect to augment this existing permanent exhibit.

Amason-Berns is not currently reflected in the ASM collection, but after reviewing her work over the past decade, we decided to attempt to add this piece to our collection. It is a great representation of the artist's current work, and her tribal membership comes from a group that is generally poorly represented in the collection. Given our mandate to collect a broad range of material from all over Alaska, and given that we have little material of any kind from Kodiak Island, and given that the scale of this piece will allow us to add it to our permanent gallery rather easily, we feel we have strong grounds for acquiring it.

**Describe the method of sharing: What is the museum's plan for sharing this work with the public? Discuss any plans for exhibition, loans, publications, online resources, newsletter, press release, etc. where the piece will be made available. Clearly state how the proposed purchase meets collection and exhibition goals of the institution.**

*(5000 characters max)*

The Alaska State Museum collects art in order to address our broad mission--to preserve and exhibit representative examples of art by Alaskans for the permanent collection. Our plan for this piece is to add it to our long-term exhibit on Alutiiq/Sugpiaq culture-juxtaposed with a seal head sculpture by her father, Alvin Amason. Together, the two contemporary pieces, amid historical Alutiiq/Sugpiaq artifacts from the same region, will drive home the message that the culture survives and their traditions still. Images of the work would also be shared via an online version of the artist's solo exhibition and in ASM's online collections database.



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We frequently share work with other museums, and this piece, like most others, would be available for loan to other museums and similar institutions. If we acquire it, we will issue a press release announcing the gift.

**Clearly explain how the price of the artwork was determined.**

*(5000 characters max)*

Amason-Berns has priced this work at a rate consistent with other examples of her work of a similar type and scale offered through private galleries over the past few years. Too, it is on par with woodcarvings of a similar scale by other Alaska Native artists, who also price their work based on previous sales in galleries on the west-coast as well as the time dedicated to each piece. In terms of the market generally, we feel that this price is fair, and in line with other work of similar significance by other prominent Alaskan artists.

**Is there anything else the review committee needs to know about your application?**

*(5000 characters max)*

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## Provenance

Please provide the provenance of the artwork, insofar as possible (including date of composition, places and dates of showings, awards and dates, and previous owners).

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## Provenance

*(15000 characters max)*

This piece was first exhibited in July 2018 at the Bunnell Street Gallery in Homer as part of the show *Asgurluta*, featuring the woodcarving of indigenous Alaskan artists Lena Snow Amason-Berns, Alvin Amason, Donald Varnell and Nathan Jackson. Subsequently, it was offered for sale by the Stonington Gallery, and listed for sale on their website, but is still owned by the artist.

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## Optional Attachments

You may attach up to six additional optional attachments.

If you are applying for funding for a commissioned work, you must contact the program administrator in advance of submitting your application, in order to discuss your application and receive information about required additional attachments for commissioned works.

If you need to attach more than six attachments, please contact the program administrator.

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### Optional Attachment

["Asgurluta" Lena Amason-Berns, Alvin Amason, Nathan Jackson, & Donald Varnell, July 2018 - Bunnell Street A](#)

### Optional Attachment

[Lena Artist's Statement 2018.pdf](#)

### Optional Attachment

No File Uploaded

### Optional Attachment

No File Uploaded

### Optional Attachment

No File Uploaded

### Optional Attachment

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