



**ARTIST**

Shelley Niro

**TITLE**

Flying Woman #9

**DATE**

1994

**DIMENSIONS**

12.5 in H x 18.5 in W

**MEDIUM**

Gelatin Silver Print

**IMAGE NOTES**

Marked 1620-20B.28b

**CATALOGUE NUMBER**

1994.033

**CURRENT LOCATION**

1620-20B

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**SHELLEY NIRO**

**BORN**

1954

**BIRTHPLACE**

Niagara Falls, NY

**GENDER**

Female

**CULTURAL HERITAGE**

Native North American

**LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP**

Artist-in-Residence, 1994  
Light Work Gallery, 1994  
Kathleen O. Ellis Gallery, 2018  
Be Strong and Do Not Betray Your Soul

**LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS**

Contact Sheet 83  
Contact Sheet 97  
Contact Sheet 198

## BIOGRAPHY

*For a more recent CV or bio please visit the artist's website, [shelleyniro.ca](http://shelleyniro.ca)*

## ESSAYS

In her photographic work Shelley Niro combines humor, fantasy, and everyday experiences to question the roles' one is expected to play in society. In a series from 1992 titled Mohawks in Beehives, Niro created photographs of herself and her friends mugging for the camera in glamour camp complete with lots of make-up, sunglasses, cigarettes, and red high heels. By replacing one stereotype of First Nations women that might include beads and feathers with another stereotype of exaggerated glamour, Niro challenges our assumptions about what defines racial and cultural identity. Instead of offering one definition of what it means to be a First Nations woman, Niro suggests in Mokawks in Beehives, that cultural and racial identity is not absolute but a fluid and complex lived experience. During her residency at Light Work in July 1994, Niro extended her notion of what defines a lived experience as she worked on a series titled The Flying Woman. The series is based on dreams where Niro would envision herself flying over real and imaginary landscapes. These dreams evoked a sense of control that Niro describes as 'Through this just before waking moment I can zoom over tree tops, exhilarate in the heights I dare to go and let the landscape swoosh under my non-existent body.' In the series, Niro's flying woman visits scenes of days gone by, present day realities and scenes of pure invention. Each scene that Niro's flying woman encounters is divided in two, with each half the mirror image of the other. This dual representation suggests that our dreams are perhaps contained in our life experience, and a shift in perspective is all that is needed for our dreams to become a part of our reality. By representing the flying woman as neither angelic or mythical, but like someone you might see every weekend at the flea market, Niro brings her freedom to abandon expected roles and conventional logic down to earth and within our grasp. Niro echoes this sense of freedom and abandon in the way she has constructed the images. In the series Niro employs many styles including photographic collage, art nouveau and art deco patterns, and constructivist graphics. In her earlier work Niro suggests that cultural and racial identity is not a fixed description but a fluid part of our lived experience. In The Flying Woman series Niro expands on that idea by exploring how the abandonment of logic and expected roles can expand the possibilities of what we include in the definition of our lived experience. Shelley Niro lives in Brantford, Ontario. Jeffrey Hoone(c)1994