

Out of Style

My partner took me to a museum
for a Native fashion exhibit, though
I don't know much about clothing.

We took our time walking around,
reading descriptions of each piece,
and looking at artist bios.

There was plenty of beadwork,
feathers, and different sorts of animal
hide. Though some clothing included

designs from pottery shards or baskets,
they were modern and what I think is
called high-fashion. Other pieces were

more classic. Like the cinched waistlines
and dart-work of 1950s dresses — the type
I can imagine my grandmother wearing.

Sportswear and skateboards were also
on display, made for and by urban Natives.
I knew the last names of several

of these designers, Yazzie and Begay,
from years of living in Phoenix. My mind
has forgotten it now, maybe out of shame,

but I also recognized a Cherokee surname
when I saw it. One my grandmother has
mentioned in old stories, one I can't connect

to a face. This artist had made a scarf
printed with the Cherokee alphabet,
and I'm sure Sequoyah never expected

his lettering to be fashionable, but
it feels appropriate that it's worn
around the throat.

I try to imagine myself taking the scarf
from its clear display case to pull tight
around my neck.