



# Introduction

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The Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art brings together dynamic and passionate people. From museum staff and supporters to the selectors who designate the honorees, these people are devoted to creating forums for the presentation and better understanding of Native American art tied both to culture and tradition and to the larger world of art and visual expression.

The outcome is not just this catalogue, but also includes a dynamic exhibition, a challenging symposium, and a growing and prestigious museum collection. Together these results help create better public understanding of Native people and their participation in a modern world of art, which often expects them to be primitive and perhaps quaint, or even irrelevant. To achieve high ambitions for the program, however, requires more than a bit of labor.

Imagine four individuals sitting at a long table, facing screens lit by slide projections, films, and PowerPoint presentations. The discussions of the art are animated, thoughtful, and often passionate. These people are always serious, but sometimes humor breaks the tension. For hours on end, they view and review images, read artist's statements, and examine exhibition catalogues. From more than sixty nominations, they finally select a distinguished artist and five others as fellows in the 2005 Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art.

The designated artists receive awards of \$20,000 each, the museum purchases examples of their work, and an exhibition and catalogue are produced. Who were the selectors for the 2005 program?

Why should they make decisions that might dramatically affect the lives of the artists?

Patterson Sims, director of the Montclair Museum in Montclair, New Jersey, was one. He has also been an advocate for contemporary art at The Museum of Modern Art, the Seattle Art Museum, the Whitney Museum, and the O.K. Harris Gallery in the SoHo arts district. Patterson was joined by art critic Amei Wallach, a frequent commentator on art for television and radio worldwide. Wallach has written extensively on art, art exhibitions, and the art scene. Her writings have included book-length assessments of Ilya Kabakov, Joseph Raphael, and Jasper Johns, and her essays have appeared in major newspapers and magazines throughout the country. Margaret Archuleta (Pueblo/Hispanic) also sat at the table. A singular driving force in the recognition of Native American Fine Art, she currently serves as the Arts and Humanities Project Specialist for the lifelong learning center at the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA), Santa Fe, where she earlier served as director of the IAIA Museum. She was been a visiting professor at Dartmouth College, and for many years was Curator of Fine Art at the Heard Museum in Phoenix. Her knowledge of Native American fine art and its creators is expansive. Through publications and exhibitions, she has done as much as anyone to create awareness of the field. Finally, Rick Bartow (Wiyot/Mad River Band) provided an artist's viewpoint during the selection process. A recipient of one of the 2001 Fellowship awards, Bartow has been through much of what other Native artists have experienced.



Works by Fellowship artists Shelly Niro, Truman Lowe, and Nora Noranjo Morse as featured in the new Stan and Sandra Hurt Gallery, June 2005.

His success is evident through his participation in exhibitions throughout the United States, Canada, and in Germany, Japan, and New Zealand. His work is found in collections internationally.

What were the impressions of the selectors when they completed their work in 2004? Their comments afterward had a clear ring to them. Patterson Sims noted that the artists “resonate because they are very fresh.” Rick Bartow felt that that he had seen an “incredible array of artists, both known and unknown, and some surprises.” Margaret Archuleta celebrated a “very good group of artists that are pushing, but they are tied to who they are as individuals and as artists.” Amei Wallach enthusiastically noted that “the quality of the artists we selected is so high that they deserve to be part of the international circuit of contemporary art.”

As it happens, 2005 is a pivotal year for Native American artists, and not just those selected in this process. It is not just that the Fellowship exhibition opens in November. Other exhibitions are found at the Smithsonian’s new National Museum of the American Indian, where one of the opening featured shows, *Native Modernism: The Art of George Morrison and Allan Houser*, focuses upon two former distinguished artists in the Eiteljorg program. At their New York City facility, NMAI has also showcased contemporary Native artists in the series *Continuum: Twelve Artists*. Nine of the featured artists are current or former Fellows. Elsewhere in the world, at private galleries and at museums, Native American Artists are receiving due attention.

The year 2005 is pivotal as well for the Eiteljorg Museum. In June, the new Mel

and Joan Perleman wing was opened to the public, effectively doubling the size of the museum. A full-blown education center with studios, a library, and a resource center better serve the needs of students and adults alike. A café provides nourishment for visitors. Nourishment of another kind is featured in the new Gund Gallery of Western Art and the refurbished Art of the American West Gallery.

In light of the Fellowship program, however, the most telling addition is the completion of the Betsey Harvey Gallery and the Stan and Sandra Hurt Gallery, both of which feature contemporary art. Together they provide us with the first permanent facility in which to showcase contemporary art, including that acquired through the Fellowship program. The Harvey Gallery gives context to contemporary art of the West with powerful works by many artists, including now deceased Native painters Fritz Scholder and T.C. Cannon. The Hurt Gallery loudly places an exclamation point on contemporary Western and Native art. Visitors enter through doorways in a wall covered with graffiti surmounted by painted skateboard decks by Apache artist Douglas Miles. The words above exclaim, “Art Can’t Hurt You,” and beyond, vibrant art provides strong confirmation that neither the West nor its contemporary art can hide any longer from the startlingly diverse art of Latino, African-American, Asian, and Native American artists. Within this context, much of the space is filled with brilliant

works created by artists honored in the Fellowship program. The great collection resulting from this initiative now has a permanent home.

In 2007, the Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art will complete the first ten years of the program. In that and years to follow, there are many emerging and experienced artists who will be in the fray. Yes, we know that some have wondered why certain prominent Native American fine artists have not been recognized in this program. Many of them will have an opportunity in later rounds. So, get involved. Become acquainted with the 2005 Fellows. Understand that Native culture is an essential part of Native contemporary art. Appreciate that the goal is not necessarily to make Native fine art a part of the mainstream of the larger world of fine art, but to be part of the struggle for self expression and to participate in the continually evolving worldwide definition of what art is. Understand the insight of Patterson Sims when he says, “I don’t think there is a mainstream. There are lots of streams and I think this is one of the streams and it is a very important one.”

When you contemplate the Fellowship artists and their work, try to anticipate the Eiteljorg Museum’s expectations for future fellows. Note artist Rick Bartow’s words. As a selector for the 2005 fellowship, he summed up the real goal. “We’ve seen what was and what is, but we are looking for what’s coming.”