

Contemporary Context

Eiteljorg Museum presents Contemporary Native Art 101, a survey of influential Indigenous artists from the mid-19th century to today.

INDIANAPOLIS, IN

Contemporary Native Art 101 is the third in a series of exhibitions at the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art specifically curated to bring attention to and help visitors understand what, exactly, constitutes contemporary Native art. To provide context, it covers the major movements, schools and styles developed by contemporary Native artists from the ledger art of the late 19th century to cutting edge works being created today. Some of the earlier works in the exhibit are by artists who were significant in ushering in this new category of Native American art—among them Julian Martinez (San Ildefonso Pueblo, 1885-1943) and Acee Blue Eagle (Creek/Pawnee, 1907-1959)—and helped pave the way for the artists who followed.

Martinez's untitled tempera on paper demonstrates the "flat style" of painting he learned as a student at the Santa Fe Indian School under pioneering art teacher Dorothy Dunne in the 1930s. The untitled piece by Blue Eagle illustrates how, further east, this style was evolving to incorporate more movement, color and perspective with increased access to modern art supplies and the application of drafting skills Blue Eagle learned while studying at University of Oklahoma.

Allan Houser (Warm Springs Chiricahua Apache, 1914-1994), was also a student of Dunne's at the Santa Fe Indian School but broke away to pursue his own aesthetic. He ended up turning his focus to sculpture, his figurative forms increasingly melting into the abstract over time, as seen in *Chrysalis*, pictured here, that he created toward the end of his life in 1990.

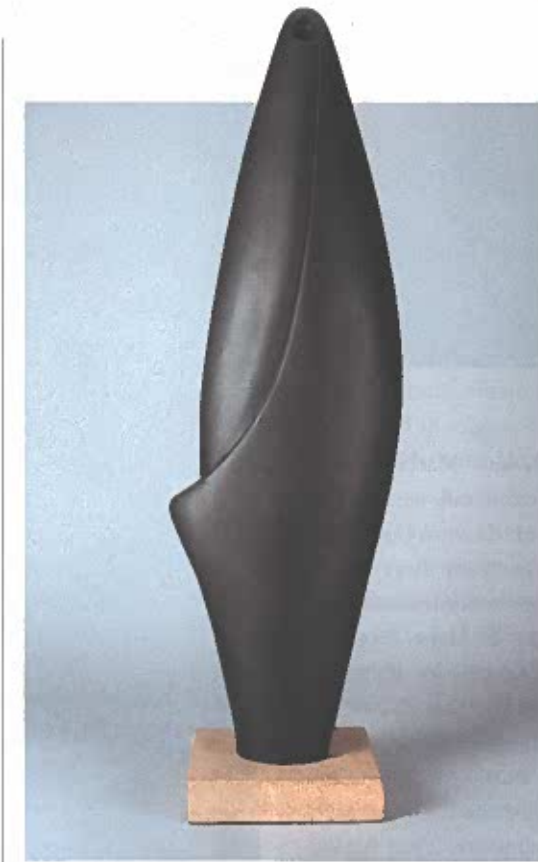
The exhibit also serves to create awareness about the Eiteljorg Contemporary Art Fellowship program as nearly a third of the 30 artists represented are former fellows. Instituted in 1999, the program has bestowed a biennial award of \$25,000 to its fellows and, in 2023, will increase the amount to \$50,000.



"We wanted a section particularly about prominent artists and teachers out of the Institute of American Indian Arts who went on to become Eiteljorg Art Fellows," says the museum's curator of Native American Art, Dorene Red Cloud (Oglala Lakota). Art historians did not consider Native art as "art" until the 1980s into the 1990s, explains Red Cloud. All the while, contemporary Native artists, including many Eiteljorg Fellows, had been exhibiting and advocating for their art to be included in "mainstream" art history. Red Cloud continues, "Artists like Truman Lowe and Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, both former Eiteljorg Fellows, brought attention to contemporary Native art, as did the [Columbus] Quincentenary, and the establishment of more museums and publications dedicated to this genre. Now people are realizing that this is art and including it in a modern context."

Lowe (Ho-Chunk, 1944-2019), whose 1998 piece *Orange Canoe on Blue Water* is in the exhibit, was among the first group of Eiteljorg Fellows in 1999. Lowe was a professor of art at University of Wisconsin, Madison, and the first curator of contemporary Native art at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian.

Other notable artists in *Contemporary Native Art 101* include T.C. Cannon (Kiowa), George Morrison (Grand Portage Band of Chippewa), Helen Hardin and her mother Magarete Bagshaw, all the way up to the highly conceptual work of modern-day Mississippi Choctaw/Cherokee painter and sculptor Jeffrey Gibson.



Through July 3, 2023
Contemporary Native Art 101
 Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art
 500 W. Washington Street Indianapolis, IN 46204
 (317) 636-9378, www.eiteljorg.org

1. The current exhibition *Contemporary Native Art 101* provides a survey of Native American art from the ledger art of the mid-to late-1800s to the most contemporary works of today. Image courtesy of Hadley Fruits Photography.
2. Truman Lowe (Ho-Chunk, 1944-2019), *Orange Canoe on Blue Water*, 1998, chalk and crayon on paper. Collection of the Eiteljorg Museum, museum purchase from the Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art with funds provided by Stan and Sandy Hurt, 1999.6.3
3. Acee Blue Eagle (Creek/Pawnee, 1907-1959) *Untitled*, ca. 1935-1955, tempera and pencil on paper. Collection of the Eiteljorg Museum, Bequest of Raymond Lee, Jr., 1999.14.3
4. Julian Martinez (San Ildefonso Pueblo, 1885-1943), *Untitled*, ca. 1930-1943, tempera on paper. Collection of the Eiteljorg Museum, gift of Mrs. Arthur J. Lacey, 1990.12.2
5. Allan Houser (Warm Springs Chiricahua Apache, 1914-1994), *Chrysalis*, 1990, cast bronze, stone. Collection of the Eiteljorg Museum, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Eugene VanHove. Artwork © Allan Houser Inc., 2008.13.1