



For Immediate Release

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SWOSU Premieres Traveling Exhibit

Weatherford, OK (*January 11, 2007*) – A century after statehood, what does it mean to be an American Indian in Oklahoma? How do Indians identify themselves in a contemporary context? What is Indian Art? This exhibition reveals the complex undercurrents that encompass being American Indian in 2007. Indian Artists have been asked to initiate a dialogue in their visual language that will stimulate an ongoing discussion. As the exhibit travels to five different regions throughout the state, community members will be encouraged to participate in the conversation sharing their perspectives and opinions. In addition, the exhibit will survey the change in American Indian art since statehood. It will chronicle representative works from each decade beginning with some of the well known precedents such as: Ledger Art, Kiowa 5+1 and boarding school art programs; and culminate with a display of contemporary Native Art that expresses Indian culture at this significant moment in Oklahoma's History. The **American Indian Cultural Center & Museum** along with **Co-Curators Mary Jo Watson and heather ahtone** have assembled and produced “**Art from Indian Territory 2007: the state of being American Indian**” which will premiere at **Southwestern Oklahoma State University**. The **opening reception** is scheduled for **February 4, 2007** in the **Art Department Building** from **2-4pm**. The reception will be hosted by the Native American Club. The exhibition will remain on display through **March 9, 2007**. **Admission is free and open to the public**. For more information contact Brian Adler at (580) 774-3063 or log onto www.swosu.edu or www.aiccm.org. Several of the participating artists will attend the exhibit opening and be available to help facilitate the discussion. This exhibition is sponsored by the Chickasaw Nation.

“It doesn't take long, in a discussion about Indian art, for the question to arise – What is Indian Art? At the core of this question lies the rhetorical and existential question of identity,” says Mary Jo Watson, Co-Curator for the exhibition. The exhibit has been arranged around three themes that pertain to Oklahoma Indian identity. These themes are:

Intimacy – artists whose families and tribes have a history in Oklahoma.

Multiplicity – artists who count more the one tribe or race in their heritage.

Geography – artists whose tribes are not located in Oklahoma, but who consider themselves Oklahomans.

Participating artists were asked to self-identify with one of the above themes. Jereldine Redcorn's selection of “Intimacy” embraces her Caddo heritage and the tribe's history with this place. Her use of circular patterns and gourd-like shapes reminiscent of the Spiro culture perpetuates a living connection with her past through her contemporary expressions. Tom Fields' photography often captures the intimate moments that only a community member witnesses. His photo of a drum stick hitting a water drum captures the dance of water on the drum surface and brings a distinctly American Indian aesthetic to this non-traditional medium.

Co-Curator, heather ahtone suggests, “Identity is often subject to someone else's discriminating identification.” Tony Tiger and Matt Bearden both selected “Multiplicity” because each were raised within communities where their tribes were not the dominant culture.

Geography can also be an important identifier, especially in a state where tribes were relocated from other regions. American Indians who come to Oklahoma from other regions are usually well supported by the local

Indian community because there is an inherent understanding relating to the experience of relocation. Marwin Begaye comments, “My wife is from Oklahoma and when we moved here we started to be a part of the unique Oklahoma community. By being a part of this community, you start noticing the social issues that are common.” Begaye’s attention to some of the common social and popular culture issues have been equally embraced by the Oklahoma community, as well as within his home community.

The American Indian Community has evolved considerably throughout the last century. This exhibition will visually narrate the journey between ancient traditions and an adaptive spirit that embraces innovation.

Exhibition Artists include: Brent Greenwood, Joanna Underwood, Daniel Worcester, Matt Bearden, Heidi Bigknife, Tom Fields, Tony Tiger, Anita Fields, Kennetha Greenwood, Ben Harjo Jr., America Meredith, Gerald Cournoyer, Blas Flores, Joshua Hinson, Marwin Begaye, Nathan Hart, Jereldine Redcorn, Richard Ray Whitman, Susan Shannon, Richard Dew and Sharon Ahtone-Harjo.