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## Promised gift will add 100 works to SLAM’s Native American art holdings

**ST. LOUIS, Nov. 7, 2023**—The Saint Louis Art Museum has received a promised gift of 100 works from the William P. Healey Collection of Native American Art, which includes drawings, paintings and sculpture by 62 Indigenous artists.

Focused on 20th-century works from artists based primarily in Oklahoma and New Mexico, the gift will introduce 55 new artists to the museum collection including major names in the field such as Fred Kabotie, Stephen Mopope, Pop Chalee and Allan Houser. The Healey gift will make it possible for the museum to present greater continuity in the history of Native American art.

SLAM’s collection of Native art has a particular strength in 19th-century art of the early reservation era, roughly 1870 to 1930, thanks to the gift of 250 works of Plains art from the family of Donald Danforth Jr. in 2010 and a gift of 75 Southwestern textiles from Paul and Elissa Cahn in 2017. The collection is also gaining strength contemporary Native American art, most recently with the purchase of “New Mexico #45,” an oil painting by Fritz Scholder that was featured in the summer 2023 exhibition “Action/Abstraction Redefined: Modern Native Art, 1940s-1970s,” SLAM’s first major exhibition presenting Native art from the 20th century.

“I am incredibly grateful to William Healey for this spectacular gift of 20th-century works,” said Min Jung Kim, the museum’s Barbara B. Taylor Director. “Over the last 20 years, the museum has made a concerted effort to grow our collection and presentation of Native American art. Filling a critical gap between our holdings of historic works and recent acquisitions of contemporary Native American art, this generous gift will let our visitors experience a fuller picture of art history.”

The earliest works in the Healey gift date to the first decades of the 20th century when artists such as Carl Sweezy, in Oklahoma, painted ethnologic commissions and then established independent studio practices. The Healey Collection traces closely a parallel movement in New Mexico,



George Morrison, Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) and American, 1919–2000; “Ephemeration”, 1962; oil on canvas; 17.5 x 24.5 inches; (The William P. Healey Collection of Native American Art); © Estate of George Morrison, Courtesy of Briand Morrison



Linda Lomahaftewa, Hopi/Choctaw, born 1947; “Parrot Dance”, c.1980; acrylic on canvas; 39 1/2 x 45 inches; (The William P. Healey Collection of Native American Art); © Linda Lomahaftewa

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ABOVE: Tonita Peña, San Ildefonso Pueblo and American, 1893–1949; “Eagle Dance”, c.1932–33; oil on beaverboard; 49 x 96 inches; (The William P. Healey Collection of Native American Art); © Estate of Tonita Peña

LEFT: Allan Houser, Chiracahua Inde (Apache) and American, 1914–1994; “Navajo Shepherdder”, 1978; acrylic on canvas; image: 48 1/3 x 24 1/4 inches; (The William P. Healey Collection of Native American Art); © Chiinde LLC ( a Houser/ Haozous Family company)

where artists from San Ildefonso Pueblo such as Awa Tsireh developed a flat, groundless style of figuration that became the first Indigenous easel paintings to appear in leading art museums across the country. Another outstanding example from this era in Healey’s gift is a rare mural panel by Tonita Peña.

By the 1930s, instructors taught this figural style to students at the Santa Fe Indian School including Pablita Velarde, Andrew Tsinahjinnie and Gerald Nailor. Simultaneously in Oklahoma, Bacone College offered a fine art program led by a series of influential directors, including Acee Blue Eagle, Woody Crumbo and Dick West. The Healey collection reflects the generational legacies of these academic movements, including a chronological series of paintings by Allan Houser, who studied at the Santa Fe Indian School and taught at its successor, the Institute of American Indian Arts.

Later works in the gift chart significant changes to Native studio art following World War II and the 1962 creation of the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, which helped expand the range of Native art practices bringing the field in direct conversation with mainstream

styles and media. Leading IAIA artists represented in the Healey gift include Fritz Scholder, T.C. Cannon and Linda Lomahaftewa. Additional contemporary artists in the Healey collection include John Hoover, Rick Bartow, David Bradley and Tony Abeyta.

An initial gift of 15 works will be given in 2023, including the Scholder and Peña paintings and an important work by George Morrison.

William P. Healey, who lives in Jackson, Wyo., is a retired real estate developer and avid, lifelong collector with a deep interest in Western art and ephemera.

“During the past 12 years I have collected primarily 20th- and 21st-century Native American Art with a purpose and a passion,” Healey said. “SLAM affords this collection the unparalleled opportunity for a permanent home and the ability to be shown on a large scale.”

The museum will be highlighting 75 works from the gift in a February 2024 exhibition along with a future publication providing more scholarly information about the artists and their history and works.

*The Saint Louis Art Museum is one of the nation’s leading comprehensive art museums with collections that include works of art of exceptional quality from virtually every culture and time period. Areas of notable depth include Oceanic art, ancient American art, ancient Chinese bronzes and European and American art of the late 19th and 20th centuries, with particular strength in 20th-century German art. Admission to the Saint Louis Art Museum is free to all every day. For more information, call 314.721.0072 or visit slam.org.*