

## Museum of Indian Arts and Culture

### *Harry Fonseca: In the Silence of Dusk*

**Santa Fe, NM (January 25, 2009)**—The exhibition *Harry Fonseca: In the Silence of Dusk* focuses on four series of paintings that explore the transformative and mythic forces that Fonseca perceived in himself and the world around him. The painting series include *In the Silence of Dusk*, *Stone Poems*, *St. Francis of Assisi*; and *Seasons*. While not a retrospective, the exhibition explores Fonseca's body of work as it changes focus from stylized but representational studies based on his Native American heritage to more abstract explorations of his world to non-objective compositions celebrating color. All of the works in the exhibition are courtesy of the Harry Fonseca Trust. **The exhibition opens at the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture on Sunday, February 14, 2010, 1:00-4:00 p.m. and runs through January 2, 2011.**

Harry Fonseca was raised in California but moved to in Santa Fe in 1990 and lived here until his death in 2006. His father of Portuguese descent was a janitor, and his mother, of Hawaiian and Maidu Indian descent, was a traditional housewife and mother. Fonseca learned little of his cultural legacy growing up. Essential to his understanding of being Maidu (a central California Indian tribe) were three men he met as an adult: Frank LaPena, a Wintu artist teaching at California State University Sacramento; his uncle, Henry Azbill, a Concow Maidu, who was a significant figure in efforts to reestablish and preserve Maidu traditions in California and with whom Fonseca recorded the Maidu creation stories; and Concow Maidu painter Frank Day who was central to creating the Maidu Dancers and Traditionalists, of which Fonseca was a member.

As Fonseca told Larry Abbott in 1991–92,

*“I found out more about my Native American background, and became involved with the dances and the whole traditional base. That really gave me a foundation, not only for me but for my art work as well. It's still here. It's still very, very strong. It has a great deal of meaning to me, even when I am not doing a petroglyph, or a coyote or something, there's still something there.”*

Fonseca's introduction to Coyote—the trickster and mythical figure who would become the subject of his most renowned work—occurred during his participation in a traditional dance. One of the figures was dressed as a Coyote and his part in the ceremony was both as jester and guide.

Coyote was Fonseca's alter-ego and throughout his career he painted the trials and tribulations of Coyote as he comes up against an Anglo/Euro-American world.

In this exhibition, we put Coyote aside to explore Fonseca's other artistic inspirations. Both the *In the Silence of Dusk* and *Stone Poems* series were inspired by Native American rock art most notably that of the Coso Range in California and rock panels throughout the American Southwest. Fonseca greatly admired the passion and determination of rock artists for the time and effort they took to carve images out of solid rock. While they are anchored in rock art, the *In the Silence of Dusk* series' central figures allude to transformation and existence in a surreal space, and Fonseca instills them with a sense of the mystery and the intuitive.

Harry Fonseca also created a series of works based on the person St. Francis of Assisi and the figure of Icarus that explored spirituality and mythology outside of his Native culture. In the *St. Francis of Assisi* series Fonseca steps outside his Native American heritage to create works that are meditations on the life of a man he greatly admired for his trueness to self through his rejection of wealth and privilege, his strong commitment to the poor, and his celebration of all forms of life.

At the end of his career Fonseca began working on abstract works, including the spontaneous drip paintings he titled "Seasons." These paintings which mark another stylistic shift reflect the artist's love of the outdoors, a physical and mental release, a sense of freedom, and a future ripe with new possibilities. He completed his last *Seasons* painting in 2006.

Fonseca was recognized in 2004 with the Alan Houser Memorial Award by New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson. In 2005 the Eiteljorg Museum in Indianapolis, Indiana, awarded Fonseca the prestigious Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art.

*Harry Fonseca: In the Silence of Dusk* opens Sunday, February 14, 2010, 1:00-4:00 p.m., in the Lloyd Kiva New Gallery at the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture with a reception in celebration of Lloyd Kiva New's birthday. Refreshments will be provided from 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. by Aysen New.

Margaret Archuleta (Tewa/Nuevo Mexicana) will speak on Fonseca's career in the O'Keefe Theater, 2 – 3 p.m. Seating is limited. Archuleta is a Ph.D. student in Art History at the

University of New Mexico and a former director of the Institute of American Indian Art Museum,  
Santa Fe.

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Located on Museum Hill™, the Museum of Indian Arts & Culture shares the beautiful Milner Plaza with the Museum of International Folk Art. Here, Now and Always, a major permanent exhibition at the Museum of Indian Arts & Culture, combines the voices of living Native Americans with ancient and contemporary artifacts and interactive multimedia to tell the complex stories of the Southwest. The Buchsbaum Gallery displays ceramics from the region's pueblos. Five changing galleries present exhibits on subjects ranging from archaeological excavations to contemporary art. In addition, an outdoor sculpture garden offers rotating exhibits of works by Native American sculptors.

The Museum of Indian Arts and Culture is a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs.

Information for the Public

**Location:** The Museum of Indian Arts and Culture is located on Museum Hill™, Camino Lejo, off Old Santa Fe Trail.

Information: 505-476-1269 or visit [www.indianartsandculture.org](http://www.indianartsandculture.org)

**Days/Times:** Tuesday through Sunday, 10:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M. Between Memorial Day and Labor Day the Museum is also open on Monday.

**Admission:**

**Sundays:** New Mexico residents with ID are admitted FREE.

Students with ID receive a one-dollar discount.

**Wednesdays:** New Mexico resident seniors (60+) with ID are free.

Adult single-museum admission is \$6 for New Mexico residents, \$9 for nonresidents; OR \$15 one- day, two museums of your choice (Museum of Indian Arts & Culture, Museum of International Folk Art, New Mexico Museum of Art, and Palace of the Governors/New Mexico History Museum) OR \$20 four-day pass to five museums (includes all 4 listed above and the Museum of Spanish Colonial Art) **Youth 16 and under, New Mexico Veterans with 50% or more disability, and Foundation Members always free.**

**Field Trips:** There is no charge for educational groups attending the museum with their instructor and/or adult chaperones. Contact the Education Department by phone at (505) 476-1271 to arrange class/group visits to the Museum.