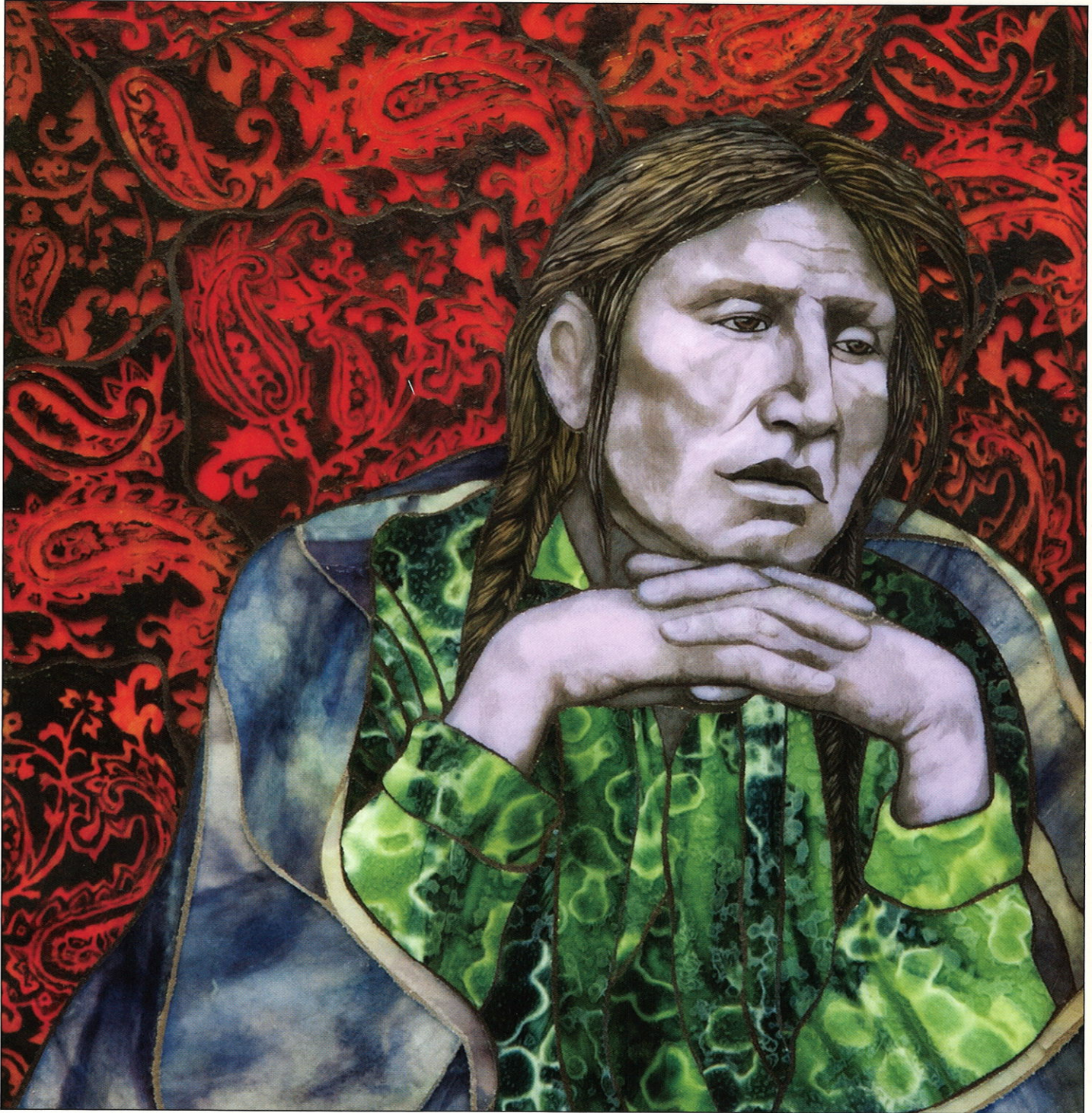


ANCESTRAL, HISTORICAL, and LIVING ARTS of INDIGENOUS PEOPLES of the AMERICAS

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atmosphere, as demonstrated in its front and back entrances and galleries warmed by natural light. Encompassing both levels of the Chiaroscuro house, the *Fall Group Show* (October 14–December 12, 2015) was an exhibition rooted in aesthetics, where the artworks, when seen as the house's residents, beckoned audiences through both their eccentricities and distinguishable personalities.

compositional space communicate those of a landscape; the artist's palette choices of reds and yellows hint at the experiences during a season change, perhaps referring to the days when summer changes into fall. Whitehorse's visual language includes spirals, half-moons, and scalloped, linear, and petal-like forms. These forms also connote musical qualities, like elongated and staccato (short) notes, or acts of

These works put forth the existential and open-ended question, "What keeps us from seeing?"

Works by Simpson and Whitehorse primarily filled one of the downstairs galleries. The first of Simpson's sculptures I examined, *Neptune* (2014), created in ceramic, leather, and mixed media, portrays a 33-inch-tall woman made of cream-colored clay, whose pose is reminiscent of a ballet dancer in fifth position. Her arms are held overhead, represented by just one continuous arch, absent of hands and elbows. The female figure does not have feet as we know them. She balances on a V-shaped form where Simpson replaced the V's point with a flat bottom. Indicative of a meditative moment, the woman wears a subtle smile on her face, her eyes closed. An etched, white leather disc sits on top of one slightly larger disc, affixed to the woman's temple. The leather in this work suggests support, as there is a white leather strip wrapped around the bicep of the woman's right arm, and others twisted around her torso, left leg, and base. Overall, this female form evokes strong senses of feeling, believing, and rising. She has a mesmerizing quality and a peaceful composure that, through reflection on her presence, one may shift into a contemplative state and empathize with this being's affective and physical place in time and space.

Whitehorse's *Tusk Shell* (2015), oil and chalk on paper mounted on canvas, is a compelling symphony of abstract iconography in variations of red, white, black, brown, and yellow. This palette effectively evokes levels of musical pitch through differentiations in color value. Moreover, the warm tonalities of the

growth and migration sustained by the glowing and muted harmonies of the background's golden gradation. Despite its dimensions of 51 by almost 79 inches, Whitehorse's playful screen of biomorphic motifs comes across as a detail of a larger, macrocosmic entity. As Whitehorse mentioned in one of Chiaroscuro's online videos, her iconography, like that of *Tusk Shell*, gives viewers an experience of the depth and complexity of the ongoing movement and fluctuation in the earth's environment.

Two studies and two more large-scale works by Whitehorse were exhibited in this room. Interestingly, the studies, including *Study for Walk-About V* (2012), *Blue Pond* (2015), and one larger painted drawing, *Charting a Walk-About* (2014), provided counterpoints of blue-toned coolness to both *Tusk Shell* and *Red Top* (2007), an epic harmony in a palette of reds.

This room also housed three more of Simpson's sculptures. The first of these, *The Secret of Flight* (2015), is a terracotta and black-patterned ceramic male bust (33 inches tall), posed back to back with a much smaller, white clay child whose stability is reinforced by black strips of leather around the chest and stunted arms. As Simpson discussed in another of Chiaroscuro's online videos, this work portrays a narrative of healing, listening, and closeness.

Adjacent to *The Secret of Flight* were two of Simpson's 6½-inch-tall, mask-like ceramics constructed of amalgams of layered clay strips, which continuously overlap one another to form facial

Santa Fe

Fall Group Show

Chiaroscuro Contemporary Art

CHIAROSCURO CONTEMPORARY Art's *Fall Group Show* presented audiences with an unassuming exhibition of works by Australian Aboriginal, American Southwestern, and Native American artists—including sculptures by Rose Bean Simpson (Santa Clara descent), painted drawings by Emmi Whitehorse (Diné), mixed media drawings by Rick Bartow (Wiyot-Yurok), and jewelry by Yazzie Johnson (Diné) and Gail Bird (Kewa-Laguna). A refined, two-story house with wood floors and white walls, Chiaroscuro disguises its grandeur through an informal



Emmi Whitehorse (Diné), *Tusk Shell*, 2015, oil and chalk mounted on canvas, 51 × 78½ inches, Courtesy of Chiaroscuro Contemporary Art, Santa Fe.

structures. *Identity 3* (2015) is a near-black ceramic face that appears to be blind, one eye covered with white clay lattice tied on with two strips of leather strung through a white clay bead. The black dotted, white ceramic face of *Identity 4* (2015), next to *Identity 3*, is also sightless. In this work, Simpson wrapped a wide strip of black leather around the forehead, which serves to hold several finger-like clay forms (some white and some tan) over the eyes. These works put forth the existential and open-ended question, “What keeps us from seeing?”

In an art historical context, Whitehorse’s painted drawings create conversations with the abstraction of three 20th-century painters—Mary Morez (Diné), Helen Frankenthaler (American), and Wassily Kandinsky (Russian). Morez’s densely patterned landscapes, Frankenthaler’s gestural color gradations, and Kandinsky’s song-like, visual vocabulary intersect with Whitehorse’s practice. Simpson’s sculptures form a dialogue with the organic, abstracted figures of two

20th-century sculptors, Allan Houser (Chiricahua Apache, 1914–1994) and Henry Moore (British). Houser’s female beings, with their emotive expressions and curvature, and Moore’s open, subtractive forms compositionally relate to Simpson’s style. Thus, a consideration of Simpson and Whitehorse in global contexts reflects that of the Chiaroscuro’s heterogeneous range of artists and media in the *Fall Group Show*.

On the note of diversity, in the same room as Simpson and Whitehorse’s works, a case near the front desk housed a stellar selection of jewelry created by artists Yazzie Johnson and Gail Bird. One of Johnson and Bird’s necklaces is a slate blue, double-strand, Tahitian pearl rope, with each pearl measuring between 11.7 and 12.8 millimeters. The necklace features six satellites (embedded charms)—each made of 18-karat gold and inlaid with a stone, namely black star sapphire, blue chalcedony, etched onyx, and mohawkite. Even more exciting, on the verso of each satellite is a carved pictographic symbol. Here I must

thank Chiaroscuro for the ample media information and closer look at this work.

The *Fall Group Show* at Chiaroscuro was well designed, with a balanced mood of sophistication and comfort. The subtle track lighting, spacious installation style, including the placement of Simpson’s *The Secret of Flight* in the front windowsill, successfully complimented the art in this exhibition. One criticism I have is that some biographical details, namely the artists’ cultures and birth years, were absent from the artwork labels. However, the gallery’s website features artist profiles that offer insightful background information to viewers. And unfortunately, the drawings by Rick Bartow had not been selected to share the downstairs gallery with Simpson, Whitehorse, Johnson, and Bird’s works. Installed in a second-floor space, I found Bartow’s drawings just as I was leaving. But, this happenstance gives me yet another reason to return to Chiaroscuro Contemporary Art. —Michelle Lanteri