Contemporary Chickasaw Art Exhibition Opens June 7 at OU

NORMAN, OKLA. – The Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art on the University of Oklahoma Norman campus serves as the first venue for a new traveling exhibition of fresh Native American artwork. *Visual Voices: Contemporary Chickasaw Art* features more than five dozen works by emerging Chickasaw artists and opens with complimentary, public festivities at 7 p.m. Thursday, June 7.

After a presentation featuring the curator and select artists from the exhibition, visitors are invited to explore the new exhibition. Complimentary valet parking will be available to the public.

“*Visual Voices: Contemporary Chickasaw Art* offers celebratory and mysterious, thought-provoking and critical two-dimensional and three-dimensional works, including abstract and experimental contemporary Chickasaw art,” said Manuela Well-Off-Man, exhibition curator. “This traveling exhibition offers an opportunity to view recent works by leading and emerging artists of the Chickasaw Nation.”

According to Well-Off-Man, the artworks analyze the complex relationship between contemporary Chickasaw life and rich tribal history and culture. Each artist demonstrates a personal approach. Many of the artists are inspired by traditional Chickasaw elements of design and render them using contemporary materials and aesthetics to create an innovative visual language. Others investigate tribal stories, belief systems or family histories and traditions, and how these relate to present-day Chickasaw life.
“From oil and watercolor to textiles and metals, glass, bronze and other materials, the artworks of 15 featured Chickasaw artists in this exhibition are unique, intrinsically Southeastern and distinctive in design among today’s contemporary tribal artists,” Well-Off-Man said. “They are rising contemporary voices on an aesthetic landscape of 21st-century American Indian art.”

With more than 65 artworks reflecting a wide variety of themes, techniques and methods, the exhibition finds balance in the artists’ strong connection to tribal identity as well as his or her distinctly individual and cultural roots.

“Visual Voices provides the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art a unique opportunity to collaborate with contemporary artists from the Chickasaw Nation, whose cultural legacy lives on through the artistic endeavors of these featured artists,” said Mark White, the museum’s Wylodean and Bill Saxon director. “The included artists helped to develop the exhibition and organized it loosely around themes that the artists consider central to contemporary Chickasaw life, such as Chickasaw history, traditional beliefs and designs, and issues of identity, both personal and cultural.”

Visual Voices: Contemporary Chickasaw Art is made possible by grants provided by the Chickasaw Nation and the National Endowment for the Arts, and by assistance from The American Indian Cultural Center and Museum.

The exhibition remains on display through Sept. 9 before it opens again next year at the Mississippi Museum of Art in Jackson and the Institute of American Indian Arts Museum of Contemporary Native Arts in Santa Fe.

A family day is scheduled from 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday, June 17, at the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art that features stomp-dancing, storytelling and art projects presented by the Chickasaw Cultural Center.

More information about this exhibition and related programs is available on the museum’s website at www.ou.edu/fjjma. The traveling exhibition’s website is www.chickasawartists.com.

The Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art is located in the OU Arts District on the corner of Elm Avenue and Boyd Street, at 555 Elm Ave., on the OU Norman campus. Admission to the museum is complimentary to all visitors, thanks to the generosity of the OU Office of the President and the OU Athletics Department. The museum is closed on Mondays. Information and accommodations are available by calling (405) 325-4938 or visiting www.ou.edu/fjjma.

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An exhibition of more than 65 works by 15 contemporary Chickasaw artists goes on display with an opening presentation and reception for Visual Voices: Contemporary Chickasaw Art at 7 p.m. Thursday, June 7, at the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art. The complimentary events are open to the public and feature works across multiple disciplines and mediums, including this 2014 painting, Young Chickasaw Man, by Bill Hensley.

Bill Hensley (U.S., Chickasaw, b. 1978)
Young Chickasaw Man, 2014
Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 48 in.
Loan courtesy of Capital Assets, Inc.