

NEWS RELEASE

May 12, 2009

FRED JONES JR. MUSEUM OF ART
UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA - NORMAN
CONTACT MICHAEL BENDURE, Public Relations Officer, 405-325-3178, mbendure@ou.edu
FAX: 405-325-7696
www.ou.edu/fjjma

'Spirit Red' Captures Adventure of Collecting Native Art

NORMAN, OKLA. – Art appreciation takes many forms, but for Rennard Strickland, collecting art has become a lifelong legacy. Over five decades, he has acquired more than 100 paintings, baskets, pottery, textiles and sculpture, representing some of the most acclaimed artists of the 20th century. Highlights from his collection, which he recently gave to the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art at the University of Oklahoma, will go on display in a new exhibition June 4.

Spirit Red: Visions of Native American Artists from the Rennard Strickland Collection opens with a free, public reception at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, June 3, in conjunction with the annual Oklahoma City-based *Red Earth Native American Cultural Festival*. A special guest lecture by Strickland and Mary Jo Watson, Regents Professor and director of the OU School of Art and Art History and curator of Native American art at the museum, will accompany the opening at 6 p.m. Seating for the lecture is limited.



Strickland, who is of Osage and Cherokee heritage, served as curator of Native American art at OU's art museum in the early 1990s. In 2007, he announced that he wished to give his remarkable collection to the museum in memory of his mother, Adell Tucker Strickland.

“Out of all of the university art museums in the country, the University of Oklahoma has arguably the most outstanding collection of Native American and Western art, including the Eugene B. Adkins Collection,” Strickland said. “It also has the most attentive curators, art historians and publications, not to mention a unique and rich history dating back to Oscar Jacobsen, the Kiowas and the early Master of Fine Arts graduates, including Oscar Howe and Dick West.”

“Rennard Strickland's vision and knowledge about Native arts makes this one of the more remarkable contemporary collections to be donated to the museum,”

said OU President David L. Boren. “The addition of major contemporary Native American pieces to our permanent collection, as well as the Eugene B. Adkins Collection, will escalate our institution to the level of leading museums in this field and also will give our students a unique opportunity to better understand and appreciate Native American art,” Boren said.

The addition of Strickland’s gift enhances the museum’s Native collections, said Ghislain d’Humières, director of the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art.

“I would like to express my gratitude to Rennard Strickland for his amazing gift to the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art and the University of Oklahoma,” said d’Humières.

Growing up in Muskogee, Okla., Strickland purchased his first piece of art as a young boy from Creek/Pawnee painter and educator Acee Blue Eagle. Today, Strickland’s collection spans 20th- and 21st-century Native artists, from Julian and Maria Martinez and Tonita Pena to Fritz Scholder, Cecil Dick and Harry Fonseca.

Strickland’s adventures as an art collector are reflected in many of the themes of his collected works, from the humorous approaches of Richard Glazer-Danay and Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, to a recent acquisition of a painted gourd by Joseph Erb reflecting a traditionally dressed Cherokee warrior listening to an iPod.

While at the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, Strickland curated such exhibitions as *Sharing the Heritage: American Indian Art from Oklahoma Private Collections* in the summer of 1994.

Watson recognized the global impact of Strickland’s collection.

“For Oklahoma and national Native American art history, Rennard Strickland is a touchstone, an example and source of energy and knowledge,” Watson said. “He has shared this energy and knowledge through numerous books, exhibitions, lectures and articles, and now he shares his inspired collection of Native American art with the university, the people of Oklahoma and visitors from around the world.”

In addition to his passion for Native artwork, Strickland is an internationally noted law professor and legal historian, especially for his introduction of Indian law as a subject of study at major universities. He currently is Senior Scholar in Residence in the OU College of Law and Philip H. Knight Distinguished Professor of Law Emeritus at the University of Oregon School of Law.

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 free to all OU students with a current student ID and all museum association members, \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors, \$3 for children 6 to 17 years of age, \$2 for OU faculty/staff, and free for children 5 and under. Admission is free on Tuesdays.

Spirit Red remains on display through Sept. 13. The museum's Web site is www.ou.edu/fjjma. Information and accommodations on the basis of disability are available by calling (405) 325-4938. The Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art is open and fully functional with exhibitions and programming throughout the entire construction process.

The *Red Earth* festival runs June 5 to 7 in downtown Oklahoma City. Additional information is available online at www.redearth.org.

###

IMAGE CUTLINE

Decades of collecting Native American artwork culminate in a new exhibition opening June 4 at the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art. *Spirit Red: Visions of Native American Artists from the Rennard Strickland Collection* spans 20th- and 21st-century Native artists. Among the more-than-100-piece collection is this 1990 black-and-white photo collage *Oklahoma – the Unedited Version* by Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie.