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GREAT BASIN NATIVE ARTISTS AND NEVADA MUSEUM OF ART COLLABORATE TO ESTABLISH THE GREAT BASIN NATIVE ARTISTS ARCHIVE AND DIRECTORY

As the inaugural 2018 Peter S. Pool Research Fellow at the Nevada Museum of Art Center for Art + Environment, artist and Great Basin Native Artists Founder Melissa Melero-Moose has amplified the voices of Indigenous artists working and living in the Great Basin.



Reno, Nev. (June 20, 2019) – Northern Paiute artist, Melissa Melero-Moose has long dedicated her creative practice to sharing the beauty of the Great Basin region, people, and cultures. In 2014, she broadened her passion to promote and preserve the work of Native American artists living and working across the Great Basin. A co-founder of the Great Basin Native Artists (GBNA) collective, Melero-Moose created a community that allows for visual artists and craftspeople to connect with each other, share ideas, and promote their work. In 2018, Melero-Moose approached the Nevada Museum of Art with the goal of establishing a permanent, free, open, and public directory and archive for GBNA. In response, the Museum awarded her the inaugural Peter S. Pool Research Fellowship at the Center for Art + Environment (CA+E) to support her ongoing commitment to Native American artists and to launch this initiative.

As a practicing Great Basin artist, Melero-Moose recognized the challenges of working in a region with a geographic scale that is vast and sometimes isolating. To help minimize distance and bring visibility to the GBNA, she established an online directory and image gallery so that Great Basin artists have a permanent presence on the internet. Melero-Moose self-funded this initiative and continues to maintain a website where journalists, researchers, curators, and collectors can locate biographical and contact information for Native artists. In March 2019, as a direct result of the work Melero-Moose orchestrated during her CA+E Fellowship, GBNA and the Nevada Museum of Art formalized a collaboration to create the Great Basin Native Artists Archive and Directory.

“This is a unique relationship between a Museum and Native American group of artists, and I hope this collaboration will catch on in other regions so we can all see and share the beauty of our cultures with each other through these new technologies. This is such an important time for Native artists of the Great Basin” Melero-Moose said.

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In coming years, the Great Basin Native Artists Archive and Directory will be permanently housed at the Center for Art + Environment at the Nevada Museum of Art. It will consist of physical and digital records related to individual Great Basin artists. Any living artist can contribute materials, and files are also maintained for deceased artists. The materials will be easily accessible at the Museum and will soon be available online as well.

“Thanks to the grassroots efforts of Melissa, the art and records of Great Basin Native Artists have a permanent home in Nevada’s only art museum accredited by the American Alliance of Museums,” said Ann M. Wolfe, Andrea and John C. Deane Family Senior Curator and Deputy Director for the Nevada Museum of Art.

For the past several years, the Nevada Museum of Art has expanded its collaborations with Nevada’s Indigenous communities and has emphasized the acquisition of Native American Art. *The Robert S. and Dorothy J. Keyser Art of the Greater West Collection at the Nevada Museum of Art* aims to make connections between artistic practices and diverse cultures of the Greater West super-region—a geographic area that spans from Alaska to Patagonia, and from Australia to the American West. The artworks included in this collection encourage conversations surrounding Indigenous cultural practices such as mark-making and mapping; visual representations of settlement and expansion; and depictions of changes to the landscape brought about by colliding cultures.

Recent acquisitions to the *Art of the Greater West Collection* include works from Great Basin artists Jean LaMarr, Steve Nighthawk, and Ben Aleck; photographs from Chemehuevi photographer Cara Romero, known for her works from contemporary Native American perspectives about a range of present-day social and political issues; *Air 2* by Will Wilson (Diné/Bilagaana), a photograph that establishes a deliberate counter-narrative to romantic visions of Native people living in an unchanging past; several works from the *Reinterpretation* series by Tlingit artist Da-ka-xeen Mehner; and *Get Comfortable* by Tlingit/Unangax̄ artist Nicholas Galanin. The works by Mehner and Galanin are part of the traveling exhibition *Unsettled*, originated by the Nevada Museum of Art in 2017 to highlight more than 80 artists living and/or working in the Greater West.

The Museum also recently secured the future gift of an extensive research archive focused on Native American weavers and basketry. Dr. Marvin Cohodas, the preeminent scholar of Washoe basketry and an art historian and professor emeritus at the University of British Columbia, will donate his lifetime of research records to the Museum’s Research Library and Archives. In addition to notebooks, interviews, books, and artist files, the future gift will include historic photographs and images of approximately 20,000 Washoe baskets, 5,000 Mono Lake Paiute baskets, and 2,000 Karuk baskets.

In June 2019, the Museum organized a major retrospective of Nevada artist Jack Malotte (Western Shoshone/Washoe). Malotte makes artworks that celebrate the landscapes of the Great Basin, with a unique focus on contemporary political issues faced by Native people seeking to protect and preserve access to their lands. *The Art of Jack Malotte* (June 8 – October 20, 2019) features illustrations, drawings, sketches, prints and paintings, including a public mural. The exhibition will be accompanied by a major book. On July 13, 2019, the Museum will once again partner with the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony to celebrate Native American art culture, community and tradition during a free Artown event, *Reawakening the Great Basin: A Native American Arts and Cultural Gathering*.

Melero-Moose was born in San Francisco, CA in 1974 and spent most of her childhood living in Reno, Nevada. She is a Northern Paiute enrolled with the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe located in Fallon, Nevada, with ties to the Fort Bidwell Paiute Tribe in California. She holds a BFA from the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, NM and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Fine Arts from Portland State University, in Portland, Oregon.

In recognition of the visionary work Melero-Moose has undertaken on behalf of Great Basin artists, she recently received a 2018 Humanities Rising Star Award from Nevada Humanities. In addition to her work with the Museum, Melero-Moose also serves in an advisory capacity for the John and Geraldine Lilley Museum at the University of Nevada, Reno, and for the Stewart Indian School Cultural Center and Museum in Carson City, Nevada.

To see the full checklist of the acquisitions mentioned above, and to access high-resolution images of these works and other related images, please contact amanda.horn@nevadaart.org.

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The Nevada Museum of Art is the only art museum in Nevada accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). A private, nonprofit organization founded in 1931, the Reno-based institution is supported by its membership as well as sponsorships, gifts and grants. Through its permanent collections, original exhibitions and programming, and E.L. Cord Museum School, the Nevada Museum of Art provides meaningful opportunities for people to engage with a range of art and education experiences. The Museum’s **Center for Art + Environment** is an internationally-recognized research center dedicated to supporting the practice, study, and awareness of creative interactions between people and their environments. The Center houses unique archive materials from more than 1,000 artists working on all seven continents, including Cape Farewell, Michael Heizer, Walter de Maria, Lita Albuquerque, Burning Man, the Center for Land Use Interpretation, Ugo Rondinone’s *Seven Magic Mountains*, and Trevor Paglen’s *Orbital Reflector*. Learn more at nevadaart.org.