

SOUTHWEST JOURNEY

Paul Joe: Medicine Man Artist
In the Spirit of Tradition: Three
Generations of Women Artists



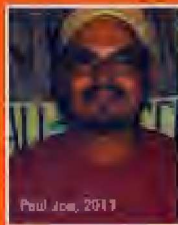
Navajo Sunset, ca. 2000. Oil, photograph and printmaking on paper.

Paul Joe: Medicine Man Artist

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS
BY THEA CARROLL

posed on the canyon rim, a yellow horse bows before a sky that radiates orange and red. Rock outcrops in the background, already beyond the sun's reach, signal the end of day. This compelling picture of a visionary moment is a work of Navajo medicine man artist Paul Joe.

But much of Paul Joe's art the picture invites a deeper reflection. The abstract-colored mare according to Navajo myth, a divine animal associated



Paul Joe, 2011

with the sacred mountains of the West, the San Francisco Peaks near Flagstaff, Ariz. Here, on the western point of the Navajo compass,

the healing intent of the artist is also present. The sacred animal and brilliant sky connect the viewer to the

the Walk About clan on his mother's side and the Red Barton people on his father's. Paul Joe's Navajo name, *Wáiner Boy*, derives from a time when his medicine man grandfather tossed him into the snow for being too rambunctious. Paul Joe, as he tells it, was rescued immediately, blessed by his elder, then given his Navajo name along with a prediction that he would become a great healer.

Until recently Paul Joe was a facilities maintenance technician at Little Singer Community School, where my wife Ann and I first met him in March 2001. The school is located near Leupp, Ariz., along the Little Colorado river basin, in the southwestern portion of the Navajo Nation. This section—the Leupp Extension—was added to the reservation by Theodore Roosevelt at the beginning of the 20th century. During our initial meeting, Paul Joe spoke about his ambition to become a medicine man. He also showed us *Calling the Ye-bi-chel*, the first of many pictures we would be privileged to see over the next ten years.

This early work features what appears to be a group of masked figures in the midst of multicolored birds. Paul Joe gently told us that the masked figures are *ye-bi-chel* men who take on the power of the holy *ye-bi-chel* Navajo tutelary deities. These *ye-bi-chel* are also dancers and

spiritual power of the natural world. In this way, the beautiful and tranquil scene becomes a sacred space for healing.

Paul Joe (born 1978) lives in Winslow, Ariz., with his wife Alvina and four daughters. Paul Joe's Navajo family includes



Calling the Ye-bi-chel, 2001. Photograph and printmaking on paper.

“Paul Joe: Medicine Man Artist” *Folk Art Messenger*, Fall/winter 2011

This article is based on the life and art of Navajo medicine man artist Paul Joe

The result of ten years getting to know Paul Joe and his family; purchasing his art; listening to his stories; sharing his work and life with my students.

Article a new departure for me: part memoir, part general background reading, part classroom study, part stories—felt at times like I was trying to compose with sand moving in the wind. Only real document is the art.



Ann Gengarely and Miriam Dror, the school counselor and friend who first introduced us to Paul Joe
Photograph, c. 2001



Paul Joe, March 2011

First met Paul Joe (born 1970) and his wife Alvina at Little Singer Community School, March 2001

Little Singer is a community school, established in 1978 to bring education and Navajo culture together.

The school is located on the Navajo reservation in the southwest quadrant of the Navajo Nation near Leupp, Arizona (north of Winslow and west of Flagstaff)

Paul (born 1970) was a “facilities Maintenance technician” at the School; also apprenticed to his grandmother, Mae Chase, in herbal medicine; beginning his practice as a medicine man healer. He showed us some of his art.



Paul Joe, *Calling the Yei-bi-Chei*, 2001, watercolor on paper—purchased March 2001

Paul Joe, *The Calling of the Yei-bi-chei*, 2001

--Paul told us that this image was a depiction of Night Way Ceremony—day nine when the Navajo community is invited to participate with “the one sung over” and the ceremony is held outside the hogan

--Yei-bi-chei Dancers (represent the tutelary deities, inward dwelling spirits of the earth-- *Yei*)

--not the usual line dance

--turning into birds (in case “five fingered” white man should penetrate the sacred circle uninvited)

--nature and spirituality ;naturalism and symbolism

--hallmarks of his art

Note: this was the only picture Paul has ever interpreted for us



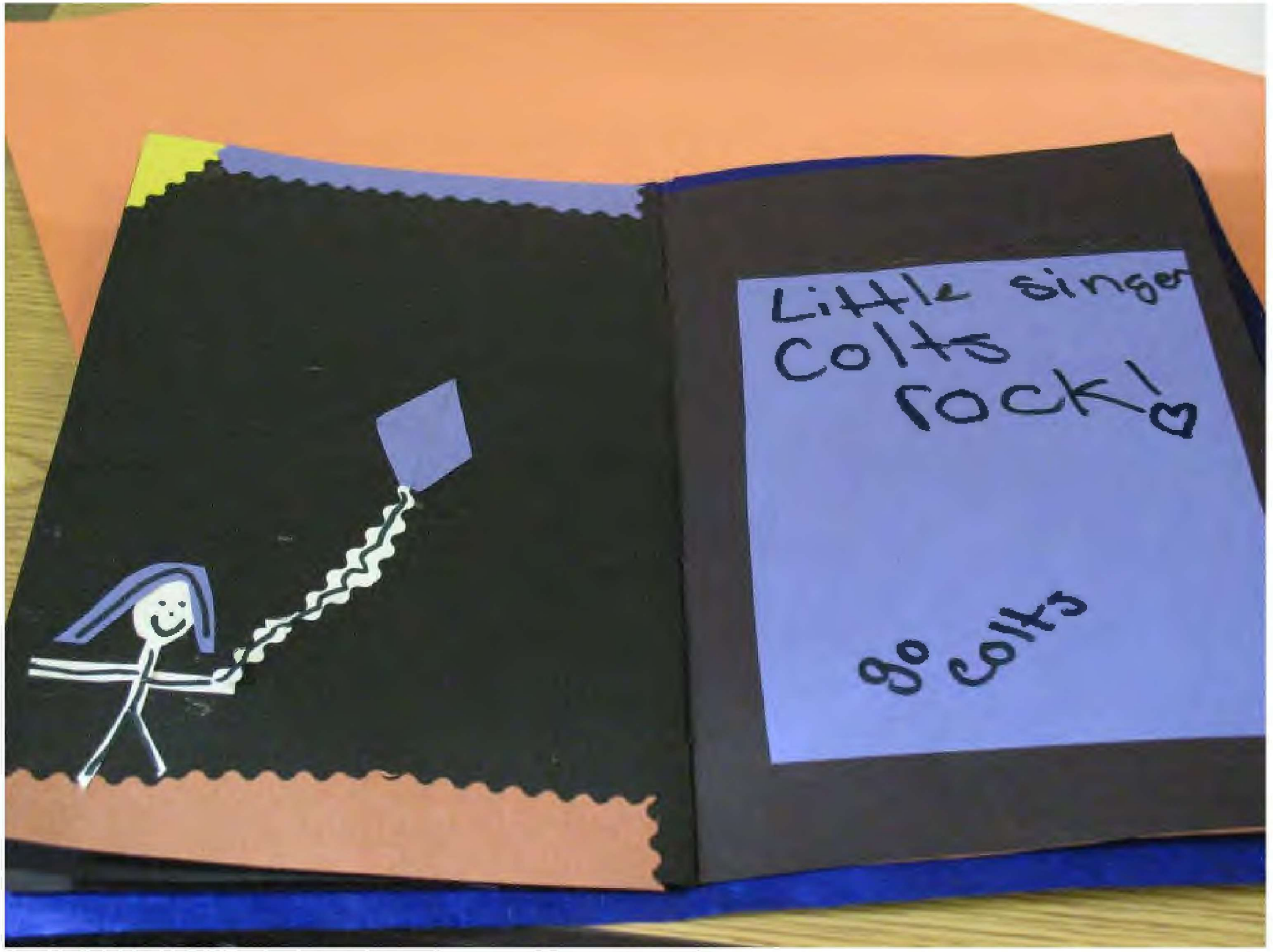
Ann and I subsequently returned to Little Singer Community School to offer Poetry and Bookmaking workshops (2001-2005).

Each time we saw Paul, bought some more of his art, and visited him and his family in Winslow, AZ.

We visited again in 2007 and then in 2011, when we returned to LSCS to offer a full week of workshops to the 3-4, 5-6 classes and to adult learners in the FACE (Family and Child Education) program.





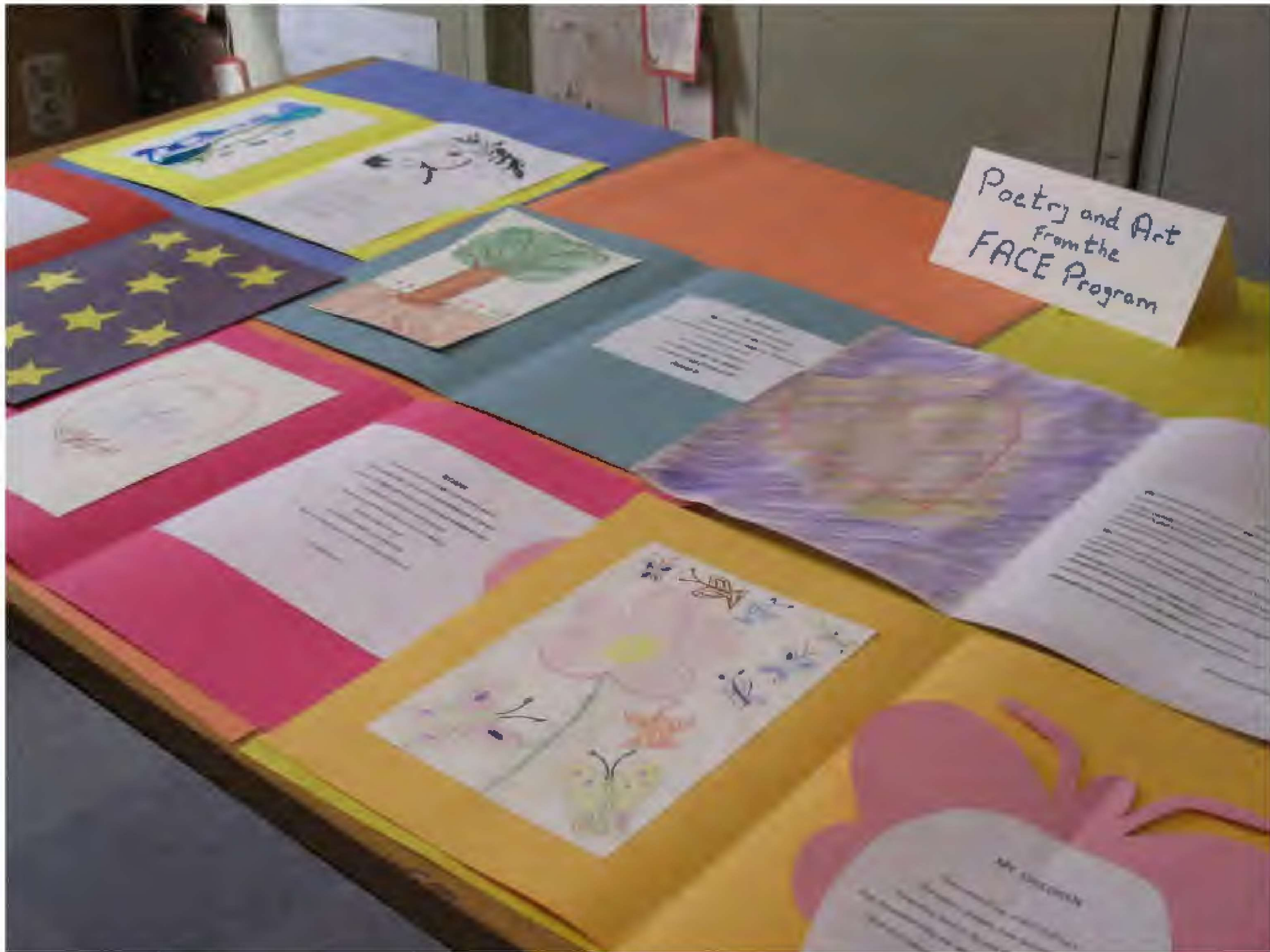


Little Singers
Colts
ROCK! ♡

Go Colts



Grade 5/6
Poetry, Bookmaking, Art



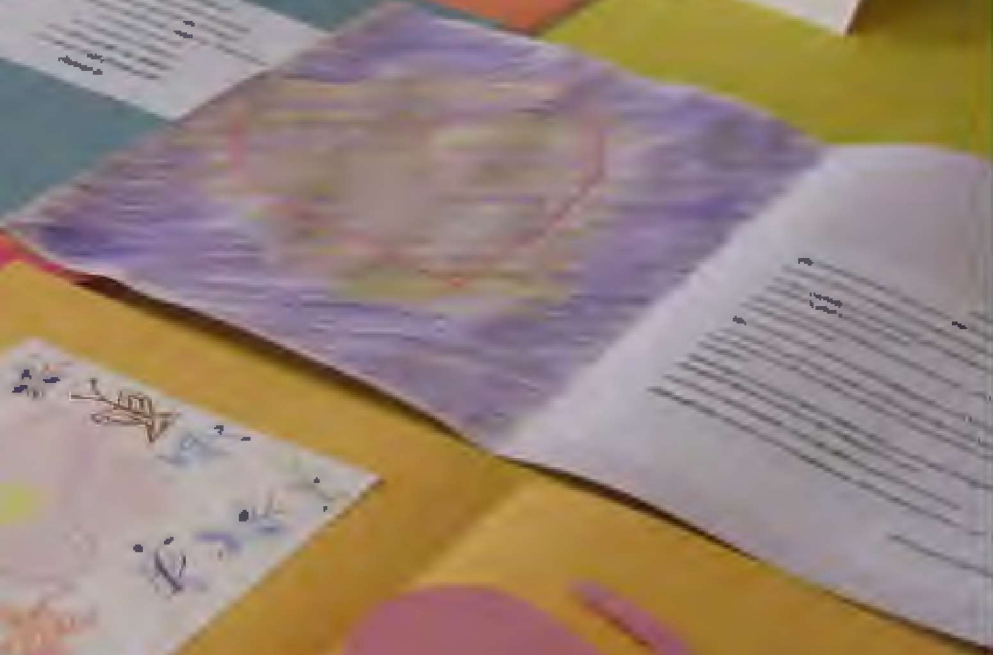
Poetry and Art
from the
FACE Program



POEM

...

...









Paul Joe and Family—left to right: Savannah, Olivia, Britney, Sheyanne, Alvina and Paul
Photograph taken during March 2011 visit

Each visit with Paul and his family was a profound experience For Ann and me. Paul, Alvina and his four daughters would share their lives with us; we, in turn, would connect on a number of mundane and profound levels; we heard stories of witchcraft and healing, about Navajo culture and the work Paul was doing for both traditional healing ceremonies and the Native America Church; his healing work at Little Singer School and in the Winslow community.

We always bought a picture or two or three depending on availability.

Over the years Paul experimented with a variety of mediums, and his pictures were always new and compelling. We had no idea, however, that they carried any special significance. In fact, we understood very little about the images' symbolic content, primarily considering them well crafted genre pictures and landscapes.

At the conclusion of each visit, Paul Joe would do a ritual ceremony for Ann and me—for the restoration of harmony in our lives and protection for our journey home.



In 2009, I began to integrate Paul's art into one of my courses, Great Monuments of Art II. I developed this course to introduce students to "the art of the other" focusing on Outsider Art and marginalized cultures such as the Navajo.

I distributed photographs of Paul's art and had the students appraise the images: were they just "tourist art" or did they have a deeper message to communicate, one tied to tradition?

I was planning on doing a modest exhibition of Paul's art in the 94 Porter Street Gallery and was hoping to include the students' comments as wall texts.

The response was electrifying. Not only did the students take Paul Joe's art seriously, but they were also impressed by its symbolic richness and spiritual content, which they detailed impressively with their comments.



In the spring 2010, *Medicine Man Artists: Paul Joe and Charley Singer* opened at the 94 Porter Street Gallery.

Curated by Jennifer Miller (MCLA 2011), with the help of Pamela Buchanan (MCLA 2012), the exhibition was to create the visual foundation for my article on Paul Joe and his art.

Including pictures by Charley Singer, Paul Joe's Cousin and a bus driver at Little Singer, the exhibition also endeavored to highlight aspects of the landscape surrounding the school as well as the cultural context for the art.

**Medicine Men Artists:
Paul Joe and Charley Singer**

Things are not as they seem on the surface but a great deal of
Loving thought and effort went into the creation of
each of the two artists. This museum which has a lot of
history and a lot of stories to tell. It is a place where the past is
preserved and the future is being built. It is a place where the
past and the future meet and where the future is being built.
It is a place where the past and the future meet and where the
future is being built. It is a place where the past and the future
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The things are not what they seem.

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**Medicine Men Artists: Paul Joe
and Charley Singer**

Opening statement

Picture of Paul and family, fall 2007

Exhibition brochure



Paul and Alvina Joe and Family, fall 2007

Medicine Men Artists: Paul Joe and Charley Singer

(from the collection of Ann and Tony Gengareilly)

May through December 2010
Porter Street Gallery, MCLA campus
94 Porter Street, North Adams

Curator of Exhibition:

Jennifer Miller

Project Director:

Professor Tony Gengareilly

Special Thanks:

Tony and Ann Gengareilly, Terri Pratt, Leon Peters,
Pamela Buchanan, Christopher Dellea, Lauren Shea,
Natalie Tottenham, Ben Warren, Shanti Sponder, Lotus Graphics,
Zephyr Design and The Fine and Performing Arts Department at MCLA.

Image on front and back cover:

Paul Joe, *Past and Present*, 2007 – Graphite on paper, 71 x 8 in.



Medicine Men Artists: Paul Joe and Charley Singer

May – December 2010

Porter Street Gallery, MCLA Campus, 94 Porter Street, North Adams, MA



Charley Singer, "It Is Finished in Beauty," 2001-05
Mixed media on paper, 8 1/2 x 11 1/2 in.



Charley Singer
***"It Is Finished in Beauty,"* 2001-05**
Mixed media on paper

**Inspired by landscape visible from
Little Singer School**



The Painted Desert - Looking Eastward
from Wupatki National Monument, 2005

Paul Joe, *Animal Totem*, ca. 2001-05
Mixed media on paper (overlay on mat board)
22 1/2 x 14 1/2 in.

Paul Joe, *Animal Totem*, 2001-05, Mixed media on paper (overlay on mat board)

Photographs of the Painted Desert, looking east from Wupatki National Monument, 2005



Paul Joe, *Twilight*, ca. 2001-05
Acrylic on canvas board, 16 x 11 in.

Paul Joe, *Twilight*, 2001-05
Acrylic on canvas board



The San Francisco Peaks, looking West
from the Newby Museum, Tucson, AZ, 2005-05



San Francisco Peaks, looking East
from the Newby Museum, Tucson, AZ, 2005-05

Landscape and Tradition—looking west to the San Francisco Peaks

A Confluence of Interpretation

- Student Texts
- Further Research
- New Information

**Comment by Juliana Matthews (MCLA 2011) after seeing *Medicine Man Artists* exhibition;
Quoted on p. 28 of the *Folk Art Messenger* 2011 article:**

“The subject matter and themes reflect community and tradition at the same time, as if they cannot be separated from the artist’s spirituality—animals, borders, clothing, clouds, community, deities, eagles, earth, environment, family, father sky, feathers, heritage, love, mother earth, mythology, plants, respect for land and natural elements, self-reliance, sunset, work, and values are incorporated in various ways, styles, and mediums.”



Paul Joe, *Navajo Sunset*, 2001-05, Colored pencil and watercolor on paper

Paul Joe, *Navajo Sunset*

But, as in much of Paul Joe's art, the picture invites a deeper reflection. The abalone-colored mare is, according the Navajo myth, a divine animal associated with the sacred mountains of the west, the San Francisco Peaks near Flagstaff, Arizona. Here on the western point of the Navajo compass, day and, metaphorically, life come to an end, and the night of dreams and transformation begins.

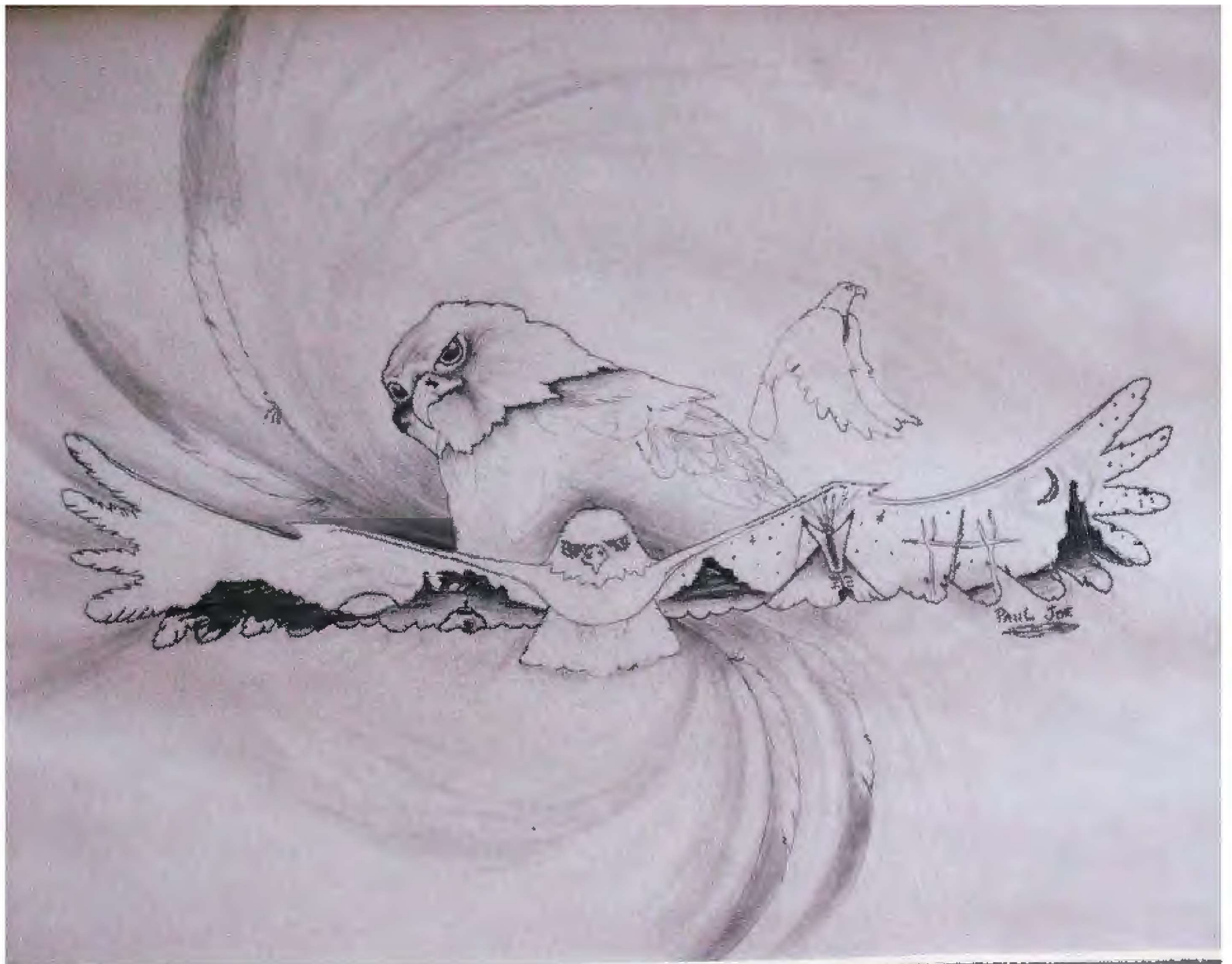
The healing intent of the artist is also present. The sacred animal and brilliant sky connect the viewer to the spiritual power of the natural world. In this way, the beautiful and tranquil scene becomes a sacred space for healing.

Tony Gengarely

***Messenger*, 2011, p. 24**

**--differs from Ben Warren's
(MCLA 2011) interpretation**





Paul Joe, *The Eagle*, 2001-05, graphite on paper

Paul Joe, *The Eagle*

- Heavenly Messenger**
- Master of the Skies—connection between heaven and earth**
- Guardian and Protector**
- Symbol of Navajo people**
 - shelters two traditions—Navajo folkways and the Native American Church**

Inspiration for many interpretations

- Ann's poetry classes**
- responses by MCLA students**





Paul Joe

Western Horizon, 2001-05

Colored pencil on paper

**--Woman standing on rock formation
Wearing a blanket dress dating from the
Navajo classical period c. 1860**

--Eagle spirit and horse attend her

**--all facing same direction in the face of
ominous clouds and wind**

**--observations by Jennifer
Miller (MCLA 2010)**

Paul Joe, *Western Horizon*

The woman has left her horse, now standing behind her, and looks out over a barren landscape. The wind and the clouds appear ominous, but her eagle spirit is strong. Is Paul Joe recounting a time just before the Long Walk—the Navajo relocation during the 1860s? Is he perhaps indicating as well that, in the face of such an historical trauma, the Navajo and their culture will endure?

**Tony Gengarely
Messenger, 2011, p. 27**





Paul Joe
Past and Present, 2007
Graphite on paper

- medicine man figure moves between past and present**
- weaving pattern represents a tradition filled with conflict and uncertainty (zig-zag lines)**
- pathos and resignation in the figures of horse and medicine man rider**
- Eagle is symbol of strength and resilience in the face of adversity**
- comments by Lauren Shea (MCLA 2012)**

Paul Joe, *Past and Present*, 2007

He (the medicine man) travels between tradition –the Navajo weaving design below—and present day reality signified by the natural landscape. The eagle spirit personified here accompanies him on his heroic journey. As the mounted figure edges forward into an uncertain world, perhaps the eagle perceives the trail ahead as an opportunity for those who have the wisdom to see it and the courage to pursue it. This iconographic portrait may will be Paul Joe traveling with a spiritual guide between past and present into a potentially transformative future.

**Tony Gengareilly
Messenger, 2011, p. 26**





Navajo Sunset, c. 2000, watercolor on paper and handmade paper

Paul Joe: Medicine Man Artist

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS
BY TONY DEBENIGNY

lised on the canyon rim, a yellow horse bows before a sky that radiates yellow, orange and red. Rock outcrops in the background, already beyond the sun's reach, signal the end of day. This compelling picture of a visionary moment in nature (*Navajo Sunset*) is the work of Navajo medicine man artist Paul Joe.

But, as in much of Paul Joe's art, the scene invites a deeper reflection. The scene is infused with a meaning to his community, a divine animal messenger



Paul Joe, 2011

with the sacred mountains of the West, the San Francisco Peaks near Flagstaff, Ariz. Here, on the western point of the Navajo compass,

day and, metaphorically, life come to an end, and the night of dreams and transformation begins.

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spiritual power of the natural world. In this way, the beautiful and tranquil scene becomes a sacred space for healing.

Paul Joe (born 1970) lives in Winslow, Ariz., with his wife Ahsona and four daughters. Paul Joe's Navajo family includes

the *Naik'abvoo* clan on his mother's side and the *Red Bonnet* people on his father's. Paul Joe's Navajo name, *Wit'oo' Biy*, derives from a time when his medicine man grandfather tossed him into the snow for being too combative. Paul Joe, as he tells it, was rescued immediately, blessed by his elder, then given his Navajo name along with a prediction that he would become a great healer.

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This early watercolor features what appears to be a group of masked figures in the midst of multicolored birds. Paul Joe gently told us that the masked figures are *ye-hi-chai* men who take on the power of the holy *ye*, the Navajo tutelary deities. These *ye-hi-chai* are also dancers and



Calling the To-hi-chai, 2001, watercolor on paper

Sent Paul Joe material on the 2010 exhibition

--positive response

Decision to write article (FASA support)

Permission of Paul Joe

--his clan history

--his Navajo name

--purpose for his art (healing and transformation)

Review of completed article

--sensitive material deleted

--Paul content with interpretations of art (including titles)

Paul's new job at the Indian Health Care Center in Winslow, AZ

--Final reaction to article?



Folk Art

MESSENGER

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Margarete Bagshaw (born 1964)
Photograph, c. 2010

GOLDEN DAWN GALLERY

Tsa-Sah-wag-eh  M. Bagshaw — PABLITA VELARDE



Photo By R.C. Gorman 1968

Cover—brochure for
Golden Dawn Gallery

Helen Hardin,
Margarete Bagshaw and
Pablita Velarde in
1968 photograph



IN THE SPIRIT OF TRADITION: Three Generations of Women Artists

BY TONY GENGARELLY

Margarita Bagshaw is in her studio and painting a large piece—10½ feet in height by 4½ feet wide. Using just her hands deftly, she applies a film of primary colors and then, with the aid of drafting tools, introduces a geometry of lines and circles. Bagshaw takes her time and considers every step. The geometry is highlighted with color and then overlaid with the tracing of live images, all in a row and suggestive of the lines incised in the wet clay she uses for her pottery. After she fills in the newly registered spaces with color tones, she turns the picture upside-down, masks off sections, then introduces new patterns, including some traditional cloud symbols. Right-side-up, once again, the picture reveals kachina-like heads with exotic crowns and flared necklaces.

The completed painting, *Arcus and Procession*, 2010, from Bagshaw's "Mother Line" series features a horizontal line of five figures, two figures traditionally stylized

after her grandmother Pabita Velarde's work and two after her mother Helen Hardin's work. The central figure is a self-portrait, "the white child," says Bagshaw, who has given the glimpse of her artistic process.

Summing up, she says: "This painting started out (as almost all of mine do) as a three-color abstract geometric painting with no idea of figures." Yet, figures do emerge, invoked by Bagshaw, whose artistic lineage is rooted in the Pueblo Indian memory-painting tradition. "As you can tell, everything I paint comes from a spiritual place that is in large part connected to Mom and Grandma."

When Pabita Velarde (1918–2006) was enrolled in the Santa Fe Indian School, around 1931, at the age of 14, she entered a world that would transform her life and others— that of her artist daughter, Helen Hardin, and her artist granddaughter, Margarita Bagshaw. In her art classes Velarde befriended Tonita Peña, who introduced her to what J. J. Brady (*Pueblo Indian Painting*) has termed "Pan Pueblo

▲ Helen Hardin, Margarita Bagshaw, and Pabita Velarde, 1968.

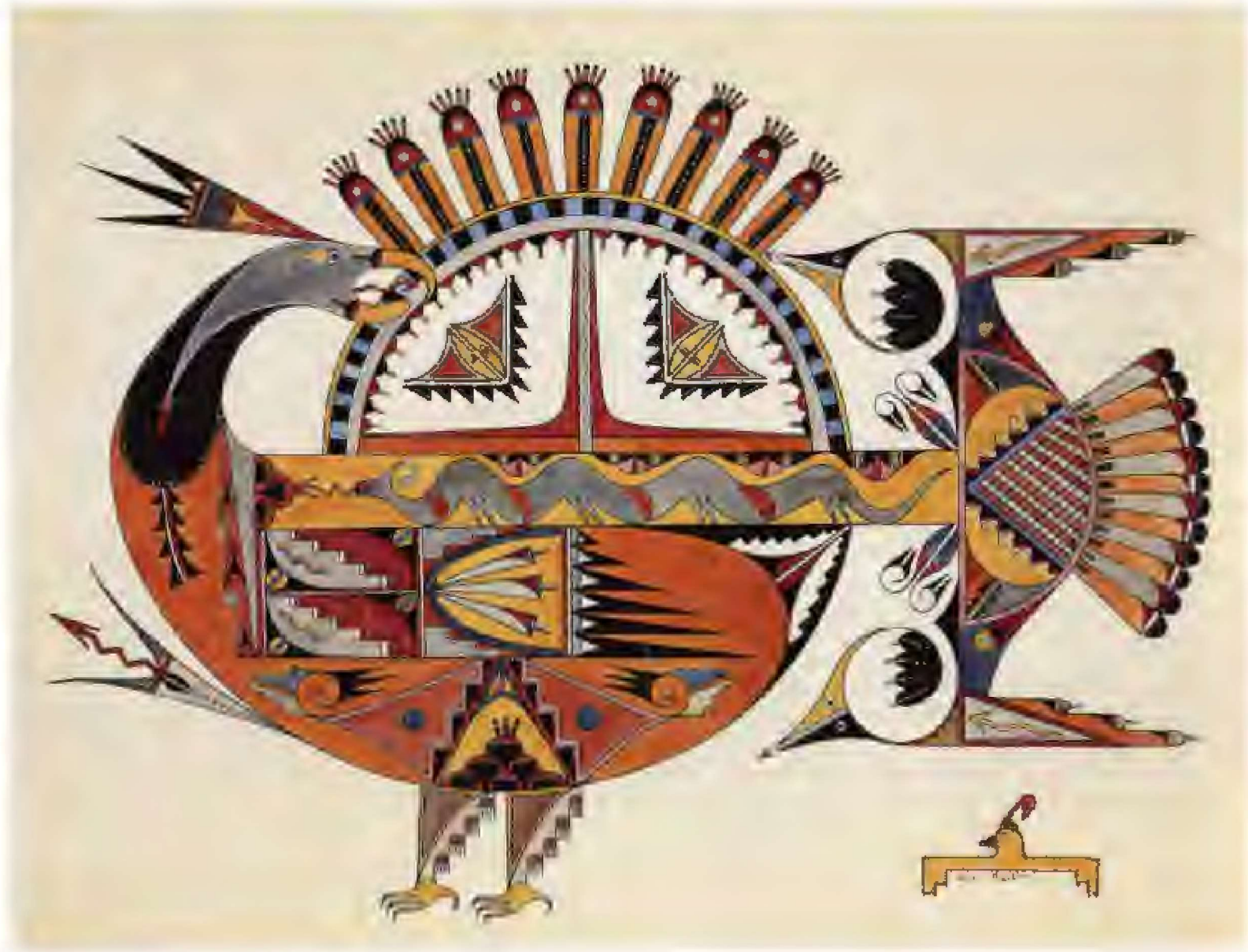
Photography: ©2010 by Tony Gengarellly
www.tonygengarellly.com



Pablita Velarde (1918-2006)
1938



Velino Shije Herrera, *Leaping Deer*, c. 1924-26



Awa Tsireh (Alfonso Roybal), *Fantastic Bird*, c. 1925-30



Tonita Pena (Quah-Ah), *Gourd Dance*, 1939
Tempera



Joe H. Herrera, *Untitled*, 1951
Watercolor



Pablita Velarde (Tse Tsan), *Thunderknives*, 1957
Dry earth pigments on masonite



Pablita Velarde (Tse Tsan)

Pottery Motif, 1958

Dry earth pigments on masonite



Pablita Velarde
Germination Kachinas, c. 1971
Dry earth pigments on board

"Germination Kachinas"
41" X 33" Earth Pigment c. 1971



Pablita Velarde, *Old Father Story Teller* (Clear Light Publishers, 1989)



Helen Hardin (1943-1984)
Circa 1970



Helen Hardin, *Santa Clara Deer Dance*, 1970
Acrylic on Board



Helen Hardin, Winter Awakening the O-Khoo-Wha, 1972
Acrylic on board



Helen Hardin

Visions of Heavenly Flight, 1977

Acrylic on board



Helen Hardin
Metamorphosis, 1981
Acrylic on board



Helen Hardin
Changing Woman, 1981
Four color etching



Helen Hardin
Listening Woman, 1982
Four color etching



Helen Hardin
Medicine Woman, 1981
Four Color Etching



Margarete Bagshaw (born 1964)
Photograph, c. 2010



Margarete Bagshaw, *Ancestral Procession*, 2010



Margarete Bagshaw, *Messages and Miracles*, 2009