



UCROSS ART GALLERY

CELEBRATING
COMPLEXITIES

GERALD CLARKE, SAVANNAH LECORNU,
MIKAYLA PATTON, AND CARA ROMERO

CURATOR: BRENDA MALLORY



ABOUT UCROSS

Ucross fosters the creative spirit of artists and groups by providing uninterrupted time, studio space, living accommodations, and the experience of the majestic High Plains while serving as a responsible steward of its historic 20,000-acre ranch.

The vast spaciousness of its Wyoming location has a powerful and life-changing impact on artists, writers, composers, choreographers, and collaborative groups. Since its first residencies were awarded in 1983, more than 2,700 artists have received the gift of time and space at Ucross.

The artists featured in *Celebrating Complexities* are recipients of the Ucross Fellowship for Native American Visual Artists.

Funding for the fellowships and associated public programs have been provided by grants from the Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund, the Wyoming Arts Council, and Arete Design Group.



**BEING AT UCROSS CHANGED THE WAY I THINK ABOUT MY
WORK AND GAVE ME THE CONFIDENCE TO BELIEVE THAT
I HAVE A SPACE IN PLACES LIKE THIS.**

- Savannah LeCornu, Recipient, Ucross Fellowship for Native American Visual Artists
(Spring 2022)

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Ucross Foundation acknowledges with respect that it is situated on the aboriginal land of several Indigenous communities, including the Cheyenne, Crow, and Lakota nations. Indigenous people continue to live in this area and practice their teachings and lifeways. Today, this region remains an important place for many Indigenous peoples. As a Wyoming institution, we recognize and respect this historical context and are working to build reciprocal relationships with the Native nations on whose lands we are situated.

In partial fulfillment of that commitment, Ucross established Fellowships for Native American Visual Artists in 2017 and for Writers in 2020. Selected fellows are given a four-week residency on Ucross's ranch, which includes uninterrupted time, private studio space, living accommodations, and meals by a professional chef. Ucross also provides each fellow with a stipend of \$2,000 and the opportunity to present work publicly.

CELEBRATING COMPLEXITIES

Celebrating Complexities includes the work of Gerald Clarke (Cahuilla Band of Indians), Savannah LeCornu (Tsimshian, Haida, and Nez Perce), Mikayla Patton (Oglala Lakota Nation), and Cara Romero (Chemehuevi Indian Tribe). These four talented artists work across many different mediums including photography, sculpture, painting, drawing, printmaking, beading, quillwork, and basketmaking. And that is not even an exhaustive list of what they do! They come from diverse backgrounds, geographies, tribal affiliations, and are at varying stages in their lives and careers. But each artist explores and celebrates complex ideas in their work, looking at the specific to elucidate the universal. They emphasize their connections to their families, their ancestors, and their communities, presenting an Indigenous worldview that encompasses the past, the present, and the future. They are reclaiming materials and techniques, narratives and identities, and their work tells rich contemporary stories about people and cultures that are vital and thriving.

As a recipient of the Ucross Fellowship for Native American Visual Artists in its initial year in 2018, I can personally attest to the profound experience it is to settle

into the quiet landscape of eastern Wyoming, to set up your materials and supplies in a light-filled spacious studio and launch into work without the interruptions of daily life. New surroundings allow us fresh views on the world around us and inside our heads. A residency at Ucross can be a time to explore new ideas or flesh out old ones. It can be a time to walk in the land or just rest and enjoy watching a whitetail deer grazing outside your window or an eagle landing in a tree.

I'm honored to come back now to curate this exhibition of works by recipients of the Ucross Fellowship for Native American Visual Artists from 2022 and 2023. Having the opportunity to study their work closely, to listen to their public talks, to delve deeper into their thinking and motivations has been enriching and gratifying. It makes me appreciate anew what Ucross can provide to Native Artists.

Gerald Clarke works across many disciplines that include sculptures made from reclaimed beer and soda cans that reference alcoholism and diabetes that shorten lives, modern day problems that are translated into the centuries-old tradition of Cahuilla basketmaking that continues today, attesting to

resilience and continuance. He creates large scale land-based work referencing his tribe's original lands and as well as the more intimate *Branded* series prints seen in this exhibition. Regardless of the medium he is using, Clarke brings attention to the layered issues of Native identity as they exist in the current world. He questions who controls the narrative about Native people and who has determined what is Native art. A branding iron is a tool Clarke uses in his life as a rancher, understanding how it confers ownership. By making his own branding irons with words and images laden with meanings and political messages, he creates storytelling devices that allow him to take ownership of the narrative.

Savannah LeCornu often works with Northwest formline designs to stay close to her identity. Her imagery combines humor and whimsy with serious topics like stolen land. She makes drawings and paintings, sometimes working with digital mediums. LeCornu's work includes the *Still Here* series, which highlights Indigenous people in urban areas and asserts their contemporary lives. Her *Indigenize* series returns Indigenous names to stolen land. The continuous curving lines of the formline designs connect her existence to those of the people before her.

Mikayla Patton explores traditional forms using found materials and alternative methods of making as metaphor for how modern Native people are forced to adapt to forever changing environments. Her work often references the parfleches and traveling trunks her

ancestors used as they traveled the western plains. Rather than the leather that these objects were once made from, she creates her works from handmade paper. She might use a laser to cut shapes for her works, but along with that modern method, she might also embellish them with designs made from her culture's traditions of beadwork or quillwork. Taking advantage of the solitude and uninterrupted time of the residency, Patton took long walks in the landscape around Ucross, discovering quills that she processed to use in her designs.

Cara Romero celebrates complexities by challenging the tropes of historical photos of Native people. Much historical photography was of the disappearing Indian writ large, the pan-Indian. Romero's work turns that on its head. Her staged photographs are tribally specific, highlighting individual people with stories that reference history but are specific to issues of today and the lively Native people she knows. Her photography creates a worldview that carries the spirits of her ancestors shown through the powerful personas of contemporary people grounded firmly in present day spaces and activities. The photographs in this exhibition focus on her portrait series reflecting a lineage of strong women from many Native cultures. These women are powerful, sometimes irreverent, hold a proud and direct gaze, and they inhabit their world to the fullest.

When we see the work in this exhibition, we are acutely aware that

these are contemporary artists making it, sometimes using modern process or materials and sometimes ancient ones, exploring current issues that are shaped by histories. They address a broad range of events with specific details. They don't seek easy answers because there are none; or try to tell simple stories because the stories are complicated; or show us only a sad past because the future is hope, and the present is where these four artists celebrate those complexities.

I am grateful to Ucross not only for creating the Fellowship for Native American Visual Artists and for the opportunity it affords these artists to advance their themes and careers, but also the opportunity for us, the viewers who see the work, to broaden our own thinking and worldview through their considerations and creations.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Brenda Mallory lives in Portland, Oregon. She grew up in Oklahoma and is a citizen of Cherokee Nation. She earned a BA in Linguistics and English from UCLA and a BFA from Pacific Northwest College of Art. Mallory has received grants from the Oregon Arts Commission, The Ford Family Foundation, and the Regional Arts & Culture Council. Awards include the Hallie Ford Fellowship, Eiteljorg Museum Contemporary Native Art Fellowship, Native Arts and Culture Visual Arts Fellowship, and the Ucross Fellowship for Native American Visual Artists.

Residencies include GLEAN, Crow's Shadow Institute of the Arts, the Jordan Schnitzer Printmaking Residency, Anderson Ranch, Ucross, Pulp & Deckle Papermaking, and Bullseye Glass. Her work is in the collections of the National Gallery of Art, the Boston Museum of Fine Art, the Portland Art Museum, The Heard Museum, and the Hallie Ford Museum.

Texture and repeated rhythmic forms are instrumental to Mallory's abstract compositions. Using mainly reclaimed materials, she explores ideas of dominion, disruption and repair, as well as interconnections in long-established systems in nature and human cultures.



brendamallory.com

GERALD CLARKE

(Cahuilla Band of Indians)

There are aspects of my work that have evolved over the past 30 years of art making, but some aspects have remained the same. I have consistently chosen to not have a singular approach to art making; I choose whatever media, format, or action that I believe would best express the idea/emotion/concept I am exploring. I also recognize my need for meaning. While I have a deep appreciation for the aesthetic object and truly enjoy the physicality and craft of making an art object, my ultimate goal as an artist is for my work to have a meaningful interaction with the viewer.

In hindsight, I recognize how my perspective of the viewer has evolved. Early in my career, I sought to educate the non-native viewer about contemporary Native culture. Over time, I came to two realizations regarding my work and the viewer. First, by focusing my efforts to educate the non-native viewer, I was neglecting my own tribal community. Second, the more personal and honest I am in my work, the more universal it becomes.

I was raised with a traditional understanding of the world and the importance of community. I feel a responsibility to share my perspective and the humanity we all share. I don't make Native American art. I express my Cahuilla perspective as a twenty-first century citizen of the world and the passion, pain, and reverence I feel as a contemporary Cahuilla person.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Gerald Clarke is an enrolled citizen of the Cahuilla Band of Indians and lives in the home his grandfather build on the Cahuilla Indian Reservation where he oversees the Clarke family cattle ranch. He is currently a Professor of Ethnic Studies at the University of California Riverside where he teaches classes in Native American art, history, and culture.

Clarke has exhibited his work extensively and it can be seen in numerous exhibitions as well as major museum collections. In 2007, Gerald was awarded an Eiteljorg Museum Fellowship and served as an Artist-in-Residence at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 2015. In 2020, the Palm Springs Art Museum hosted Gerald Clarke: Falling Rock, the first major retrospective of the artist's work.

Clarke is a frequent lecturer, speaking about Native art, culture and social issues. He holds a B.A. in Art from the University of Central Arkansas and the M.A./M.F.A. degrees in Painting/Sculpture from Stephen F. Austin State University located in Nacogdoches, Texas.

geraldclarkeart.com

(BELOW)
ARTIST TOOLS DETAIL
(FACING PAGE)

NATIVE FADED, 2019
CHARRED PAPER, 24 X 18 INCHES



PORTRAIT BY NATE ABBOTT



native

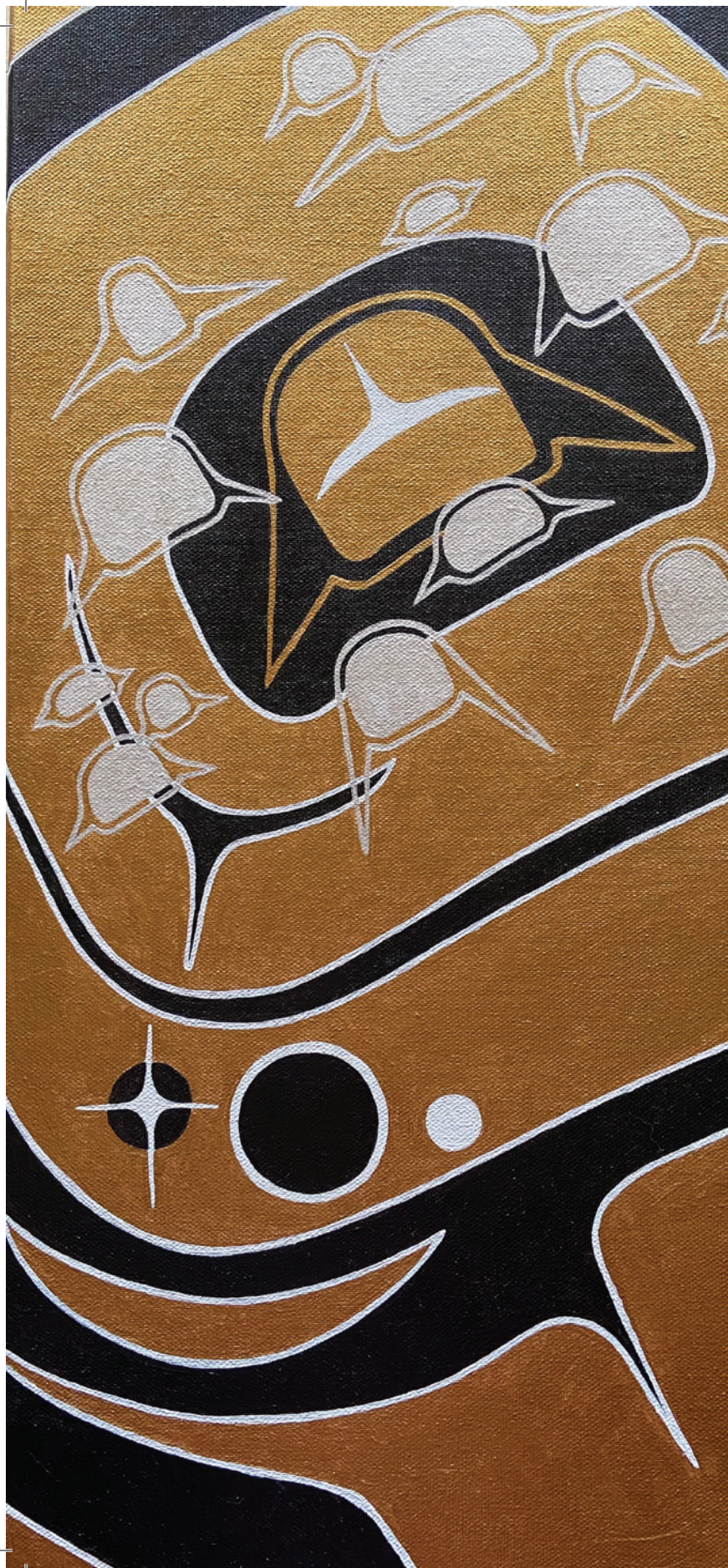
native

native

native

2019

Gerald Clarke



SAVANNAH LECORNU

(Tsimshian, Haida, and Nez Perce)

Storytelling has always been important to us as a people, and it's something I have always gravitated to. In the past that meant writing or design work, and on a couple of rare occasions, performing. Over the years I have found the stories I want to tell and how to tell them through painting and drawing.

Traditional stories.

Family stories.

Stories of heartbreak and stories of joy.

Stories I love.

Complex stories, with more than one person to tell it.

When I walk into a studio or paint in my kitchen I think of

My Ancestors and elders.

Tricksters and creation stories.

Life without her.

Current obsessions (right now it's Good Omens)

Summers with brothers and cousins.

So many before me fought to pass down our stories for me to be able to continue telling them. When I draw, or paint, or bead, I hold all of that with me and try to create another chapter.



PORTRAIT BY MADISON JOY LEFEVER

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Savannah LeCornu is a self-taught artist from Ketchikan, Alaska. She is part of the Tsimshian, Haida, and Nez Perce tribes. Savannah primarily draws and paints in digital and traditional formats but she also beads. She works in formline and plateau art styles to create modern pieces that celebrate her tribes, her family, and indigenous peoples.

LeCornu received her BA in performing arts from Western Washington University. Her concentrations were in lighting design and playwriting.

LeCornu was the recipient of the Native American Fellowship from Ucross in Spring 2022. She was the recipient of the Harpo Foundation Fellowship for Native American artists from the Vermont Studio Center in Fall of 2023. Her work was exhibited for the first time in 2023. "ah yes that old indian saying" was her first solo exhibit and was displayed at the Seattle Repertory Theatre. She was also a part of "arnaq, hana'ask, sm?em" at Columbia City Gallery. Both took place in Seattle, Washington.

savannahlecornu.weebly.com

(FACING PAGE LEFT)

BE NOT AFRAID, 2023

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

(FACING PAGE TOP RIGHT)

STORY TELLER, 2023

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

(FACING PAGE BOTTOM RIGHT)

PRESSED FLOWERS, 2023

VARIOUS SIZES AND CUTS

OF BEADS ON CANVAS

MIKAYLA PATTON

(Oglala Lakota Nation)

By embracing the delicate balance between vulnerability and renewal, I am interested in exploring Indigenous intimacies, personal narratives, and the transformative power of repurposing materials. Through the interplay of recycled paper-making and earth elements, I create sculptural objects that utilize my Lakota knowledge of being, adornment, and artistic methodologies. I aim to address shared themes of healing, growth, and renewal.

I collect and combine intimate, often Indigenous informed articles such as glass beads, porcupine quills, leather, fabric scraps, sinew, plant dyes, inks, and nylon thread. These materials are embedded, woven, and pierced through the paper, creating poetic fragments of adornment. The identifiable materials I use help to harness their energies, further emphasizing the connection between my work and the land it represents.

One recurring subject in my work is the concept of traveling trunks, reflecting on the functionality and protection of such utilitarian containers. My people once heavily relied on traveling across the Great Plains in connection with Maka (Mother Earth). These objects unify our relationship to land while acknowledging the complexities of self, creating a visual dialogue between vulnerability and protection.

ENDURING, 2023

HANDMADE PAPER, DEER LEATHER LACE,
PORCUPINE QUILLS, ASH
TIA COLLECTION, SANTA FE, NM
(DETAIL ON COVER)





ABOUT THE ARTIST

Mikayla Patton (b. Pine Ridge Reservation) is an enrolled member of the Oglala Lakota Nation and mixed media artist.

In 2019, Patton obtained a BFA from the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Her work exhibited at the Texas Tech School of Art (Lubbock); All My Relations Gallery (Minneapolis); and the Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans. Patton has been mentioned in Hand Papermaking Magazine, First American Art, and Pasatiempo. She received fellowships, awards and residencies through the Roswell A-I-R Program; Ucross Foundation; The Studios at MASS MoCA; First Peoples Fund; and Native Arts and Culture Foundation. Recently, Patton was awarded the 2023 Joan Mitchell Fellowship and is currently based on the East Coast.

mikaylapatton.com





CARA ROMERO (Chemehuevi Indian Tribe)

As an Indigenous photographer, I embrace photography as my tool to resist Eurocentric narratives and as a means for opening audiences' perspectives to the fascinating diversity of living Indigenous peoples. My approach fuses time-honored and culturally specific symbols with twenty-first century ideas. This strategy reinforces the ways we exist as contemporary Native Americans, all the while affirming that Indigenous culture is continually evolving and imminently permanent.

Sometimes I portray old stories, such as creation stories or animal stories, in a contemporary context to show that each grows and evolves with ensuing generations. I use vibrant color, experimental lighting, and photo-illustration to explore ideas of how the supernatural world overlaps with our everyday lives. In combining form and content, I reflect a uniquely Indigenous worldview that shows the resilience and beauty of our thriving cultures. Here, self-representation through photography battles the "one-story" narrative that casts complex, living cultures into stereotypes, instead offering multi-layered visual architectures that invite viewers to abandon preconceived notions about Native art, culture, and peoples.

To further counter photography's exploitive past, I actively collaborate with my models. Hailing from many tribal backgrounds and many geographic

regions, these subjects are my friends and relatives. Together we stage photographs to tell stories that we feel (together) are important and give back to our Native community. My photographs explore our collective Native histories, and the ways in which our indigeneity expresses itself in modern times. I firmly believe Native peoples are as Indigenous today as we were prior to the advent of colonialism.

When we as Native people explore new artistic tools and techniques, such as photography, we indigenize those media. Our vision and intimate relationship to our communities are precisely what make Native photographers the people best equipped to convey the allure, strength, and complexity of contemporary Native life. I am deeply committed to making work

that addresses Native American social issues and changes the way people perceive us in contemporary society. My style offers viewers sometimes serious and sometimes playful social commentary on pressing issues like the border wall, the hyper-sexualization of Native women in histories of photography, environmental destruction of Native lands, and stereotypes of Indigeneity in pop culture. In response, I unapologetically depict where we are now, in the present day, making sure to always respect cultural protocol and ancestral ties.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

An enrolled citizen of the Chemehuevi Indian Tribe, Cara Romero is a visual storyteller, activist, and mother. Born to interracial parents in LA, she grew up between the reservation and big city sprawl. Romero is known for dramatic fine art photography that examines Indigenous life in contemporary contexts. As an undergraduate at the University of Houston, she pursued a degree in cultural anthropology and was disillusioned by how Native Americans are portrayed in academia and media. After realizing that photographs could do more than anthropology did in words, she shifted her medium. With training in film, digital, photojournalism, editorial portraiture, and commercial and fine art photography, her work is shaped by 25 years of formal study and artistic practice. Blurring the lines between fine art and activism, she tells stories of cultural memory, collective histories, and autobiography. Her work commonly explores themes of environmental racism, power and belonging of Native womxn, Native sub-pop, and mythos.

As Romero's work continues to grow and evolve, her imagery — which ranges from pointed satire to the supernatural in everyday life — conveys the complex realities of contemporary Native peoples. Her work has been acquired by major institutions including The Met, MoMA, The Amon Carter, as well as the Forge Project Collection. Over the past three years, she been commissioned to create monumental-scale public art including the 2019 Desert X Biennial and NDN Collective's #TONGVALAND billboard series in Los Angeles. Since 2017, she has mentored four emerging Native American women photographers. She is the mother of three children, travels between Santa Fe and the Chemehuevi Valley Indian Reservation, where she inherited her childhood home and maintains close ties to her tribal community and ancestral homelands through art and activism.

cararomerophotography.com



PORTRAIT BY CARA ROMERO

(CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT)

STARLIGHT, STARBRIGHT, 2023

ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PHOTOGRAPH, PRINTED BY THE ARTIST

JENNA, 2014

LIMITED EDITION ARCHIVAL FINE ART PHOTOGRAPH

PESHAWN, 2022

LIMITED EDITION ARCHIVAL FINE ART PHOTOGRAPH



An aerial photograph of a lush green landscape. The scene is dominated by vibrant green grass and various trees, including some evergreens and deciduous trees with bright green foliage. Long, dark shadows are cast across the grass, suggesting a low sun position. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

**I LOVED THE COMMUNAL DINNERS EACH EVENING.
IT GAVE THE PARTICIPANTS TIME TO GET TO KNOW
ONE ANOTHER AND CREATE COMMUNITY!**

- Gerald Clarke, Recipient, Ucross Fellowship for Native American Visual Artists
(Spring 2023)

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MIKAYLA PATTON, AND CARA ROMERO

CURATOR: BRENDA MALLORY

FEBRUARY 12 - MAY 17, 2024

MAY 3, FREE & OPEN TO ALL

11 a.m. ARTIST TALK, Sheridan College

6 p.m. EXHIBITION RECEPTION, Ucross Art Gallery

GALLERY HOURS:

Monday - Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

CAFÉ HOURS:

Wednesday - Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Following Ucross, show will appear at



YELLOWSTONE ART MUSEUM

June 21 - October 6, 2024

2401 N. 27th St, Billings, MT 59101

406.256.6804

artinfo@artmuseum.org

artmuseum.org

COVER:

MIKAYLA PATTON, *ENDURING DETAIL*
TIA COLLECTION, SANTA FE, NM



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Arts Council, with funding from
the Wyoming State Legislature
and the National Endowment
for the Arts.



30 Big Red Lane, Clearmont, WY 82835 | 307.737.2291 | info@ucross.org | ucross.org