

## ON COLLECTING AND ENDURING LEGACIES

Monica Buckle (Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma)  
Executive Director, Verde Valley Archaeology Center and Museum

Fine art collecting honors the artist and above all the inspirational qualities of creative expression. The James T. Bialac Indigenous Art Collection is comprised of a vast range of mediums, composition, techniques, themes, and tribal affiliations. With that said, this collection in its entirety tells a beautiful story of how one man cared deeply for emerging, and established, Native American and Indigenous artists.

Mr. Bialac validated an individual artist's expression and inherently supported their creative endeavors. There are notable artists represented in the collection, and several that share family and communal relationships. Some of the artists I am not too familiar with, yet they manage to hold space within the collection. Then there are artists at the onset of their careers experimenting with technique.

Nonetheless, each artwork in the collection conveys a cultural message. Messages of spirits, deities, ceremony, tradition, animal friends, cosmological and worldly elements, exuberance for life, sadness, grief, resiliency, connectedness to land, and above all kinship with humanity.

We invite you to interpret each work presented here in your own unique way. What messages are conveyed? How do you respond? Is there a particular piece that speaks to you?

I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked alongside Julia Arriola, David Tenario, Christine Brindza and Marianna Pegno, and how the spirit of this collection's legacy continues to live on.

This exhibition was developed through collaborative, scholarly, and community-based dialogue with Indigenous scholars Julia Arriola, Mayo-Mescalero; Monica Buckle, Cherokee; and David Tenario, Tohono O'odham. This exhibition focuses on the intimate relationships and interconnectedness of people, events, and nature as told from multiple viewpoints found in works of art. From these conversations we've learned that there is no one perspective, truth, or memory, but many, and all are meaningful.

*Enduring Legacies: The James T. Bialac Indigenous Art Collection* is presented by Anne and Jeff Gartner, Kit and Dan Kimball, and the Tucson Museum of Art Western Art Patrons. The 2022/2023 Exhibition Season at TMA is presented by Jim and Fran Allen, Jon and Linda Ender, James and Louise Glasser, and I. Michael and Beth Kasser. AC Hotel Tucson Downtown/Loveblock is the official hotel sponsor of TMA.

This program was made possible by Arizona Humanities.



COVER: David Bradley (b. 1954), Chippewa, *Another Minnesota Folk Legend*, 1987, oil on canvas. 25 x 20 in. Collection of the Tucson Museum of Art. Gift of James T. Bialac.

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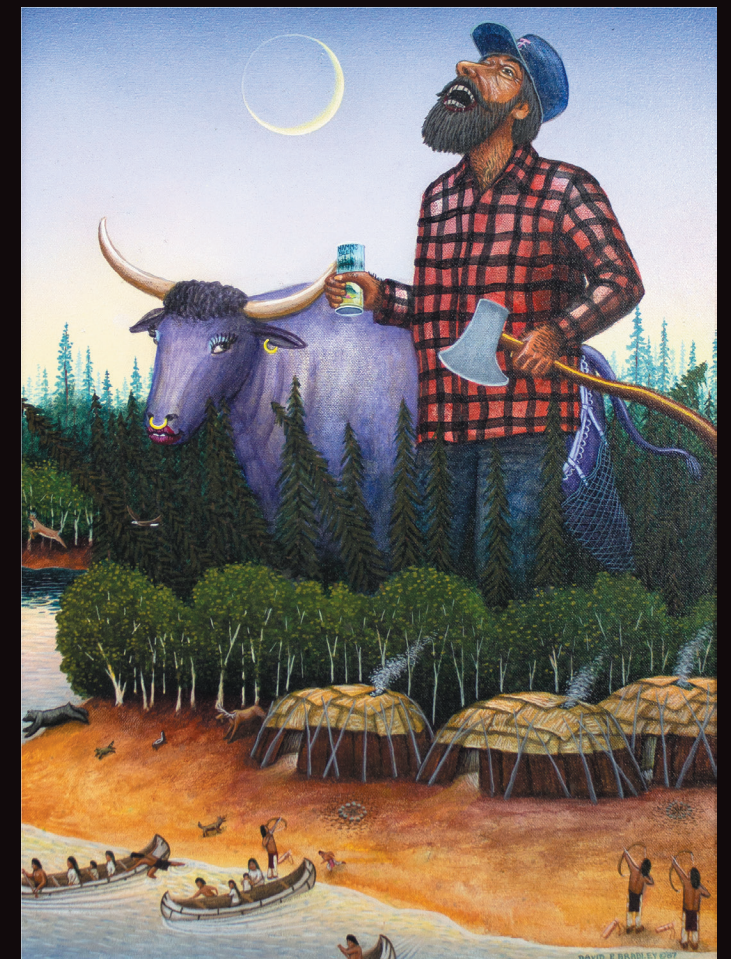
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## EXHIBITION GUIDE

# Enduring Legacies

The James T. Bialac  
Indigenous Art Collection



FEBRUARY 2, 2023-FEBRUARY 25, 2024



*Enduring Legacies: The James T. Bialac Indigenous Art Collection* presents an expansive array of contemporary Indigenous Art featuring late 20th to early 21st century paintings and works on paper. Donated to the TMA collection by Arizona collector, James T. Bialac, this exhibition celebrates his lifelong passion to collect Indigenous works of art, befriend and support artists, play a role in nurturing creativity, and help sustain Indigenous artistic traditions. *Enduring Legacies* includes representation from regional artists of Arizona, the Southwest, and the greater American West, providing a glimpse into the cultures, histories, artistic styles, and experiences of contemporary Indigenous artists.



T.C. Cannon (1946–1978), Kiowa, *Diné*, linocut. 26.25 x 22.25 in. Collection of the Tucson Museum of Art. Gift of James T. Bialac.

## ABOUT JAMES T. BIALAC

James T. Bialac (1928–2022) was a dedicated support of Indigenous artists—amassing over 4,000 works of art from when he started collecting in 1964.



James T. Bialac with his collection, c. 1967

Originally from the mid-west, Bialac and his family moved to Arizona in the 1950s from California. He had an eclectic career as a developer and contractor with the family business, a brief stint in the U.S. Army, and eventually a lawyer.

His first purchase of Indigenous Art was from Tom Bahti's Indian Arts in Tucson, AZ when he was a student at the University of Arizona Law School. This purchase spawned a lifelong passion and commitment to learning about various Native artists and techniques. He shared his love of the genre with friends and institutions, resulting in his joining the board of the Heard Museum in 1968. He was able to explore the intersection of his legal profession and passion for collecting by acting as legal counsel for

Arizona-based galleries such as Marilyn Butler Fine Art and the Elaine Horwitch galleries. Through this professional relationship he was also able to enhance his collection and befriend many Indigenous artists such as Fritz Scholder and Helen Hardin.

In 2012, Bialac generously donated a large portion of his collection to the Fred Jones Jr. Museum at the University of Oklahoma. However, he continued to acquire work. Toward the end of his life, he gifted the Tucson Museum of Art approximately 400 paintings and works on paper, and his extensive kachina collection to the University of Arizona Law School.



Harrison Begay (1917–2012), Diné, *Fawn Under a Rainbow*, watercolor. 19.25 x 15.5 in. Collection of the Tucson Museum of Art. Gift of James T. Bialac.