

SAND to STONE



**29 PALMS ART GALLERY AND JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK ANNOUNCE
SAND TO STONE: CONTEMPORARY NATIVE AMERICAN ART
IN JOSHUA TREE
April 1 – May 22, 2016**

**1ST OF 3 EVENTS – 700 4TH GRADERS to PARTICIPATE in A BIRD SINGING & DANCING EVENT
APRIL 1 at COPPER MOUNTAIN COLLEGE**

29 PALMS, CA (March 21, 2016) – 29 Palms Art Gallery and Joshua Tree National Park present the highly anticipated project *Sand to Stone: Contemporary Native American Art in Joshua Tree*. This multidisciplinary art project highlights contemporary Native American artists from the tribes (Cahuilla, Chemehuevi, Mojave and Serrano) with significant cultural ties to Joshua Tree National Park. The goal of this community collaboration is to increase awareness about Native American art and culture, encourage Native American artists, individuals and local communities to interact with park land, and foster cross-cultural relationships. Over the next few months, students, visitors, artists, and tribal members are invited to participate in Bird Singing & Dancing events, an exhibition at the 29 Palms Art Gallery featuring Cara Romero, Lewis deSoto, and Gerald Clarke Jr., and a site-specific installation by Lewis deSoto at Joshua Tree National Park's Oasis Visitor Center.

Project Director and Curator, Rhonda Lane Coleman states, "This project, for the first time in our region's history, acknowledges contemporary Native American Art and challenges us to reconsider long-held assumptions. While many Native American artists continue to work in traditional art forms (basketry, beading and pottery), others are working outside this context in a variety of media – photography, film, and installation. The artists chosen for this exhibition draw from their indigenous roots and challenge preconceived notions about what contemporary Native American art is and offer new models of cultural identification."

On **April 1st** at 10am, seven hundred 4th graders from the Morongo Basin Unified School District will gather at Copper Mountain College to participate in *Sand to Stone's* first event – a Bird Singing & Dancing performance. Bird, as it is known, has been an important part of Native culture in southern California for centuries and is the heart of a growing revitalization movement. Host, Michael Mirelez, will introduce two groups – Desert Cahuilla and Mojave Bird Singers & Dancers – and instruct students on the history and practice of the tradition. This unique opportunity for students to actively participate with the tribal groups comes at a crucial moment, when 4th-grade students are being introduced to California history. As part of the National Parks' Every Kid in a Park Initiative, each 4th grader will receive a one-year park pass to all federal lands (www.everykidinapark.gov). Superintendent David Smith says, "The Park welcomes the opportunity to showcase art offerings from Native Americans who have deep ties to this land. *Sand to Stone* highlights the fact that Native American art has a progressive, contemporary component which is presented in the exhibition and site-specific installation."

On **April 15th** at 7pm, the community is invited to attend a Bird Singing & Dancing event at Joshua Tree National Park's Indian Cove amphitheater. It is a chance for bird singers and dancers to perform in an intimate outdoor landscape important to their heritage and to gather with the community to share this experience. Project advisor, artist, and bird singer Gerald Clarke Jr. adds, "Many area tribes passed through the lands in and around JTNP for trade routes, gathering edible plants, and hunting small game. Salt and other minerals, obsidian and clay were also important for early tribal cultures. These area tribes are still here and continue to use the land and nature to preserve a sustainable way of life." Bird songs tell stories about the lessons learned during the migration throughout seasons, and this migration parallels the movement of indigenous people through territories.

PROJECT SUPPORT

This project is organized by Rhonda Lane Coleman for the 29 Palms Art Gallery and Joshua Tree National Park, and is made possible, in part, by the California Arts Council, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. Additional support provided by the Tribal Alliance of Sovereign Indian Nations as well as in-kind support from Copper Mountain College, Joshua Tree National Park Council for the Arts, and Benchmark Studios.

PROJECT COMPONENTS

EVENT: BIRD SINGING & DANCING – 4th GRADERS at COPPER MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

Friday, April 1, 2016, 10 - 11:30am

Copper Mountain College Bell Center, 6162 Rotary Way, Joshua Tree, CA 92252

FREE; priority entrance for 4th grade elementary students. Community welcome

Bird singing and dancing have been an important part of Native culture for tribes in southern California for centuries and continue to be actively passed on. At this event, multiple bird singers and dancers will gather at this central location with over seven hundred 4th graders from the Morongo Basin Unified School District. Students will have the opportunity to learn about bird songs – history and traditions – and participate in this unique event that comes at a crucial time in their introduction to California history.

EVENT: BIRD SINGING & DANCING in JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK'S INDIAN COVE

Friday, April 15, 7pm

Joshua Tree National Park, Indian Cove Amphitheater, 7295 Indian Cove Rd, 29 Palms, CA 92277

FREE; Space is limited, carpooling encouraged

Bird songs are a linkage between neighboring tribes and between generations, and are the heart of a growing revitalization movement. This is a special opportunity for bird singers and dancers to perform in an intimate outdoor landscape important to local Native heritage and to gather with the community to share this experience.

EXHIBITION: LEWIS deSOTO, CARA ROMERO, and GERALD CLARKE

April 27 – May 22, 2016

29 Palms Art Gallery, 74055 Cottonwood Drive, 29 Palms, CA 92277

FREE; Gallery hours, Wednesday – Sunday, 12 – 3pm

The exhibition focuses on work by contemporary Native American artists from tribes associated with Joshua Tree National Park. Artworks presented address modern indigenous worldviews, while honoring traditions, dispelling stereotypes, and addressing cultural mythologies.

SITE-SPECIFIC ART INSTALLATION: by LEWIS deSOTO

Opens May 7, 2016

Joshua Tree National Park Oasis Visitor Center, 74485 National Park Drive, Twentynine Palms, CA 92277

FREE; Visitor Center open year round, 8am – 5pm

Lewis deSoto, is known worldwide for his site-specific artwork addressing cosmological questions and cultural mythologies. He is collaborating with contemporary opera singer Erin Neff, artists Emily Clarke and Vincent Desjardins to create a new sound and didactic installation inside park boundaries.

SPECIAL OPENING RECEPTION, PERFORMANCE & LECTURE

Saturday, May 7, 5 – 8 pm

29 Palms Art Gallery, 74055 Cottonwood Drive, 29 Palms, CA 92277

FREE; Open to the public

The 29 Palms Art Gallery is hosting a special reception celebrating all aspects of this large multidisciplinary project. The evening will feature a panel discussion with artists, Gerald Clarke Jr., Lewis deSoto, and Cara Romero, and be moderated by Curator, Rhonda Lane Coleman. Following the panel discussion will be a special performance by Lewis deSoto's collaborator – opera singer Erin Neff – and Bird Singers. All artists, participants and partners are invited to join in the festivities.

EXHIBITION ARTISTS

The exhibition artists – Gerald Clarke Jr., Lewis deSoto, and Cara Romero – were selected for their artistic excellence, ability to provide insight, and desire to contribute to the contemporary dialogue. Their artworks serve as cornerstones for discussions about current indigenous world views, cultural mythologies, relationships with land, and the complexities of the modern Native American experience.

Gerald Clarke Jr., Exhibiting Artist and Project Advisor

Gerald Clarke Jr. is a member of the Cahuilla Band of Indians. Clarke often employs traditional Native techniques in a conceptual format, but he works in a variety of media. A selection of his photographs are currently on view at the Palm Springs Art Museum in an exhibition entitled *Changing the Tone: Contemporary Native American Photographers*. Clarke lives on his family's ranch on the reservation, has served on the Tribal Council as Vice-Chairman, and teaches Sculpture, Drawing and New Media at Idyllwild Arts Academy.

Cara Romero, Exhibiting Artist

Cara Romero, daughter of a Chemehuevi father and German-Irish mother, studied cultural anthropology and photography. Her photographs present whimsical and complex ideas with a modern Indigenous worldview. She is a contemporary visual storyteller interested in rewriting the ideas of Indian identity, battling cultural misappropriation, and dispelling stereotypes all while preserving tradition and maintaining cultural sensitivity.

Lewis deSoto, Exhibiting Artist and Site-Specific Installation Artist

Lewis deSoto, an artist of Cahuilla ancestry, is internationally recognized for his photographs, installations, sculpture and public art that engage cosmological questions, notions of self, cultural mythologies, and native relationships to land. Influenced by anthropology, sociology, history, religion, literature, and music, he is most known for his culturally-specific and site-specific installations that transform spaces through light, audio and video.

For more information, visit www.sandtostone.org and www.29palmsartgallery.com or contact Rhonda Lane Coleman, 760-367-7819 / rhonda@sandtostone.org. 29 Palms Art Gallery is located at 74055 Cottonwood Drive, 29 Palms, CA 92277 (off National Park Drive). Joshua Tree National Park Oasis Visitor Center is located at park headquarters, 74485 National Park Drive, Twentynine Palms, CA 92277, at the junction of Utah Trail and National Park Drive.

About 29 Palms Art Gallery

Located in a historic adobe, the 29 Palms Art Gallery is the longest-standing non-profit art organization in the Joshua Tree Gateway Communities and for over fifty years has consistently provided art exhibitions and education to participants of all ages and skill levels. The mission of the 29 Palms Art Gallery is to present high-quality art, to encourage creative growth through innovative educational programs, and to offer an inclusive environment for artists and community members to meet, exchange ideas, and create art. Admission is free and open to the public. For more information, call 760-367-7819, visit www.29palmsartgallery.com and follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Media Contact

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