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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Action/Abstraction Redefined: Modern Native Art, 1940s to 1970s
Opens at the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts on February 16, 2024
Family Art Festival and Artist Talk Announced to Celebrate Exhibition Opening

January 25, 2024 (LITTLE ROCK, Ark.) – [*Action/Abstraction Redefined: Modern Native Art, 1940s to 1970s*](#) opens at the [Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts \(AMFA\)](#) on Friday, February 16, 2024, in the Harriet and Warren Stephens Galleries and will remain on view through May 26, 2024.

Action/Abstraction Redefined is the first major traveling exhibition to highlight modern Native American art through the lens of 20th century Abstract Expressionism, Color Field and Hard-Edge Painting. Comprising 52 works by 36 artists—including George Morrison, Fritz Scholder, and T.C. Cannon—the exhibition showcases work by artists who redefined the concept of abstraction at midcentury and pushed the boundaries of Native art.

Drawn from the collection of the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe, a school where revolutionary approaches encouraged experimentation and risk taking, *Action/Abstraction Redefined* explores how artists combined New York School art influences with Native art traditions and challenged stereotypical expectations of American Indian art.

After several decades of the U.S. government’s forced assimilationist policies, IAIA was created, instead, to foster radical teaching and bold, student-centered learning for Native students who came from as far away as Alaska and Florida. Experimentation was encouraged alongside traditional Native arts, and the two uniquely merged in the works on view.

“AMFA is proud to present IAIA’s remarkable proof of concept—highly advanced art produced by young people, alongside some of their instructors, and other Native moderns.” says Dr. Catherine Walworth,

Jackye and Curtis Finch, Jr., Curator of Drawings at AMFA. “*Action/Abstraction Redefined* presents an exciting perspective on Native American Art and an extraordinary visual experience.”

With *Action/Abstraction Redefined*, AMFA presents a broader, more inclusive conversation about American art from the 1940s-1970s. The work of artists such as Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and other soon-to-be Abstract Expressionists in the mid-1940s has dominated American art history. This exhibition flips that script and expands the conversation to showcase Indigenous artists authentically bringing their own visual culture and innovation to Abstract Expressionism, Color Field, and Hard-Edge Painting.

While artists such as George Morrison and Fritz Scholder have often been the subject of solo museum exhibitions, *Action/Abstraction Redefined* offers the chance to view these and dozens of other artists in conversation with each other. The lasting impact of these early works continues to reverberate today in the Contemporary Native Art movement and can be seen in AMFA’s own collection with works by such artists as Raven Halfmoon (Caddo), Dawn Walden (Ojibwe), and Kay WalkingStick (Cherokee), all on view in AMFA’s Harriet and Warren Stephens Galleries.

Admission is always free, and the exhibition is open through May 26, 2024. Exhibition images are accessible in AMFA’s [press kit](#).

To accompany the opening of *Action/Abstraction Redefined*, AMFA announces several events are planned for guests of all ages.

AMFA Member Exhibition Preview

AMFA Members get the first look at *Action/Abstraction Redefined* on Thursday, February 15, 2024, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

An opening ceremony presented by the American Indian Center of Arkansas begins at 6:00 p.m. featuring a Cherokee flute performance by Tommy Wildcat and a Lakota Four Directions drum song by Steven Morales. A reception will follow giving guests a chance to view the exhibition before it opens to the public the following day.

This event is open exclusively to AMFA Members, Circle Society Donors, and Corporate Partners, and reservations can be made at www.arkmfa.org.

AMFA’s Family Art Festival

Families can enjoy a free day of art and fun inspired by *Action/Abstraction Redefined* on Saturday, February 17, 2024, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

The Bizhiki Culture & Dance Company—featured on Bon Iver’s 2019 album *l,i*—kicks off the experience with energy-packed, interactive dance performances at 10:30 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. in AMFA’s Atrium. The dancers will then lead audiences to a special storytelling performance illustrating the resilience of Indigenous cultures.

In the Windgate Art School, guests will enjoy live demonstrations by Plains Cree ledger artist Joshue Atcheynum and a basket-making artist as well as specifically-designed art experiences organized by AMFA's Teen Advisory Board.

This is a free event, and no reservations are required.

Artist Talk: Action/Abstraction Redefined

Doug Hyde and Frank Buffalo Hyde, father and son contemporary Native artists, will participate in an intergenerational conversation on Wednesday, March 6, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in AMFA's Performing Arts Theater. The Artist Talk will examine the influence and growth of Native art. Doug Hyde's work *Sun and Moon Gods* is featured in the exhibition.

Tatiana Lomahaftewa-Singer, Curator of Collections at the IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts (MoCNA) in Santa Fe, will lead the conversation and further explore the importance of the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) student artwork featured in *Action/Abstraction Redefined*.

Reservations are encouraged for this free Artist Talk and can be made at www.arkmfa.org.

Action/Abstraction Redefined Dance Performance

On Saturday, April 27, 2024, at 1:30 p.m., traditional choreography and modern movement merge to create a unique art form during a contemporary Native American dance performance in AMFA's Performing Arts Theater. A spectrum of innovative dancers from across the country come together to perform a wide-ranging program, mirroring the creative youthful artistry on view in *Action/Abstraction Redefined*.

Skillfully combining new breakdance traditions, Indigenous storytelling, and contemporary dance, each artist will showcase their unique voice in context with the rituals and customs of their cultures.

Reservations are encouraged for this free event and can be made at www.arkmfa.org.

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Action/Abstraction Redefined is organized by IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, Sante Fe, NM. Support for this exhibition is provided by Art Bridges.

Action/Abstraction Redefined: Modern Native Art, 1940s to 1970s is organized by Dr. Manuela Well-Off-Man, chief curator, IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, Tatiana Lomahaftewa-Singer, curator of collections, IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, and Dr. Lara Evans, IAIA Associate Professor of Native Art History.

The Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts is supported in part by the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts Foundation; Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts Foundation Board of Directors; Arkansas Museum of Fine

Arts Board of Trustees; Windgate Foundation; City of Little Rock; Little Rock Convention and Visitors Bureau; City of North Little Rock; and Arkansas Arts Council, an agency of the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Teen Advisory Board is supported by The Schmieding Foundation and the Alice L. Walton Foundation.

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About the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts:

Founded in 1937, the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts is the largest cultural institution of its kind in the state, offering a unique blend of visual, educational, and performing arts experiences. AMFA is committed to featuring diverse media and artistic perspectives within its permanent collection as well as through rotating temporary exhibitions. AMFA's international collection spans eight centuries, with strengths in works on paper, and includes notable holdings by artists from Arkansas, the South, and across the United States and Europe.

With a vibrant mix of ideas, cultures, people, and places, the museum extends its commitment to artistic diversity through the innovative Windgate Art School, a dynamic children's theatre and performing arts program, and community-focused educational programs for all ages. Located in Little Rock's oldest urban green space, MacArthur Park, AMFA's landmark building and grounds are designed by Studio Gang and SCAPE, in collaboration with Polk Stanley Wilcox Architects.

About Art Bridges:

Art Bridges Foundation is the vision of philanthropist and arts patron Alice Walton. The mission of Art Bridges is to expand access to American art in all regions across the United States. Founded in 2017, Art Bridges creates and supports programs that bring outstanding works of American art out of storage and into communities. Art Bridges partners with a growing network of more than 230 museums to provide financial and strategic support for exhibition development, loans from the Art Bridges Permanent Collection, and programs designed to educate, inspire, and deepen engagement with local audiences. The Art Bridges Permanent Collection represents an expanding vision of American art from the 19th century to present day and encompasses multiple media and voices. For more information, visit artbridgesfoundation.org.