

PRESS RELEASE – May 27, 2008

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High res images available online, www.RCGormanGallery.com

R.C. Gorman: The Collector

Estate Auction makes available famed Navajo artist's personal art collection and distinctive items from a lifetime of collecting

TAOS, NEW MEXICO – It is already being called one of the most exciting auctions to take place in Northern New Mexico. The personal estate of famed Navajo artist and long-time Taos resident R.C. Gorman will be auctioned August 20-21, 2008.

“R.C. Gorman was not just a giant in the arts,” New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson said upon learning of the artist’s death in 2005, “but he was a great spokesman for New Mexico and the Navajo Nation and for artists around the world. He was a dear friend, who will be sorely missed.”

The event that is perhaps most sorely missed is R.C.’s annual Indian Market Show gala each August on the Thursday preceding the weekend market. This August will be a special time to honor R.C.’s memory.

The estate auction begins with silent bidding and preview Wednesday, August 20, from 5-9 p.m. at the Taos Civic Plaza Convention Center, 120 Civic Plaza Drive in Taos. A complete list of auction items may be previewed online at www.RCGormanGallery.com. On Thursday August 21, the silent auction and preview continue at 10 a.m. The live auction commences at 1:30 p.m.

And, R.C. Gorman’s Navajo Gallery at 210 Ledoux Street in Taos will feature a concurrent exhibition of the largest collection ever shown of the artist’s work, including items from his private inventory never before available to the public, along with six lithographs which have only been released since his death.

R.C. Gorman, who passed away at the age of 74, helped chart a new course for a generation of American Indian artists. Prior to the late 1960s, many of those artists felt they had to express an antiquated image of native art favored by collectors. Gorman, however, was an iconoclast and his stunning images of lavishly arranged figure studies celebrating Native American womanhood earned him a level of fame unheard of amid the desert landscape of the Navajo reservation he called home. In fact, it was The New York Times that dubbed him the “Picasso of American Indian art.”

He was born Rudolph Carl Gorman on July 26, 1931, in Chinle, Ariz., son of Carl Gorman and Adele Katherine Brown. Artist Carl Gorman, whose work will be represented at the auction, was a Navajo Code Talker during World War II. From an early age, it was expected that, like his father, R.C. would become an artist.

As a boy, he herded sheep with his aunts in Canyon de Chelly, where he drew on rocks and in the sand and mud. His first sculpture was in clay and his first subjects were Mickey Mouse, Shirley Temple, and automobiles. One of the objects that may be featured in the auction is Gorman's prized Mickey Mouse watch.

After graduating from high school, R.C. studied art at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff and San Francisco State University. In 1958, he received a grant from the Navajo Tribal Council to study art at Mexico City College, where he was deeply influenced by the work of Diego Rivera.

"An Indian who painted strong abstracts and elegant figure studies, and who defied being pigeon-holed, wasn't easy to sell. That might be one of the reasons Gorman decided to take a bold step and open the first Indian-owned fine-art gallery in 1968 on the same street where Taos Society of Artists founder E.L. Blumenschein once lived," according to his obituary in *The Taos News*.

Gorman was an artist of many mediums. His stylized images of Indian women and Indian motifs in acrylics, oils, stone lithography, ceramics and sculpture won him many accolades. In 1973, he was honored as the only living artist to be in the "Masterworks of the American Indian" exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

Gorman also published essays; on Mexican artists, petroglyphs, and cave paintings, and wrote a series of books on cooking and art. His friends included film stars such as Elizabeth Taylor, Danny DeVito and Arnold Schwarzenegger. His work was collected by Gregory Peck, Andy Warhol, and others.

Taos art gallery owner Stephen Parks, who wrote the text for *R.C. Gorman, A Portrait* (Little, Brown, New York) with photographs by Chuck Henningsen, said the artist was "bigger than life" and that he "did a lot to make Taos what it is today."

R.C. traveled extensively in promotion of his art, and acquired a sophisticated taste and a connoisseur's eye for not only Native American art, but art from Africa and Asia.

The auction will include exquisite examples of Southwestern pottery, retablos, sculpture, jewelry, rugs and fine furnishings from Gorman's home, along with artwork by some of the most well known artists living and working in Taos.

Represented will be works by Ted Egri, the last of the Taos Moderns who turned 95 this year; local painter Ron Barsano; Navajo sculptor Robert Shorty; Hispano portraitist Miguel Martínez; Japanese abstract artist Michio Takayama; Chippewa artist David Paul Bradley; and renowned Native American artist Fritz Scholder.

Other highlights of the auction will include "The Gunslinger Series" by the late Taos artist Bill Gersh, a triptych of acrylic on canvas panels that occupied an entire wall in the Gorman home; Sergio Bustamante's assembled "Rhinoceros" with its rich bronze colored patina; and small abstracted works by Cynthia Bissell, Bill Bomar, and Louis Catusco.

Gorman loved the elegance of finely made objects, such as a Richard Lalonde 'linenfold' glass bowl or a Sabattini silverplate caviar serving dish. Also up for bid will be a pair of East Indian carved elephant stools, an embroidered appliqué of peacocks and fans on a Kimono-Uchikate, and a pair of Shekwan pottery garden stands with floral pierce work.

Gorman's Japanese pigeon blood cloisonné vase with a fern leaf interior design is a wonder, as is the Meiji period tansu, and a pair of bronze Doré candelabra. Also included will be designer glassware, sterling silver and china. Gorman's unique sense of humor is evident in a chrome crab server with movable legs, which opens "Transformer"-like to reveal a serving dish.

What may be the most sought after item is a hand carved and sewn puppet of Gorman made by Taos artist Frank Lyon. Many portraits of R.C. are in the collection, ranging from work appraised in the thousands to casual, more personal keepsakes.

The silent auction will offer over 300 items. The live auction will feature up to 150. It is expected that there will be many very pleased collectors by Thursday evening.

Old friends and Taoseñans with lesser budgets will be happy with the vast range of items available.

From keepsakes to fine Southwest art to a full suit of armor, collectors of every stripe will have this event circled, in red, on their calendars!

Registration fee will be \$25.00, which will be credited to the first purchase. Each registrant may bring one guest, but only registrants can bid. Due to the venue's capacity, admission will be limited to 400 persons age 21 and older. Buyer's premium is 15 percent.

For more information, call (575) 758-3250 or visit online www.RCGormanGallery.com. E-mail navajo@RCGormanGallery.com.

FAST FACTS

R.C. Gorman Estate Auction

August 20-21, 2008

Taos Civic Plaza Convention Center

120 Civic Plaza Drive in Taos, New Mexico

Online preview of all auction items

From Monday, June 2, www.RCGormanGallery.com

Silent auction bidding and preview

Wednesday, August 20, 5-9 p.m.

Silent auction and preview continue

Thursday, August 21, 10 a.m.

Live auction

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