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Lighting Pathways: Matriarchs of Oklahoma Native Art Shines
Spotlight on Seven Indigenous Women Trailblazers

New exhibition at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum honors some of the most influential Indigenous women artists and their enduring impact on contemporary art.

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK – On February 16, the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum will highlight seven women artists in *Lighting Pathways: Matriarchs of Oklahoma Native Art* who overcame significant challenges in the late 20th-century Oklahoma Native art scene. Mary Adair, Sharron Ahtone, Allie Chaddlesone, Ruthe Blalock Jones, Brenda Kennedy, Jane Osti and Virginia Stroud found success in the fine art world while carrying forward their diverse tribal cultures.

“During this vibrant period, these artists built successful careers by drawing inspiration from cultural symbolism and narratives, sharing unique perspectives on Native identity, history and worldviews that resonated with very diverse audiences,” said Eric Singleton, Curator of Ethnology at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. “These artists have made remarkable contributions that have solidified their place in Feminist art history.”

In the 1970s and early 1980s, Oklahoma witnessed an exuberant era for Native American art, marked by sold-out exhibitions. Bacone College and the Philbrook Indian Annual served as platforms empowering Native women artists to enter the art world and forge impressive careers despite many obstacles. The exhibition celebrates the groundbreaking achievements of these women, many of whom exhibited in the 1985 national traveling exhibition *Daughters of the Earth*.

Curated by America Meredith (Cherokee Nation) and Tahnee Ahtone (Kiowa/Seminole/Mvskoki), this exhibition honors the legacy of these artists, acknowledging their pivotal role in paving the way for future generations of Oklahoma Native women artists. Drawing from various public and private collections, including the Museum's own, this exhibition pays tribute to the artists who made an impact on the broader sphere of contemporary art, museums and galleries.

Lighting Pathways: Matriarchs of Oklahoma Native Art will be on exhibit through April 28, 2024. For media materials, contact Hannah Stewart at hstewart@nationalcowboymuseum.org.

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About the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum

The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City is America's premier institution of Western history, art and culture. Founded in 1955, the Museum collects, preserves and exhibits an internationally renowned collection of Western art and artifacts while sponsoring dynamic educational programs to stimulate interest in the enduring legacy of the American West. The Museum is located only six miles northeast of downtown Oklahoma City at 1700 Northeast 63rd Street. Memberships are available beginning at just \$50. For more information, visit nationalcowboymuseum.org.