



MUSEUM of NORTHERN ARIZONA
Celebrating the Colorado Plateau

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Baje Whitethorne Sr.: Nááts'ílid/Rainbow Light

On view at Museum of Northern Arizona until April 2023

[Flagstaff] Bursting with color, this retrospective exhibit presents the full spectrum of art by Baje Whitethorne Sr., a visual storyteller acclaimed for his colorful paintings full of life and energy.

Each of Baje Whitethorne Sr's works of art is a glimpse of his rich life, his family, and his homeland on Navajo Nation. He grew up near Shonto, northeast of Tuba City, a land of slickrock, piñon and juniper, brilliant light, and quiet. He studied art at Northern Arizona University and by the early 1980s was gaining regional acclaim for his colorful paintings full of life and energy.

He was first drawn into the world of storytelling when he and his brothers would make up stories on the way to their grandmother's house. His art often depicts the landscape around his family home near Shonto and the harmony of the Navajo way of life.

In addition to his paintings, Baje is an accomplished printmaker, sculptor, jeweler, author, and illustrator. He has illustrated eight children's books, two of which he wrote. Among his popular books are the Native American stories *Monster Bird*, *Monster Slayer*, and *Sika and the Raven*.

Throughout his long career, Baje has exhibited his work in several European countries and in the United States from San Francisco to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.. In 2019, he was included in the major exhibition "Six Navajo Masters" at the Booth Western Art Museum near Atlanta, Georgia. He has been awarded the Western Heritage Wrangler Award from the Cowboy Hall of Fame and here in Flagstaff, the 2014 Mayor's Legacy Award for Lifetime Contribution to the Arts at the annual Viola Awards.

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Baje is a passionate advocate for young artists and for sharing the power of art in his communities. The exhibit includes a table of art activities for visitors to try, some with short videos of Baje demonstrating the art exercise.

With a small group of Indigenous artist friends, Baje also created the artist's group Art of the People. Working together, they seek to encourage a new generation of artists while sharing Navajo culture through their art. Baje and the artists of Art of the People publicly engage in a collaborative art-making process. They set up at regional events, such as Rock the Canyon at Shonto and Palette to Palate here in Flagstaff. At events, each of the artists take turns painting on a single canvas, while the public looks on, layering paint and ideas with ease and synergy as a shared vision emerges.

In 2019, Baje became the first instructor for the Namingha Institute at Museum of Northern Arizona. The Institute brings students and early career artists to the Museum for intensive workshops with Master artists. Eight students from around the Southwest joined Baje for the inaugural event that included daily discussions and collaborative painting sessions.

In this video Baje explains the title and the story behind it:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFEH-6ahVLg>

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High-resolution images are available upon request.

Interviews with Baje Whitethorne Sr. available upon request.

About the Museum of Northern Arizona: Founded in 1928, the mission of the Museum of Northern Arizona is to inspire a sense of love and responsibility for the beauty and diversity of the Colorado Plateau through collecting, studying, interpreting, and preserving the region's natural and cultural heritage. MNA works in collaboration with native peoples of the Southwest to protect and foster the cultures, traditions, and beliefs of the Colorado Plateau by encouraging artistic expression and supporting, empowering, and educating visitors about the region's art and cultures. The Museum, located at 3101 N. Ft. Valley Rd. in Flagstaff, is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.