

Celebrating the Art of JoAnne Bird: A Retrospective Exhibition

JoAnne Bird, b. 1945

Born in Oakland, California, JoAnne Bird was raised in northeastern South Dakota by her grandmother, whom she credits for playing a major role in her creative education, from infancy to young adulthood. JoAnne is Santee Sioux and an enrolled member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate. JoAnne Bird knew from early childhood her destiny was to be an artist. After graduating from high school in Flandreau, South Dakota, she received art training at Dakota State University in Madison, South Dakota; Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota; and the Institute of American Indian Arts at Santa Fe, New Mexico. After working for the 3M Company, she decided to leave the commercial art field to devote her life fulltime to a professional art career.

JoAnne's paintings depict her Native American heritage, portraying the rich traditional way of life in a contemporary style. Much of her work is spiritual in nature and timeless. Her work often employs rich, bold colors in a fluid motion presenting images of warriors and horses that seem to be approaching the viewer straight off the canvas. Her preferred medium is acrylic, but she has worked in several media.

Her technique and mastery of handling a paint brush with precision are unique—a combination of controlled paint throwing and palette knife. Some see her style as evolving from realism to mystical impressionism. Her favorite artists are Vincent Van Gogh and Henri Matisse.

JoAnne Bird is also an accomplished bronze sculptor. Her sculptures, many larger than life, can be found throughout the United States and Europe. She has accepted commissions from several municipalities, including a 9' bronze sculpture of Chief Wabasha for the City of Wabasha, in Minnesota.

JoAnne has won numerous awards and honors for her work, and in 1992 was inducted into the South Dakota Hall of Fame as Artist of the Year. In May of this year, she was awarded an honorary doctorate in humanities and the arts by South Dakota State University. Jerry Jorgensen, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, remarked, "JoAnne has been an ambassador for the state of South Dakota, not only through sharing her painting, sculpture work and techniques with students at SDSU, but also for infusing cultural history and traditions into her artwork."

Dr. JoAnne Bird has exhibited at the CWS Artists of the Plains Show & Sale for many years, and today many of her pieces are found in private and corporate collections and art museums throughout the world.

The Western America Award is given for achievement in any and all fields of endeavor that relate to the preservation and interpretation of the history and cultures of South Dakota, the Northern Plains, and the American West. In recognition of Dr. Bird's achievements in the arts and her celebration and interpretation of the cultural heritage of her people, the Board of Directors of the Center for Western Studies is pleased to present The Western America Award to JoAnne Bird.



Photo courtesy of The Brookings Register

THE WESTERN AMERICA AWARD

The Western America Award is given for achievement in any and all fields of endeavor that relate to the preservation and interpretation of the history and cultures of South Dakota, the Northern Plains, and the American West. The award is a medallion of bronze, designed by the late Ogden Dalrymple, himself a prize-winning medalist and sculptor. The following are past recipients of the award.

2005 - Joel Strasser	1996 - Ruth Ziolkowski	1990 - Linda Hasselstrom	1984 - Frederick Manfred
2003 - John Day	1993 - Thomas Kilian	1990 - Sven G. Froiland	1977 - Robert Karolevitz
2000 - Anson Yeager Sr.	1992 - Roger Preuss	1988 - Arthur R. Huseboe	1976 - Herbert S. Schell
1999 - Ronald Robinson	1992 - Frederick Manfred	1984 - John R. Milton	
1997 - Bernie Hunhoff	1991 - Harold Torness	1984 - Herbert T. Hoover	