

Phoenix Art Museum

News Release

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Phoenix Art Museum features Fritz Scholder in groundbreaking retrospective *Super Indian examines the depiction of indigenous Americans as real, not red*

PHOENIX (February 3, 2016) – Opening February 27 at Phoenix Art Museum, *Super Indian: Fritz Scholder 1967-1980* is a groundbreaking exhibition of more than 40 rarely seen, monumental paintings and lithographs by the renowned 20th-century artist, who died in Scottsdale, Arizona in 2005. *Super Indian* is the first exhibition to explore how Scholder blended figurative and pop art influences to create colorful, compelling and revolutionary images. It will be on view February 27 through June 5, 2016 in the Katz Wing for Modern and Contemporary Art.

“Scholder’s work confronted stereotypes of Native Americans with pop-art colors and expressive brushstrokes. It was controversial because he refused to depict Native Americans in romanticized ways but as contemporary people, often with a dose of humor—drinking a beer or eating an ice cream cone,” said Amada Cruz, the Museum’s Sybil Harrington Director. “He came to be appreciated as the most influential American Indian artist of contemporary times, and we are truly excited to bring works of this caliber to our community.”

Scholder himself described the figures in his paintings as “real, not red,” defying the commonly held stereotypes of the American imagination, and eschewing notions of the “noble savage.” His work was sometimes at odds even with his own intentions. Scholder vowed never to paint Indians and claimed he was not an American Indian artist, but he was. He claimed his art was not political, but it polarized the art world. For every position he took, he also explored the opposite perspective.

This exhibition, which draws its title from the iconic painting *Super Indian No. 2*, features Scholder's controversial Indian series, started in 1967, as well as his 1980 Indian Land paintings, which marked a seismic shift in the artist’s palette and subject matter. Though he was influenced by abstract expressionists including Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline, as well as painters Francis Bacon, Francisco de Goya and Paul Gauguin, Scholder's work was purely his own. His art reveals the raw reality of being an American Indian.

Super Indian: Fritz Scholder 1967-1980 was organized by the Denver Art Museum. Its Phoenix premiere was made possible through the generosity of Vicki and Kent Logan, Western Art Associates, and Richard B. and Patricia E. Nolan. Following its time in Phoenix, the exhibition will travel to the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art in Overland Park, Kansas beginning June 23. The exhibition also features a full-color exhibition catalog available in The Museum Store.

About Phoenix Art Museum

Phoenix Art Museum has provided access to visual arts and educational programs in Arizona for more than 50 years and is the largest art museum in the Southwestern United States. In addition to an annual calendar of special exhibitions, Phoenix Art Museum’s permanent collection galleries are drawn from more than 18,000 objects of modern and contemporary art, fashion design, and photography, as well as American, Asian, Latin American, and European art. Each month, the Museum hosts a wide variety of public programs, including lectures, performances, tours, workshops, and film screenings designed for audiences of all ages to enjoy.

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