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TONY ABEYTA HONORED WITH 2012 NATIVE TREASURES LIVING TREASURE AWARD

Santa Fe, NM – The organizers of *Native Treasures: Indian Arts Festival* in Santa Fe are pleased to announce the 2012 recipient of the Native Treasures Living Treasure award: noted painter and jeweler, Tony Abeyta (Diné). The Native Treasures Living Treasure Award acknowledges both the body of work by an artist and the participation of that artist in the community at large.

Abeyta is considered one of the finest young, contemporary painters today. He depicts complex Navajo beliefs—evoking the notion that there is power in everyone and everything--in a distinctive, modernist painting style. He has also recently branched out into jewelry-making. He has supported many non-profit organizations through the donation of his work to their fundraisers and he served on the Museum of Indian Arts & Culture's (MIAC) development committee.



“One of the reasons we chose Tony is that despite his success as an artist, he has never fallen back on a ‘formula’ for his work,” explains Jane Buchsbaum, Artist Chairman for *Native Treasures*. “He continues to experiment and innovate in his media, his images, his technique, and his style. The fact that he has just taken on the challenge of translating his visions into jewelry is a perfect example.” Abeyta is represented locally by Blue Rain Gallery.

Raised in Gallup, surrounded by the Navajo (Diné) and Zuni reservations, “I always had a sense that there were other places to be,” he says. He started his journey to explore those places when he left Gallup at the age of 16 to study at the Institute for American Indian Art (IAIA) in Santa Fe. School opened up many opportunities for him to travel and study further, including the Studio Arts Center International in Florence, Italy; the Art Institute of Chicago; and finally at NYU, where he received his Masters of Fine Arts. Currently, Tony lives in both Santa Fe and Chicago. “Living in a city, there is this whole discourse of culture, thinking, music, and international art,” he explains. “I consider myself a regionalist, accepting that much of what I do is tied to a Native culture and place.”

“We are delighted to give this award to Tony,” says Shelby Tisdale, Director of MIAC. “Not only does he create powerful, rich work inspired by Navajo culture, but he also has a long history with this museum.” A monumental mural by Abeyta graces the gathering space within the museum.

“I’m very surprised and honored to be receiving this award,” says Abeyta. “It means a lot when museums recognize your work and I feel my efforts to continue to diversify as an artist are being appreciated.”

Native Treasures has become one of the important Indian art shows in the country since its inception in 2005. More than 200 museum-quality artists from over 40 tribes and pueblos will showcase and sell their pottery, jewelry, glass, painting, sculpture, carvings, textiles and other art on Saturday and Sunday, May 26 and 27, 2012 at the Santa Fe Convention Center. Artists are invited to participate, and show organizers work to bring in new talent each year. Weaving demonstrations by Toadlena Trading Post, an eclectic mix of music, and delicious food will add to the festive atmosphere.

Proceeds from *Native Treasures* provide the primary funding for exhibits at MIAC. While the museum receives state funds for operating expenses, all exhibit funding must be raised privately. Sponsors of *Native Treasures* will also be recognized as exhibit supporters for all of the exhibits mounted at MIAC in 2012. Artists generously donate a portion of their sales to MIAC.

Friday Night Benefit

The honoring ceremony for Abeyta will take place at a special benefit cocktail party on Friday May 25, 5:30-7:30 p.m., also at the Santa Fe Convention Center. Each year, the award for the Living Treasure artist is an original piece of art made and presented by the previous year’s Living Treasure honoree. Last year’s award recipient was Santa Clara sculptor, Roxanne Swentzell. A special sale of “treasure boxes” by all of the *Native Treasures* artists will also take place that evening and guests have the opportunity to mingle with all of the artists. Hors d’oeuvres and an open wine and champagne bar round out the evening. Tickets for the Friday party are \$100 and are also available as part of *Native Treasures* sponsorships.

www.nativetreasures.org