



Artist Name: Rick Bartow



Biography:

Rick Bartow was born in Newport, Oregon. His father was of Yurok Indian descent and the family developed close ties with the local Siletz Indian community. Throughout his youth, Bartow displayed an interest in art. He pursued his interest at Western Oregon State College, earning a degree in secondary art education in 1969. Almost immediately after graduating he was drafted into the army and sent to Vietnam. He fought in Vietnam from 1969 to 1971 and like many Vietnam veterans, he came home suffering from a sense of disillusionment and what is now known as Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. His trauma led to a struggle with alcoholism and a divorce during the 1970s. His art has played a therapeutic role during his recovery.

In the 1980s he met William Jamison, a highly respected Portland art dealer. Jamison gave Bartow his first solo show in 1985 at the Jamison/Thomas gallery in Portland. By the 1990s, he was accepting commissions that began with Portland's Saks Fifth Avenue. Today his work is held in numerous collections including: the Microsoft Corporation, the Portland Art Museum, the Hallie Ford Museum of Art, the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art at the University of Oregon, and the National Museum of the American Indian.

Bartow combines an intense use of color with graphic marks and expressive, fantastical images. His work reflects a vast knowledge of art history and world mythology. He has been influenced by artists such as: Hieronymus Bosch, Marc Chagall, Horst Janssen and Harry Fonseca.

Online Curriculum:

Vietnam: Geography, Culture, and The Second Indochina War (pdf download)—Level: Grades 6–8

Students explore the geography and culture of Vietnam through several sources that include reading fiction and non-fiction literature from several perspectives related to Vietnam and the Vietnam War. Students integrate their own studies with the personal Vietnam War experience of the artist.

Uncovering Our Masks(pdf download)—Level: Grades 6–12

Inspired by Bartow’s Native American use of animal imagery in his work, students first discover their own totem animal. The animal is brought to life through the creation of a paper maché mask. Students then wear the mask and are transformed into the totem animal while reading a narrative they wrote about taking on the persona of the animal.

Experimenting with Charcoal and Chalk Pastel(pdf download)—Level: Grades 6–12

Focusing on the use of color and the mood created by color combinations, students create charcoal and chalk pastel drawings using the style of the artist. The focus is to explore and experience the particular characteristics of this media, along with layering and removing color from the paper. Students create a piece of artwork that meets several requirements which include the personification of an animal.

Found Materials(pdf download)—Level: Grades 7–10

Rick Bartow utilizes a wide range of materials in his process. Throughout history, found materials and various important cultural practices have served a valuable purpose for artists to reflect their values and identity. He poses the question: How does an object made with local materials reflect the values and express the identity of a culture?

Storytelling and Transformation(pdf download)—Level: Grades 7–12

Bartow quotes Chagall as saying “let us attempt therefore to find something authentic in our lives”. He looked for artists who “make something authentic in the work”. Bartow quotes his elder, John Bevan Ford who said that: “at any one time we are making art for three areas, for what was, what is and what will be”. Bartow gives us a sense of this when talking about those who came before him and sitting with family who is present. This lesson deals with ideas of transformation in our lives.

Gesture and Movement(pdf download)—Level: Grades 7–12

Rick Bartow talks about the importance of gesture and the urge to make marks. In his work there is much reference to gesture and movement. He uses techniques that he has developed over time and which deal with emotion. He also talks about a time when “gesture became everything” and how this was a crucial time since his work moved in a new direction to explore gesture more freely; which transformed his work from smaller and more controlled imagery, to more loose and gestural compositions.