

SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN

INDIAN MARKET MARKET 2012 winners



Indian Market judges look at traditional pueblo fetishes Thursday at the Santa Fe Community Convention Center.

BEST OF CLASSIFICATION

Classification I: Jewelry

Vernon Haskie (Navajo/Diné)

Classification II: Pottery

Lisa Holt (Cochiti Pueblo) and Harlan Reano (Santo Domingo Pueblo)

Classification III: Paintings, Drawings, Graphics & Photography

Angela Babby (Oglala Lakota Sioux)

Classification IV: Wooden Pueblo Figurative Carvings and Sculpture

Arthur Holmes (Hopi)

Classification V: Sculpture

Amelia Joe Chandler (Navajo/Diné)

Classification VI: Textiles

Lola Cody (Navajo/Diné)

Classification VII: Diverse Arts

Kevin Pourier (Oglala Lakota)

Classification VIII: Beadwork & Quillwork

Jamie Okuma (Luiseño/Shoshone Bannock)

Classification IX: Youth (17 years and under)

Valerie Calabaza (Santo Domingo Pueblo)

Classification X: Moving Images

Yves Sioui-Durand (Huron Wendat)

Classification XI: Basketry

Kathryn Kooyahoema (Hopi)



Jamie Okuma's exquisitely conceived and crafted doll won the Santa Fe Indian Market's Best of Show, 2012. Okuma (Luiseño/Shoshone Bannock) has several Indian Market Best of Shows in her repertoire, and won her first Best of Show in 2000 — the youngest artist ever to win the prize. PHOTOS BY LUIS SÁNCHEZ SATURNO/THE NEW MEXICAN

Complete list of winners inside

Judgment Day: Best of Show is 'never obvious'

By Patricia West-Barker
For The New Mexican

An artist, a gallerist, an academic, a museum director and a collector walk into a ballroom ...

If the ballroom is in the Santa Fe Community Convention Center and it's the Thursday before Indian Market, it's no joke. This diverse group of individuals is about to begin the very serious business of judging the artwork entered in market's 11 major classifications.

This year, 68 Indian Market judges from a wide variety of backgrounds armed with white cotton gloves, magnifying glasses, penlights and sheaves of standards gave each work submitted in their classification hours of close scrutiny and serious consideration.

What were the judges looking for? A balance between well thought out concept, fine design and expert execution. Quality craftsmanship, adherence to market values and

unique innovation — the vision and technical ability to take a traditional art form in a new direction — also appeared important.

Among the comments overheard: "Should this get an honorable mention? No. The technical execution is not good enough."

"It should be practical. We are in jewelry, not sculpture. You should at least be able to wear it."

"Is this [pot] real? The rim is not perfect so it's real."

"She has over 100 interlocks for every weft here."

"It's a high-risk piece. It's probably gone under high heat at least 10 times. One mistake and he'd be out thousands of dollars."

"I can see going to a gallery and paying \$20,000 for this."

"Not only is the quality of the craftsmanship high, it tells a story about family and traditional Native American values."

"I don't think any of these pots have been fired outdoors except for that one. You can

actually smell the ash in that pot."

To be considered for Best of Show, a work must first have taken the prize for best of category, best of division and best of classification. When all 11 best of classification winners have been chosen, the works are moved to a dais in the center of the ballroom, and a judge representing the team for each classification talks about why that piece deserved best of class — and why all the other judges should vote it Best of Show.

Then the balloting begins.

This year, the 11 original entries were reduced first to five contenders, then to four, then to three finalists. On the fourth round of voting, Jamie Okuma's exquisitely conceived and crafted doll took the top prize — and even then, SWAIA staff observed, the voting was close.

"It was never obvious who the winner would be," said Bruce Bernstein, executive director of the Southwestern Association of Indian Arts, the nonprofit that produces Indian Market.

Okuma (Luiseño/Shoshone Bannock) is no stranger to the Indian Market winner's circle. She was 22 when she won her first Best of Show in 2000 — the youngest artist ever to capture the coveted prize. Okuma won Best of Show again in 2002, and Best of Category (Diverse Art Forms) in 2011 for her Northern Men's Fancy War Dancer Doll. (She's also won two Best of Show awards from the Heard Museum Indian Fair Market in Phoenix.)

Okuma's work is historically accurate — shells and ribbon work tell of the trading of materials among Northern Plains tribes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. But the judges were most impressed with the perfect scale of each part of the doll, Okuma's exquisite attention to detail in both the doll's clothing and accessories — a fully realized baby carrier and beaded doctor's case complement the main ensemble — and her impeccable craftsmanship. Okuma's ability to take porcupine quillwork to the smallest possible level, they said, was akin to "folding atoms."

Simply

Winning market's top award brings years of blessings

THE BEST

By Craig Smith
For The New Mexican

Taking Best of Show at Indian Market is one of the most prestigious awards in the Native arts world — and on the general arts scene as well. Since the winning piece is chosen from all of the Best of Classification awardees by a panel of impartial judges, Best of Show acknowledges a crowning gem in a superb display of work.

The award carries commercial cachet as well. The winning artist is sure to have his or her booth thronged the moment market opens and to sell the inventory quickly. He or she may be besieged with requests for commissions. The Best of Show winner will certainly become well known among galleries, museums, collectors and the media. Of course, there's also the cash prize that goes with the ribbon: The total awarded by market's non-profit presenter, the Southwestern Association for Indian Arts, to Best of Show winners — who must also have taken the top prize in their category, division and classification — is just over \$10,000.

A number of winners going back more than a decade agree about the immediate sales benefit in taking Best of Show. As representatives of their tribal traditions, they also feel honored to have been chosen. And even years later, they find the accolade reaps positive benefits.

Giving back acknowledges support

For Maine native Jeremy Frey, an eighth-generation Passamaquoddy basket weaver, winning 2011 Best of Show came on top of a string of other prizes, including Best of Show at the Heard Museum Indian Fair and Market in Arizona and a \$50,000 grant from the Los Angeles-based nonprofit organization United States Artists. He also won early in his Indian Market career.

"That was one of my goals at market ... to one day win Best of Show," he said. "So to do it in my second year there was just amazing. It's pretty much a sign pointing to your table among 900 to 1,000 artists. That alone is huge. I had a lot of people looking last year, but I feel I'm going to see more this year.

"I don't know if it's related to just that one award, but I've had a lot of museums approach me, a lot of charitable organizations," Frey added. "I think I may be more eligible for grants now than before." Not necessarily because his work has changed, he said, but because of increased knowledge about his work, and how it maintains tribal traditions.

Frey has always donated work to worthy causes — including a new piece to tonight's SWAIA live auction. His donations are a percentage of his output. "I've given a lot more art away this year [than in the past]," he said. "I do some personal stuff in my tribal area. And I'm a member of the Indian Basket Makers Alliance. They funded me, so I'm giving back to a program that helped me."

The young artist is frankly eager to win Best of Show again sometime. "Now I know it's possible to win that award, it's spurring innovation. I'm going to have something completely different at this show."

Exposure raises personal, category profile

Two artists shared the top honor in 2010: Diné (Navajo) filmmaker Blackhorse Lowe and Hopi carver Stetson Honyumtewa, who lives at Tesuque Pueblo.

"It helped out a lot on my situation," Honyumtewa said. "I've been out there a long time and it exposed my work more." And with the exposure, Honyumtewa's market changed: He sells less to galleries now and more directly to private collectors. He also takes commissions.

"I try not to rush my work, and now I can slow down, give even more time, give it extra attention," he noted. "The way I make kachinas is different from anyone else's. Texture is what I'm after. I don't sand everything down." Rather, while working in wood, "I try to make it look natural — to make it look like it would feel like cloth, or leather, or buckskin. Or feathers."

For Lowe, the award not only acknowledged his winning film *Shimásání*; it also contributed to a greater awareness of Native filmmaking in general. "Dealing with stuff in the film business, you have to push your work out there," he said. "So people can see you're alive and kicking and that your work is essential."

Lowe was living in Boise, Idaho, when the 2010 Indian Market rolled around, and he was considering not coming down for it. "I forgot what I had entered. It's so busy in the film busi-

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ABOVE: Hopi artist Stetson Honyumtewa who won the 2010 Best of Show, holds a kachina carving of Mongwu, the Great Horned Owl Kachina, who disciplines clowns when their behavior gets out of control. The award's exposure changed the artist's market: He sells less to galleries now and more directly to private commissions.

LEFT: Diné filmmaker Blackhorse Lowe, left, and Honyumtewa, center, shared top honors in 2010. Lowe said his award for *Shimásání* helped out his situation and contributed to a greater awareness of Native filmmaking.

NEW MEXICAN FILE PHOTOS



Diné jewelers and artists Darryl and Rebecca Begay, left, took the top honor in 2009 with a concho belt titled *Return From the Long Walk*, above. Darryl Begay said the award yielded immediate and long-term results. 'I think it was something really positive,' he said.



Nambe Pueblo micaceous potter Lonnie Vigil, who won Best of Show in 2001, said the award was not so much about him personally as a recognition of his family, his pueblo and his ancestors.



Sheldon Harvey, a Diné painter-sculptor-woodworker, won Best of Show in 2008. He said the honor has definitely helped market sales. CRAIG FRITZ/FOR THE NEW MEXICAN

For Maine native Jeremy Frey, an eighth-generation Passamaquoddy basket weaver, winning 2011 Best of Show came on top of a string of other prizes, including Best of Show at the Heard Museum Indian Fair and Market in Arizona and a \$50,000 grant from the Los Angeles-based nonprofit organization United States Artists.



NEW MEXICAN FILE PHOTOS



Native American films, such as this year's *Frankie and Irene* entry, have been a part of Indian Market since the classification was formed in 2010. COURTESY PHOTO



Honyumptewa, a traditional carver who puts his heart and soul into his work, won Best of Show in 2010 for his carving depicting a Katsina asking for rain.

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ness, it's hard to stay up on it. I didn't think much about it until I got a call the day beforehand that told me to come down. That was a 16-hour drive. It was a complete shock and surprise to me," he said of winning Best of Show.

Lowe has been working on a documentary about novelist N. Scott Momaday and finishing several short films. And he has entered the 2012 Market's moving images category. "It's not heavily language- or Native-specific," he said. "It's a movie for the sake of a movie. There's no turquoise, no blue sky. It'll be interesting to see how market takes it. Hey, it's a story; check it out."

Hard work earns recognition

Diné jewelers and artists Darryl and Rebecca Begay took the top honor in 2009 with a concho belt titled *Return From the Long Walk*. "We were doing a different series of belts — that's the third one, actually," Darryl Begay said. "All the Best of Classification winners were there, and it was announced live."

"You know, with all the hard work and late-night sessions, it was just an overwhelming feeling and very emotional and very powerful. It was cool. When we won that award, we were the only jewelers [to do so] for a whole decade."

As with the other winners, the award yielded immediate and long-term results — "Our booth was packed" — and now, three years later, "People are, I guess, checking out our work more, asking a lot of questions. I think it was something really positive." It also recognized, he said, that making art "[is] just all hard work. You can't really put a timeline on it. From the time it's conceived to when it's actually done, there are a lot of hours put into it."

Winning buys time to explore

The 2008 winner, Diné painter-sculptor-woodworker Sheldon Harvey, found out about winning Best of Show in an unusual way. Rather than coming up for the awards ceremony, he had stayed in his Albuquerque studio, finishing paintings for market, which opened the next day. Then his wife called with news he had won an award and should come up.

"I came up on my bike and I remember getting off the bike and walking up [to the convention center]. A lady greeted me and she said I had won Best of Show." Actually, as he soon discovered, a sculpture of his had taken Best of Classification and a painting had taken both Best of Classification and Best of Show — the first time such a sweep had occurred.

The news didn't hit him right away, Harvey said. "I was exhausted from the ride, and then I got in and heard the crowd, and the people. It was an overwhelming feeling. That was a rough night, but it was exciting, coming off that high."

Best of Show definitely helped market sales, the artist said. "It also does have that power to give you a bit more selling power around the art community in the Southwest and in the areas of Phoenix and Los Angeles. It's a very big award, very well-known among the Native American market." Press coverage also increased. "There was definitely an increase in interviews, people just wanting to get to know more about what's happening, who won Best of Show, why, and who the artist is."

Like Frey, Harvey had set his heart on winning Best of Show someday, but the win came much sooner than he had ever dreamed. "When it occurred, it raised another challenge for me: OK, this is probably a time to try and work in different kinds of mediums, which helps as far as sales. It's a challenge to create something different and new. It helped me invest some time in working on things I hadn't worked on in quite a while."

Award recognizes entire community

Nambe Pueblo micaceous potter Lonnie Vigil, who won Best of Show in 2001, said the award was not so much about him personally as a recognition of his family, his Pueblo and his ancestors. "I think by the time we had received that award we had quite a substantial following," he said. "Fifteen to 20 museums had collected us. Before that, we'd had clients throughout the country attracted to our work." Thus, Best of Show "was an addition to the acknowledgements we'd [already] received at Indian Market."

"When I say we, I mean not only my present living family but my traditional ancestors, the community we come from," Vigil explained. "It's an art form that belongs to the community, and I happened to be the one expressing it. I feel like it's a very special gift given me through my great-great-grandmother's lineage. It's not about me; it's about all of these foundations I have around me."

"It was totally unexpected. Often, timing has its own way of being. It was intended to happen in 2001; that's why it happened. I felt like, 'Clay Mother, thank you for the blessing.'"