

**SHOWDOWN**



## **PART IV:**

**Frances Bagely**

**Jerry David Defrese**

**Martin Delabano**

**Linnea Glatt**

**Joseph George Havel**

**Luis Jiminez**

**Suzanne Klotz-Reilly**

**Charmaine Locke**

**Jesus Bautista Moroles**

**Guillermo A. Pulido**

**Carl Reed**

**James Surls**

**Mac Whitney**

**Curator: April Kingsley**

The Sculpture Center,  
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# SCULPTORS OF THE SOUTHWEST

Artists, like all of God's creatures, tend to take on something of their surroundings. Being an artist in the Southwest is not the same as being an artist in New York or Paris. The sights one encounters daily are radically different, as are the materials, textures, and even the weathering of natural and manufactured objects in each locale. The sharp spikiness of forms seen in the unrelenting glare of full sun, the dryness, the stark simplicity of desert flora, the warmth, the purplish reds and the golden dust — all this can be read back out of the sculptures in this exhibition. A profound feeling for the sandy, clayey, baked earth runs tandem with this concern for the effects of light and atmosphere. Then too, one finds a serious commitment to the religious and mythic content of both the Hispanic and Amerindian cultures and a real, though sentimental attachment to the mystique of "The Old West."

Luis Jiminez glorified the heroic Amerindian in his *Man of Fire*, and he recently paid homage to his enemy as well in a huge 7 x 24 foot piece entitled *Sod Buster*. In it a white-haired but fully muscular farmer determinedly turns up a curling wave of soil behind a massive pair of straining oxen. *Low Rider*, *Back Seat* combines contemporary car culture with legendary Amerindian imagery and can be seen as a vulgarization of the ancient by the modern or as a debunking of overinflated values on either end. The macabre

black humor of some of Martin Delabano's sculptures shares something with Jiminez's heavy irony, particularly in *Early Morning* and *Tea With Me*, a tableaux vivant featuring a skeleton sitting at a pink-topped table daintily drinking tea. Usually though, his "altarpiece" triptychs and standing figures seem more intentionally and seriously related to Hispanic religious models.

Michael Tracey's paint encrusted "retablos" clearly have religious connotations despite their high level of abstraction, and many of Jerry de Frese's small votive houses also do, especially when they are lit from within or enshrouded in neon. The content of *Residence*, in this exhibition, is more secularly narrative and personal. Guillermo Pulido's *Installation for Canyon de Chelly* with its two facing altars crudely fashioned of stones or tree branches speaks of the Native Americans who first settled in the Southwest, but also of the Spanish invaders with their votive candles lit for a Christian God. It seems fairly safe to conclude, even from a sample this small, that the religious artifacts and customs of the Mexican and Amerindian cultures exert a significant influence upon contemporary Southwestern artists.

Charmain Locke's strange huts and domed houses have a ceremonial quality that seems quasi-religious and her equally otherworldly standing humanoid figures seem like guardians



for these temple-like "buildings." Linnea Glatt creates spaces for viewers to enter and erase the world from consciousness. *Centering, a Place to be Alone, Together* provides places for two people to meditate separately, but simultaneously.

The rough red stones Jesus Bautista Moroles carves, and the yellow terra cotta Joseph Havel bakes into a simulation of heat-cracked earth, both seem like clear responses to Southwestern topography, in texture and in geologic structure. Moroles's interlocked pieces are constructed in a way that relates to primitive as well as modern architecture. The blue circle moving, it would seem, across the sunburnt surface of Havel's piece seems like the sun's shadow cast down on the earth. The spikey forms of James Surls' *Black and White-Tipped Flower* and of Mac Whitney's two versions of *Columbia* have the biting clarity of objects seen midday in the glaring desert sun. The tension in Carl Reed's *#4 Fascis Series* is like that of a wagon spring or a spun lariat. Frances Bagley's *Chi*, a variation on her *Absent Horses* theme, is taut—reeds straining against the wind—and swift, like an Abstract Expressionist gesture. These works give a sense of open spaces, big scale, rough-and-ready ruggedness, jagged forcefulness and stark clarity—all of which are characteristic of the Southwest, at least for us Northeasterners.

The one artist whose work doesn't seem to speak of its place of origin is Suzanne Klotz-Reilly. *Jake* and the *Rabbit Man* are so obviously products of an intensely personal, perhaps one might even say fevered vision, that they could have been made anywhere in America. At least in this exhibition, she is the exception that proves the rule.

## April Kingsley

April Kingsley is the curator at the Sculpture Center on New York's upper east side. In existence for more than three decades as a non-profit institution exclusively devoted to the art of sculpture, the Sculpture Center has both a large gallery designed to exhibit sculpture to its best advantage, and a school where a complete course of instruction in every method of sculpture making is offered. It has long been a Sculpture Center tradition to invite groups of artists from locations outside of New York to showcase their work in our gallery, and we have also been consistently involved with artists not commonly seen in the gallery-museum system. It is with great pleasure that we continue both of these traditions with this exhibition. We want to thank the National Endowment for the Arts for their assistance with this project.