

TRIBUTE TO THE LEGENDARY R.C. GORMAN

Native Stars Studios to Produce Docuseries on the Iconic Native American Artist

Currently in pre-production, Native Star Studios presents an in-depth docuseries on the most prolific Native American artist of our time, Rudolph Carl Gorman, known to the world as simply "R.C." As an oil painter, lithographer and sculptor, R.C. was praised by First Ladies, including Jacqueline Kennedy and Rosalynn Carter, fascinating friends, such as Andy Warhol, and many celebrities, like Elizabeth Taylor, Gregory Peck, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Danny DeVito, and Maria Shriver, for his captivating depictions of authentic Native American culture—their struggle and spirit, and especially his abstract portrayal of full-bodied Native American women.

Due to R.C.'s dramatic lines and his ability to capture pure raw emotion in his drawings, he was called "the Picasso of American Indian artists" by The New York Times. In 1973, R.C. was the first and only living Native American to be included in the New York City Metropolitan Museum's exhibition, "Masterworks from the Museum of the American Indian." He was honored by the museum, as two of his pieces were selected to grace the cover of the exhibit's catalog.

Although R.C. started drawing at the tender age of three, his professional art career began in his 30s and spanned from his first public exhibition by a reputable gallery in 1963 until his death in 2005, when he donated to the Diné College in Tsaile, Arizona, his personal art collection, which included Picassos, Chagalls, and Miros, along with works from emerging artists or whoever caught his attention. During his lifetime, he produced over 500 lithographs and serigraphs, at least 28 Bronze Sculptures, and countless ceramic editions, giclees, glass etchings, paper casts, prints, and tapestries, as well as one-of-a-kind oil and acrylic paintings, oil pastel drawings, and sketches, that were bought as much by contemporary art collectors as Native American art enthusiasts. Even though contemporary Native American art was not an established fine art genre at the time, the price of his artwork ran from several thousand to tens of thousands of dollars.

R.C. was born in Chinle, Arizona, in 1931 and was raised by two loving devoted parents, Adele Katherine Brown and Carl Nelson Gorman. His father, Carl, a teacher and also a distinguished Navajo painter in his own right, was the oldest of the original twenty-nine Navajo Code Talkers, who famously altered the destiny of World War II. Carl and his fellow Navaho recruits volunteered to form a secret division of the Marine Corps and developed the unbreakable code using the Navajo language. It was a critically precarious responsibility, but the Japanese never broke the code as the Talkers were dispersed across the Pacific. After graciously serving his country, his father studied at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles. Before long, Carl became a technical illustrator for Douglas Aircraft, founded his own silk-screen design company, and was a professor of Native American art at the University of California at Davis.

R.C. grew up on a Reservation steeped with rich Navajo Tradition in a Hogan, a typical Native American dome-shaped dwelling made of mud and sod. Even though the Gorman family was

impoverished, they were blessed with a heritage abundant in artistic talent. He lived in harmony with nature and loved animals. During his early years, while herding sheep, his maternal grandmother sparked his initial passion for becoming an artist by sharing his deep history of Navajo heroes and his lineage of indelible native artists. Although R.C. as a young boy, drew on rocks, sand, and mud, along with making sculptures with clay, he credited his teacher, Jenny Lind from the Ganado Presbyterian Mission School High School, for instilling in him the confidence to become a professional artist. Due to his powerful female role models in his early life, R.C. continuously mentored the youth and encouraged them to seek wisdom from their elders, especially women.

After graduating high school, R.C. joined the Navy for four years during the Korean War. Upon his discharge, he was the first recipient to be awarded a scholarship to study art abroad by the Navajo Tribal Council. He was overjoyed and grateful to spend an entire year at the Mexico City College, Mexico City, Mexico, now known as the University of the Americas. R.C.'s recognizable, unique approach with colors, random forms, and shapes, which changed from abstraction to abstract realism, was influenced by Mexican masters: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros, Tamayo and Zuniga.

R.C. developed many innovative techniques based on the works of these astounding masters, for instance, his well-known use of the "Rainbow Roll"—the smooth gradation of color that often appears in the background of his pieces. He discovered a new technique while cleaning his brush on butcher paper, which left an oily residue. Later, when he used his grease pencil on the soiled paper, it partially dissolved, producing a magnificent washed effect. Brilliantly, he added a color overlay using turpentine as a medium, creating his signature style.

After several long years in San Francisco, trying diligently to pursue a career in art, R.C. painted abstract canvases based on Pueblo pottery patterns and Navajo rug designs, garnering his first public recognition. His career blossomed with one-man and two-man exhibitions with his father, Carl. The dynamic duo's personal expression made quite the splash, and soon the consummate pair were the toast of the town, stirring up national recognition. However, it was R.C. who far surpassed all of his father's expectations and went on to sweep all of the United States (U.S.) Native American art competitions, consistently winning first place in painting and drawing. The accolades convinced R.C. to open his own gallery in Taos, New Mexico, making him the first Native American to own and operate a fine art gallery in the U.S.

R.C. wanted to shine a spotlight on other artists he admired by featuring group exhibitions, including all-women shows with his favorite female artists, a trailblazing movement ahead of its time. Due to his popularity and sales, it became obvious that the gallery should be a showcase for himself alone, as clients bought his art right off the easel while stumbling into the gallery and finding him working with live models. R.C. relished in using compelling lines to capture the spirit of the model's soul in each piece.

R.C. never set regular gallery hours because he loved his freedom and his social life thrived mainly in the gallery. He enjoyed exquisite cuisine and spontaneously entertained whoever wandered into

the gallery, where he hosted extravagant parties, epic weddings, and sensational events. R.C. was so adored that two cities commemorate his spectacular life as "R.C. Gorman Day." The first city, Taos, New Mexico, celebrates on January 8, with its Mayor Phil Lovato proclaiming in 1979, "R.C. Gorman is an example of a spirit of Taos which attracts artists.... We have before us a living example—the man we honor today." The second city to follow suit was San Francisco, California. In 1986, Mayor Dianne Feinstein dedicated March 18 to R.C. for his outstanding body of work and contribution to humanity.

R.C.'s international clientele rapidly expanded with his one-man sold-out tours of Europe and other countries throughout the world. While in Japan, he created a collection of prized woodblocks that are cherished by elite collectors to this day. During the '80s, oversized coffee table books featuring photos of R.C.'s greatest works, such as the more eclectic four cookbooks called "Nudes and Food," flew off bookstore shelves. His books were instrumental in introducing R.C. to brand-new admirers all over the world.

Although throughout his life, R.C. won a myriad of awards, he fondly embraced his visit to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to receive Harvard University's Humanitarian Award, inspiring him to endow an annual scholarship for Taos High School students of Native American and Hispanic descent. He also profoundly treasured his honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from The College of Ganado in Arizona.

His favorite artistic creation was the heroic bronze figure of his father in honor of the Navajo Code Talkers in 1995. This special bronze was dedicated in a touching ceremony on Veteran's Day and donated to the campus of his alma mater, Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona. Many of the pioneering Code Talkers, illustrious dignitaries, hundreds of Native American students and his extended family attended the ceremony. This bronze is a tribute to the brave Navaho men, who risked their lives to protect and serve our country, and as a monument to uplift and empower future generations.

After decades of acclaimed notoriety with numerous honors, global museum exhibitions, documentaries, books, articles and reference materials about him, as well as legions of Board Member appointments with prestigious art institutions, R.C. peacefully passed away at the age of 74 on November 3, 2005. Notably, New Mexico Governor, Bill Richardson, ordered flags flown at half-mast in his honor. R.C. is heralded to this day across the globe as the premier Native American artist of all time.