



IAIA 2022–2023 BFA Exhibition:
***Indigenous Presence,
Indigenous Futures***

March 1–June 9, 2024

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IAIA 2022–2023 BFA Exhibition: *Indigenous Presence, Indigenous Futures*

Indigenous Presence, Indigenous Futures highlights the storytelling of IAIA's graduating seniors. Student artists showcase their work as a testament to their artistic journeys. Through their works, they explore shared experiences and relationships that guide us toward communal healing. Fearlessly, they confront systematic inequalities and investigate historical injustices that have been affecting Indigenous peoples. Despite collective trauma brought upon Indigenous communities, these artists find inspiration and hope by celebrating their cultural values and identities.

This exhibition invites audiences to embrace and empathize with Indigenous perspectives. Native communities face the risk of resource exploitation on sacred land, environmental degradation, and cultural endangerment. A new generation of Indigenous leaders is stepping to the forefront. By recognizing the ancestral legacies that live within them, IAIA artists explore holistic solutions to contemporary issues in our world. We live in an unprecedented era of solidarity and resilience.

This exhibition is curated by Museum Studies student **Zoe Childs** and installed with the help of student preparators **Sally Mittler** and **Charlize Pourier** (Oglala Lakota).

“I am a first-generation Mexican-American painter and ceramicist. My portrait and figurative paintings explore the representation of human existence, particularly emphasizing contrast between aspects of race, culture, and sexuality and broader aspects of the human condition. The ceramic components amplify the thematic ideas of historical and cultural aspects of the Chicano/a/x life and aesthetics, Mesoamerican beliefs, Mexican identity, and my American nationality through an alternative relation to materials. My desert landscapes and earthenware symbolize my physiological terrain (in-between place) and sustain my mixed cultural lineage links to the concept of *Nepantla* (Nahuatl for “in the middle of it”)—an in-between space where the consciousness transforms into personalized perspective.

In sourcing inspiration from Mesoamerican culture and the Mexican identity concerning my American nationality, *Rasquache*, which describes an attitude that references the lower class, lends itself to the conceptual intermixing of concepts and the use of found objects.”

—Jesus Miguel Avena

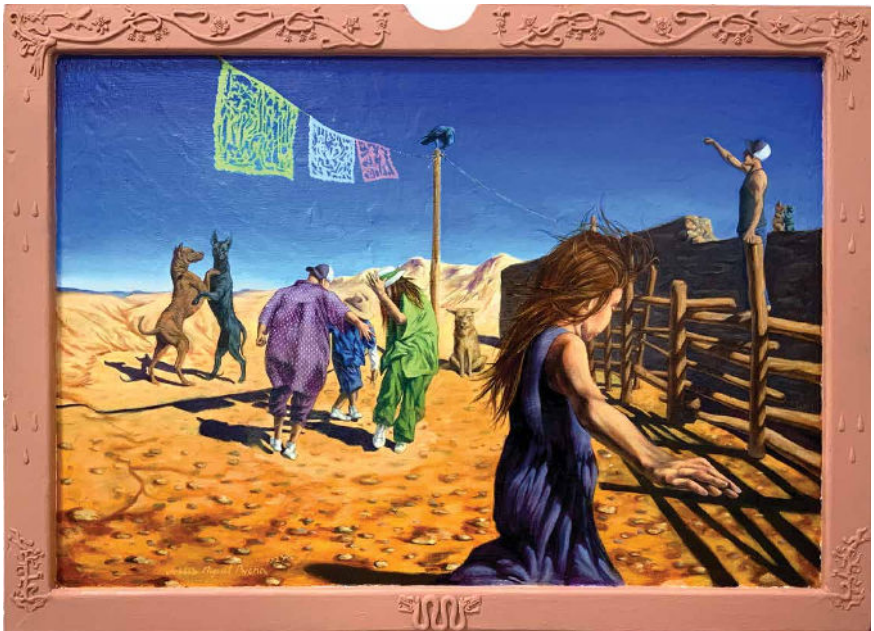
Jesus Avena is a Queer Mexican-American oil painter and ceramicist from Santa Fe, New Mexico. In 2016, Avena interned for *The Art and Leadership Boys Program* at the *Georgia O’Keeffe Museum* and was honored in Pick by the *SITE Santa Fe Young Curators*. In 2019, he entered a national competition, *Connection*, featuring young emerging artists with disabilities and was awarded the “Award of Excellence” by the Kennedy Center. Jesus Avena aspires to continue broadening his knowledge in the historical scholarship of Latin America and later work in higher education. Fashion Show and the Woodland Art Show.



United (Mexican) States of America



Vessel Without Words



La raza cósmica

“When it comes to filmmaking, my main interest is in narrative, fictional work. Creating a documentary, which is the opposite of that, would prove to be a challenge. The second I was tasked with creating a documentary project, I knew I wanted to make one about my cousins, the members of the Lindy Vision band. Throughout the Fall 2022 semester, I would bring my camera and follow my cousins while they created music and when they performed on stage. The most challenging aspect of the project at the end was editing because I had so much footage to craft into a short piece that became *Stay on the Path*. “*Stay on the Path*” was showcased by the New Mexico Film Foundation in their student showcase, and the project was awarded Best Film, Best Cinematography, and more.”

–Brandon Martinez

Brandon Martinez is a Jicarilla Apache filmmaker who began his filmmaking journey in late 2019. His work has been featured in several IAIA Student Showcases, as well as selections in other festivals such as *Los Angeles Skins Fest* and the *Tucumcari Film Festival*. Martinez hopes to continue sharing his stories with everyone and support his fellow peers in any way he can.



Stay on the Path



Stay on the Path

“The pursuit of connection is a fundamental desire that drives us as beings. As an artist, I seek to transcend the limitations of our physical world by exploring the various dimensions of our existence. Each piece of my work is a testament to this ongoing journey as I strive to capture the essence of our eternal natures through the compositions of my shots and the intricate cuts that bring them together. With every project, I delve deeper into the rich tapestry of the human experience, expanding my understanding of the vast and complex spectrum of emotions, sensations, and states of being that define us as individuals. I hope to inspire others to embrace their own journeys of self-discovery and recognize the beauty and wonder within and around us.”

—Ethan Nopah

Ethan is a Navajo filmmaker from the “Indian Capital of the World,” Gallup, NM. In the realm of cinema, Ethan is interested in its intimate and contemplative natures within a slow-moving, minimalist framework. During his time at IAIA, Ethan received several awards, including *Outstanding Student Film and Directing Awards and Audience Award* at the 11th Annual IAIA Student Filmmaker Showcase in 2023. Additionally, Ethan was awarded the “Proven Storyteller” Scholarship from the *George R.R. Martin Literary Foundation* for a screenplay he had written and was named the IAIA Student of the Year 2022-2023.



Big, Small, Scared, At Ease



Big, Small, Scared, At Ease

Simona Rael (Latina, Mexican American)

“I am an international muralist, singer, painter, and fashion designer who created the fashion brand Chula Punk. As a multimedia artist and performer, my creations allow me to fully express a self-study of the body, spirit, and mind. Creativity is a limitless gift from the Creator that pushes my voice and purpose in life and gathers my community to uplift people with music, whimsically punk clothing, and paintings. My practice includes creating collective prayer through live performance art with my band *Sequence*, spray-painted murals, and directing theatrical fashion shows. *Chula Punk* is a body-positive inclusive style I created that challenges societal systemic constrictions to Western beauty standards and advocates for oppressed people, Chicano culture, diverse fashion, and human rights. All clothing is re-purposed and given a new life as a representation of the transformation of a divine higher spiritual self in a physical form.”

—Simona Rael

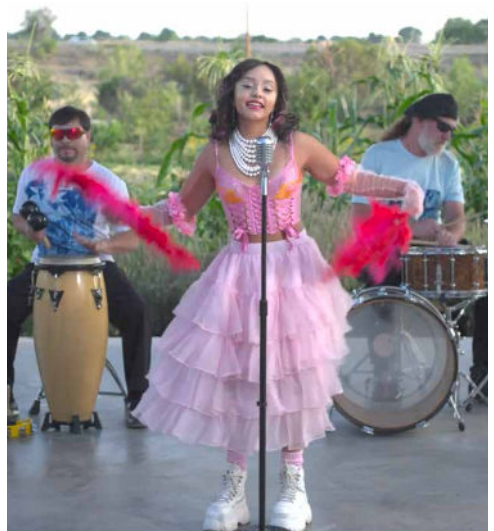
Simona Rael (2001, Pena Blanca, NM) is a Nuevo Mexicana Latina artist. Her interdisciplinary practice explores spiritual empowerment through artistic performance and healing. She is an international muralist, local fashion designer, and a singer in her family band *Sequence*. Simona has completed murals in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Artesia, Mexico City, and Venice Blvd 1080 Los Angeles.



Toreras Set and Sirena Dress



Ascension



Trees Have Eyes

“My paintings focus on Southwest aesthetics that incorporate traditional Adobe earthen architecture found in Northern New Mexico. I use oil and acrylic mediums to convey my artistic message. I utilize light, shadow, and simple forms to create a quiet, serene feeling for my viewers. I have been working on conceptualizing the building materials that make up traditional Northern New Mexico architecture through different styles such as impressionism, abstraction, symbolism, and color theory in my paintings. I break down imagery into simpler forms and pigments to emulate the earth and mud that are used in the creation of these long-lasting structures. Through tone and form, I create a striking, yet gentle feel that brings warmth to the land and calmness towards the shadows.”

–Brian Taaffe

Brian Taaffe is a multidisciplinary artist from the Red Willow People of Taos Pueblo. Growing up, he split his time between Taos and Santa Fe, New Mexico. Having learned at a young age how to create art in 2D and 3D media, he continues to pursue these art forms today. In 2023, he was part of the exhibition *Clay Line of the Red Willow People: Showcasing Three Taos Pueblo Artists* at the *Indian Pueblo Cultural Center*.



Pueblo of the Zia Sun

“As an Alaska Native and First Nations artist, my practice is an expressive exercise to find catharsis and healing from personal and community trauma based on systemic inequality and historical hegemony. The themes of my art vary from death, climate change, and recovering from trauma. My creative work uses photography and mixed media to express emotional pain, commentary on societal issues, and enduring optimism grounded in personal cultural values.”

–Carl H. Tuzroyluke

Carl H. Tuzroyluke is a multi-disciplinary artist from the Tlingit, Nisga'a, and Inupiaq Nations. Born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska, Tuzroyluke's work explores addiction, identity, and inequality. Beginning his artist's journey in the fall of 2019, he interned with *Sealaska Heritage Institute*, where he completed two artist-in-residences. Tuzroyluke has expanded the scope of his art as an apprentice and art assistant with artists such as Crystal Worl, Evelyn Vanderhoop, and David R. Boxley.



Kassanak



Loolduwoo



Kinduaat



Jesus Miguel Avena (Mexican-American, Mexica, Mestizo, Chicano)
United (Mexican) States of America
2023
Cone 6 white earthenware, Cone 4 red earthenware, leather vest



Jesus Miguel Avena (Mexican-American, Mexica, Mestizo, Chicano)
Vessel Without Words
2023
Cone 6 Earthenware clay, glaze, kiln wire, and found rocks



Jesus Miguel Avena (Mexican-American, Mexica, Mestizo, Chicano)
La raza cósmica
2023
Oil on found object and paper clay



Brandon Martinez (Jicarilla Apache)
Stay on the Path
2022
Short documentary 14:38 min.



Ethan Nopah (Navajo Nation)
Big, Small, Scared At Ease
2023
Film: 7:28 min.



Simona Rael (Latina, Mexican American)
Ascension
2023
Acrylic, paint waterballoons, spray-paint



Simona Rael (Latina, Mexican American)
Trees Have Eyes
2023
Music video: 7:35 min.



Chula Punk/**Simona Rael** (Latina, Mexican American)
Sirena Dress
2023
Sequins, tulle



Chula Punk/**Simona Rael** (Latina, Mexican American)
Toreras Set
2023
Bead work, ribbon, tulle, faux leather



Brian Taaffe (Taos Pueblo)
Pueblo of the Zia Sun
2023
Acrylic paint



Carl H. Tuzroyluke (Tlingit, Nisga'a, Inupiat)
Loolduwoo
2023
Archival ink print



Carl H. Tuzroyluke (Tlingit, Nisga'a, Inupiat)
Kinduaat
2023
Archival ink print



Carl H. Tuzroyluke (Tlingit, Nisga'a, Inupiat)
Kassanak
2023
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- Jesus Miguel Avena
(Mexican-American, Mexico, Mexico, Croatia)
- Brandon Martinez
(Akanila Apache)
- Ethan Nogah
(Navajo Nation)
- Simona Rael
(Latin, Mexican-American)
- Brian Taaffe
(Diné People)
- Carl M. Tutroylake
(Tlingit, Nisga'a, and Inupiat)







MoCNA's Mission: To elevate contemporary Indigenous art through exhibitions, collections, programs, partnerships, and new research.

Cover image: Simona Rael (Latina, Mexican American), *Ascension*, 2023, acrylic, paint waterballoons, spray-paint.