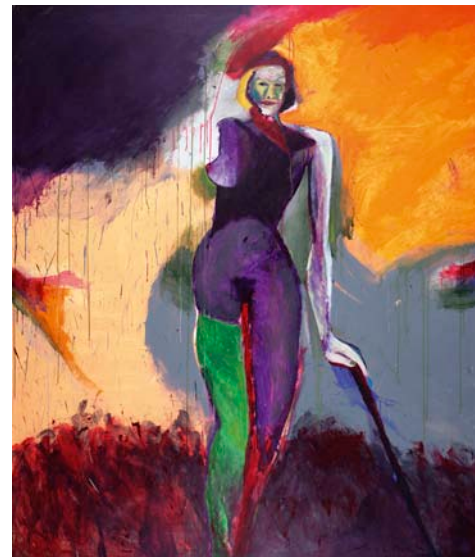


new york exhibition

# FRITZ SCHOLDER

indian not indian

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN



*Lilith No. 1*, 1992. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Estate of Fritz Scholder. This painting has been published previously as *Lilith No. 3*.

Controversial and prolific, Fritz Scholder (1937–2005) embraced paradox. An enrolled member of the Luiseño tribe, he often said he was not Indian. An abstractionist, he became famous for paintings of the human figure. Personally shy and introspective, he became one of the most famous Native Americans of his time. Despite his enormous influence on Native painting, much of his work contains no obvious Indian imagery.

**“My favorite word is paradox.”**  
— Fritz Scholder

Scholder’s career spanned five decades and encompassed painting, sculpture, prints, and photography. As a young teacher at the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe, New Mexico, during the 1960s, he had become one of the leaders of a group

of Native painters that sought to cut through popular stereotypes about Native people and paint Indians as they really were. Scholder’s paintings in particular were commercially successful and enormously controversial—many other Native artists felt he was both rejecting and benefiting from his heritage.



*The Border No. 7*, 1992. Acrylic on paper. Collection of Romona Scholder.

### Scholder without Indians

In 1980, after more than a decade of depicting American Indians, Scholder was ready to explore what he considered more resonant, mystical subjects. At this time, he also left the Southwest for New York, where he hoped to conquer the wider art world. During the 1980s and 1990s, his work became both more personal and more universal than any he had created previously. Incorporating images of vampires, fallen angels, animals, ancient mythic beings, and elusive “mystery” women, Scholder’s paintings reflected a charged interior panorama that defied easy explanation.

### Alone

Like the *Indian* series he had completed during the previous two decades, the works he created during the 1980s most often feature bold colors and one or two figures against an abstracted landscape. Some of the figures appear androgynous; others are seemingly half-human. Romantic encounters are tinged

with menace, and his women, such as the mythological subject of *Lilith No. 1*, can be both alluring and sinister. The winged creatures in his *Possession* series, he said, represented emotional desire rather than supernatural beings. As with *Possession with a Green Face* and



*Bending Over No. 2*, 1990. Monotype. Collection of the Estate of Fritz Scholder.

*Purgatory*, 1996. Acrylic, oil, and collage on canvas. Collection of the Estate of Fritz Scholder.



*Self Portrait with Grey Cat*, 2003. Acrylic on canvas. Collection of the Estate of Fritz Scholder.

*Another Possession*, Scholder would sometimes begin with a painting before carrying the theme into three-dimensional bronze sculptures.

**“An artist has to transcend a subject, or he loses the battle. The subject wins.”**  
— Fritz Scholder

### Self-Portraits

Each year Scholder painted a self-portrait. In *American Portrait No. 46* (1982) he appears as an imposing figure, exuding confidence, looking forward to future conquests. In subsequent years, the self-portraits—and many of his other works—increasingly reflected the artist’s sense of mortality. His 1996 trio, *Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory*, although not identified as such, can be seen as looming visions of his own afterlife. His final self-portrait, *Self*

*Portrait with Grey Cat* (2003), in which he sits attached to an oxygen tank, with a cat, a book, and a pool of blood on the floor in front of him, conveys his bold, unflinching approach to both his art and his life.



*Possession with Green Face*, 1989. Acrylic on paper. Collection of Romona Scholder.

**Fritz Scholder: *Indian/Not Indian***, curated by Truman T. Lowe (Ho-Chunk) and Paul Chaat Smith (Comanche), is on view at the George Gustav Heye Center through May 17, 2009. Included in the exhibition is a nine-minute, continuous-loop video that further illuminates the artist’s life and work.

Opening simultaneously at the National Museum of the American Indian’s locations in New York and Washington, D.C., the two parts of this exhibition each focus on different aspects of Fritz Scholder’s work. The exhibition in Washington, D.C., presents an overview of the artist’s career, including his celebrated Indian paintings. The exhibition in New York presents the work Scholder created in the 1980s, when he moved away from the Southwest and from Indian imagery. For more information about the Washington, D.C., exhibition, please see the reverse side of this brochure or visit [www.AmericanIndian.si.edu/exhibitions/scholder](http://www.AmericanIndian.si.edu/exhibitions/scholder).

For public programs, please check the NMAI calendar of events at [www.AmericanIndian.si.edu](http://www.AmericanIndian.si.edu)

National Museum of the American Indian  
George Gustav Heye Center  
One Bowling Green  
New York 10004  
Phone: 212-514-3700

Heye Center hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, Thursdays until 8 p.m. Closed December 25. Admission: free. The museum is fully accessible.

The Museum offers two shops—the Gallery Shop and the Museum Shop. The Gallery Shop (on the main level) features a large collection of books on Native cultures as well as authentic pottery, handcrafted Native jewelry, and traditional and modern Native music recordings. The Museum Shop (on the lower level) has a huge variety of children’s books, educational and exhibition-related posters, toys, holiday-related gifts, souvenirs, and musical instruments. Open daily 10 a.m.–5 p.m. For information call 212-514-3767.

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Published by the National Museum of the American Indian in association with Prestel Publishing, the book *Fritz Scholder: Indian/Not Indian*, edited by Lowery Stokes Sims with Truman T. Lowe and Paul Chaat Smith, is available in NMAI’s stores and online at: [www.AmericanIndian.si.edu/bookshop](http://www.AmericanIndian.si.edu/bookshop).

COVER: *American Portrait No. 46*, 1982. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Estate of Fritz Scholder.

All artworks © Estate of Fritz Scholder.



*Another Possession*, 1989. Bronze. Collection of the Estate of Fritz Scholder.

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