

For Immediate Release

June 19, 2010

The SFAI Welcomes Photographer and Installation Artist

Will Wilson

What: Will Wilson **Lecture**

Where: Tipton Hall

When: July 19, 2010 @ 6pm

How Much: \$10 general admission | \$5 students/seniors/members

As part of our 2010 season of visiting artists and scholars, **Elemental: Earth, Air, Fire, Water**, the Santa Fe Art Institute is pleased to present photographer and installation artist **Will Wilson**.

Will Wilson was born in San Francisco and moved permanently to the Navajo Reservation at the age of 10. He attended the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Tuba City Boarding School from 1978 to 1983. He holds a bachelor's degree in art history and studio art and a master's of fine art in photography. Wilson has worked in a variety of media and has produced large-scale multi-media installations that incorporate photography and sculpture, monumental art pieces and intimate photo essays. Most recently Wilson's work provides a glimpse into the complex contemporary negotiation with a land we have become alienated from, our disease in understanding who we are, and possible paths for healing.

Wilson says of his work:

"Throughout my work I have focused on photographing Navajo People and our relationship to the land. While portraying this relationship I have always been aware of how our representation has never been without consequence. Historically, photography as a scientific means of categorization cannot be made separate from the social, political, economic and ecological colonization of Native North America. Photography has been used to classify and reinforce theories of racial superiority and strengthened anthropological discourse positioning American Indians as primitive others. More commonly, it has been used to reinforce negative stereotypes of Indians, pervasive throughout American culture.

My work is a response to the ways in which photography has been used as a mechanism of colonization. Decolonizing photography for the use of American Indians has to occur through the articulation of a Native representational subjectivity. In the place of colonizing representation, I want to produce images and sensory experience, which convey representation of, by and for American Indians. This means developing a methodological practice, a framework from which to draw upon. It is towards these ends that I see my work progressing.

In my work there are stories that I grew up with, stories bringing together the cultural weave from which I come. These stories are personal to me as an

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individual and a member/citizen of a people; therefore, they must be presented and received with respect. In a way it is a ceremony, it's about exorcising discursive demons that have been planted in our minds and the processes of remembrance and continuance that enable us to keep functioning.

For Indians, I want to produce experiences that bring us close to home, while unsettling us with the evidences of colonization. I want my work to strengthen Indians with examples of resistance, and the possibilities of controlling one's own representation. For non-Indians I want to call into question the uncritical consumption of images of American Indians both positive and negative. This is to be done by presenting experience that articulates a history of life constantly remembered, strengthened and continued in the face of colonization.

You can see some of Wilson's work at the Santa Fe Art Institute in the *Elemental: Earth Air Fire Water* exhibition through August 27th, and at the *NATIVE MODERN: PAPER + GLASS* show up at Legends Gallery in Santa Fe through July 5th.

For more information please contact Michelle Laflamme-Childs at mchields@sfai.org or call (505) 424-5050.

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