

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Margaret Roach Wheeler & Mahota Textiles

Summer Winter

8 May – 30 June, 2025

OPENING RECEPTION

8 May, 5 –7 PM



MARGARET ROACH WHEELER | *Forest Dweller – The Bear*. Handwoven silk/wool, hand-cut reversible oversized vest with Ultra Suede trim. Hand-crafted silver/copper palate with antler teeth by Maria Mayo. Bear headdress with goose feathers by Alice McKee. Photo courtesy of the Artist.

(Santa Fe, NM) Chickasaw fiber artist Margaret Roach Wheeler weaves a living practice of Indigenous textile designs for Zane Bennett Contemporary Art in time for the inaugural edition of Native Fashion Week Santa Fe.

(May 2025) Margaret Roach Wheeler is a textile artist and designer whose scholarship and reinterpretation of Indigenous dress spotlights the cultural legacy of her people and brings greater attention to Indigenous craft traditions across the United States. Wheeler's forthcoming exhibition, *Summer Winter*, presents sixteen handwoven garments inspired by Indigenous symbology and textile traditions from the southwest to the northeast. Included in this exhibition are collaborations on headdresses with Alice McKee and Maria Mayo; and recently completed collaborations with Marwin Begay (Diné/Navajo). Works from the first tribally owned textile company in the U.S., Mahota Textiles, founded by Wheeler, feature designs by Wheeler and other Indigenous designers such as Billy Hensley, Brenda Kingery, Dustin Illetewahke Mater, Faithlynn Seawright, and Taloa Underwood, honoring the tradition of creating ceremonial garments and functional textiles. ***Summer Winter: Margaret Roach Wheeler opens with an artist talk at Zane Bennett Contemporary Art on Thursday, May 8, from 5 to 6 PM, followed by a reception in the gallery's atrium.***

To an artist who has produced paintings, sculptures, and woven clothing as well as having built five houses, "Getting the idea to completing the project is my idea of art." She moves from idea to research in Native American culture and "figuring out the best techniques," but the final output is also shaped by more personal insight and inspiration. **Mahota Textiles, founded in 1984, is named after her great-great-great-grandmother, "who was removed from Mississippi to Indian Territory in 1844." She continues, "Telling her story was an important factor in my work. I had lived among the Northern Plains tribes and the Southwest tribes that also influence my work."**

"The evidence of the hand is in every strand of Wheeler's creations," says Carina Evangelista, Zane Bennett director. "Morning walks on her land in Sulphur, Oklahoma, yield a gathering of mushrooms and lichen with which she dyes the yarn that she weaves into cloth on her handloom. She then fashions these textiles into clothing, costumes, or sculptures. **Her practice is an amalgamation of the act of gathering natural sources of color pigment, the intuitive decision-making involved in determining patterns, and the overall design of each garment shaped by a story, a childhood memory, a myth, or the feel of spiritual kinship with an animal.** Within the warp and weft of each piece, there is wonder and there is heft—from the whimsy of imagination to the weight of history both personal and ancestral, the remembrance of fear, and the homage to strength."

The design-forward exhibition at Zane Bennett celebrates the debut of Native Fashion Week Santa Fe, which showcases Indigenous designers such as Apache Skateboards, Ayimach Horizons, and Neeko Garcia, who will host a jewelry trunk show in our gallery shop aimed at evolving the fashion landscape. ***Summer Winter highlights Wheeler's contributions to contemporary Indigenous fashion design, brings attention to the broader network of Indigenous craft traditions in the U.S., and pays tribute to Indigenous self-determination.***

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For press or image inquiries, please contact Spencer Linford at spencer@zanebennettgallery.com.

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About the Artist

Chickasaw textile designer Margaret Roach Wheeler (b. 1943, South Dakota) honors the spirit of her maternal ancestor, Mahota, and the legacy of creative Chickasaw women. Wheeler has become known internationally as a painter, sculptor, educator, Native historian, and award-winning weaver. From her earliest business in handwoven fashions to creative textiles and fine art, Wheeler's art and work continue today in original handwovens and in the national brand of Mahota Textiles that tell the stories of the Chickasaw Nation and five other tribes. The legacy of Mahota; Nancy Mahota; grandmother, Juel; and mother, Rubey span centuries of tradition and craftsmanship handed down through generations of Indigenous makers. Through her detailed historical research and creative innovation, Wheeler connects the inspiration of her ancestors to the contemporary world.

Wheeler's intricate textiles have been exhibited at institutions, including the Anchorage Museum of Art and History, Anchorage, AK; Heard Museum, Phoenix, AZ; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, NY; Museum of Art and Design, New York City, NY; Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, Santa Fe, NM; Naples Museum of Art, Naples, FL; National Museum of the American Indian, New York City, NY; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA; Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, OK; Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis, MN; and Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian, Santa Fe, NM.

Her works are in the collections of the Eiteljorg Museum, Indianapolis, IN; Heard Museum, Phoenix, AZ; Museum of Arts and Culture, Santa Fe, NM; Portland Museum of Art, OR; and Toledo Museum of Art, OH. Alongside her museum exhibitions, her "Street Clothes" weavings have been featured in numerous fashion shows. A 2000 Smithsonian research fellowship provided her the opportunity to study the designs and textiles of her ancestors, the Mississippians and the Mound Builders. Her handwoven works were featured as the regalia worn by clan members in Jerod Tate's 2024 classical composition of *Clans*, set in the Mound Builder Era (900–1500 AD). She will be giving the keynote address at the Midwest Weavers' conference in St. Louis, MO, this year.

Wheeler has earned numerous awards including Best of Class-Heard Museum Indian Market, First place in SWAIA (Santa Fe Indian Market), and Purchase Award at Eiteljorg. In 2010, she was inducted into the Chickasaw Nation Hall of Fame and was honored by the State of Oklahoma with the Governor's Arts Award in 2018 for her unique contributions to art.

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