

*Fritz Scholder: The Raw Immediacy and
Chromatic Vibrations of Fritz Scholder's Prints*

31 July 2026–5 September 2026

OPENING RECEPTION

31 July 2026, 5–7 p.m.



FRITZ SCHOLDER | *Indian Portrait in Roma*, 1978
Etching and aquatint
62 x 43 in (157 x 109 cm)
Photo by Marylene Mey © Estate of the Artist

(SANTA FE, NM) Fritz Scholder's Bold Prints Recast Indigenous Identity and American Modernism at Zane Bennett Contemporary Art.

Zane Bennett Contemporary Art is pleased to present *Fritz Scholder: The Raw Immediacy and Chromatic Vibrations of Fritz Scholder's Prints*, an exhibition of Scholder's prolific print practice. Fritz Scholder (Luiseño Tribe), renowned for his bold use of color and expressive mark-making, redefined the representation of Indigenous people in 20th-century American art and challenged enduring American myths about Indigenous identity. Scholder defied the quintessential "noble savage" stereotype of the American Indian by complicating interpretation of the archetype through his distinctly modernist approach of vibrant colors, gestural washes, and fractured forms in the prints he produced. **The exhibition opens with a reception on the gallery's ground floor on 31 July, 5–7 p.m.**

Although Scholder initially vowed never to depict Indigenous people in his work, his experience with American southwestern depictions of Indigeneity soon convinced him that the visual cliché of the Indian in American visual culture was a subject that warranted pursuing. **"Everyone in this country had his own preconceived idea about the Indian," said Scholder, "Someone needed to paint the Indian differently."**

Instead of romanticized anachronistic figures, Scholder's Indians are human, citizens of a modern American culture and socioeconomic system conditioned by extraction and peppered with paradoxes. They are figures living in, and resisting, the unrelenting pressure of American cultural hegemony. **"People say that I must hate Indians since I sometimes paint them as monsters," Scholder once remarked. "But I paint what I see, faces reflecting the torment in the minds of Indians today."** If sometimes dark, Scholder's work is grounded in lived reality and imbued with compassion and respect. As Tamarind Institute co-founder Clinton Adams observed, **Scholder's palette and expressionist mark-making deliberately distanced the artist's subjects from conventional realism, allowing viewers to confront Indigenous people as complex individuals rather than archetypes.**

***Fritz Scholder: The Raw Immediacy and Chromatic Vibrations of Fritz Scholder's Prints* features a number of significant prints from Scholder's extensive collaboration with Tamarind Institute, including *Buckskin Indian* and four of the five states of *Indian Landscape*, which respectively illustrate the height of his signature subject matter defined by his *Indian Series* (1967 to 1980) and his preeminent concern with color. "The lithographs have become an important part of the work," Scholder said. "As a painter-printmaker and fetish maker, I revel at being able to produce statements in various forms."**

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The exhibition also includes another side of Scholder's interests. "I have a preoccupation with death," said Scholder, "The vampire of life is death." Although his *Indian Series* gained critical attention, he was an artist first and foremost concerned with the possibilities of the mediums he worked in, stating, **"I am interested in making a strong painting or a strong lithograph, first of all, for aesthetic reasons."** This exhibition honors the breadth of Scholder's artistic endeavor by not only featuring his works that remain relevant in their expression of the nuances of conflict, forced removal, and broken promises between Indigenous peoples and the United States, but also those works that contemplate death, magic, and the afterlife, which were of equal interest to the artist.

This exhibition demonstrates how Scholder shifted the American public's perception of Indigenous peoples while expanding the possibilities of American printmaking at a time when Tamarind Institute had yet to fully secure the future of the medium. **More than five decades after many of these works were first printed, Scholder's work continues to invite viewers to reconsider the relationship between modern art history, Indigenous identity, and the American experience.**

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Fritz Scholder (1937–2005) was a painter, printmaker, and fetish maker. An enrolled member of the La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians, his paintings, lithographs, monotypes, and sculptures transformed the representation of Native Americans in contemporary art. He studied under influential artists including Oscar Howe and Wayne Thiebaud before earning an MFA from the University of Arizona in 1964. That same year, he joined the faculty of the newly established Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, where he helped shape a generation of Indigenous artists.

Although Scholder initially vowed never to depict Native people, he became frustrated by the romanticized stereotypes that dominated American culture. Beginning in 1967, his influential Indian series presented contemporary Indigenous figures with bold color, expressive brushwork, and unexpected imagery—beer cans, American flags, and everyday objects—challenging the enduring myth of the "noble savage." His work emphasized the complexity and humanity of Native life while advancing a distinctly modern aesthetic.

Printmaking became central to Scholder's practice through his long collaboration with Tamarind Institute, beginning with the landmark 1970 lithographic suite *Indians Forever*. Throughout his career, he embraced lithography as an expressive medium equal to painting, producing works celebrated for their vibrant color and formal innovation.

Scholder's work has been the subject of major retrospectives at institutions including the Denver Art Museum and the National Museum of the American Indian, and is represented in the collections of leading museums worldwide. Today, he is recognized as one of the most influential Native American artists of the twentieth century.

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FRITZ SCHOLDER | *Buckskin Indian (Third State)*, 1974
Lithograph
30 x 22 1/2 in (76 x 57 cm)
Photo by Marylene Mey © Estate of the Artist



FRITZ SCHOLDER | *Anpao/ Buffalo*, 1976
Lithograph
22 x 15 in (55.9 x 38.1 cm)
Collaborating printer: Lynn Baker
Printed and published by Tamarind Institute
© Estate of the Artist



FRITZ SCHOLDER | *Dancers at Zuni*, 1978
Lithograph
22 1/2 x 30 in (57.1 x 76.2 cm)
Photo by Marylene Mey © Estate of the Artist



FRITZ SCHOLDER | *Indian Landscape (Third State)*, 1974
Lithograph
28 x 20 in (71.1 x 50.8 cm)
Collaborating printer: Ben Q. Adams
Printed and published by Tamarind Institute
© Estate of the Artist

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