



Ledger Horse no. 92 (40 x 50) by Mitchell Robles

CASA Magazine

UNLEASHING THE LYRICAL PAST

By ERIN J. SMITH / CASA

ANCIENT, POWERFUL RHYTHMS ARE EXPRESSED THROUGH THE RICH TEXTURES AND BOLD COLORS used by artist Mitchell Robles, whose contemporary Native American paintings and multi-media artwork can be seen at CASA Magazine through the end of November.

“Music and art come naturally to me. It’s in my blood,” said Robles, an eleventh generation Californian and direct descendent of the Chumash and early Spanish settlers. “I love going into my studio, shutting the door, and putting the music on – anything with high energy rhythms, like contemporary jazz, rock, or soul. The paintings flow in response to the rhythms and moods through vibrant colors and primordial shapes.”

A third generation drummer, Robles toured as a musician with his father and brother during the 80s. He turned to painting in 1989 after finding inspiration in an abstract painting he purchased for his home. “I went out, bought oils and canvas, and just started,” said Robles. “I was curious and became fascinated with abstract geometric shapes and vibrant colors. The timing was right.” Robles, who has no formal training as an artist, spent the next three years experimenting with abstract painting before turning to the contemporary Native American style he is now known for.



Mitchell Robles

Robles finds inspiration from traditional Native American art forms such as ancient Chumash pictographs, the ceremonial warshirts traditionally worn for battle, and what is known as Ledger Art. “Ledger Art was created on ledger paper with crayons by the Plains Indians in the late 1800s. They’re these incredible drawings that show how traditional ways of life were changing,” he said. “My Ledger Art Horse Series is based on imagery found in the originals, like the feathers and the arrows, but on a much larger scale. I even incorporate the lines and numbers found on the ledger paper they used.”

Robles’ artwork is represented in galleries throughout California and in Arizona, New Mexico, and Wyoming. In addition, Robles’ artwork is featured in other forms including magazine and textbook publications and several Sundance Film Festival documentaries. In 1997, Robles was the featured artist for the American Library’s annual celebrity READ poster and his painting *Touch of the Past* appears on a best-selling t-shirt sold locally and in museums, including the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian and The Heard Museum in Arizona.

“Whether I am painting the mystical face of a shaman, the fluid outline of a buffalo, or a modernist abstract, I try to convey the feeling that we are connected to something beyond the present; ageless, timeless, and infinitely powerful,” stated Robles in his artist statement. “When critics and viewers tell me they feel a sense of energy and intensity from my work, I know I have succeeded.”

CASA Magazine is located at 23 E Canon Perdido. Hours are 9–5:30pm, Mon through Fri. For more information, call Mitchell Robles at 966-2131 or visit www.mitchrobles.com.



Santa Ynez Bull (72 x 48) by Mitchell Robles