

# form & concept

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## SOUL OF NATIONS GROUP EXHIBITION

August 17 - September 15, 2018

**Opening Reception:** Friday, August 17, 5-7 pm

**Artist Talk:** Saturday, August 18, 1-2 pm

**What/ Who:** Soul of Nations, a Washington, D.C. and Arizona-based nonprofit that works to uplift Indigenous communities throughout the Americas, presents this juried exhibition of Native teen artists from Southwest reservations. The 15 featured artists all took part in the organization's Brea Foley Art Program, which awarded three of them with a special residency at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. The exhibition opens on the weekend of SWAIA Santa Fe Indian Market and offers boundary-pushing aesthetic statements from a new generation of Indigenous artists. The theme of the exhibition is "Honor the Earth."

**When:** The *Soul of Nations Group Exhibition* debuts at a special reception on Friday, August 17, 5-7 pm, on the weekend of Santa Fe Indian Market. The event also features the unveiling of Armond Lara's *Flying Blue Buffalo* installation in the gallery's atrium. An artist talk follows on Saturday, August 18, 1-2 pm.

**Where:** form & concept, 435 S. Guadalupe St. Santa Fe, NM 87501

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## TEENS FROM SOUTHWEST INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES LAND NEW YORK RESIDENCY, SANTA FE GALLERY SHOW

Santa Fe, NM—It's safe to say that the Brea Foley Art Program is one-of-a-kind. The initiative, by Washington, D.C. and Arizona-based nonprofit Soul of Nations, vaults teens from Southwestern Indigenous communities into the upper echelons of the art world. This year's program had hundreds of applicants and 15 finalists, all between the ages of 15 and 18. Three winners jetted off to Manhattan for a residency at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. Later in the summer, all of the finalists will exhibit together at form & concept gallery in Santa Fe, on the weekend of this year's SWAIA Santa Fe Indian Market. The *Soul of Nations Group Exhibition* opens with a reception on Friday, August 17, 5 to 7 pm, followed by an artist talk on Saturday, August 18, 1 to 2 pm. Inspired by the theme "Honor the Earth," the participants offer fresh perspectives on Indigenous identity, contemporary culture and the state of the environment.

“Art is its own language,” says Ernest Hill, cofounder of Soul of Nations. “People might not want to hear what you have to say about your own plight, but you could look at a canvas and that could ignite a discussion.” That was the founding philosophy for Soul of Nations, which Hill dreamed up with his childhood friend Brea Foley. Hill and Foley grew up in Denver but had strong connections to Navajo Nation in the Four Corners region: Foley’s heritage was Navajo, and Hill’s family conducted missionary work on Native reservations when he was young. They were both interested in addressing the extreme poverty divide between Indigenous communities and the rest of the Southwest.

“There was this drastic disconnect between on-reservation life and off-reservation life,” Hill says. “I made a promise to myself that I wouldn’t go back unless I could do something about it.” Foley passed away in 2014 from breast cancer, but Hill carried on their mission and officially incorporated Soul of Nations as a 501(c)3 the following year. The organization has a broad charter, seeking to uplift the vast numbers of displaced Indigenous communities throughout the Americas. Hill also created the Brea Foley Art Program as a tribute to his late collaborator, with the more targeted mission of providing art world opportunities to Native teens from the Southwest. “At the beginning, we had a focus group and asked students, ‘What are you most interested in doing?’” says Hill. “About 80% of the students said that they were really interested in the arts as a career path. We wanted to show them ways to be successful.”

The Brea Foley Art Program has grown and evolved in the three years since its founding. Hill says awareness of the initiative has grown significantly, with 253 applicants for this year’s program. In addition to the residency at Tisch School of the Arts, this year’s winners—Maiyah King of Albuquerque, Bailey Pete of Gallup, and Christine Garcia of Santa Fe—participated in a special reception at Manhattan’s National Museum of the American Indian. “Last year we did a series of college tours and museum tours, but we wanted to find a school that was dedicated to investing in youth at a larger level,” says Hill. “NYU really stepped up to the plate.”

Hill also wanted to build a bridge to the commercial art world for the program’s participants. That’s how form & concept came into the picture. “It’s a whole new realm for us in terms of education,” says Hill. “We want to teach them how to work with a marketing team, but also how to market yourself in the commercial art scene. Being an artist is like having a sole proprietorship.” All 15 of this year’s finalists will contribute an artwork to the *Soul of Nations Group Exhibition* at form & concept. They hail from 11 different tribal communities throughout the Southwest. Their work will debut at the gallery on the weekend of the SWAIA Santa Fe Indian Market, which attracts over 100,000 visitors to buy art directly from 1,000 artists who represent more than 200 federally recognized tribes from the U.S. and Canada. The show’s opening reception also features the debut of an art installation by Armond Lara, an internationally renowned artist.

**Featured Artists:** Mikhail K. Ganadonegro, Quansha J. Abayta, Maiyah King, Bailey Makai Pete, Deanna Lee, Christine Garcia, Naomi Smart, Kyle Begay, Megan Joe, Rikki Begay, Iona Stevens, Naomi Begay, Josiah Whitesinger, Lehlahni Michelle, Kiara Tom