

# form & concept

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Ryan Singer**

## **Childhood Mythologies**

March 29 - May 25, 2019

**Opening Reception:** Friday, March 29, 5-7 pm

**Artist Talk:** Saturday, March 30, 2-3 pm

**What/ Who:** Albuquerque artist Ryan Singer unveils a solo exhibition of acrylic paintings of Navajo Nation landscapes populated by cultural icons. The artist's vivid imagery showcases original narratives inspired by dreams and childhood memories while interweaving subtle socio-political commentary.

**When:** *Ryan Singer: Childhood Mythologies* debuts Friday, March 29 from 5 to 7 pm and runs through May 25, 2019. The opening reception coincides with the Last Friday Art Walk in the Santa Fe Railyard Arts District. Singer will appear at an artist talk on Saturday, March 30 from 2 to 3 pm.

**Where:** form & concept, 435 South Guadalupe Street, Santa Fe, NM 87501

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### **ALBUQUERQUE ARTIST BLENDS PERSONAL MEMORIES, INDIGENOUS NARRATIVES— AND 20th CENTURY POP CULTURE**

Santa Fe, NM—"My older sister was really into sci-fi. If she wanted to see a movie, she had to drag me along," says Albuquerque painter Ryan Singer. "I remember watching *Star Wars*, *Godzilla*, and old black-and-white movies like *Frankenstein* or *The Mummy*." Pretty soon, the iconic beasts had traveled from the silver screen into the artist's psyche—plaguing Singer with vivid nightmares of monsters standing outside his bedroom window or chasing him through his neighborhood. Years later, the artist still has intense dreams, but they're a welcomed occurrence. "It keeps my mind focused," Singer explains. "It feels like there's a spirit or muse guiding me and influencing me." In his solo exhibition *Childhood Mythologies*, opening Friday, March 29 from 5 to 7 pm, Singer presents vibrant acrylic paintings imbued with his own youthful legends: Navajo landscapes populated by characters from comic books and popular culture.

“All of the paintings relate to personal memories and nostalgia,” says Singer. *Childhood Mythologies* comprises dozens of acrylic paintings that will span the gallery’s second floor. As a child, Singer would draw everything from monsters to KISS, raising concerns at school. “My teacher told my mom there was something wrong with me, because I’d want to sit inside and draw instead of playing at recess.”

Singer’s mother dismissed these concerns and proudly equipped the budding artist with sketchbooks, paints, and other supplies. They came in handy during summertime visits to his grandmother’s house, where Singer spent his days herding sheep and playing with his toys or drawing in the shade. “I miss those innocent moments,” he explains. “Being a kid, playing in the dirt, living in the land. The air seemed a little clearer, it wasn’t so chaotic and complex. So I paint the things I miss, the Navajo landscape, and I’ll throw in characters from *Star Wars* or other things.”

Singer’s juxtaposition of traditional Native imagery with Western pop culture forms a complex portrait of contemporary Native life. “For a while I struggled with it. Why can’t you just accept me as an artist foremost?” Singer asks. “I just happen to be Native. But at the same time, it feels like part of my identity. And I want people to know.”

The vividly colorful works offer subtle commentary on racial stereotypes and ecological issues. By placing culturally loaded symbols in landscapes that are imbued with personal meaning, Singer shifts pervasive narratives and challenges old storytelling hierarchies. “For the viewer, there’s this instant recognition of the pop culture archetypes—followed by a discovery of Ryan’s more idiosyncratic signifiers,” says form & concept Director Jordan Eddy. “The work evokes something in the viewer that plays on their fears, fantasies, prejudices, and sense of empathy.”

After attending Arizona State University, Singer began exhibiting in group exhibitions throughout the state. In the early 2000s, he was invited to show in the Heard Museum in Phoenix. At first, Singer was anxious to show his work there, as it wasn’t “necessarily Native.” However, veteran artists took a shine to his work and encouraged him to show at the 2003 Santa Fe Indian Market. Fifteen years later, he would win “First Place for Best Representational Acrylic Painting” for his acrylic on canvas work *Inter-Dimensional Gambling*.

For Singer, the exhibition is an opportunity to showcase his paintings on a larger scale. Although the theme of *Childhood Mythologies* offered Singer the opportunity to touch on social issues, the artist is purposefully withholding commentary or explanation. “The paintings are different parts of my life, and I put them together like a puzzle,” the artist explains. “I think if I say too much it ruins it, so I leave it up to interpretation. I want other people to weave their own stories into it as well.”