

Honoring Weavers with Canvas and Bronze

Wopila Artist Guild's first benefit show
honors the weaving families of the Historic
Toadlena Trading Post who refuse to let tradition disappear



wopila
ARTIST GUILD

**Exhibit opens at the bi-annual celebration
at the Historic Toadlena Trading Post, June 18, 2011.**

Show runs through August 21, 2011
at The Historic Toadlena Trading Post Weaving Museum.





A weaver works at a traditional Navajo loom

Thank you for your interest in Wopila Artist Guild's inaugural benefit show.

20% of the price of the artwork purchased will be donated to the Toadlena Young Weaver's Project, a non-profit fund administered by the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian in Santa Fe.

This fund has been set up to defray the costs of teaching traditional weaving skills to young people in the Toadlena community.

The paintings and sculptures in this show are available for sale now.

On June 18, 2011, Bergsgaard and Ayers will unveil their creations directly to the residents of the Toadlena Trading Post area during the trading post's huge bi-annual community celebration. **Art lovers are invited to join in the festivities and meet the artists and the weavers.**

We ask that owners of the painting and sculptures to allow their works to be displayed at the museum at the Historic Toadlena Trading Post through August 21, 2011. (We can display the owners' names next to the works, if desired.)

For more information or to make a purchase, please contact Wopila Artist Guild at 602-510-3662 or by email at amy@wopilaguild.org.

Wopila Artist Guild's first benefit show, Honoring Weavers with Canvas and Bronze celebrates the Navajo weavers of the Historic Toadlena Trading Post



Master Weaver Violet Brown demonstrates spinning



Benefit painting and sculpture exhibit by renowned artists James Ayers and Craig Bergsgaard, Wopila co-founders

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Want a glimpse into the remarkable work of the Navajo weavers of the Historic Toadlena Trading Post? All you have to do is imagine working in your chosen profession using only the technology available in your great-great-grandmother's era.

Now imagine that using these primitive resources, you are able to produce something so masterful that it is unrivaled by any other maker – either man or machine.



The artists of the Historic Toadlena Trading Post weave sophisticated textiles using *the same methods their ancestors have been using for over three hundred years*. This painstaking process includes raising, shearing, and hand-spinning their lustrous natural-colored wools from the few remaining multi-hued flocks in existence.

When Ayers and Bergsgaard met the Toadlena weavers and their families and saw their techniques, they were floored. **“Here is history, right before our eyes,”** said Ayers.

“The idea is to create a show that will celebrate the commitment to art made by this unassuming group of people,” says Bergsgaard. “We want people to experience the weavers and their art for themselves so they can appreciate this unique chapter of American culture.”



James Ayers, Co-Founder

Shortly after graduating from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1991, James began a pattern of traveling, living, and working with indigenous peoples worldwide that continues to the present day. James' relationships with people from dozens of tribal cultures helps him understand the historical material he incorporated into his art.



James Ayers receives a lesson in carding wool from Pamela Brown, the youngest Master Weaver at The Historic Toadlena Trading Post.



Patterns of Tradition

Painted by James Ayers

30" x 40" • oil on linen • \$14,500

Patterns of Tradition depicts the traditional family-based Navajo weaving tradition. James got the inspiration for this piece after visiting with one of the Master Weavers at the Historic Toadlena Trading Post. The weaver, Pamela Brown, told James that one of her earliest memories was the sound of the loom “clacking” as she was seated next to it as a baby.

“We want to do our part to make sure the traditions that have inspired our work are kept alive for future generations.”

- Painter and Wopila co-founder, James Ayers



Safekeeping

Painted by James Ayers

Oil on board • 16" x 20" • \$4,800

Safekeeping features a c. 1880s Navajo woman wearing a traditional woven dress and holding a lamb from her flock.



Navajo Finery

Painted by James Ayers

Oil on board • 32" x 24" • \$8,500

In *Navajo Finery*, James portrays a proud Navajo man from the 1870s wearing a classic third phase chief's blanket. Before Navajo women developed expertise at weaving rugs in the late-1800s, the weavers created dazzling blankets to be worn as garments and trading. These blankets, handspun, hand-dyed, and painstakingly woven, were valuable commodities.



Craig Bergsgaard, Co-Founder

Craig Bergsgaard insists on historical accuracy in all of his compositions. “All the accoutrements need to be correct,” Craig explains. “But I’m not setting out to make a portrait. Rather, I’m creating a story and may take some license to express it - but the subtleties will still be right.” To accomplish this, Craig does extensive research on his subjects. “People who collect my work are often intrigued by the details and insist on accuracy, so I make sure not to let them down,” he says. “This is a slice of history they are incorporating into their lives.”



Master Weaver Evelyn George offers input on Craig’s sculpture, The Chaparone. Evelyn had pointed to the shoulder of the sheep and she said “It needs to be fatter.” Craig then offered her a piece of clay and Evelyn applied it to fatten up the sheep appropriately.

“We know that the expansion of the American West came at a tremendous cost to many people, but we can help support the next generation of artists instead of simply being bystanders as traditional art forms dwindle away.”

*Sculptor and Wopila co-founder,
Craig Bergsgaard*



The Chaperone

Sculpted by Craig Bergsgaard

32"h x 14"w x 14"d • Bronze (work shown here in clay) • **\$7,000**

Craig Bergsgaard's sculpture, *The Chaperone*, features a Navajo woman tending to the young sheep of her flock. The shepherdess is wearing the traditional blanket dress and bun hairstyle of 150 years ago.

The #1 version of *The Chaperone* will have three special features that the other pieces in the edition will not have:

- A miniature Navajo rug (approx 6" x 18") with the title of the piece handwoven into it
- A special walnut "jewelry box" style base with a drawer that can house the tiny rug, the catalog, and photos of the piece with the weavers (and other show ephemera)
- The title will be laser cut into the jewelry box and then embedded with turquoise



Saving the Day

Sculpted by Craig Bergsgaard

Approximately 30" tall • Bronze (work shown here in clay) • **\$6,000**

In *Saving the Day*, Craig Bergsgaard depicts a Navajo man tenderly caring for a small lamb in his flock.

The #1 version will have three special features that the other pieces in the edition will not have:

- A miniature Navajo rug (approx 6" x 18") with the title of the piece handwoven into it
- A special walnut "jewelry box" style base with a drawer that can house the tiny rug, the catalog, and photos of the piece with the weavers (and other show ephemera)
- The title will be laser cut into the jewelry box and then embedded with turquoise



The Lesson

Sculpted by Craig Bergsgaard

Finished size with base will be 20" t x 24"w x 16" d

Bronze (work shown here in clay) • **\$6,000**

The Lesson depicts two Navajo women of yesteryear carding and spinning wool.

Sculptor Craig Bergsgaard learned about Navajo carding and spinning techniques in his 2010 research trip to the Historic Toadlena Trading Post on the occasion of their annual carding and spinning day.

The #1 version of *The Lesson* will have three special features that the other pieces in the edition will not have:

- A miniature Navajo rug (approx 6" x 18") with the title of the piece handwoven into it
- A special walnut "jewelry box" style base with a drawer that can house the tiny rug, the catalog, and photos of the piece with the weavers (and other show ephemera)
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Sculptor Craig Bergsgaard (left) and painter James Ayers (right) with the artwork for the first Wopila show

About Wopila Artist Guild

Artists supporting art education for Native American youth

Wopila Artist Guild was organized in 2010 with a simple, yet powerful mission: help sustain traditional art forms by providing support and funds for Native American youth art education.

The brainchild of sculptor Craig Bergsgaard and painter James Ayers, Wopila was conceived at barbecue in Bergsgaard's back yard as the two men mused about their fine art careers. They joked about how even the worst day in the studio is better than the "normal" jobs the artists both held at one time.

"The conversation made us think of how lucky we were to be successful in our artistic careers," says Bergsgaard, "and how we would like to share our success with young artists to help them get a start."

"Since Craig and I both derive inspiration for our art from Native American cultures, doing something to encourage traditional art forms seemed like the perfect choice for giving back."

Would you like to find out more about Wopila Artist Guild?

Please visit our website at www.wopilaguild.org to learn more about our shows, our works, and how you can participate.

