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La Fonda on the Plaza in
Santa Fe, New Mexico.

A Story of Art

La Fonda on the Plaza celebrates its vast art collection with a new book on the famous hotel's holdings.

BY JOHN O'HERN



Skateboard decks painted in acrylics by—left to right, top to bottom—David Naranjo, George Alexander, Tony Abeyta, Steven Paul Judd and Diego Romero

Last year, Historic Hotels of America (HHA), an official program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, recognized the oldest hotel in the country's oldest capital city as a top hotel for magnificent art. Art has been a centerpiece of La Fonda on the Plaza in Santa Fe, New Mexico, since it opened in 1922.

In 2020, HHA recognized Jenny Kimball, now ambassador and board chairman emerita of La Fonda as Historic Hotelier of the Year. She comments, "The bulk of La Fonda's collection deliberately includes mostly Native American and local artists. The previous

owners and my good friends Sam and Ethel Ballen were big supporters of both SWAIA and Native artists. They passed that baton to me, and I'm very proud to carry on this tradition on behalf of our current owners.

"I try to find pieces that are going to add value to the hotel and are created by an artist whose work we don't have or an artist who has a connection to New Mexico that we should have. Each August, I spend time scouting *Indian Market* to find up-and-coming talent, too. The youthful spirit of emerging artists complements the hotel's long history and sets the tone for a dynamic and progressive future."

Jordan Craig (Northern Cheyenne), *Pink and White Stripes*, acrylic on canvas

On August 17, prior to *Santa Fe Indian Market*, La Fonda will present a book launch event in its historic La Plazuela restaurant for the revised and updated book, *In Every Room—A Story of the Art: Highlights from the Collection of La Fonda on the Plaza*. The event will take place from 3 to 5 p.m.

There is indeed art in every room at La Fonda from some of the first pieces purchased for the collection by artists at the Santa Fe Indian School, to a display of skateboard decks in the lobby painted by some of the country's most important contemporary Native artists.

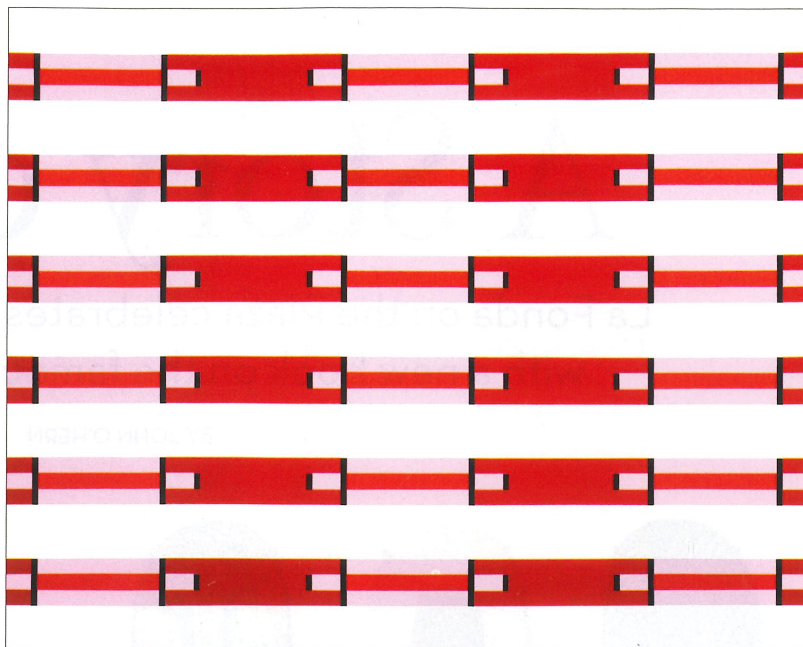
The first edition of *In Every Room* was produced in 2012. I have had the pleasure of writing the text for both editions and working with Jenny Kimball and with Britta Anderson who is now the hotel's marketing director. The collection has grown significantly under Kimball's leadership.

"A story of the art" is an apt subtitle for a book on La Fonda's art collection, especially its collection of Native art. Family tribal and personal relationships abound. The work of Tony Abeyta (Navajo (Diné)) can be seen throughout the hotel and is now joined by sculptures by his sister Pablita Abeyta (1953-2017). Pablita was not only a sculptor, but also a lobbyist for the Navajo Nation's Washington office. She commented, "I devoted my career to the establishment of an institution [the National Museum of the American Indian] which people from all around the world can learn from and the Indian people of all nations can be proud of."

Several of the artists attended the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) and have been fellows at the School for Advanced Research (SAR) in Santa Fe.

Cheyenne artist Jordan Craig has been an artist in residence at IAIA and a fellow at SAR. During her tenure at both, she studied Cheyenne and Northern Cheyenne beadwork on pouches, tobacco bags, moccasins leggings and cradleboards from the Buffalo Bill Center of

Ricardo Caté (Kewa Pueblo), *Standing Rock*, acrylic on canvas



Pablita Abeyta (Navajo (Diné)), 1953-2017, (left to right) *Corn Maiden*, *Yei*, *Corn Maiden*, mixed media sculpture





Tony Abeyta
(Navajo (Diné)),
Navajo Horse, acrylic
on canvas

the West, Plains Indian Museum's collection in Cody, Wyoming. *Pink and Red Stripes* was digitally mapped from the original design of a circa 1885 Cheyenne bag with porcupine quills and painted in pristine precision to honor the original object and its designer.

Ricardo Caté (Kewa Pueblo) is well known for the wry humor in his daily cartoon *Without Reservations*, appearing in the *Santa Fe New Mexican* since 2006. In 2016 when he brought supplies to the protestors at the Dakota Access Pipeline, he remarks, "A significant event occurred on September 13 when weapons were drawn and pointed at the weaponless water protectors. I depict that here in this painting, which is akin to photos of Vietnam War protestors placing flowers in the muzzles of riot police officer's weapons." In

Standing Rock, a little Native girl holding a doll places a feather in the muzzle of an officer's rifle, recalling the peace protests against the Vietnam War. «

August 17, 2023, 3-5 p.m.

Book Release:

***In Every Room—A Story of the Art:
Highlights from the Collection of La
Fonda on the Plaza***

La Fonda on the Plaza,

100 E. San Francisco Street, Santa Fe, NM 87501

(505) 982-5511,

www.lafondasantafe.com