

Diné College exhibit shows Whitesinger, Yazzie as multi-talented artists

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Navajo-based show runs through March

TSAILE, Ariz. — Artists Don Whitesinger and Peterson Yazzie first started drawing as kids, illustrating people and things that spontaneously came to mind.

Both studied concepts of art at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe and went on to receive graduate degrees from the Rhode Island School of Design and the University of New Mexico.

Whitesinger teaches studio art at Diné College and Yazzie is an art instructor at Northern Pioneer College in Holbrook, Ariz. The two recently put on loan to Diné College's Ned Hatathli Museum more than 30 paintings characteristic of the Navajo experience — something each is very proud of.

The exhibit includes original sketches and runs through the month of March and includes splendid images of hogans, Navajo families and artifacts. Whitesinger and Yazzie are Navajo, and are from Spider Rock and Greasewood Springs, Ariz., respectively. Stylistically, both consider themselves abstract expressionists.

"I approach each project with an open mind," Yazzie said.

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Not long ago, Yazzie illustrated a children's book called, *The Hogan that Great-grandfather Built*, which is a series showcasing home life on the reservation. *Homage to Picasso*

is a vividly and somewhat linear work by Whitesinger that is a tribute to the 19th

Century Spanish painter, sculptor and ceramist. "It was something I just felt worthwhile to do," Whitesinger said.

The exhibit has already left impressions on onlookers. The art show opened Feb. 7 and is titled, "Contemporary and Traditional Innovations in Rez Paint."

"What makes the work of both of these artists notable is their dedication to Navajo culture," Hatathli Museum Curator Nonabah said. "Their styles are creative and remarkable and people have given them a lot of positive comments."

Whitesinger noted the start of a baccalaureate of fine arts program at Diné College and the appeal it has for students. The program began Spring of 2018.

"It's a new program, and one that is gaining popularity," Whitesinger said. "I think everyone is pleased with it." Whitesinger added, "Art is the greatest asset Indian people have in our communities, yet it is the most underdeveloped."

Yazzie is a former student of Whitesinger's from when the two were at Holbrook High School. Yazzie is a member of the B.F.A. advisory council.