

Cultural Icons

GEORGE RIVERA (Pojoaque)

SANTA FE, NM

George Rivera is many things; art and cultural teacher, student of painting and sculptural design and even Governor of the Pueblo of Pojoaque in northern New Mexico, his hometown and Native heritage. Rivera's impact reaches even further with his talents as a bronze sculptor, depicting Pueblo life and other tribal customs.

Rivera mainly focuses on large scale commissions such as a recent piece made for the city of Santa Fe titled, *Catua and Umtua*. It depicts two life size bronze figures that were runners serving as messengers



during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Another recent large scale work is *Pechanga Peon*, showing 13 Luiseno Natives involved in the sing gambling game called Peon, installed at the Pechanga Resort and Casino in Temecula, California.

The upcoming summer exhibition with Manitu Galleries will showcase the many smaller cultural icons Rivera has created over the years, such as *Deer Dancer*. "This was an important and powerful dance, and I was really touched by it," he says. "The expression on the face is from me being at the actual dance."

Rivera often works from pictures but prefers to be immersed in the experience he sculpts. He furthers, "If you sculpt from a picture that's hundreds of years old, you can only read about the imagery, but my preference is to be involved in it and capture the essence."

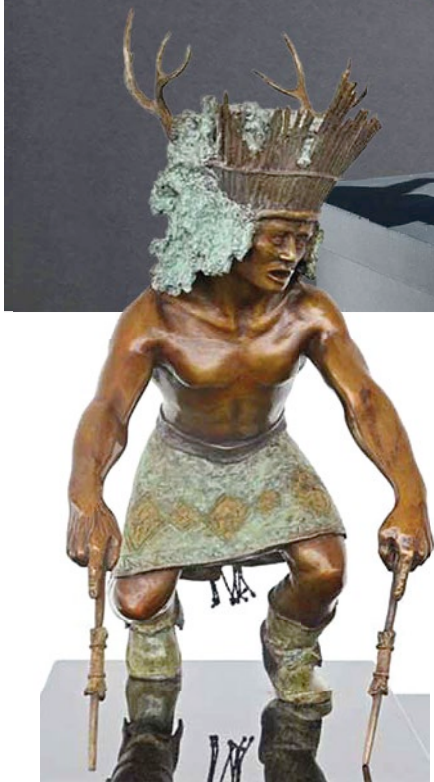
On commissioned tribal projects, Rivera works first from interviews, the story and meaning behind the subject matter. "That is very important for the people," says Rivera. "I like to focus on cultural representations that the tribes can be excited about, imagery that the tribe can be proud of."

This is true for his piece *Buffalo Dancer*, where imagery goes back hundreds of years for buffalo dancers. "This is a pose I captured in my mind," Rivera says. The piece was also made in large scale for Buffalo Thunder Resort in Santa Fe and for The National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.

A very important and sentimental piece titled *Lightning Boy*, will also be a part of the exhibition. Rivera's young son passed away in a car accident, and his dying wish was to be remembered not for his injury, but for who he was as a talented Native



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dancer. Rivera titled the piece after his son's traditional name, Valentino 'Tzigiwhaeno,' which translates to 'lightning.'

From June 5 to 28 at Manitou Galleries, Rivera's bronze cultural icons will be on display. To witness his work is to gaze upon a piece of history, as well as beautiful representations of family and spirit. «

1. *Buffalo Dancer*, bronze, ed. 11 of 50, contact gallery for size
2. *Small Buffalo*, bronze, ed. 30 of 100, 7 x 9"
3. *Lightning Boy*, bronze, ed. 8 of 12, 25 x 28"
4. *Deer Dancer*, bronze, ed. 21 of 50, contact gallery for size

Manitou Galleries

June 5-28

123 W. Palace Avenue, Santa Fe, NM, 87501
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