

FALL FASHION: FEATHERS AND FRINGE

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MITCHELL ROBLES' bold paintings and striking mixed-media creations are part of a personal quest to explore his cultural and spiritual identity. A direct descendent of the Chumash and early Spanish settlers, Robles first viewed the art of his ancestors at age 11 when he toured the Chumash Painted Cave. The experience kick-started Robles' solo expeditions to indigenous ruins, connecting him to his heritage and influencing his art. The result is a surprisingly diverse portfolio: ancient rock art symbols dance on dynamic canvases, abstract portraits of chiefs are painted in brilliant colors, and low-relief war shirts in dazzling hues are adorned with beads, quills, and horsehair.

Shown above, *Yellow Horse No. 92* is a stunning example of Robles' modern take on ledger art. Captivated by an 1800s ledger drawing of a woman shading herself from the sun with an umbrella, Robles incorporates the image into his own work. With its quiet strength and emblems of longevity, this historical tribute executed with contemporary flair seems to celebrate the continuum of the modern Chumash experience. "I try to convey the feeling that we are connected to something beyond the present," Robles explains, "something ageless, timeless, and infinitely powerful."

With such singular focus on his ancestry, it may come as a surprise that Robles is currently working on a series of Texas longhorn paintings. "Friends of my family own the Saint Frances Ranch in Santa Ynez, California," he shares. "It is where I was first introduced to the African Ankole-Watusi. These massive cattle had a big impact on me and inspired me to start painting longhorns. I like their extenuated horns, their size, the way they stare at you; they're gentle giants."

Whether he's painting shamans, war ponies, or Texas longhorns, Robles' goal is the same: "When [people] tell me they feel a sense of energy and intensity from my work, I know I have succeeded."

—Amy Pallas

ABOVE: *Yellow Horse No. 92*, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 60.

GALLERIES: Artes De Taos Gallery, Taos, New Mexico, 303.995.5044. Horizon Fine Art Gallery, Jackson, Wyoming, 307.739.1540, www.horizonfineartgallery.com. Robles Art Studio, Santa Barbara, California, 805.966.2131, www.mitchrobles.com. Terzian Galleries, Park City, Utah, 435.649.4927, www.terziangalleries.com.