

December 15, 2014

**For Immediate Release**

*Re-Riding History: From the Southern Plains to the Matanzas Bay*  
January 16 to February 28, 2015

The Crisp-Ellert Art Museum and Flagler College are pleased to announce the exhibition *Re-Riding History: From the Southern Plains to the Matanzas Bay*. Curated by Emily Arthur, Marwin Begaye and John Hitchcock, the exhibition opens to the public on January 16 and will be on view through February 28, 2015. Related programs will include a symposium on Thursday, February 12, 2015, to be held in the Ringhaver Student Center's Virginia Room. This event will be free and open to the public.

Concurrent with the St. Augustine 450th commemoration, artists Arthur, Begaye and Hitchcock present a curatorial project which metaphorically retraces the history of seventy-two American Indian peoples who were forcibly taken from their homes in Salt Fork, OK, and transported by train to St. Augustine, Florida. The United States war department imprisoned Cheyenne, Kiowa, Comanche, Arapaho, and Caddo leaders under Lieutenant Richard Henry Pratt from 1875-1878.

It was at Fort Marion (renamed Castillo de San Marcos in 1942) that Lieutenant Pratt developed the assimilation methods of control that defined a century of government policy. Assimilation as a term and a political strategy is defined as the total eradication of one culture by another culture by force. The imprisonment method was institutionalized in the federal off-reservation boarding school policy that was in place in the United States until the 1930s. The most central boarding school example was authored at Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania (1879) where Lieutenant Pratt coined the phrase "Kill the Indian, save the man." Five hundred and thirty Chiricahua Apache men, women, and children were imprisoned in Fort Marion, Florida, which initiated twenty-seven years of prisoner of war status.

The curators asked seventy-two artists to respond to the experience of imprisonment by creating an individual work on paper in the same dimensions as the historic ledger drawings made at Fort Marion from 1875-1878. The exhibition is a contemporary response to a historical experience held intact within American Indian communities through oral history and art.

The artists selected include Native American, non-Native and descendants from both periods of imprisonment. Engaging these historical events, the artists reclaim the telling of this story to offer an indigenous perspective of our shared history. We urge the viewer to consider this fresh perspective, while bearing in mind the idea of forgotten histories, and the power of memory. As curator Emily Arthur states, "It's not history," Nancy Mithlo further posits in her essay for the exhibition: "Memory

and alternative temporalities have conspired to make this history present and alive.”

The traveling exhibition of contemporary works on paper combine various printmaking methods with drawing, collage and photography, and include artists such as Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Shan Goshorn, Mel Chin, Edgar Heap-of-Birds, Alison Saar and Monte Yellow Bird, Sr.

A related symposium has been organized to take place on Thursday, February 12, 2015. The following artists and scholars have been invited to speak about the exhibition in a contemporary context and how the exhibition responds to historical events: Nancy Marie Mithlo, Ph.D. (Associate Professor of Art History and Visual Arts, Occidental College and Chair of American Indian Studies, Autry National Center Institute), Emily Arthur, Symposium Panel Chair (Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison); Harry Mithlo (Artist and Apache Tribal Historian), Juanita Pahdopony (Artist & past President of Comanche Nation College, Lawton, OK), heather ahtone (Asst. Curator, Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, University of Oklahoma-Norman), Edgar Heap-of-Birds (Professor of Native American Studies, University of Oklahoma), Marwin Begaye (Assistant Professor, University of Oklahoma-Norman) and John Hitchcock (Associate Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison); and Willie Johns (Cultural Specialist and Chief Justice of the Seminole Tribe of Florida).

One powerful example of a response from artist and descendent Edgar Heap of Birds about the work he created for the exhibition is as follows:

*This piece presents "Grandfather" in the Cheyenne language, 3 times [Numshim Numshim Numshim].*

*It can be seen as a cry or longing for the loss of Grandfather, a lamenting.*

*Also the words speak of my Cheyenne Grandfathers:*

*Guy Heap of Birds*

*Alfrich Blackwolf Heap of Birds*

*Chief Many Magpies Heap O Birds*

*Over the last 25 or so years I have researched and lectured on Fort Marion and the death of Chief Many Magpies. Our grandfather is buried somewhere near Fort Marion. He was one of the four principal Chiefs of the Cheyenne. Early on during my graduate school years this painful history played a pivotal role in my artwork and persevered as an inspiration.*

*I came to Fort Marion during the exhibiting of my 2007 Most Serene Republics Venice Biennale exhibition, reset at the University of Florida gallery in 2010. Research was conducted at Fort Marion and I offered ceremonial sage at un-named Native graves plus also smoked the Cheyenne prayer pipe inside the fort.*

*It is my hope to someday erect a major public art sculpture, on the large scale such as my 50 foot medicine "Wheel" at the Denver Art Museum, in St. Augustine for the memory of the many Native P.O.W.s.*

This exhibition and symposium are generously supported through a grant from The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida. The *Re-Riding History* exhibition and symposium are concurrent activities of the 450th Commemoration of the city of St. Augustine. For further information on the exhibition and related programs, please visit [www.reridinghistory.org](http://www.reridinghistory.org), our website at [www.flagler.edu/crispellert](http://www.flagler.edu/crispellert), or contact Julie Dickover at 904-826-8530 or [crispellert@flagler.edu](mailto:crispellert@flagler.edu). The museum's hours while classes are in session are Monday through Friday, 10 am to 4pm, and Saturday, 12 to 4pm.