



PRESS RELEASE

The Heard Museum Honors the gift of the Delores Browne Abelson Collection with a New Exhibition

PHOENIX – [The Heard Museum](https://www.heardmuseum.org/) is proud to celebrate ballerina, educator and arts advocate Delores Browne Abelson through the presentation of her collection of Native American art in a new exhibition, *October Art: The Collection of Delores Browne Abelson*, which opened on Friday, Nov. 14. The collection is comprised of 17 works by some of the leading Native American artists of the 20th and 21st centuries and also includes historical items.

In 1984, Abelson founded October Art, a New York gallery dedicated to displaying the work of Native American artists, many of whom are represented in this exhibition. Artwork by her close friend and artist Harry Fonseca (Nisenan Maidu/Portuguese/Native Hawaiian), as well as other contemporary Native artists whose works reflect Abelson's lifelong passion for the arts, are included in the exhibition.

Browne, born March 30, 1935, in Philadelphia, was a pioneering ballet dancer and instructor who is recognized for breaking racial barriers in ballet and for her contributions to mentoring and supporting future generations of dancers. Raised in a racially mixed, working-class neighborhood, she began her dance training through a school ballet club. At age 14, she received a scholarship to Judimar School of Dance after being discovered by the founder Marion Cuyjet. Abelson later trained at the School of American Ballet, where she was one of six Black students at the time.

In the 1950s, Browne performed with the Ballet Guild of Philadelphia and worked with choreographer Antony Tudor. In 1956, she joined the New York Negro Ballet, performing principal roles during a tour of the United Kingdom. The company disbanded in 1960, and after a brief hiatus from performing, Abelson returned to the stage in 1966. She later taught at the Ailey School and Philadanco and supported organizations such as the International Association of Blacks in Dance.

“The Heard is honored to steward this remarkable collection, a gift from the estate of Delores Brown Abelson,” said David M. Roche, Heard Museum Dickey Family Director and CEO. “Her illustrious career as a pioneering dancer is well known. We will shed light on her pioneering efforts in the field of American Indian art with this exhibition.”

October Art: The Collection of Delores Browne Abelson is made possible thanks to the generosity of Major Supporters Susan Esco Chandler and Appy Chandler, Supporter Lili Chester in memory of Sheldon Chester, and by the Arizona Commission on the Arts and the Phoenix Office of Arts & Culture.

For more information, please visit heard.org.

Image Above: Harry Fonseca (Nisenan Maidu/Portuguese/Native Hawaiian, 1946-2006), Coyotes: Working it Out, 1984. Foil mixed media on paper, 22x29 inches. Heard Museum Collection, Gift of Delores Browne Abelson Trust, 5114-2.

Notes to Editors:

October Art: The Collection of Delores Browne Abelson will be open from Nov. 14 through Oct. 26, 2026.

The Heard Museum and Museum Shop are open daily, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. It is closed on Easter, Independence Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. From June 1 to Aug. 31, the Museum and Shop are open Tuesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Ticket prices for the museum are as follows: adults are \$26; seniors (65+) are \$21; military members are \$21 (with valid ID); university/college students with a valid ID are \$10; children (6-17) are \$10; all children 5 years and under, American Indians (with Tribal ID or CIB) and Heard Museum members are free.

Photography of any kind may not be used for publication without written permission from the museum and/or artists.

Credentialed members of the media may contact a member of the marketing staff for more information concerning photography of public events or museum galleries.

About The Heard Museum:

Since its founding in 1929, the Heard Museum has grown to become nationally and internationally recognized for its world-class exhibitions, award-winning publications, unparalleled festivals and innovative educational programs. Dedicated to connecting Indigenous creativity to the world, the Heard showcases the beauty and vitality of Indigenous creative expression by presenting the voice and vision of American Indian artists. A welcoming destination for children and families, the Heard offers engaging experiences that inspire curiosity and foster appreciation for American Indian art and culture. The Heard Museum is supported by the generosity of Heard Museum members and donors, the Arizona Commission on the Arts, and the City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture.

For more information, please visit heard.org.



To follow updates on the museum via Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, use [@heardmuseum](https://www.instagram.com/heardmuseum).

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