

Apache Skateboards founder speaks at UNM-G

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
Friday, 14 September 2018 05:55



Artist urges youth to 'be your truest self'

The auditorium in Calvin Hall at the University of New Mexico Gallup was filled Sept. 5 for an artist lecture by Douglas Miles, whose artwork is on display in the Ingham Chapman Gallery as part of the exhibit *New Native American Art to Brighten Your Day*, which runs through Sept. 24.

Miles, who hails from San Carlos, Ariz., may be known to locals as the founder of Apache Skateboards, which has operated for the past 15 years.

During the lecture, Miles said Apache Skateboards began as a personal project that caught the attention of the community and evolved into a business.

Apache Skateboards founder speaks at UNM-G

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
Friday, 14 September 2018 05:55

“[Apache Skateboards] started as a father making something for his son,” he said. “The board was unique, and everyone wanted one [when they saw it].”

Miles said he initially had to be persuaded by his parents, who were artists in their own right, to begin creating his own pieces. Painting, he said, differs from other forms of art as an isolated form of expression.

“Painting is not like being in a band,” Miles said. “[The audience] sees you right away, hears you right away.”

Miles is San Carlos Apache and was raised in Phoenix, Ariz. He said this upbringing allowed him to learn things in a different way than if he’d lived on a traditional reservation.

Regardless of location, though, Miles said being discriminated against and looked down upon has urged many Native Americans to embrace their creativity through art.

“We’re a powerful people,” he said.

Miles described how he has applied such an ideology to his own life — he’s depicted proud Native American people in his large murals that span upward of 10 feet. He showed the lecture crowd photos of his work in New Orleans, where he worked for Amnesty International in order to shine attention on the plight of political prisoners.

Locally, Miles was commissioned by Nativo Lodge in Albuquerque to repaint a number of hotel rooms. Guests at the hotel can gaze at the large Native faces in their rooms, a feeling Miles admits can be imposing. But he also said the scope of the paintings reinforces how important the people are to their community, specifically the women.

“Women will always be important,” he said about subjects of the mural. “They will never not be important.”

Apache Skateboards founder speaks at UNM-G

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
Friday, 14 September 2018 05:55

Miles' work can also be found in San Carlos, Ariz.; on display at the Tempe Center for the Arts in Tempe, Ariz., a secluded space near San Carlos Lake; and in the South Bronx of New York City, where he's painted a sizable mural that measures 120-feet-long.

Miles said he continues to look for new techniques and tools to implement into future pieces. He sees his work as more than a living — it's his way of expressing and sharing himself with others.

"What people don't understand is I make culture," he said. "I'm giving you something you've never heard before."

Miles wrapped up the lecture by advising students and younger artists not to think only of financial gain from creating and sharing work. Art can be whatever the artist wants to say, however they want to say it, he said. If an artist starts to get materialistic and think about impressing people, they are likely to lose their passion and forget what made them want to create in the first place.

"Be your truest self — you kind of can't go wrong," he said.

By Cody Begaye
Sun Correspondent