



Rabbett Before Horses Strickland, *Creation Story*, oil on canvas.
Collection of the Tweed Museum of Art, University of Minnesota Duluth

SOUTH DAKOTA *Art* MUSEUM

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RABBETT BEFORE HORSES STRICKLAND IMAGE MAKER

April 17 - August 19, 2018



Rabbett Before Horses Strickland, *Assimilation*, oil on canvas.
Collection of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

RABBETT BEFORE HORSES STRICKLAND

Rabbett Before Horses Strickland's large, colorful, allegorical paintings blend traditional Ojibwe mythology, the artist's personal experiences and dreams, and Western fine art traditions. Beautiful and vivid imagery brings powerful narratives to life in these strikingly unique paintings.

Strickland grew up immersed in art. His mother and her siblings painted; she created handicrafts and kept art-making supplies readily available to him in his youth. Strickland's family created art for its important power as a healing agent and transmitter of knowledge, often giving away works to those who would benefit most from them. Strickland carries on this tradition today, while also maintaining a commercial practice.

Without any formal fine art training, Strickland honed his incredible natural talents through self-study. As a teenager he taught himself to paint in the Western tradition by studying the works of European Renaissance and Baroque masters like Botticelli, Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Titian, Rubens, and Velázquez. The compositions and techniques of these artists were a major influence on Strickland. This is most obvious in the dramatic arrangements in his paintings and in the glazing techniques he uses, where paint is not blended or applied wet into wet, but built up through the application of thin layers of color.

Since 1998, Strickland's paintings have been shown in London, Santa Fe, California, Wisconsin and Minnesota, and in a traveling exhibit by Honor the Earth, an organization that raises awareness for environmental issues. His work is in collections in the United States, Japan, Hawaii, Europe and Canada. Strickland is an enrolled member of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. He was born in San Francisco, CA, but now lives and works Bayfield, WI.



Rabbett Before Horses Strickland, *Searching for Nokomis*, oil on canvas.
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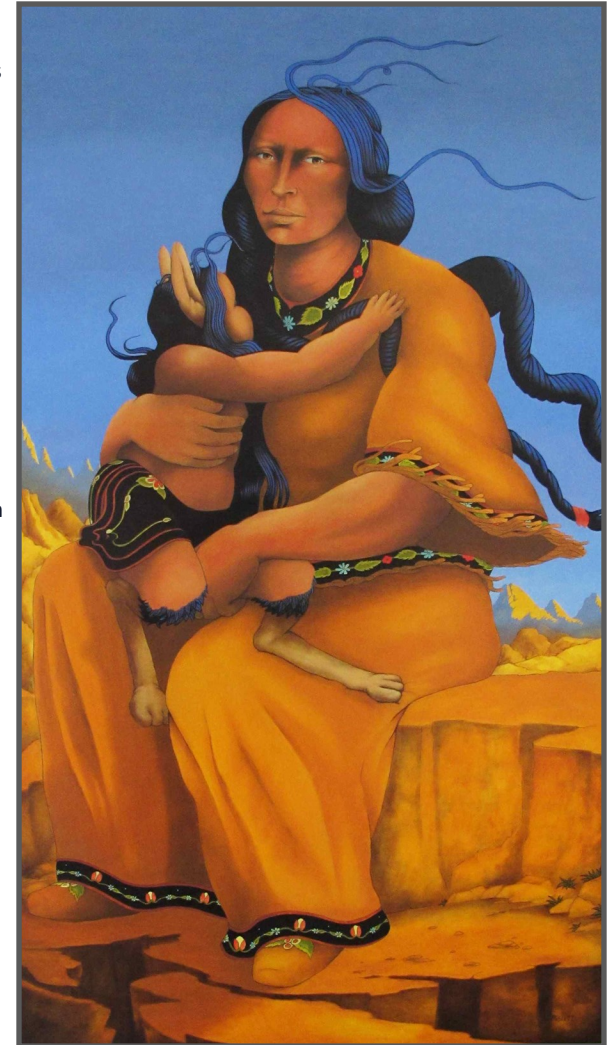
NANABOZHO

All of Strickland's paintings feature Nanabozho, the complex culture hero and teacher from Ojibwe mythology. Nanabozho may be more of an active participant or a solemn witness in a Strickland painting but he is always present. Also referred to as the Great Hare, stories of Nanabozho shape-shifting inspired Strickland to represent him as a satyr-like figure that is half-rabbit and half-human with rabbit ears and legs.

The offspring of a mortal woman and the West Wind, Nanabozho is part spirit (manitou) and part mortal. He has supernatural powers but, like humanity, is subject to the need to learn. Nanabozho creates medicines to heal the sick and gives assistance to the weak and oppressed but can also be foolish or mischievous. He is both teaching and being taught through his actions. Ojibwe scholar, Basil Johnston, refers to Nanabozho as "the prototype of humankind and the center of human interest."

Some of the narratives Strickland depicts are traditional stories of Nanabozho while others reveal new narratives that often come to the artist in his dreams. The new stories that Strickland paints act as a "living mythology" of Nanabozho, bringing him and his lessons into the contemporary world.

For Strickland, it is important that Nanabozho is seen as an emissary of Gitchie Manitou (the Great Spirit) and not just simply as a "trickster." Having come out of the world through a mortal birth, Nanabozho shares important lessons about how one is to live as a part of the Earth. Strickland sees him as the bringer of a new medicine, a force for balance and understanding.



Rabbett Before Horses Strickland, *Winoah and Nanabozho*, oil on canvas.
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