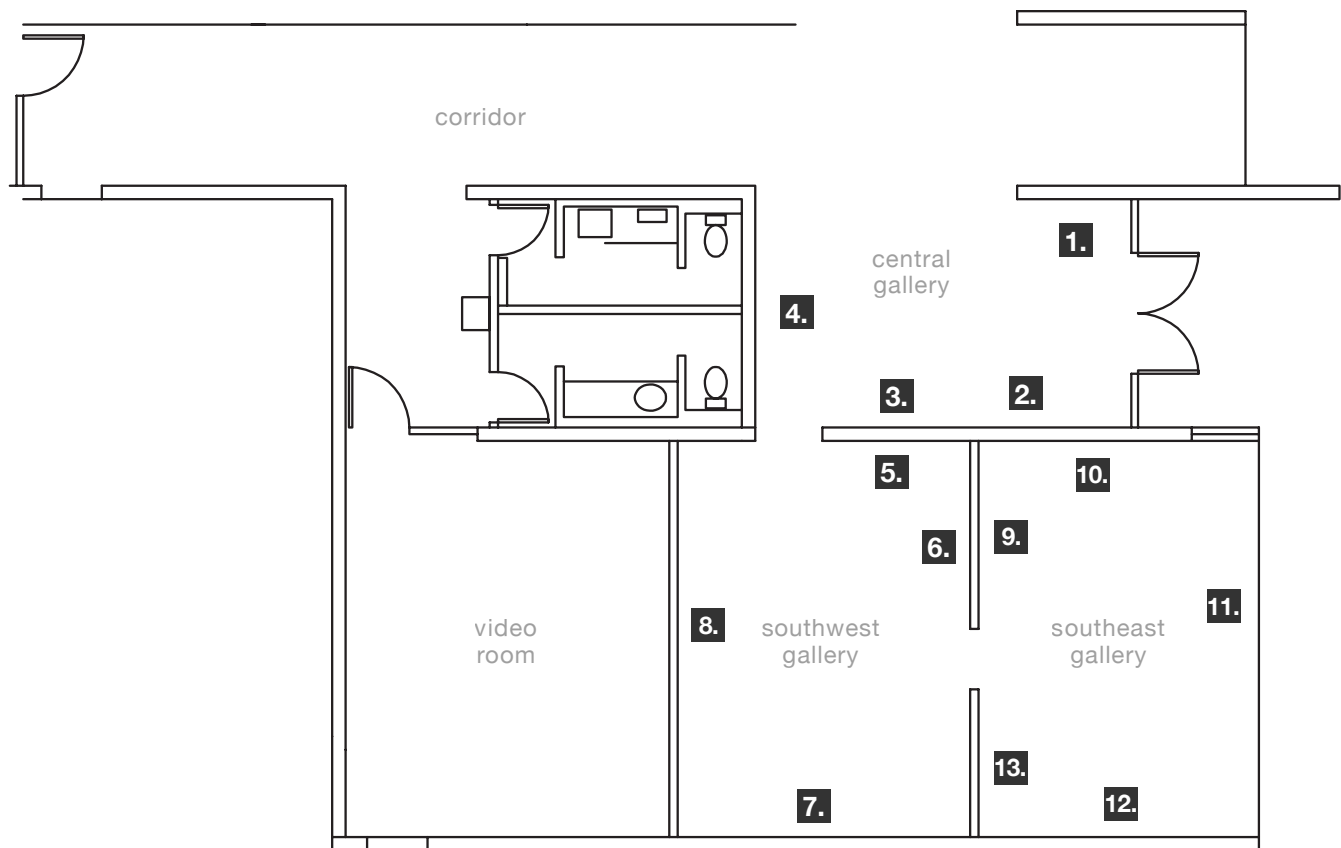


CENTRAL GALLERY & SOUTHEAST GALLERIES

Dennis Jeffy *From Antelope Springs*



CENTRAL GALLERY

Clockwise from stairs

1. **Déjà vu, 2005** Oil on canvas. 40" diameter
2. **5th Circle, 2009** Oil on canvas. 48" diameter
3. **Epiphany, 2005** Oil on canvas. 72" diameter
4. **Dooli Sings, 2000** Oil on canvas 80" diameter

SOUTHWEST GALLERY

Clockwise from door

5. **Bah Yazz, 2017** Canvas on linen. 47 ¾ x 60"
6. **Holy Man, 2015** Oil on canvas. 24 x 24"
7. **Fractals, 2014** Oil on canvas. 52 ½ x 52 ½"
8. **Poetess, 2014** Oil on canvas. 13 x 95 ½"

SOUTHEAST GALLERY

Clockwise from door

9. **Dreamer, 2017** Plexiglas. 30 x 40"
10. **Alpha and Omega, 2017** Plexiglas. 48 ¼ x 58"
11. **Excavation, 2017** Plexiglas. 48 ¼ x 65"
12. **Genesis, 2017** Plexiglas. 48 ¼ x 59"
13. **Moonlight, 2017** Plexiglas. 48 x 7 ½"

Born in Jeddito, AZ, in 1952, **Dennis Jeffy** attended Brigham Young University and received an Associate's Degree from the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, NM. He has shown at the Love Gallery, Santa Fe, NM; Artemis Gallery, Denver, CO; and the Retha Gambaro Gallery in Washington, DC. His work is in the collection of the Heard Museum in Phoenix, AZ. He has also taught painting and drawing classes for Media-Art-Xchanges (MAX), a non-profit educational group based in Los Angeles.

Curator's Essay

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18 February—28 May 2017

In an exhibition spanning fifteen years, formal invention, experimentation, and technical prowess go hand in hand with nuanced references to memory and the past. Using a form dating back to antiquity, Jeffy's large-scale oil on canvas tondos are connected to his personal history. "My paintings are round because of the natural roundness of the eye. Our vision is round. I was raised in a hogan, which is round and represents the cycle of life."

In *Dooli Sings*, the largest of the tondos, eyes and eyelashes are depicted in minute detail and elongated faces stretch out in curves, while planets, luminescent water droplets, and swirls of vertiginous color combine inner mind and outer space. In *Epiphany*, an aerial view self-portrait, the subject looks up from an escarpment based on the mountains surrounding Phoenix. As the peaks whirl into glaciations, the figure and the landscape become one within the sphere. The brushy, circulating ovoids of pink, yellow, and purple in *5th Circle* allude to the speed of ideas, "that get away like a rock skipping on a pond; it happens so fast that one has no idea where the idea is going or went." Directly across the gallery, *Déjà vu* kaleidoscopically mirrors that feeling, with all lines simultaneously converging in the middle and expanding past the edge of the canvas.

In the Southwest Gallery, strips of canvas cut and glued on linen relate to late, liberated Matisse. With material peeling away, the piece is both minimal and sensuous. The title is an homage to Jeffy's deceased cousin Bah Yazz, a renowned rug weaver. *Fractals* has a star-shaped cut away excavating the interior of the picture plane, on the edges of which abstraction borders negative space. At thirteen inches wide and eight feet long, *Poetess* is a diagonal swath cut from a large painting, segments missing its top and bottom. Fragments of old-fashioned nineteenth century frames at each corner turn it into a "specific object" that conflates painting and sculpture. At the middle of *Holy Man*, a shaman stands in front of a green "sea," surrounded by intricately interlaced lines and brown stains on white, an enigmatic being with access and insight to the world of good and bad spirits.

Jeffy continues to innovate with the recently completed Plexiglas pieces (2016-2017). Transferring the inherently ephemeral aspect of sand painting into permanence by using the present-day medium of Plexiglas, they immediately suggest Marcel Duchamp's pivotal *The Large Glass*, 1915-1923. Rusty ochre hues, wisps of pink and green, they contain areas of inflammatory intervention and paradoxically unify solidity and featherweight ethereality, conjuring the sky, clouds, milk, and fog, primal and modern at the same time. Presented five inches off the wall, artificial and natural light penetrates the Plexiglas creating shadows behind. Early twentieth century Constructivism melds with scratched bank teller cages, unknowable ancient symbols in an almost futuristic fashion. The room becomes a chapel, contemplative, with depth created by the lambent play between object and the air that lies behind.

From Antelope Springs positions Jeffy as an exceptional and captivating creator first and foremost, with an imperative to contextualize and re-frame his singular achievement at an institution that engages a broad audience including a local population with ties to the artist's own ancestry. Shaped by the desert vistas and canyons of his native state, Jeffy's work has a strong connection to tradition, filtered through an ingenious engagement with current art historical strategies and a drive to make conceptual and material breakthroughs. Undeniably contemporary while informed by a Native American heritage, this is an oeuvre that resolutely avoids perpetuating, and even actively rebels against, tropes rampant in most "Indian" art. Imbued with mystery and magic, they are also rigorous and original—light years from the expected clichés, and in a class all of their own.