

Tempo

TAOS' ART & ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE

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WORK BY WOMEN

ERIN CURRIER'S 'LA FRONTERA'
HEADLINES A FOCUS ON
CONTEMPORARY WOMEN ARTISTS AT
THE HARWOOD MUSEUM OF ART

JAMES AND ERNIE YUK IT UP FOR UNM-TAOS LIBRARY
HEARTS AND STARS BENEFITS GOOD CAUSES
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DINNER & COMEDY
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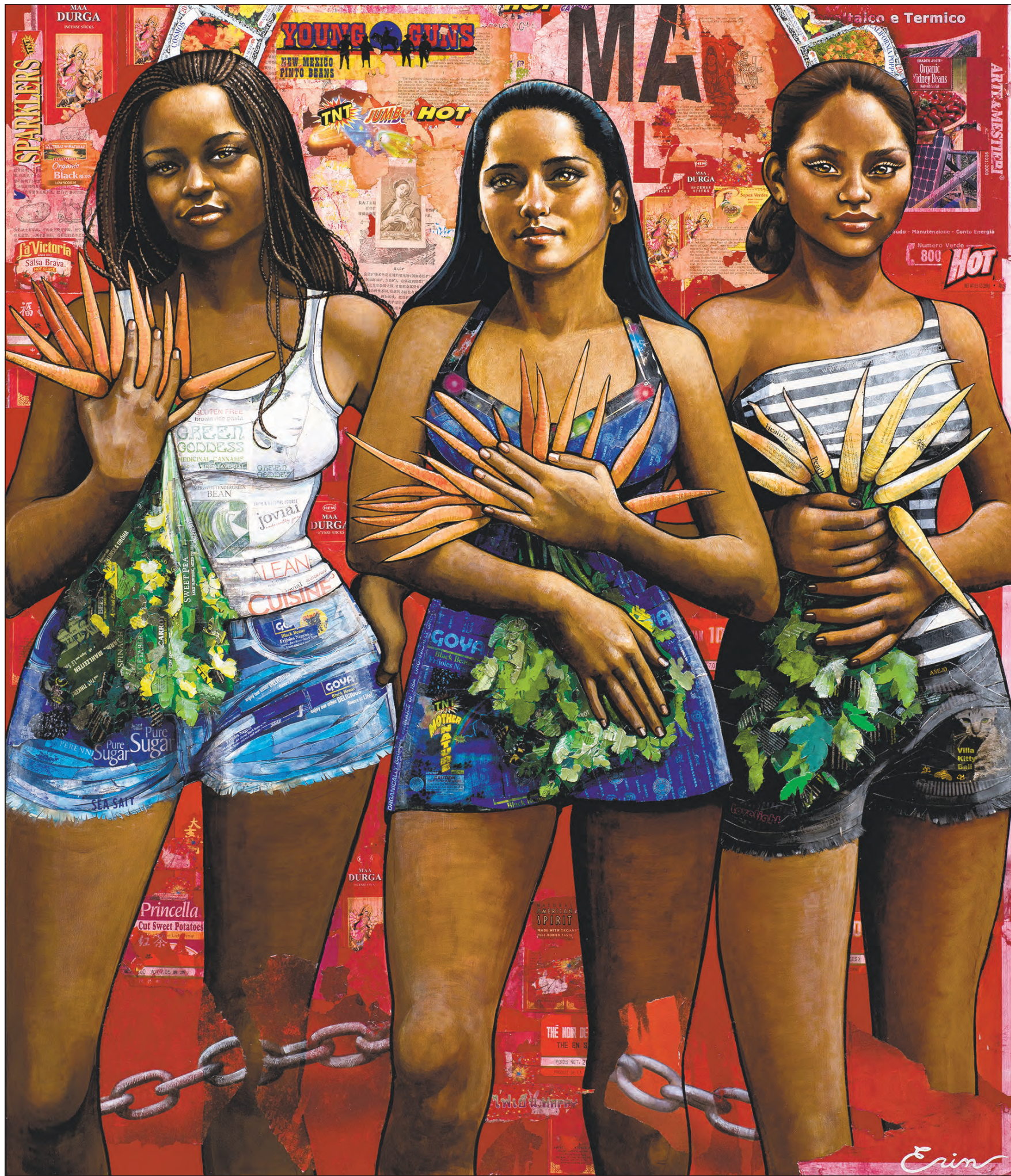
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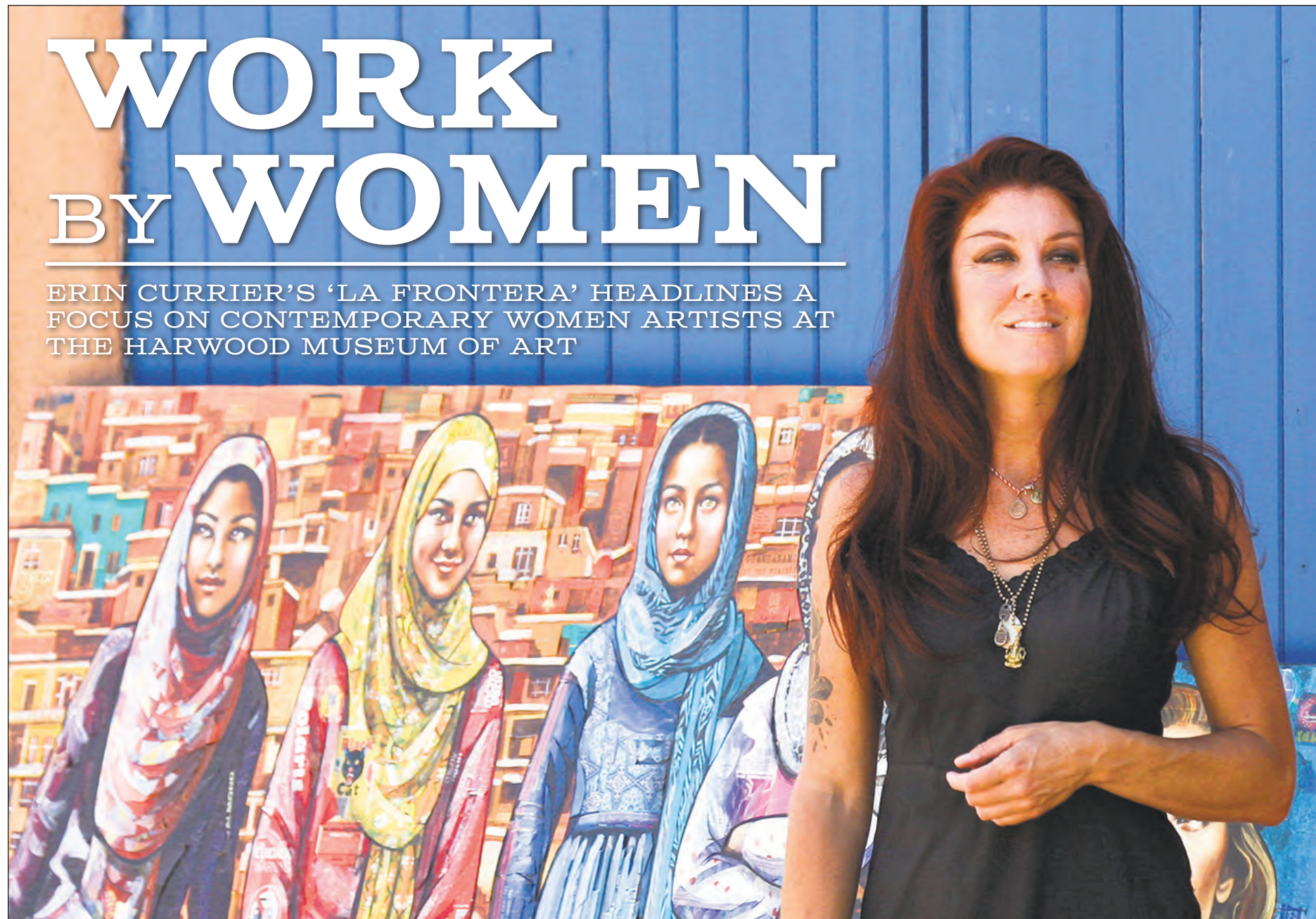
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COURTESY IMAGE

'PARSNIPS, CARROTS AND BEANS,' mixed media, 60-by-48 inches by Erin Currier. "In 17th century England, 'sowing the ground with parsnips, carrots, and beans' was considered an act of treason. It was the signature action of the Diggers, gardeners who had been impoverished by England's sudden and arbitrary process of enclosing and privatizing the commons." – Erin Currier



COURTESY D'NELLE JONES

ARTIST Erin Currier

BY ARIANA KRAMER

Erin Currier's artwork has been featured in numerous solo shows and is exhibited and collected internationally. She describes her pieces as "part portraiture, part collage constructed of disinherited consumer 'waste' collected in nearly 50 countries, part sociopolitical archive, but wholly humanist." A former Taosña, Currier lives and works in Santa Fe. In this email interview with *Tempo*, Currier discusses her work, philosophy and her current exhibit at the Harwood Museum of Art.

Currier's exhibit, "La Frontera," is one of two solo exhibits by contemporary women artists under the overall title, "Work by Women," which opens to the public Saturday (Feb. 10) at the Harwood Museum of Art, 238 Ledoux Street. Regular museum admission prices apply.

The other solo exhibit, "Sisters of War," highlights the work of Diné artist Jolene Neníbah Yazzie, who has painted Native American comic-art style women warriors directly onto the gallery walls. (For more, see "Wonder Woman Redux" in the Jan. 18 issue of *Tempo*). Concurrently, pattern art by Helen Gene Nichols will be on view in the museum's Studio 238 (see sidebar).

"Work by Women" also highlights the art by contemporary and past women artists in the Harwood's collection, such as Frances Varos Graves, Anita Rodríguez, Maye Torres, Catharine Critcher, Mary

Blumenschein, Mary Ufer, Lucy Case Harwood, Rachel Brown, Joan Loveless, Kristina Wilson and Agnes Martin. The exhibit is curated by Judith Kendall and Janet Webb.

TEMPO: For how long have you been working on the pieces that are part of the exhibit, "La Frontera"?

ERIN CURRIER: The pieces in "La Frontera" span from 2003-2017 and are a survey from my larger body of work (some 400-500 pieces) created during the course of my 20 years as a working artist.

Although these works are from various series created through the years, all share in common the fact that each one is either a direct or symbolic representation of those engaged in the international struggle for social justice – be it individuals, such as "Leticia y Andrea," and "American Schoolboy," or be it groups of people: indigenous women from both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, members of the Black Panther Party, fiesta queens. I see beauty inherent in the strength and courage that are necessary attributes of those engaged in struggle, resistance and defiance, against the catastrophic onslaught of globalization, capitalism, fascism and ecological devastation.

TEMPO: Your work addresses sociopolitical issues. Why do you feel it is important that art is used to address these issues? What inspires you right now as an artist?

CURRIER: I truly believe that, for every tactic employed by those seeking to oppress and subjugate others, for every shackle and chain utilized, there are a thousand ways to unlock, untangle and break through those chains. This is why a counter-power rooted in imagination is crucial. That is why art is crucial. There is no one way to attain liberation: each method must be appropriate to the situation at hand, utilizing the information and tools available at the time. For example, in 17th century England, "sowing the ground with parsnips, carrots, and beans" was considered an act of treason: it was the signature action of the Diggers, gardeners who had been impoverished by England's sudden and arbitrary process of enclosing and privatizing the commons. The humble act was the Diggers' means by which to alleviate hunger and free themselves from servitude and slavery. Guerilla gardening is an effective act of resistance to this day.

The Black Panthers occupying the statehouse was another, and very different, effective method. Factory workers occupying and running defunct maquiladoras in Argentina is a third example. Immolating oneself, the only recourse for Tunisian fruit vendor Mohammed Bouazizi, is yet another example, of which there are countless (and upon which so many of my own works are inspired). The nonviolent

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COURTESY IMAGE

'AMERICAN WOMEN,' mixed media, 48-by-72 inches by Erin Currier. This work depicts the U.S.-Mexico wall being dismantled by American Indigenous women (Hopi, Navajo, Tewa, on the U.S. side; Nahuatl, Miztec, Mayan, on the Mexican side). "Most borders which define nation states—topics of such heated debate—were only recently built, created by colonial conquest, and are false constructs – hastily drawn lines etching across and carving up lands inhabited for millennia by indigenous peoples. Thus, it is the right of the Indigenous to dismantle the oppressive walls and artificial distinctions of the world: walls that slice through the heart of communities and ecosystems – the only function of which is fear-based exclusion." – Erin Currier

MEMBERS RECEPTION

Friday (Feb. 9), 5-7 p.m.
Friends and collectors of
the artist welcome
Harwood Museum of Art,
238 Ledoux Street
Free admission
(575) 758-9826



COURTESY IMAGE

'AMERICAN SCHOOLBOY: ABDULRAHMAN AL-AWLAKI,' mixed media by Erin Currier. "It remains unclear as to why Abdulrahman, an American teenager born and raised in Colorado, was killed by the U.S. military in Yemen, a country with which the United States is not at war. In the days following Abdulrahman's execution by a remote-controlled aerial robot, U.S. officials asserted that the teen was a 'military-aged man' in his 20s, a claim that, under international protocols of conflict, provided the justification for his killing. However, Abdulrahman's family quickly released a copy of his U.S. birth certificate – proof that he was 16 years old when he died.

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methods of the Water Protectors at the Dakota Access pipeline in North Dakota – chaining themselves to bulldozers, linking arms, crawling inside pipes, etc., has had unprecedented reverberations throughout the world. Even if the literal battle is lost and the pipeline is built, the resistance nonetheless is already successful – as it has succeeded in galvanizing Native Americans across hundreds of tribes as well as peoples all over the U.S. and the world.

The struggle against the Dakota Access pipeline has unified peoples across geographic, ethnic, racial, class boundaries in a wholly organic and infectious way. Already it has sparked direct actions in defense of the natural world internationally. Women's rights movements are similarly igniting like wildfires across the world. What is most crucial is respect for one another and dignity for all.

TEMPO: What initially inspired you to start using consumer "waste" in your art?

CURRIER: Nearly 20 years ago, I was studying Buddhist Thangka Painting and doing a Buddhist practice. I was working at a coffee shop at the time and was struck by how much trash was generated and discarded during the course of a single shift. So, I began gathering this post-consumer waste, bringing it home, and employing Thangka painting techniques, including sacred geometry, to collage Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, eventually exhibiting this work at the café: it was my first solo exhibition in 1998.

My use of trash made sense to me on a number of levels, and, the reasons behind it, like the works themselves, are multilayered. First, I believe that artists have always used materials close at hand. Nowhere is this perhaps more apparent than in New Mexico – where butleros use discarded, weather-worn pieces of wood; potters use clay dug right from the earth, etc. I am no exception. I use what is most readily available, prevalent, and ubiquitous to my era—discarded packaging and product waste from our globalized consumer culture. Secondly, my use of trash is a spiritual practice in the sense that the discarded waste is transfigured, hopefully, into something of beauty.

Finally, using post-consumer waste is a sociopolitical act in that, not only is it a form of recycling, but also by virtue of the fact that it is written in every language and gathered from every continent, it expresses our interconnectedness and our commonalities as human beings, in what we value, share, consume and cast away.

TEMPO: How do you feel about having a solo show at the Harwood?

CURRIER: It is a profound honor. The Harwood is one of my favorite museums on Earth. I cannot tell you how many times I have attended openings and viewed shows over the years with countless friends. It is especially moving to me as it was the dream of my dear friend and longtime Taos gallerist, Stephen Parks, who, together with his wife, my dear friend Joni Tickel, owned the legendary Parks Gallery, that a solo exhibition of some of my large-scale works (as well as solo exhibitions of my Parks colleagues and friends— such as Jim Wagner and Arthur Lopez) might one day be exhibited at the Harwood Museum of Art. He worked hard during his lifetime on behalf of all of us.

I am especially excited to be in such company as Jolene Nenibah Yazzie, Agnes Martin, Anita Rodríguez, and others. Even after having seen many of the world's wonders, the masterpieces of modern and ancient civilizations, and having met exceptional artists on every continent, I have found that New Mexico inspires me more than any other place. The reason is its incomparable artists, many whom are trained in Native and Hispanic traditional techniques, who are able to comment on sociopolitical issues within the framework of these traditions in masterful works unique to the world.

On Friday (Feb. 9), a members reception, with friends and collectors of the artist welcome, will be given from 5-7 p.m. A concurrent public reception is planned for "Industrial Paisley" by Helen Gene Nichols in the museum's Studio 238 from 4-6 p.m. Both receptions are free.

Regular museum admission prices are \$10, \$8 seniors and students, free to youth age 18 and under. Members of the Harwood Museum Alliance, University of New Mexico faculty and students, military with ID and their families, and Taos County Residents every Sunday are free.

For more information, call (575) 758-0926 or visit harwoodmuseum.org.