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### **Rick Bartow The Man Who Made Marks**

Rick Bartow The Man Who Made Marks A ᄒᄒᄒᄒ ᄒᄒᄒ Nanette Kelley film. Copyright 2022 Nanette Kelley (part of The Bartow Project) 21 minutes A mini documentary about artist Rick Bartow (Wiyot, 2016) Writer/Director/Producer: Nanette Kelley Executive Producers: Zuzka Sabata & Michelle Hernandez, The Wiyot Tribe & Dell'Arte International Animation: Amy Uyeki Editor/Sound/Oregon camera: Brian Gee. My role as writer/director was supported primarily by my 2021 California Arts Council Administrators of Color Fellowship, hosted by the Ink People Center for the Arts in Eureka on unceded Wiyot land in collaboration with SV Creates and with the School of Arts & Culture at Mexican Heritage Plaza including funding from the California Arts Council, James Irvine Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Cast: Rick Bartow (Wiyot), Charles Froelick, Ted Hernandez (Wiyot), Brian Tripp (Karuk), Leon-Forrest Caulkins, Karl Davis, Peter Walters (Umatilla/Cayuse/Walla Walla), James Lavadour (Walla Walla), Lillian Pitt (Warm Springs/Wasco/Yakama), and Seiichi Hiroshima.

### **Transcript**

0:02

[Music]

0:25

i'm gonna buy me a black dog

0:28

Let him bite everyone I see

0:32

when i get to feeling blue like this

0:35

i'll let them chew on me

0:40

i'm gonna buy me a black dog

0:44

i'm gonna buy me a black dog

0:49

i'm gonna buy me a black dog

bite everyone I see

[Music]

0:55

when i get to feeling like this i let

0:58

him chew on me

1:01

[Music]

1:06

rick's family

1:08

moved

1:10

was displaced from northern california

1:13

and they knew they needed to find a safe

1:15

place to live and they walked up the

1:18

coast up the pacific coast

1:20

through oregon and landed in the newport

1:23

area on yaquina bay specifically rick

1:26

says his grandfather would say it looked

1:29

a lot like humboldt

1:31

when he was on the island he knew he was

1:33

at home and he was at peace when we

1:35

completed that ceremony up at table bluff

1:37

to watch rick

1:39

in full regalia

1:41

standing with the other tribal elders

1:42

not just wiyot but yurok hupa karuk

1:45

the elders and marching together was

1:48

like

1:49

this is

1:50

how it should be

1:52

i was standing there watching the dance

1:54

and

1:55

then all of a sudden

1:56

it hit me i said oh god i wonder if

1:58

rick's here

2:00

you know standing there and i

2:02

looking there he is dancing right in

2:04

front of me you know i didn't

2:07

i didn't recognize him with all the

2:10

stuff on you know head rolls and

2:13

you know the

2:14

basket and all that kind of stuff and

2:18

wow it just

2:20

made me um

2:25

almost made me cry you know

2:28

just to see him there

2:30

dancing with his people you know

2:32

rick talked about

2:33

the

2:34

the gift of being an artist as

2:37

he was dipping his toes into that water

2:40

where the very first people that put

2:43

their hand on the wall and painted their

2:45

hand and they put coyote tail

2:49

hair and

2:51

bird bones together and pulverized berry

2:54

pigments and juices to make paintings on

2:57

the wall

2:58

and he was doing the same

3:01

anything rick

3:02

did he did breathe life into it

3:05

everything he did

3:06

was alive it had a spirit you know all

3:09

these animals represent us and those are

3:11

the ones you know frog

3:13

you know all gave us ceremonies and

3:15

that's what we learned our ceremonies was in

3:17

in the beginning was from the from the

3:19

animals from the wee animals from the

3:20

water animals and from the land animals

3:23

the animal kingdom was a constant source

3:26

of inspiration

3:27

for rick the drawing against instinct

3:30

has both

3:32

dog arms and legs and human hands

3:36

and the

3:38

instinct

3:39

of

3:40

man or human and dog

3:43

they're

3:44

so allied at times and rick understood

3:47

that

3:48

rick identified with some of those

3:50

traits

3:51

rick said if he had an artist block if

3:53

he didn't know what to do he would go

3:55



find a dog to look at

3:57

i remember a trip

3:59

to astoria we were going as a duo just

4:02

him and me and in the truck doing a

4:05

little uh

4:06

gallery actually it was called the red

4:08

rooster

4:09

[Music]

4:26

gonna wake up

4:28

[Music]

4:36

as you know rick loves birds he had such

4:39

a deep connection to

4:41

birds of all kinds and especially out

4:43

here in this region there is

4:45

so many raptors eagles and kestrels and

4:49

hawks sitting on the wires waiting for

4:52

their snacks that i think was his big

4:55

connection to crow shadow and the

4:57

umatilla reservation was those birds

4:59

that he saw

5:00

i think the ones that speak to the most

5:02

is the the ones that he does of the

5:05

birds

5:06

because

5:07

when i see the birds they just like

5:09

speak because they're like our medicine

5:11

birds we use a lot of the woodpecker in

5:13

our dances and

5:15

you know eagle and condor and raven you

5:17

know they're all part of our tradition

5:20

especially the sculpture we have

5:22

you know the woodpecker the big it just

5:24

it

5:25

it sticks out to me it's like he's there

5:27

with us

5:29

i think in terms of the popularity of

5:30

those prints they do tend to touch

5:34

people a little bit they bring them in a

5:36

little bit more those birds are very

5:37

personal to everyone who sees them

5:40

everything has a spirit i mean no matter

5:42

where it comes from it has a spirit if

5:44

it's a piece of wood

5:46

it came from a tree that has a spirit

5:48

mother earth has a spirit everything she

5:50

gives us has a spirit so we have the

5:52

treatment it has a script

5:54

rick felt like he was in a

5:56

good place and he gained his confidence

5:59

back after he recovered from his first

6:02

stroke

6:03

and

6:04

learned how to handle his congestive

6:06

heart failure and he said

6:09

really

6:10

the confidence of holding a snake

6:13

was a big

6:16

[Music]

6:19

to deal

6:22

gonna find me a big blue snake and teach

6:25

him how to sing

6:30

well i might teach him opera words won't mean a thing

6:38

rick was

6:39

deeply influenced with rock and roll and

6:43

guitar he was a

6:45

mad guitar player he just could burn it

6:49

up

6:50

in

6:50

2006 i helped found the rock and roll

6:54

camp at the pendleton center for the

6:56

arts it's really cool it's a really fun

6:58

week we bring in a bunch of artists from

7:01

around the northwest

7:02

and my folks brought rick along and so

7:06

somebody handed rick guitar and it just

7:09

turned into this really intimate kind of

7:12

performance

7:13

slash storytelling session with rick

7:17

just kind of regaling us as he

7:20

kind of would fiddle around on a guitar

7:22

and he would

7:23

tell us stories about his life or about

7:26

his relationship with art and with music

7:29

and he gave us all like these incredible

7:32

words of encouragement and about helping

7:35

youth

7:36

realize their own potential

7:38

and

7:39

find their own stories and songs

7:42

and after about two or three songs i

7:45

kind of started noticing people getting

7:47

like

7:48

teary-eyed a little bit and you know i'm

7:50

not saying i wasn't but uh you know

7:53

every they were literally uh people

7:55

getting a little uh verklempt

7:58



[Music]

8:12

rick talks about the spider

8:14

getting a

8:15

spider that will

8:17

create a web over his eyes

8:20

and

8:21

you can't go back

8:22

he couldn't go back

8:24

but

8:25

his effort artistically to unsee

8:28

was that he often scratched eyes out of

8:31

his self-portraits

8:34

[Music]

8:45

[Music]

8:55

[Applause]

8:57

[Music]

8:58

rick came from vietnam a raging

9:01

alcoholic as many veterans did as well

9:05

as drugs and so forth i don't think rick

9:07

ever participated with drugs

9:10

just his drug was alcohol

9:14

his animals were always

9:17

kind of pained or angry or just filled

9:20

with feeling and i figured it was

9:23

probably from his ptsd from vietnam

9:28

and his alcoholism

9:30

and you know you have all these things

9:33

haunting you

9:35

and so it has to go someplace

9:38

just like with these animals you know

9:40

they were

9:41

very strong

9:43

animals

9:44

you know kind of almost war-like

9:48

rick incorporated masks

9:50

in both sculptural and two-dimensional

9:53

artwork

9:54

from the earliest days

9:57

going forward and rick talked about

9:59

hiding behind the mask or using it to

10:02

draw out another element of personality

10:05

and eventually even then

10:07

coming out from behind the mask

10:11

the venues i can't remember the name of

10:13

it but big sign on the window said

10:16

wino's dingbats and ne'er-do-wells

10:25

[Music]

10:33

[Applause]

10:35

[Music]

10:41

bartow had a really

10:43

wonderful way about him i called him

10:45

reverend bartow sometimes because

10:49

reverend would

10:50

hold forth

10:52

he was a wordsmith he was able to come

10:55

up with

10:56

all kinds of phrases and so forth rick

11:00

was an enrolled member of the yurok

11:04

tribe of northern california

11:07

and his family was

11:09

and it was not until rick was in his 50s

11:13

that rick was reassigned and this was

11:16

bureau of indian affairs

11:18

and the tribes

11:20

sent him a notice saying they figured

11:22

out that where his family was from

11:25

was actually wiyot country

11:27

something must have woke up in rick's

11:29

dna

11:30

to make him be able to

11:32

do what he does with his artwork and his

11:34

sculptures and his drawings

11:36

you know

11:37

it's just it's in us it's automatically

11:39

yes it just needs to be woken up

11:41

you know a lot of people say we lost it

11:43

i said we didn't lose it i say

11:45

it's in us it's just asleep we just need

11:47

that one little push to wake it up and

11:49

then it comes back and it's like you

11:51

never forgot

11:52

nothing that happened

11:54

number one he was a performer and he was

11:57

as aware of the audiences as any artist

12:00

can be you know and

12:02

and so he did dramatic things you know

12:05

whether it's abstract you know the way

12:07

you use color form or motion or where he

12:10

made a mark you know he made a mark that

12:12

was like

12:13

a musical note you know you you look at

12:16

one of his x s or

12:18

one little it you know it's it's a

12:20

pleasure just to look at the mark his

12:23

paintings are very rich very musical in

12:26

a sense you know and very

12:29



you know in a way and every once in a

12:31

while there's an eye that's looking out

12:34

and it's almost like

12:36

somebody on the other side of the

12:37

canvas looking out at you you

12:39

know it's him trying to

12:41

judge your reaction to what what you're

12:43

looking at you know so

12:45

all that imagery just like here i am

12:48

rick you know and that's the way you

12:49

look at the world so he was in it wasn't

12:52

like he was creating that it was

12:54

knocking on his door

12:56

he knew he's birds

12:58

and the one thing

13:00

that i think was outstanding about him

13:03

was his drawing of the eyeball

13:06

and he'd always put one eyeball in then

13:09

if he didn't like something he'd draw a

13:11

circle and put an x through it that's

13:13

like that didn't exist

13:15

instead of rubbing it out he just drew a

13:18

circle with an x

13:20

he says that means i don't want that

13:22

there

13:26

and these art students try and figure

13:28

out what he's doing with the x

13:31

said hugs and kisses you know

13:36

i don't think our

13:38

lack of conversation by

13:41

language

13:42

didn't interfere with our collaboration

13:46

i think we did a soulful and spiritual

13:50

communicative artworks

13:53

like calls me ototo

13:56

means younger brother

13:58

and i call rick aniki

14:00

means big brother

14:03

we

14:03

are

14:04

the

14:05

very good team

14:08

and i want to show this one i binded

14:12

the title of the book is bosh

14:16

and the

14:17

13 hand carved dry point plate prints in

14:21

this book

14:24

this book

14:26

is the last collaboration of rick and i

14:30

eye

14:34

i always think in 2016.

14:37

[Music]

14:40

my very close friend

14:42

erin tormey informed me

14:46

rick was in very bad shape

14:49

so

14:50

i hurried to see him

14:52

he smiled

14:54

when he saw my face

14:57

but he didn't look very well then

15:00

so i wanted to cheer him up

15:04

i asked him to put colors on

15:07

his last prints

15:11

i gave him some brushes and inks

15:15

but soon

15:17

he put the brush back on the table

15:20

and stopped drawing

15:22

and

15:23

laid down on his bed he could only color

15:28

three

15:29

out of 18 copies

15:33

he wanted me to bind

15:36

those three copies

15:38

and

15:40

So sad he passed away

15:43

just one day after i returned to japan

15:47

i can't forget

15:49

how he looked

15:50

through the window

15:52

and saw me off

15:55

he was a very kind of calm you don't

15:58

have to worry about things just

16:00

just keep doing the work just keep

16:02

creating and

16:04

you know what needs to be

16:07

seen will be seen and what needs to be

16:09

heard will be heard i've done these

16:11

little collaborations with other artists

16:14

that are different than me you know so

16:16

i we had this idea of just i'll just

16:19

make a bunch of marks and if they want

16:21

to respond to them and

16:23

we trade them back and forth and then i

16:26

realized you know rick was going oh

16:29

he said i've never been any good at

16:31

backgrounds and i said

16:33



backgrounds what are you talking

16:35

backgrounds and i thought oh you know

16:37

okay that's what i wanted i'm the

16:39

background okay so

16:44

[Applause]

16:45

he had this kind of musical gift that he

16:47

could put into

16:49

a two-dimensional image that was just

16:51

profound you know and uplifting you know

16:53

yeah

16:55

something we should be trying to emulate

16:59

as we all know i think

17:02

indigenous people

17:04

worldwide have all been downtrodden and

17:08

put down

17:10

and

17:11

it's important that

17:13

we all rise together

17:15

and rick bartow was able to do that and

17:19

able to share that

17:21

and

17:23

help people he's helped me a great deal

17:26

he was a very generous man you know with

17:28

his art that's what i liked about you

17:31

know i mean he was incredibly prolific

17:33

and he just sort of

17:35

gave it away as he went you know and

17:38

such a great thing

17:39

made so many people happy

17:42

rick's contribution both

17:45

when he was here making prints and after

17:47

he passed has been enormous in

17:49

establishing a shadow as both a

17:52

center for indigenous creativity and for

17:55

printmaking around the world and people

17:58

who don't know about native art they

18:00

know about crows shadow because of that

18:02

for him being an elder as well he heard

18:05

the stories

18:06

and he knew stories so he knew how to

18:09

make things come to life because it's

18:11

part of who we are we are people are we

18:13

we are the

18:14

bringing balance to the world so he knew

18:16

how to bring balance through his art

18:19

rick was always a trickster

18:21

and i

18:22

that's how he was he was a trickster i

18:24

mean rick knew how to make life fun

18:27

that's how he's always been since we've

18:29

known him he's always been a

18:32

person that makes you laugh

18:34

every now and then he comes to visit me

18:37

i was trying to do this important email

18:40

to my photographer

18:42

all of a sudden joe cantrell sent me

18:45

pictures of rick and i don't know how it

18:49

happened but rick's picture

18:51

smiling at me

18:54

was in front of my computer

18:57

i could not get him off of it

19:00

to save my life

19:02

i said rick dog gone your hyde get

19:05

off of there

19:06

and i just ended up turning it off you

19:10

know he comes to visit but it's not

19:12

always a fun time when i'm trying to

19:15

fight with my computer

19:17

and there he is

19:20

with paint all over his jacket grinning

19:23

at me

19:27

and so our relationship was really fun

19:33

[Music]

19:49

of course the black dog but you know

19:51

everybody knows a black dog he bites you

19:55

[Music]

20:04

[Music]

20:19

i'm gonna find me a black dog

20:24

buy me a black dog

20:28

buy me a black dog

20:31

i'm gonna buy me a black dog

20:40

[Music]

20:43

Bite everybody baby

21:01

uh