



NEWS FROM INDIAN COUNTRY CULTURE

Featuring the National Pow-wow Directory

Seattle Couple honored for documenting American Indians *Faces from the Land: A Photographic Journey through Native America*

Seattle, Washington (NFIC)

Ben and Linda Marra, working together as photographer and documentarian respectively, were honored at a reception by Omaha's elite Bodmer Society, March 14 at Joslyn Art Museum, which features a yearlong exhibition of *Faces from the Land: A Photographic Journey through Native America*.

Joslyn Art Museum's Bodmer Society was named after Karl Bodmer, the remarkable artist who accompanied Prince Maximilian's expedition to North America. The Bodmer Society, Joslyn's most prestigious patron group, was created in 1999 to foster interest in Western and Native American art and support projects for Joslyn's Margre H. Durham Center for Western Studies, an invaluable resource for students and scholars of Native American and Western art, as well as those who appreciate this genre.

The Marras began documenting Native dancers at powwows in 1988, when a Seattle commercial photography assignment lead them to the experience.

The individuals photographed for *Faces from the Land* are of the same tribes encountered by Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery expedition (1804-06) and Prince Maximilian of Wied's 1832-34 journey across North America and up the Missouri River. Joslyn Art Museum is known internationally for its Maximilian-Bodmer Collection featuring Bodmer's pencil, ink, and watercolor renderings of the flora, fauna, and native inhabitants of the Missouri River Valley.

The Marras began documenting Native dancers at powwows in 1988, when a Seattle commercial photography assignment lead them to the experience. Powwow is an integral part of Native American life, offering the opportunity for Native Americans to gather together to celebrate their spiritual connections to their ancestors, the earth, community, and traditions through drum, song, and dance.

Faces from the Land features 40 of Ben's large portraits of powwow dancers, each accompanied by personal narratives written by the subject describing the tribal significance of their



regalia and dance. The striking images and poignant texts vividly detail the magic of powwow and introduce children and adults to the rich cultural traditions and vibrant contemporary life of American Indians. Important connections to Joslyn's permanent collections of Native American and Western American art are facilitated through interactive gallery guides that focus on the culture of powwow and portraits as an important artistic genre.

Ben and Linda are dedicated to using the photographs to strengthen and perpetuate an appreciation for Native American culture. Their photographic portfolio is the largest contemporary collection existing today.

The work has been featured in numerous museums, books, national magazines, and was included in the Smithsonian Institution's *Handbook of North American Indians*. Their award-winning book, *POWWOW: Images along*

the Red Road (Abrams) is in its seventh printing, and annually they publish two international calendars, *POWWOW: Portraits of Native Americans* and *Native American Dance*, which are available to tribal youth organizations for fund-raising projects.

For more information or to request images of works featured in *Faces from the Land* please call Linda Marra at (206) 729-2456, or e-mail linda@benmarra.com.