



A PUZZLING PIECE

Three painters mix it up in 2009 collaborative piece

Over the years at the Indian Market Gala Auction, a tradition has been formed to include at least one piece that is a collaboration by a number of artists. This year's piece is the product of a lengthy process by three outstanding talents, including 2008 poster artist Mateo Romero, 2008 Innovation Award-winning artist Marla Allison, and painter Ryan Singer, winner of numerous awards in the painting classification. This piece tells the story of their process.

By Gregory Pleshaw

Our story begins at Winter Showcase 2008, where Marla Allison and Ryan Singer had their booths next to one another. Though the two are good friends, they hadn't really ever had their paintings together in one place and both marveled at the way in which their pictures complemented each other.

"We began talking about how fun it might be to do a collaboration, where we'd paint a piece together," recalled 28-year-old Allison, (Laguna/Hopi). "Knowing that the SWAIA Auction accepted collaboration pieces led us to think that maybe we could do one for them."

The pair excitedly decided that they would enlist a third artist to be involved, and they chose Mateo Romero.

"I was excited by the prospect. Marla Allison was a former student of mine, and I had followed Ryan Singer's work and hers for years," Romero said. "It fell in line with ideas I have about how you work with students and eventually they evolve into a colleague and peer."

Originally, the trio thought they might work on one painting together, but given that they all live in different locations, with Romero in Santa Fe, Allison in Laguna Pueblo and Singer in Albuquerque, they ultimately decided on a



PHOTOS BY JANE PHILLIPS

Ryan Singer, Marla Allison and Mateo Romero and their collaboration.

different tack — they would each paint their own piece, but use the same model and the same basic color palette to achieve their individual visions.

"We all gathered together in Tony Abeyta's studio in downtown Santa Fe," Allison said. "We brought in the model Leslie Elkins to pose for us."

The model wore a traditional black muntah (or mantah, spelling varies by Pueblo) tied with a sash. In each photograph, she held a pot of traditional Pueblo design. The artists agreed on a color palette of earth tones, and each took a