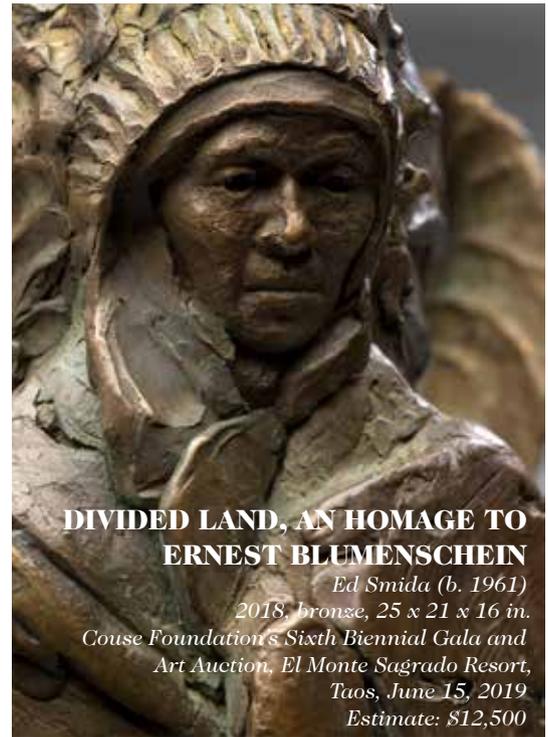


TAKING STANCES FOR PEACE

AUCTION



DIVIDED LAND, AN HOMAGE TO ERNEST BLUMENSCHNEIN

Ed Smida (b. 1961)
2018, bronze, 25 x 21 x 16 in.
Couse Foundation's Sixth Biennial Gala and
Art Auction, El Monte Sagrado Resort,
Taos, June 15, 2019
Estimate: \$12,500



There are those connoisseurs who can recognize talent by a single line drawn on a canvas, by one brushstroke, even by the impression of a sculptor's thumb left in bronze. Such is the case with Davison Packard Koenig, the Couse Foundation's executive director and curator, when referring to a bronze created by Ed Smida (b. 1961), *Divided Land, An Homage to Ernest Blumenschein*. Completed last year, this expressive sculpture depicts four Native Americans and is featured in a June 15 benefit auction for the foundation, which manages the Couse-Sharp Historic Site in Taos, New Mexico.

"You might look at an early Picasso work, for instance, and see confidence in a line and suddenly realize he's telling a story with that one mark," says Koenig. "That's the way I feel about Ed — there's a confidence of the hand and of the eye. The four figures in this work seem to be coming right out of the earth." Indeed, Smida is telling and retelling a story with these figures, one of whom is a small child. While the artist is directly referencing the scene in the famous Blumenschein painting from 1913, *The Peacemaker*, Smida's depiction and interpretation are wholly his own. "Ed took something two-dimensional and gave it a three-dimensional voice," Koenig emphasizes. The key changes or interpretations Smida has made include repositioning the figures while imbuing some of their faces with, perhaps, a more pronounced expressiveness.

"When I spoke with Ed last," recounts Koenig, "he saw this work as a metaphor for where we are now politically in our country. The U.S. is split, and no matter what side of the divide you are on, no one could argue that our democracy is

functioning well right now." Koenig points to the child in the sculpture as perhaps the key to its narrative: "The presence of the child begs the question, 'Is he the next generation of peacemaker?'"

The event on June 15 is the foundation's sixth biennial gala and art auction, proceeds from which will support preservation of the Couse-Sharp Historic Site, which includes the home and studio of E.I. Couse (1866–1936) and the studios of his neighbor and fellow artist J.H. Sharp (1859–1953). Both Couse and Sharp were prominent members of the Taos Society of Artists, founded in 1915, of which Blumenschein was also a founder. Virginia Couse Leavitt, granddaughter of Couse and a founding member of the Couse Foundation, will debut her long-awaited biography of her ancestor during the celebration weekend of June 14–16. According to Koenig, Leavitt spent some 35 years researching the life of her grandfather.

Koenig is especially pleased that the Smida work is in the auction, not only because the Santa Fe-based sculptor has been a longtime supporter of the site and foundation, but also because he has been sculpting for only a few years. "He's hardly old, but Ed is what we call a 'late career artist,'" says Koenig. "He has built a significant body of work already. For our gala two years ago, he made a work that was purchased immediately and is now in the Tia Collection in Santa Fe.¹ He's that good a sculptor."

¹ Please see the article about the Tia Collection in the December 2018 issue of *Fine Art Connoisseur*.



**DAVISON
PACKARD
KOENIG**

Executive
Director and
Curator, Couse-
Sharp Historic Site