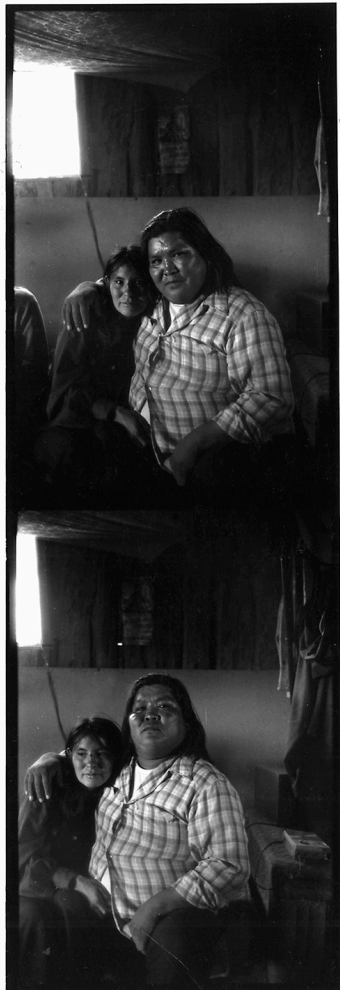


# GITTERMANGALLERY

Johnny + Wanda Scatero, Indian Wells, Arizona, 1979



Johnny won four prizes for his paintings at the Inter-Tribal Ceremonial. He's been in town drunk for three weeks. He's tired, wants to collect his prize money + go home. None of the traders who handle his work know where the checks are. Joe Tanner, a Mormon art dealer, gives him a lecture about his drinking. Finally, Johnny borrows \$25, enough to get home on, from Johnny Porter, a friendly trader from Tuba.

Hollysue + I drive Johnny + Wanda to Indian Wells, where Johnny's mother has a sheep camp. We agree to spend the night. Johnny's on his fourth quart of Garden of Eatin', + starting to get really drunk. He talks about Vietnam, being point man on night patrols. He begins to hallucinate about snipers, eating dogs + mule deer steaks in the jungle, huts on fire, rivers running with blood. Anger rises in his throat.

I'm holding his hand in the darkness, uptight as hell. He senses it, + starts squeezing hard. I can feel my snake ring biting into the edges of my middle + little fingers. His whole body condenses into enormous rage. Fat squeezing my hand that paints Shalako dancers with exquisite detail, all finesse gone. I feel trapped, can't remember where I put my glasses, can't see anyway in this gathered darkness. I can only absorb his rage, + try to let go. I imagine I hear coyotes howling in the desert outside the window. Maybe I do. My hand goes slack. Johnny loosens his grip. "That's better," he says. "Sit up + drink with me a while, little brother, I feel troubled." A little while later, I hear him talking in his sleep, something about New Orleans, and the women on Bourbon Street.

The next day, Johnny is shy + hungover. He + Wanda load our car with cans of government surplus food, way too much. Johnny's mother gives Hollysue a juniper berry necklace + some pieces of petrified wood. I take some pictures of the roosters + goats. It's time to go. Johnny shakes hands, smiles. I want to say something, but don't, about last night. Or about the night before, in Gallup, in his room at the Harvey Hotel, Wanda already asleep on the broken-backed bed, Johnny in the middle of the room, next to three paper bags full of wine + groceries, saying, as he put his big arms around me, "Tell your people that you have been embraced by a stinking Navajo wine in Gallup, New Mexico. Tell your people that, will you?"

(8/21/79)