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## NSUBA hosts art exhibit, book signing for Judith Houston-Emerson

BROKEN ARROW – Northeastern State University – Broken Arrow will host a display of the works of American Indian artist/author and NSU alumna, Judith Houston-Emerson, in the Visitor Center Gallery in January.

Emerson's collection is available for viewing from 8:30 a.m. – 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:30 a.m. – 6 p.m. on Fridays.

"My work is characterized by freedom and diversity. It has qualities of the expressive, as well as the sensual. It explores beauty and mystery, challenging fundamental notions in Native American art," said Emerson.

Born in Tahlequah, Emerson received a bachelor's degree from NSU, taught American Indian Art History as an associate professor at the University of Central Oklahoma, and served as a consultant for Cherokee National Historical Society in Tahlequah and the Philbrook Art Museum in Tulsa.

"From the Far East to Europe and throughout aboriginal societies I have found mythologies to have an animal/human component," said Emerson.

Emerson said that the symbolic meaning of birds and other creatures with wings has permeated human societies since the beginning of time.

"Transcendence and transformation, sometimes referred to as the "shape shift" in Native American cultures, is central to my paintings and drawings," said Emerson.

While spending time in New York City, Emerson began formal training at the Art Students' League, where she began to evolve creatively and professionally. Emerson spent many hours drawing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as well as open studio life drawing groups in SoHo. She was also employed by the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian.

"With visual art I was a purist having studied classical art and human anatomy extensively. I was reluctant to abandon those techniques and use of those materials that went along with my training," said Emerson. "With this exhibition, for the first time I have loosened up a little to explore mixed media. I felt like I was playing and art was fun, like when I was a child."

Emerson has also studied art history, drawing and sculpture in Florence, Italy and La Coste, France. She has also attended the Academy of Realist Art in Santa Fe, N.M.

"I have lived an exciting life and traveled in some glamorous circles, but my father particularly, always told me to remember who I was and where I came from, and to never discount it. My Native American history here is very important to me," said Emerson.

Emerson's creative passion for nature and animals ascends its way into her debut novel, "The Myth Makers". In the book, Emerson weaves a historical tale about her Cherokee forbearers, their lives and belief systems and the wondrous world of mythic animals before their removal.

The university will hold an exclusive book signing for Emerson's, "The Mythmakers" on Thursday, Jan. 13 from 3-5:30 p.m. in the Riverhawk Shoppe bookstore inside the Administrative Services Building.

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