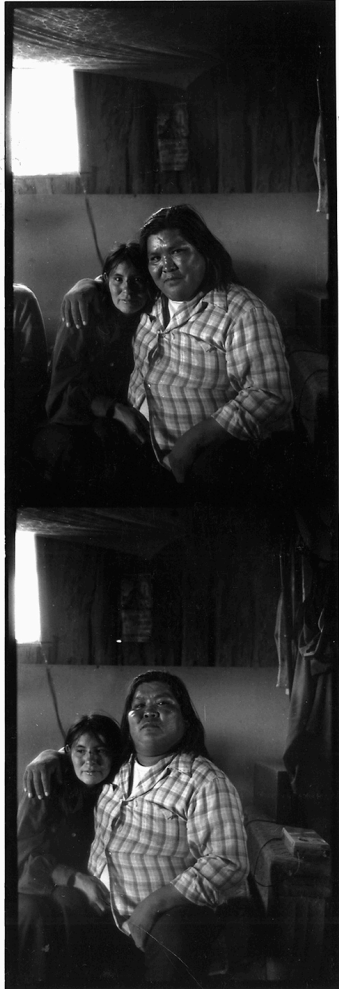


# GITTERMANGALLERY

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 + mulesey 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)