

ARTSHOUND

Sniffing out what you shouldn't miss in the arts this week



RICK BARTOW

The world lost a beautiful, warm, generous, mischievous, wickedly smart and delightfully cantankerous soul the night of Saturday, April 2, when **Oregon artist Rick Bartow passed away** after battling congenital heart failure. He was 69. At EW, our hearts are full of sorrow. Bartow will be remembered for his mastery of color and gesture, and his spirited and unflinching work — paintings, drawings, prints and sculpture, found in museums and collections around the globe.

Words like “genius” and “fearless” are terms thrown around perhaps too casually in this world, but Bartow was both. I won't pretend to know Bartow intimately after spending just one splendid day with him at his home and studios in Newport, and after long chats on the phone, a year ago, but I know enough to say that he didn't give a shit what the world thought of him or his art, which made both all the more beautiful and urgent.

This is the Native American artist who, when the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art opened the stunning and largest-ever retrospective on Bartow's work a year ago this month, opted to play guitar with his band downstairs instead of hobnobbing in the gallery. Bartow had expressed to me several times he didn't go in for any “woo-woo” crap — anything stinking of pretension or pomp and circumstance.

As his beloved friend and agent of more than two decades Charles Froelick told me last April: “He could give a rat's ass about fame or what people think.”

Bartow's death is not unexpected. He had survived numerous strokes — having to relearn how to walk, talk and paint — along with heart issues, PTSD (stemming from his stint in Vietnam) and addiction. There were tragedies, too, such as losing his wife to cancer when she was 50 among other heartbreaks. When we met a year ago, the artist was beginning to go blind in one eye, and he himself was skeptical how much longer he could go on creating.

Word is that Bartow was still creating up to a week before his death, which makes sense, as that is how he processed life, how he beat his demons.

“Work — that's the only thing,” Bartow told me in March 2015. “That's the only way. Work. Work. Do what you can, as long as you can, because I don't see anything outside of it. My place to have fun is work; to get out of pain, working.”

Bartow is survived by daughter Lily and son Booker, as well as siblings, his Wiyot tribe and Newport community, and a planet-full of artists. Thank you, Rick Bartow, for everything you taught and brought the world. To read the EW profile of the artist, “Teeth & Bones: Into the beautiful tormented world of artist Rick Bartow,” visit bit.ly/1DxSj5q. A memorial service will be held 2 pm Saturday, April 30, at Newport Performing Arts Center.

In other art news: To celebrate its 20th anniversary, the Florence Event Center will unveil “**Dancing with Sea Lions**” — 20 fiberglass sea lions by 21 artists which will be on display in Florence, Newport and Reedsport through summer. The celebration runs 10 am to 3 pm Saturday, April 9. Visit dancingwithsealions.com for details.

UO grad student Andrea Goering is trying to bring the new film **Minimalism: A Documentary About the Important Things** to screen in Eugene but needs to guarantee at least 67 people will buy tickets to nab it. The film is about the insatiable desire in the U.S. for more materials goods — smart phones, flat screens, fast fashion, plastic junk — and how this manic lust for more is killing the planet. Visit bit.ly/1RJIw4u to reserve a ticket via Gathr and learn more.

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