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Georgia Southern students and indigenous Argentinian artists collaborate to celebrate Wichí culture

AUGUST 31, 2018

Save



The Betty Foy Sanders Department of Art on the Armstrong Campus will present Fwala Jutunek (Light of the Sun), a silent auction and exhibit of indigenous Argentinian Wichí bags, jewelry, wall hangings and other items Sept. 10-21.

When Georgia Southern University art professor Rachel Green was first introduced to Ana, Carolina and Betina — a grandmother, daughter and granddaughter trio of artisans who create colorful textiles according to their family's long-held Argentinian traditions — she was captivated.

The family members are descendants of the native South American group Wichí, meaning 'the people,' and call on ancestral techniques to transform chaguar, a common ground cover found in the dry forests of Argentina, into unique handcrafted items. In a laborious process, the Wichí women create thread from the chaguar that is woven, crocheted or knitted into clothing, bags and other household items that reference nature, such as an owl's eye or an iguana's belly.

Green, who teaches fibers and fabric design on the Armstrong Campus, discovered her love of the Argentinian art in 2007 while attending a University System of Georgia Faculty Development Seminar in Salta, Argentina.

In the local craft markets Green admired Wichí textiles and wood carvings. So, when she met the group of family artists in their studio in 2010, she was elated to have the opportunity to create a partnership that would benefit both them and her students. Green created a study abroad program, now in its 10th year, that offers a select group of art students the chance to study the rich cultural and craft traditions of the country's northwestern province while exploring fine art museums and contemporary galleries.

"Each year, students take workshops from Ana, Carolina and Betina in Wichí weaving, spinning and dyeing techniques," explained Luran M. Schwan, arts marketing manager with Georgia Southern. "To demonstrate our gratitude, we purchase some of their crafts to exhibit and others for a silent auction. Funds raised are returned to them to help maintain a studio space so they can continue to teach their craft and language."

This year's Argentinian study abroad program was attended by Green and five art majors, including Christina Davis, Timothy Eller, Robert Ewbank, June Ford and Patrice Jackson. From Sept. 10-21, the Betty Foy Sanders Department of Art on the Armstrong Campus will present Fwala Jutunek (Light of the Sun), a silent auction of Wichí bags, jewelry, wall hangings and other items. Bidding will take place during gallery hours and close at 5 p.m. on Sept. 21.

There will also be an art exhibition by the program's student attendees and a gallery reception, free and open to the public, on Sept. 14, 5:30-7 p.m.



Artwork by Georgia Southern student June Ford, who participated in this year's Argentinian study abroad program.

For more information, visit https://calendar.georgiasouthern.edu/event/fwala_jutunek_light_of_the_sun#.W4IHJNKjOQ.