



Book News



The University of Arizona Press

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The Sweet Smell of Home: The Life and Art of Leonard F. Chana

Leonard F. Chana, Susan Lobo, and Barbara Chana

Publication Date: August 29, 2009

176 pages, 8 1/2 x 10, 26 color illustrations, 60 b/w illustrations

ISBN: 978-0-8165-2818-9, \$40.00 hardcover

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A self-taught artist in several mediums who became known for stippling, Leonard Chana captured the essence of the Tohono O'odham people. He incorporated subtle details of O'odham life into his art, and his images evoke the smells, sounds, textures, and tastes of the Sonoran desert—all the while depicting the values of his people.

He began his career by creating cards and soon was lending his art to posters and logos for many community-based Native organizations. Winning recognition from these groups, his work was soon actively sought by them. Chana's work also appears on the covers and as interior art in a number of books on southwestern and American Indian topics.

The Sweet Smell of Home is an autobiographical work, written in Chana's own voice that unfolds through oral history interviews with anthropologist Susan Lobo. Chana imparts the story of his upbringing and starting down the path toward a career as an artist. Balancing humor with a keen eye for cultural detail, he tells us about life both on and off the reservation.

Eighty pieces of art—26 in color—grace the text, and Chana explains both the impetus for and the evolution of each piece. Leonard Chana was a people's artist who celebrated the extraordinary heroism of common people's lives. *The Sweet Smell of Home* now celebrates this unique artist whose words and art illuminate not only his own remarkable life, but also the land and lives of the Tohono O'odham people.

Leonard F. Chana was born in 1950 and passed away in 2004. Susan Lobo works for Native community organizations in the United States and Latin America and is the author of *Urban Voices: The Bay Area American Indian Community* and *A House of My Own*, also published by the University of Arizona Press. Barbara Chana is a licensed therapist and a frequent presenter on the dynamics of Native American families and substance abuse. She and Leonard Chana were married for 23 years.

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Praise for *The Sweet Smell of Home*

“Leonard Chana spoke, and painted, from his heart and **deep cultural roots**. His shared insights into the past and present of the O’odham, leavened by his **gentle humor** and unsullied by third-party interference, have no peer in the published literature of his people. While *The Sweet Smell of Home* is about these **quintessential** desert dwellers, it is also about all of us who find ourselves joined in an enterprise we call ‘life.’ ”

—Bernard Fontana, author of *A Guide To Contemporary Southwest Indians*

“The insight of oral culture highlights artistic perception in this **heartfelt** book. For a cultured artist such as Leonard Chana, the words are in the art and the art is in the culture.”

—Jose Barreiro, National Museum of the American Indian

“Leonard Chana’s drawings and paintings reflect his deep love for and understanding of his place and culture. His commentary gives us even greater access to the next-door but far-off world of the Tohono O’odham. **A truly generous book.**”

—Jim Griffith, The Southwest Center, University of Arizona

“Rarely is the life of an artist so **clearly captured** and illustrated in the author’s own voice. To hear Chana’s stories surrounding each artistic venture makes his work come alive.”

—Susan Penfield, author of *Forty Years On*

“Home is sweeter, lovelier, grander, and better than any other place in the world! ‘There’s no place like home’ sounds, perhaps, too casual and too simplistic to say, but it’s true! For Leonard Chana, home was the heart of his art. And art was his heart. His paintings of family, kinfolk, his O’odham home, and the beautiful desert homeland of the Tohono O’odham are matchless! Leonard’s paintings are stories that comprise *The Sweet Smell of Home*, just as much as his vocal narratives about his artwork and his home are endearing stories that tell us who he was as an O’odham person. In this book are ordinary and everyday conversations about his desert homeland and his work as an artist and community member, as well as narrative ruminations of l’itoi, the spiritual guide, Elder Brother, and guardian of the Tohono O’odham tribal community. **We and all people are fortunate, honored, and blessed to have had the vision, artistry, positive spirit, and love of the late Leonard Chana among us.**”

—Simon Ortiz, author of *Beyond the Reach of Time and Change*

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The University of Arizona Press, founded in 1959, is a nonprofit publisher of about fifty books each year, with over 800 books in print. Publications include scholarly and trade titles in Native American and Latina/o studies, anthropology, archaeology, nature writing and environmental studies, regional history, Latin American studies, and space sciences. The Press publishes two critically acclaimed series in fiction and poetry, Sun Tracks: An American Indian Literary Series, and Camino del Sol: A Latina and Latino Literary Series.