



James Rutherford - American, b. 1960
curator • gallerist • educator • arts advocate

I was born and raised in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the youngest of five siblings. My parents, Jim and Bets Rutherford, moved to the state with my four brothers and sisters in 1954 at the invitation of my father's friend John Simms with whom he served in WWII. Simms wanted my father's help with his campaign for governor and is purported to have said "come to New Mexico – we're going to do great things." This statement has ended up becoming the de-facto mantra for our family, manifest in the wide range of accomplishments of my parents and the Rutherford siblings.

My own career in the arts has now spanned more than thirty-seven years – but it all began with a move to Los Angeles in 1980 where my first professional forays involved working for galleries, consultants, and collectors via an art installation business I co-founded. These early experiences in the big-city art world set me on a path which led me back to Santa Fe and then New York where I pursued my dream of becoming a curator.

In 1986 I was appointed Director of the Governor's Gallery at the New Mexico State Capitol. The success of my 6-year tenure was evinced by an ambitious exhibition schedule, a travelling exhibition program, the establishment of a sculpture garden on the Capitol grounds, and copious media coverage. I also became involved with numerous non-profit arts organizations, most notably the Capitol Art Foundation – which I initially helped bring into existence and subsequently worked with to establish an important public art collection. I embarked upon the next phase of my career in the early 1990s when I left the public sector to found Copeland / Rutherford Fine Arts – a gallery and sculpture garden located in the heart of Santa Fe's Canyon Road arts district. During four years of operation the gallery established a reputation for cutting edge exhibitions, and outré events and programming.

In 1998, I relocated to Nashville where I was hired as Assistant Director of Special Projects at the Tennessee State Museum (TSM). This position involved working with museum staff on the planning and implementation of outreach exhibitions and programming, and the coordination of fundraising endeavors of the Museum Foundation. My work at TSM greatly enhanced my talents as a museum professional, and taught me a range of skillsets that I continued to leverage in my later work as an independent curator and project manager. Other noteworthy accomplishments during this period included serving as guest curator for exhibitions at Vanderbilt University, the NM Museum of Art, and the United Nations, and my work to establish a private museum dedicated to the late singer/songwriter Roger Miller in his hometown of Erick, OK.

My return to Santa Fe in 2009 marked the beginning of another chapter in my life, which has been characterized by a reexamination of my career path, a return to school in pursuit of a long-held goal to complete a degree in Museum Studies, a stint as an adjunct community college professor, service as an auctioneer and volunteer for various non-profit organizations, and a re-entry into the commercial art world via positions at respected galleries including Chiaroscuro Contemporary and the Allan Houser Gallery.