

# FROELICK GALLERY

## Rick Bartow

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### *Witkol Wołai: Coyote's Road, 2011*

Native Elders say that we have this time right now. We have this time to breathe together. As it has a beginning so shall it have an end. John Bevan Ford, my old Maori artist, friend, mentor said "we must all die, but I don't wish to hasten it!"

In the gateway to the Shimpkugi Temple in Oguni Town, on the west coast of Japan's Honshu Island and up in the mountains, there hangs many pairs of sandals of varying sizes and materials, straw to iron, representing prayers for walking a great distance, living long.

My granddad walked from Northern California to central Oregon's coast once, twice, three times!

I lost my ability to walk a few years back and spent whole days, weeks, months, watching with envy people walking by, climbing a sand hill nearby- it took a while but eventually I tackled that same sand hill and made it to the top much to my relief and small joy!

A recent stroke finds me once again at the rec (wreck?) center 5 days a week. Walking.

All this after the image of the 'foot' presented itself to me in a shattered plank end generously given by the University of Oregon's Deaton Love, from trees harvested on campus.

The work is a bit unusual in that the materials beg to be approached in a different manner, being planks of hardwood, very hard wood, instead of alder or cedar and redwood rounds.

The image of the bear made herself known to me years ago but recently appeared in the tall book end maple planks, begging to be reawakened once more as a symbol for protective motherhood and as a symbol of medicine and ancient doctoring.

Coyote, *Witkol* in Wiyot is what he/she is, a teacher of the highest order. Coming or going we learn and see our good nature and our bad habits in one character.

Fish are indicators of health and clean water as are the birds in the air- the more birds the healthier the environment.

I suppose it is all about gratitude and as that one Gloria taught us to pray at the Sweat House for the Health Help and Happiness! My wish for you is the same one I have for me- a long walk, a lot of breathing together.

714 NW Davis Street  
Portland, Oregon 97209  
503 222 1142  
[www.FroelickGallery.com](http://www.FroelickGallery.com)