V

NATIVE REPRESENTATIONS:
MEDIA AND THE ARTS
In academics, the term *representations* refers to how meaning is constructed in our minds through language; be it words (e.g., writing, poetry), music (e.g., traditional, modern, or rap lyrics), storytelling (e.g., spoken words, traditional languages), or visual language (all forms of art, filmmaking, and performance). How Native Americans represent themselves or make meaning of their lives and cultures as Native peoples is *very* different from how the dominant culture has represented (mis-represented) them as "Indians" throughout history.

As we have seen in previous parts of this text, Native history is different from American history. However, with the development of the field of American Indian Studies/Native American Studies, history is being revised to include Native voices; this book is a prime example of that process. But, in this day and age, the story is not told only in textbooks. History is conveyed through popular culture in the media—through movies, music, and other arts—where Native stories are being rewritten in Native voices.

Today many people learn about American Indians through school or museums. However, even more people learn about Natives in the media. Historically, people learned about Indians less from school than from folklore, newspapers, novels, images, and serialized stories. In fact, the earliest images and stories of Indians came from the explorers and later the colonists. Columbus was one of the first to write about Indians, and ever since, there have been stories and images of Native Americans permeating the consciousness of American popular culture.

Indian history is the history of America, and it is a part of national folklore in the winning of the West. In fact, by the 1830s most Americans had never seen an Indian. Yet, the image of the Indian fascinated Americans. The "Indian" represented the wild and untamed West, and there were many books about Indians. One example, *The Last of the Mohicans*, is a novel by James Fenimore Cooper from 1826. It was serialized in the mid-1800s, and by the 1900s was made into a movie. In fact, *The Last of the Mohicans* has been made into a movie five times in 80 years! Yet, the author had never seen an Indian! Cooper's romantic portrayal of the "last of his kind" perpetuated the idea that Indians were a dying race, an idea that continued into the mid-twentieth century.

There were other writers in the 1800s who wrote about the "noble savage," and the cannon of work they created became a genre in literature, marking their difference from their literary counterparts in Europe. Their literary territory was the West and the imaginary line between savagery and civilization—that point where white civilization meets the savage West—the perfect ideological location for a literary tragedy. By the 1860s, this literary genre became a full-born Western formula, a formula with which the reader is no doubt familiar—with the outlaw, the Indian, and the hero set in the mythic Old West.

This formula was well honed in graphic novels of the time, called dime novels, and in serialized periodicals or stories in magazines. Also, the Western formula was used in traveling theatrical productions called Wild West shows, modeled after circuses but with a Western theme. Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and Congress of Rough Riders is among the most famous of these traveling shows, even visiting Europe and playing for the Queen Mother of England in the 1880s. Interestingly, Buffalo Bill saw the new technology of filmmaking as a way to market his Wild West Show, and he made the first movie Western. Even more fascinating, Euro-Disneyland in Paris still presents a live version of *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show*. And, as we know, the Western is still a popular movie genre in filmmaking today.

For hundreds of years, stories about American Indians have been told in various manners—from illustrations, to paintings, to print and from art to movies. However, the idea and the image of the Indian depicted in these representations is purely a white construction; the Indian is a stereotype that has nothing to do with how present-day
Native Americans perceive or represent themselves. Native Americans were and are real, but the stereotypical Indian is not.

In representing themselves, many Natives take full advantage of all media available today. Native people’s ability to counter the stereotypical presentation of “the Indian” is limited only by imagination. Native Americans are extremely visible on the Internet (e.g., in social media), in music, in literature, in academics, in museums, and in the movies. Native American journalists are visible on many sites, including Indian Country Today’s Web site. On Indianz.com news articles are collected daily and form a working database of sorts on current issues happening in Indian Country. Native American artists, filmmakers, and writers make great use of personal web pages and blogs, social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook, and YouTube. In addition, many Native American organizations and agencies make use of the Internet. Most of the major museums, such as the National Museum of the American Indian, as well as Native social, political, and business organizations such as the National Congress of American Indians, the Native American Rights Fund, and the American Indian Movement have Facebook pages in order to connect Natives and supporters across the world. Most tribes have “official” Web sites. In terms of social networking, most of the major Indian centers in various cities, including the Chicago Indian Center, have MySpace pages. Artists, authors, musicians, and filmmakers, including filmmaker Chris Eyre, author Sherman Alexie, and artist Steven Yazzie, take full advantage of the Internet, having web pages, blogs, and MySpace and Facebook pages. Native American filmmakers and artists actively use sites such as YouTube to get their movies and short videos out. In fact, the National Museum of the American Indian regularly releases videos through YouTube. The Internet and the social networking community it has created have opened up a new world of connectedness that Native Americans fully participate in. (For more examples, see the appendix.)

One important fact to remember is that while many Natives are using the Internet, many more are not. Given that upward of 70 percent of Native Americans live in urban areas, it is safe to assume that they at least have access to the Internet through schools, libraries, or their homes. However, just as in other segments of the population, poorer communities have less access to technology than others. Further, on many reservations there is little to no access to the Internet. Reservations are in rural areas and often don’t have the infrastructure that other geographic locations have. In 1999, the U.S. government estimated that only 76 percent of households on reservations had telephones, mainly due to lack of infrastructure. For example, there is no telephone service in some rural areas of the Navajo Reservation, making Internet service impossible. Many Navajo people have dial-up access only to the Internet at local community centers or chapter houses, and they may have to drive long distances to reach these locations.

Even now, in early 2009, there is only limited cellular service—if any—on the Navajo Reservation! This gap in telecommunications is called the digital divide. There are many entities still working to meet a federal mandate to bridge the gap in access, including National Congress of American Indians and Native Public Media, the federal government, tribal leadership, and telecommunications companies. Despite the digital divide, Native American presence on the web continues to expand, and Native American cultural representations are growing exponentially with the advent of the web and new media.

The first article, Reading 1, “Creating a Visual History: A Question of Ownership,” is about creating a visual history or visual culture. Theresa Harlan (Laguna Pueblo) examines how Native photographers depict their own history and concludes that Native people have a very different perspective than do non-Indian observers. Euro-American image making that focuses on the “proud” and the “primitive,” she writes, does not “carry messages for survival.” Native image makers, on the other hand, depict
the everyday world and actions of Indian people in images that “recognize the origin, nature, and direction of their Native existence and communities.”

When looking at the visual and literary culture of Native Americans, as well as other oppressed peoples, there is often a very subtle commonality—the use of humor, joking, or teasing. While it may not be obvious or even visible to those not entrenched in the culture or it may look like black humor, peoples who survive oppression survive because they have the ability to laugh. The white stereotype of the “silent, stoic Indian” is a myth; Indian people love to joke and tease. One important function of humor is that it is a social leveler. No one can get too puffed up without some Indian wit cutting him or her down in an easy, teasing but pointed way. Hopi author Emory Sekaquaptewa, in Reading 2, “One More Smile for a Hopi Clown,” describes another important function, explaining the world of Hopi clowns. Clowns are an important aspect of many Indian religions: they provide fun and laughter, and they also serve as an ethical and moral compass for the participants in the tribal culture. For example, whether they imitate lewd and mischievous behavior or punish the errant, they are demonstrating the mores of an Indian society.

Another prominent way in which Native Americans represent themselves is through art. The earliest forms of Native art include embellished objects for personal and community use. Often designs were family or clan related or told stories in their depiction. Each tribe in each geographic region had different designs; their uses of materials, color, and objects varied widely. Today, descendents of those peoples create beautiful art using derivatives of many of the same designs, albeit in very different ways and contexts. Contemporary Native American art can be very valuable, for a variety of reasons. In Reading 3, “But Is It American Indian Art?” Traci L. Morris (Chickasaw) discusses the development of contemporary Indian art as an economic system that places monetary value on Indian identity and then looks at young artists who are revising this system or rejecting it all together.

Nowhere can a better collection of Native American art be seen than the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). In Reading 4, “The National Museum of the American Indian,” Traci L. Morris presents the history of this museum and the extent of the collections. Be sure to check out the NMAI web page, at http://americanindian.si.edu, for a sampling of art by the artists discussed in Reading 3.

Another way in which Native Americans are challenging the stereotypes and misrepresentations of the past is through filmmaking. Many people say that the newest form of storytelling is filmmaking. Native Americans have taken to filmmaking because of accessibility and the ability to represent themselves and tell their own stories. In Reading 5, “Wiping the Warpaint Off the Lens: Native American Film and Video,” Beverly R. Singer (Santa Clara Pueblo/Navajo), a filmmaker and professor at the University of New Mexico, presents an overview of the development of Native American filmmaking. Native American filmmaking began in the 1980s but really gained prominence in the 1990s, with the film Smoke Signals (1998), which was a Native written, directed, and acted film that gained box office notoriety. Native filmmaking has plateaued since that time.

Reading 6, “Gone With the Wind: A Decade After Smoke Signals, Success Remains Elusive for Native American Filmmakers,” is an interview and dialogue with two of the most successful Native American filmmakers, Chris Eyre and Sherman Alexie. They discuss what has and hasn’t happened with Native filmmaking in the decade since Smoke Signals was released. In order to provide a sampling of the breadth of Native Americans in music and film arts, the box “Native American Media” provides an overview of some of the organizations supporting Natives in music, film, television, and other media.
Part V focuses entirely on Native representations of themselves and combats the stereotypes of Indians that have been and continue to be pervasive in the media. A number of organizations support this endeavor. The box “Native American Media” lists some of the most prominent and active Native media organizations and their Web sites.

A Google search on “American Indians” in late 2008 brought up 6,690,000 sites in 0.17 seconds. To effectively use this volume of sites about American Indians, it is important to be able to determine the difference between factual sites and the nonfactual sites. The box “Web Page Evaluation Checklist” is provided to help the reader determine the validity of Internet sites.

NOTE

In 1992 I guest-curated “Message Carriers: Native Photographic Messages” for the Photographic Resource Center at Boston University.1 When invited, I could not accept without careful consideration of significant issues such as: ghettoization, opportunism (mine and theirs), and exploitation. Mainstream museums and publications often set apart “artists of color,” “multicultural artists,” and “ethnic artists,” thereby designating us as the “other” or “different.”

The art and writings of these “other” artists are locked into discussions of “their” art, “their” people, and “their” issues. While there are still few opportunities to exhibit works by Native artists, there are even fewer exhibitions that treat these works in terms of their intellectual and critical contributions. Contemporary Native art is often characterized as angry, created from the voices of the defeated, and confined to the realm of the emotions.

Native people have—but are not perceived as having—diverse histories, cultures, languages, economics, politics, and worldviews. As Native people, we must claim rights to, and ownership of, strategic and intellectual space for our works. We must reject the reduction of Native images to sentimental portraits, such as those depicted by Marcia Keegan in her book *Enduring Culture: A Century of Photography of the Southwest Indians.*2 Keegan writes, “From the beginning of my acquaintance with them, it was the Indians’ confidence and attunement to the eternal verities that inspired my wonder and admiration. Thus it became my enduring commitment to try to experience, imagine, and document that more elusive subject, the traditional Indian way of life.”3 This type of thinking reduces Native survival to a matter of nostalgia, and precludes discussion of the political strategies that enabled Native survival. The writer bell hooks refers to nostalgia as “that longing for something to be as once it was, a kind of useless act. . . .”4 and calls for the recognition of the politicalized state of memory as “. . . that remembering that serves to illuminate and transform the present.”5

Native survival was and remains a contest over life, humanity, land, systems of knowledge, memory, and representations. Native memories and representations are persistently pushed aside to make way for constructed Western myths and their representations of Native people. Ownership of Native representations is a critical arena of this contest, for there are those who insist on following the tired, romantic formulas used to depict Native people. Those myths ensure an existence without context, without history, without a reality. An existence that allows for the combing of hair with yucca brushes in the light of a Southwest sunset; competition powwow dancing reborn as a spiritual ceremony; or the drunken Indian asleep on cement city sidewalks unable to cope with the white man’s world. These are the representations constantly paraded before us by non-Native photographic publications such as Keegan’s *Enduring Culture,* or *National Geographic’s* 1994 issue on American Indians, or Marc Gaede’s *Border Towns.* Such constructed myths and representations are given institutional validation in the classroom and are continually supported by popular culture and media.

American classrooms are usually the first site of contest for Native children. In her essay, “Constructing Images, Constructing Reality: American Indian Photography and Representation,” Gail Tremblay writes, “When Native children are taught that they are not equal, that their cultures are incapable of surviving in a modern world, they suffer from the pain that has haunted their parents’ lives, that haunts their own
lives. For an Indigenous person, choosing not to vanish, not to feel inferior, not to hate oneself, becomes an intensely political act. A Native photographer coming to image-making in this climate must ask, ‘What shall I take pictures of, who shall I take pictures for, what will my images communicate to the world?’”

Photographer and filmmaker Victor Masayesva, Jr., has described the camera as a weapon. “As Hopi photographers, we are indeed in a dangerous time. The camera which is available to us is a weapon that will violate the silences and secrets so essential to our group survival.” Writer, curator, and photographer Richard Hill, Jr. of the Tuscarora nation, also named the camera as a weapon, but a weapon for “art confrontation rather than military confrontation. Indians themselves now have taken the power of the image and begun to use it for their own enjoyment as well as for its potential power as a political weapon.” Artist Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie declared, “No longer is the camera held by an outsider looking in; the camera is now held with brown hands opening familiar worlds. We document ourselves with a humanizing eye, we create new visions with ease, and we can turn the camera and show how we see you. The power of the image is not a new concept to the Native photographer—look at petroglyphs and ledger drawings. What has changed is the process.”

Masayesva, Hill, and Tsinhnahjinnie speak from the experience of seeing themselves spoken for by outsiders, of seeing the surreal positioned as the real. As Trinh T. Minh-ha says, Native image-makers “understand the dehumanization of forced-removal/relocation/reeducation/redefinition, the humiliation of having to falsify your own reality, your voice—you know. And often cannot say it. You try and keep on trying to unsay it, for if you don’t they will not fail to fill in the blanks on your behalf, and you will be said.”

When Native people do pick up the camera, often their image-making is greeted with a patronizing welcome. The “Indian” no longer sits passively before the camera, but now operates the camera—a symbol of the white man’s technology. The voices and images of Native photographers must be understood as rooted in and informed by Native experiences and knowledge.

Lee Marmon has created, and continues to create, photographic representations of Native people that affirm Native memories, self-knowledge, and presence. Upon his return from World War II, Marmon began taking photographs of the old people in the villages at Laguna Pueblo—so that there would be something to remember them by. Marmon’s photographic remembrances are of a generation of people who had to devise ways to affirm and protect Laguna knowledge despite the pernicious attempts—beginning in the sixteenth century—of the Spanish, Mexican, and later, the United States governments to strip them of land, culture, religion, and the memory of that existence. Thus, these are not merely images of cute old people. The presence of Juana Scott Piño; of Jeff Sousea in White Man’s Moccasins; or of Bennie at the sheep camp might at first seem ironic or contradictory, as some are dressed in “traditional” clothing and others not. Marmon’s photography is not confined to any strict notion of Indianness. It differs vastly from Keegan’s inspired commitment to document the “elusive traditional way of life,” as these images include the context of Laguna lives and experiences. Marmon did not drive around seeking the best adobe wall to use as a background; he photographed his community while delivering groceries for his family’s store. What we see through Marmon’s photographs are images of people living and working as they are—and without an implied mystical “elusiveness.” Marmon’s title, White Man’s Moccasins, is more than the irony of an old Laguna man wearing high-tops. It is Pueblo objectification of Western society through the appropriation of a popular Western icon.

Marmon’s images are of people who do not perceive themselves as confined to any mythic or imagined concepts held by others. They remain fresh because they are not restricted by essentialist notions that Native people must dress as Natives in order to
look Native and to be Native. Even some Native documentary photographers fall prey to expressing Native thinking and traditions through what is worn. By doing this, they risk entering into the same trap of only being able to recognize themselves through the eyes of non-Natives.

Zig Jackson provides ethnographic material about non-Native practices in photographing Native people in his series “Indian Photographing Tourist Photographing Indian.” The tourists he records are so intent on their subjects and the drama of the moment that they are unaware of Jackson’s presence. They exhibit a fascination usually reserved for movie stars, rock stars, scandalized politicians, or famous athletes. For these photographers, the value of Native images is based strictly on appearance. But would they clamor to take pictures of Native people wearing the clothes they wear at school, work, or home? No. Because when Native people wear bright colors, fringe, beads, leather, and feathers, they are “real” Indians. When they are dressed in everyday clothes they are not. Robert Berkhofer, Jr., discussed this in The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present. “Since Whites primarily understood the Indian as an antithesis to themselves, then civilization and Indianness as they defined them would forever be opposites. Only civilization had history and dynamics in this view, so therefore Indianness must be conceived as ahistorical and static. If the Indian changed through the adoption of civilization as defined by Whites, then he/she was no longer truly Indian according to the image, because the Indian was judged by what Whites were not. Change toward what Whites were made him [her] ipso facto less Indian.”

Larry McNeil deliberately avoids representations of the “feathered” Indian and instead chooses a single feather to discuss Native survival. Some critics have described this work as relying on an easily recognized symbol, even a cliché. In fact, to reduce McNeil’s use of feathers to a cliché is to accept the dominant thinking that is continually wielded against Native people. (Dominant thinking prevails when Native symbols are reduced to cliché while American colonization continues to be described as Manifest Destiny.) In McNeil’s series, Native survival deliberately is not shown through full-color images of powwow dancers. Instead, he keeps to the visceral side of survival through black-and-white depictions of worn and broken feathers set against a dark background. Here, the Native memory of survival is neither romantic nor nostalgic.

James Luna’s photo-essay “I’ve Always Wanted to Be an American Indian,” is a satirical jab at those
who at some point discover a thread of Native ancestry in their past and then draw on myths of Indian identity to realize their ancestral inheritance. Luna’s wake-up call is for these individuals to realize the reach of racist, political, and economic subordination of Native people, who cannot pick and choose their Native circumstances. Luna escorts the wake-up Indian on a guided tour of his La Jolla reservation, pointing out interesting sites and bits of information. His snapshot photographs of the mission church, schoolchildren, and a disintegrating adobe building are combined with positive and negative snips of information. Statements such as “During the last five years on the Reservation there have been and/or are now: three murders, an average unemployment rate of 47 percent, . . . twenty-one divorces and/or separations . . . thirty-nine births, forty-five government homes built . . . an increase in the percentage of high school graduates.”

At the end of the tour, Luna asks “Hey, do you still want to be an Indian?”

Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie reveals the current dispute among Native people over, in fact, is “Indian.” Tsinhnahjinnie’s Would I Have Been a Member of the Nighthawk, Snake Society or Would I Have Been a Half-Breed Leading the Whites to the Full-Bloods, signed “111–390” (her issued tribal enrollment number) uses self-portraiture to discuss identity politics within a historical context. These graphic, 40-by-30-inch, black-and-white head-and-shoulder shots, which resemble passport or police photographs, support her discussion of the use of photography to identify and control the “other.” The reference to the Nighthawk, Snake Societies, and half-breeds comes from a 1920 statement made by Eufala Harjo regarding the practice of the Bureau of Indian Affairs of securing names of Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Cherokee resistance-group members from “half-breed” informants. Societies were formed to resist tribal leaders’ decisions to ignore previous treaty agreements and to accept the 1887 Dawes Allotment Act, which reallocated parcels of lands to individual ownership—thereby overturning tribal practices of land collectively held through the maternal line.

Tsinhnahjinnie is one of the few artists who have taken a public stand on the 1990 Indian Arts and Crafts Act, which requires tribal enrollment numbers, state census roll numbers, or a special “Indian artist” status to be provided by an artist’s tribal council in order for Native artists to sell their work as “Indian” art. Tsinhnahjinnie reminds us that we, as Native people, must recognize and understand identity politics as the invention of the United States government.

Jolene Rickard’s Sweka and PCBs calls our attention to the fact that we may be ignoring or underestimating the dangers that accompany moneyed solicitations of tribal land use for toxic dump sites that contaminate food sources. Rickard draws a connecting line from toxic contamination to the gathering, collecting, fishing, and hunting of foods, and the ritual ceremonies that emanate from those sources. Rickard warns us, “If Indians no longer have a material and spiritual relationship with ‘land,’ then certain teachings and ceremonies cannot take place. Even when it is possible to transform these teachings into abstract space, without the geographic place of community, experience has shown that the teachings increasingly dissipate.”

Sweka and PCBs is not a romantic representation of an Indian man and his relationship to the natural world. It is a warning for all of us to confront our own threatened survival as human beings. We may become our own endangered species along with the salmon and the eagle that feeds on the salmon.

In Pamela Shields Carroll’s Footprints, family images are printed on cut-out soles of baby mocassins, along with porcupine quills, collected in a small wooden box. Footprints evokes family memories that ultimately inform the next generation. The image on the left sole is of Carroll’s brother celebrating his third birthday, dressed as a cowboy, sitting on a pony. The right sole depicts Carroll’s great-aunt’s Sun Dance tipi. Footprints is layered with personal memories, but also speaks from historical experience. It is a sister’s quiet memory of her brother—and a statement about non-Native influences. The complexity of growing up Native is revealed in a family snapshot, in which her brother, as a child, adopts the...
dress of those who were part of the conquest of his larger Blackfoot family. It is also a memory of family participation and responsibility in ceremony, and the health of a community through the Sun Dance. Yet together the moccasin soles represent diverse paths: the left, reflective of outside influences and future generations; the right, inside sources of knowledge and the integrity of Blackfoot culture.

Creating a visual history—and its representations—from Native memories or from Western myths: this is the question before Native image-makers and photographers today. The contest remains over who will image—and own—this history. Before too many assumptions are made, we must define history, define whose history it is, and define its purpose, as well as the tools used for the telling of it. The intent of history is to help us keep our bearings. That is, to know what is significant and, most importantly, to teach us how to recognize the significant. What happens when history is skewed, or when we no longer have the same skills of recognition? We as human beings become disabled by the inability to distinguish what is real from what is not.

Gerald Vizenor, in his book *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance*, calls this “Postindian simulations [which] are the absence of shades, shadows, and consciousness; simulations are mere traces of common metaphors in the stories of survivance and the manners of domination.” . . .

What Native photographers provide is the possibility of a Native perspective unclouded by White liberal guilt or allegiance to Western heroes. Yet these possibilities are not guaranteed by race or genetics. For if the photographer picks up his or her camera and approaches image-making with the same notions of capturing a “proud/primitive” moment, then we are not getting a Native perspective. We are seeing Euro-American image-making traditions in action in Native hands. Those images do not carry messages of survival. In fact they are an ominous signal that colonization has been effective, in that the “Indian” can now recognize him- or herself only through the outside, as an outsider.

Native image-makers who contribute to self-knowledge and survival create messages and remembrances that recognize the origin, nature, and direction of their Native existence and communities. They understand that their point of origin began before the formation of the United States and is directly rooted to the land. These Native imagemakers understand that the images they create may either subvert or support existing representations of Native people. They understand that they must create the intellectual space for their images to be understood, and free themselves from the contest over visual history and its representations of Native people.

NOTES


2. “Message Carriers: Native Photographic Messages” was at the Boston Photographic Resource Center at Boston University in October, 1992. The exhibition included the works of Patricia Deadman, Zig Jackson, Carm Little Turtle, James Luna, Larry McNeil, Jolene Rickard, Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, and Richard Ray Whitman. Then staff curator Anita Douthat initiated the exhibition. The FRC was instrumental in the success of the exhibition.


5. Ibid.


11. Lee Marmon owns and manages the Blue Eyed Indian Bookshop at Laguna Pueblo.


The heart of the Hopi concept of clowning is that we are all clowns. This was established at the very beginning when people first emerged from the lower world. In spite of the belief that this was a new world in which no corruption and immorality would be present, the people nevertheless took as their own all things that they saw in the new world. Seeing that the people still carried with them many of the ways of the corrupted underworld, the Spirit Being divided them into groups and laid out a life-pattern for each of them, so that each would follow its own life-way.

Before the Hopi people left from the emergence place, one man chosen by them as their leader went up on a hill. I can just imagine the throng of his people around him who were excited and eager in getting ready to be led out to the adventures of a new world. The leader gets up on this hill and calls out, “yaahahay!” four times. Thus gaining their attention he said. “Now you heard me cry out to you in this way. You will hear me cry in this way when we have reached the end of our life-way. It will be a sign that we have reached the end of the world. We will know then whether we have fulfilled our destiny. If we have not we will see how it is to be done.” The leader who was a visionary man chose this way of reminding his people that they have only their worldly ambition and aspirations by which to gain a spiritual world of eternity. He was showing them that we cannot be perfect in this world after all and if we are reminded that we are clowns, maybe we can have, from time to time, introspection as a guide to lead us right. From this beginning when we have been resembled to clowns we know that this is to be a trying life and that we will try to fulfill our destiny by mimicry, by mockery, by copying, by whatever.

This whole idea of clowning is re-enacted at the time of the katsina dances. When they are dancing in the plaza the katsinas represent the spiritual life toward which Hopi destiny is bent. The katsinas dance in the plaza at intervals throughout the day and sometimes for two days. When the clowns come they represent man today who is trying to reach this place of paradise. That is why the clowns always arrive at the plaza from the rooftops of the houses facing the plaza where the katsinas are dancing. The rooftops signify that even though we have reached the end, we are not necessarily ready to walk easily into the spiritual world. The difficulties by which clowns gain the place of the katsinas make for fun and laughter, but also show that we may not all be able to make it from the rooftop because it is too difficult. We are going to clown our way through life making believe that we know everything and when the time comes, possibly no one will be prepared after all to enter the next world. We will still find the way difficult with obstacles in front of us. Maybe some of us won’t make it.

The clowns come to the edge of the housetops around noon and they announce themselves with the cry “yaahahay!” four times. This announces as foretold at emergence the arrival at the end of the life-way journey. And then they make their way into the plaza with all sorts of antics and buffoonery representing the Hopi life quest. In their actions they reveal that we haven’t yet fulfilled our destiny after all. By arriving at the late hour, noon, they show that we are lagging behind because we think we have many things to do.

Once in the plaza they act just as people did when they emerged in this world. They presume that they are in a new world, clean and pure. They are where they can finally have eternal life like the katsinas; indeed, this is the day all Hopi look forward to. But as they are remarking on the beauty of this place filled with plants and good things they hear the
katsina songs. They grope around the plaza looking for someone. They pretend they cannot see them because they are spirits. Finally, one of the clowns touches a katsina and upon his discovery of these beautiful beings, the clowns immediately try to take possession of them. “This is mine!” “This is mine!” They even fight each other over the possession of the katsinas and over the food and things they find.

The remainder of the afternoon is filled with all sorts of clown performances, many of which are planned in advance. Others just happen. These are satires focused on almost anything whether it be in the Hopi world or in the non-Hopi world. Clowns make fun of life and thereby cause people to look at themselves.

Imagination is important to the clown. There are good clowns and not so good clowns when it comes to being funny and witty. But all clowns perform for the smiles and laughter they hope to inspire in the people. When the clowns leave the kiva they try to buy their safety by offering Owl a bribe. When the clowns leave the kiva they try to buy their safety by offering Owl a bribe. Conscience keeps getting stronger and more demanding and insistent. On Owl’s third visit he brings with him a whole lot of warrior katsinas. The atmosphere is one of impending catastrophe. They move closer and closer, finally attacking the clowns, who are stripped and whipped for all they have done. In this way they force the clowns to take responsibility for their actions. After they are whipped, water is poured on them and sprinkled about the audience to signify purification.

When it is all over the threatening katsinas come back to the plaza again, but this time they are friendly. They shake hands with the clowns signifying that they have been purified. Then they take each clown the length of the plaza and form a semi-circle around him. At this time the clowns make confessions, but even here they are clowns for their confessions are all made in jest. Having worked up satires for the occasion they jump and sing before the katsinas. Their confessions usually are focused on their clan, who, by way of being satirized, are actually honored.

I’ll tell you one I heard not long ago. When it was time for this young clown man to make his confession he jumps up and down in front of the katsina and says, “Ah ii geology, geology, ah ii.” Then he made a beautiful little breakdown of this word so that it has Hopi meaning. “You probably think I am talking about this geology which is a white man’s study about something or other. Well, that’s not it,” he says. “What it really is is that I have a grandmother, and you know she being poor and ugly, nobody would have anything to do with her. She is running around all summer long out in the fields doing a man’s job. It breaks her down. She would go out there every day with no shoes and so her feet were not very dainty and not very feminine. If you pick up her foot and look at her sole, it is all cracked and that’s what I am talking about when I say geology.” Every Hopi can put that together. Tsiya means “to crack” and leetsi means things placed “in a row,” so these cracks are in a row on the bottom of the feet, geology. Things like that are what the confessions are like.
There is a story about the last wish of a Hopi man who died many years ago that shows the character of clowning.

In those days the clown society was very much formalized. It was a practice for men who had great devotion for their ritual society to be buried in the full costume of their office. Of course, this was not seen by the general public since Hopi funerals are rather private affairs.

This story is about a man who had gained great respect for his resourcefulness and performance as a clown. Clowning had become a major part of his life and he was constantly attending to his work as a clown by thinking up new skits and perfecting his performance. As he reached old age he decided that clowning had made his place in this world and he wanted to be remembered as a clown. So he made a special request for what was to be done with him at his death as he realized his time was short. He made his request to his family very firmly.

When he died his nephews and sons began to carry out his request. In preparation for burial the body was dressed in his clown costume. Then the body was carried around to the west side of the plaza and taken up on a roof. While this was being done the town crier’s voice rang out through the village calling all the people to the plaza. Everybody was prompt in gathering there. I can just see the women, as with any such occasion, grabbing their best shawl on their way to the plaza. It didn’t matter whether they were dressed well underneath the shawl.

When the people arrived they saw this unusual sight on the roof of the house on the west side of the plaza, men standing around a person lying down. When all of the people had gathered, the attendants—pallbearers I guess you could call them—simply, quietly, picked up the body and took it to the edge of the house near the plaza. They picked it up by the hands and legs and swung it out over the plaza as if to throw it and they hollered, “Yaahahay!” And they’d swing it back. Then they’d swing it once more. “Yaahahay!” Four times! On the fourth time they let the body go and it fell down, plop, in the plaza. As they threw the body the pallbearers hollered and laughed as they were supposed to. It took the people by surprise. But then everybody laughed.
BUT IS IT AMERICAN INDIAN ART?

Traci L. Morris

American Indian art, the kind you see in most galleries and that is made for the art market for the last 100 years or so, is actually a conceptual category originating in the early twentieth century, created by well-meaning white supporters of the arts and Indians trying to survive economically. American Indian art and the various systems of instruction, patronage, and economics that perpetuated and propelled it into the industry we see today, continues to be determined primarily by outsiders—by white patronage. As Berkoher demonstrated in his classic 1979 book, *The White Man’s Indian*, images of Indians are a white construction. So, too, is American Indian art, especially what the general public perceives to be Indian art.

This article focuses on the historical development of saleable contemporary American Indian art, beginning in the late 1800s up until the present. American Indian art is an extremely lucrative and market driven field. The sale of Native art is also highly legislated, with the first legislation in the 1930s and the most recent legislation in 2007. Native American art ranges on a continuum and includes anthropological art, historical art, and craft art. Also on the continuum is contemporary art, fine art, and socially critical art. All of these forms may be marketed and saleable. However, some forms are created strictly for the art market and these forms are the subject of this article. It is important though, to keep in mind that all forms are interrelated and may reference other forms of Native art. This graphic demonstrates how all Native art is related; despite mediation and differences in conceptual categorization.

Religious forms of art or sacred items, considered culturally traditional art are often aesthetically embellished, but their use and function prohibit the sale of such pieces. These items are used in ceremonial settings and are therefore considered sacred; one does not sell sacred objects. Examples of culturally traditional that are aesthetically pleasing include, but are not limited to: textiles, pottery, and beadwork. Traditional art forms are not included on this graphic, nor will they be addressed in this article. Sadly, these items are highly trafficked on the international market today. (See Bomberry article Battling for Souls: Organizing the return of sacred textiles to the community of Coroma, Bolivia in Part VII, Reading 4.)

American Indian art developed for the market in the last one hundred years, the subject of this article, be it historic or contemporary, is expected to be free from political or social comments, ideally demonstrates a cultural heritage directly descended from or connected to a pre-contact past, and is based on stereotypical perceptions and museum misconceptions. Marketability is a major component that drives contemporary Indian art, which is a descendant of styles taught to Native
Americans by white patrons in the early twentieth century. There is no doubt that this is an economic system and one that benefited and continues to benefit both parties. Generations of Native Americans have made their living or supplemented family incomes with the creation of Native art for the marketplace. In many cases, the making of art is a family business and can mean the difference between surviving and living. Economics does not change the fact that Native art is aesthetically pleasing to many, but the stylistic components and aesthetic properties are not being discussed here. The purpose of this article is to focus how this system developed in the Southwest, thus demonstrating how “authentic” Native heritage creates the value.

Although not all agree, derivatives of this mediated and marketable style continue to be taught by Natives to Natives mainly by the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe (IAIA) in New Mexico, or by a family member who attended IAIA or its predecessor the Santa Fe Indian School. This market driven style of Native American art is supported by museums such as the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). Santa Fe was historically and continues to be the geographic center of contemporary saleable American Indian Art in the United States. However, in the early twentieth century, Oklahoma had a thriving style of art called the Southern Plains style painting, including the Kiowa Five, which developed at Bacone College, near Muskogee, Oklahoma. Today, Native American art thrives in Oklahoma and other places throughout the United States, but Santa Fe continues to be the ideological and geographical center of contemporary Native American art.

Historically, the value and authenticity of American Indian art was created by white patrons’ intervention in determining subject matter and stylistic elements—patrons who believed that Natives existed in a stereotyped and romantic ethnographic present which was perpetuated by encouraging the artist to look “Indian” by wearing so-called traditional clothing while making and selling art. Indeed, part of the marketing scheme for Native art included selling Indian identity as a means of authenticating the work of art. Through the patronage of white consumers and museums, a cycle of authentication developed. White patrons instructed the Native artist on subject matter, style, and materials, and then they purchased the piece for their museum or personal collection. They then wrote articles about the art for various magazines, thus making the art more valuable. Finally, they and others commissioned more art, which was sold to collectors who eventually donated the works to museums, creating even more value for Native art.

In The Predicament of Culture, James Clifford delineates the process for assigning value to American Indian art. He postulates that what he calls the Art/Culture system is a “machine for creating authenticity.”

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**THE ART-CULTURE SYSTEM**

A Machine for Making Authenticity

1. connoisseurship
   - the art museum
   - the art market
2. history and folklore
   - the ethnographic museum
   - material culture, craft
3. takes, Inventions
   - the museum of technology
   - ready-mades and anti-art
4. tourist art, Commodities
   - the curio collection
   - utilities

(authentic)

(masterpiece)

(not-Art)

(inauthentic)

Art (original, singular) → Culture (traditional, collective)

(not-Culture) (new, uncommon) → (not-Art) (reproduced, commercial)
This system classifies and assigns value to appropriated cultural objects, by determining the contexts in which objects belong and circulate. The objects range from art to artifact and their value is determined by their level of cultural authenticity, based on an invented past where Western connoisseurship established the parameters of what was or is considered art or aesthetic. As the object moves between various contexts in the cycle of collecting, the final value is determined and assured by the vanishing status of a tribe. Indeed, historic artifacts and contemporary Native art alike establish their authenticity through associations with an unassimilated and unacculturated past.

The Art/Culture system, while historically situated, continues to evolve and to determine authenticity even today. The value of authenticity is monetary and can be observed in Santa Fe, New Mexico on any given summer day as Indian artists sit on the sidewalk under the portal selling art and wearing traditional clothing. Native artists often choose, as a matter of economic necessity, to participate in the art/culture system by wearing traditional clothing while selling art that conforms to the aforementioned stylistic elements. These artists will sell more than a Native artist dressed in average street clothes selling modern Indian art that is not recognizable as such, because the latter artist is not displaying the appropriate signs of being Indian, nor is he/she creating art that has recognizable signs of an authentic Indian past. Indeed, some Native artists make two separate and stylistically distinct kinds of art: the kind of art that conforms to the art/culture system and sells; and art they will make for themselves or their families. The issue of authenticity as it pertains to Native American art is like a spider web that weaves through everything: issues of Indian identity, stylistic components of art, marketability of the art, the Indian market, the magazines that perpetuate the market, and the academics who study Indian art. Authenticity determines perceptions and representations of Indians and is perpetuated through the Art/Culture system. Legally, tribal enrollment determines authenticity. This disregards cultural definitions by Natives of who is Indian and gives the federal government one more layer of power over the sovereignty of Indian tribes.

**HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF NATIVE ART**

As previously stated American Indian art, is a Euro-American conceptual category and as an art and culture system, developed during the late nineteenth century, almost as soon as the Indian wars were over. Serious artifact collecting by museums began nearly simultaneously as did the beginnings of American anthropology in the late 1800s. The general public did not start collecting until somewhat later. After the turn of the twentieth century, tourism developed, especially in the Southwest, and academics began writing articles about Native American art in popular magazines. The public began collecting Indian artifacts and it quickly became a broadly accepted hobby. The development of a Euro-American mediated American Indian art form was a natural progression beyond the collecting of artifacts. This coupled with the fact that by the 1930s, art was also considered a viable idea for economic stimulus. This is evidenced by the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 and the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1935, both of which advocated the incorporation of art into the curriculum in some of the Indian boarding schools and virtually assured the development of American Indian art into the broad field that it is today.

The most successful and most well documented school that taught American Indians art techniques was the Santa Fe Indian School. The school was established as an Indian Boarding School in 1890. Art classes were offered there as early as 1920. The so-called Studio Style art taught there was intentionally meant to look primitive to appeal to collector’s notions of the “Vanishing Indian.” To cater to the collector’s market, correct subject matter, and methods for painting were determined for American Indian painters by instructors, Indian traders, anthropologists, and museum personnel while the market and the standardization of stylistic components of Native art developed simultaneously. This cycle is now so standardized that it is accepted and not questioned. The Indian art market was conceived of and created by Euro-American patrons, is still going strong and is now self-perpetuated. Many of the so-called traditional stylistic components to which Native art adheres and by which it is judged, were created and determined by Euro-American connoisseurs and patrons for the larger collectors art market. Some stylistic designs in two-dimensional paintings borrow elements from traditional art forms, such as pottery designs or the use of isolated geometric elements used in the creation of a Navajo sand painting. Both historically and now, designs are used in a way that is non-traditional or may have no relationship with traditional Native art. However, American Indian art and Native American art was, or is marketed as traditional, regardless of how designs are used or the relationship of the object to traditional art.
In examining the development of Native art as an art historical conceptual category, Brody and Garmhausen postulate that the earliest white mediated forms occur in the Southwest between 1900 and 1917. This period in Southwest history includes the beginnings of Southwest anthropology, archaeology, and tourism. There was sporadic art production prior to this time when early Southwest Indian traders such as C. J. Wallace commissioned Zuni Indians to create paintings. Anthropologists like Jesse Walter Fewkes who commissioned drawings of Katsinas at Hopi and Edgar Hewett and Kenneth Chapman, both from of the School of American Research (SAR), commissioned Santa Domingo Pueblo artists to create works on paper. Chapman provided materials to tribal members whom he asked to depict tribal images as early as 1901 and then purchased these images for study. Hewett encouraged workers from San Ildefonso, at the Frijoles Canyon Ruins dig from 1904–1914, to draw designs they saw and to produce pictures of tribal ceremonies. Hewett was also responsible for creating the process for authentication and legitimization of Native art forms. He commissioned, collected, and wrote articles about the art he commissioned and collected. Hewett published articles in such magazines as Ladies Home Journal, The Dial, El Palacio, and Art and Archaeology. During the summer of 1918, Hewett and SAR employed Native artists Crescencio Martinez, Julian Martinez, Fred Kabotie, Otis Polelonema, Velino Sheje and Alfonso Roybal, also known as Awa Tsireh. In addition to Hewett, there was also a grade school teacher at San Ildefonso day school who, as early as 1910, had urged her students to draw.

Indeed, by the 1920s there were over a dozen Pueblo painters, with no formal art training, who produced two-dimensional easel paintings in and around Santa Fe and Taos, New Mexico. Sometimes referred to as the Santa Fe School of Art, they were largely self-taught and had developed their own small market of white patrons, including local museums, tourists, and white intellectuals and artists such as Mabel Dodge Luhan, John Sloan, and Robert Henri who were living in the area at the time. These artists, authors, and anthropologists contributed much to the early development and dissemination of Native art. In fact, they and others in their social group were intimately involved in the creation of a number of events that were instrumental in creating a market for American Indian Art and events that continue to draw artists and customers today. These events included Gallup Intertribal Indian Ceremonial and Santa Fe Indian Market. Local traders and other white patrons started this “festival and art exhibition” in 1921. In addition to the Gallup Intertribal Ceremonial, the Santa Fe Indian Market, or at least an incarnation of it, began in 1922. Indian Market and Gallup Ceremonial both continue to be the largest venues for Native American art and are the two biggest events of the year in the Native art world.

In addition to creating local and regional markets for Indian art designed for tourists, some of the literati living in and around Santa Fe and Taos organized larger national events, which included the first showings of American Indian Art in New York City. In 1931, the Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts opened in New York City and was the first National Indian Art show of its kind. The show reinforced that Indians were a part of American history, and this show fell right in line with the prevailing view that Indians were vanishing and their culture needed preserving. Because of their prolific collecting and encouragement of quality and authenticity, wealthy collectors actually created a market for Indian art that was self-validating. Ten years later, in 1941, The Museum of Modern Art, in New York City hosted an exhibit of Indian Art of the United States. This show introduced the world to American Indian art at a time of renewed nationalism and was hugely influential on many contemporary artists of the time.

These new markets created consumer demand for Indian art and by the late twenties, this demand was met by training artists at several Indian schools, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs schools such as Haskell Institute, Carlisle, and the Albuquerque Indian School. In partial response to the recommendations of the Merriam Report of 1931 and the artistic environment that had developed in and around Santa Fe, the Santa Fe Indian School implemented an arts program. The school hired Dorothy Dunn to begin teaching in this program in 1932. Dunn was familiar with Indian painting, as she had previously taught at several other BIA schools in the area. She was the instructor at the Santa Fe Indian School from 1932 to 1937. And despite the mythology that she literally created the style that is now considered traditional style or studio style Native American art, it is clear that these styles were already in existence. However, she did standardize the methods for teaching these styles and, further, she taught students how to produce saleable work specifically for the white collectors’ market. Students were required to produce suitable subject matter in their art or leave school, and Dunn determined...
the subject matter. One of her students, renowned Apache artist, Allan Houser, later recalled,

When I got to the studio, it was the old traditional style they wanted from you or not at all. Dorothy Dunn told me that if I was going to do things that are realistic, then you better go on out and take the first bus home. Everyone was encouraged to search their background for traditional things. That’s all she permitted us to do. My only objection was this: She trained us all the same way. You either paint like this, Mr. Houser, or it’s not Indian art.12

For Dunn, it was unacceptable for students to paint any other subject matter or for any other purpose than the Indian market. She was committed to encouraging and facilitating pictures of an unassimilated group heritage, despite the fact that many students wanted quick training in modern non-Indian American art in hopes of competing for commercial success with non-Native artists. As a result, many students left before they were twenty years old, having already done their best work.13 In effect, Dunn was fulfilling the role that anthropologists, traders, and other educators had filled in the past, only in an officially sanctioned setting.14 Some of the characteristics of what is called the Studio Style include representations of tribal images in a flat style, with little figure to ground relationship. Also depicted were geometric elements isolated from pottery designs, and figures of birds and animals. The Studio Style is often criticized in academia as white mediated, although similar images were created by Pueblo Indians in kiva mural designs as noted by Hibben.15 However, what was white mediated was cultural borrowing of design elements. Borrowing designs or crossing tribal motifs would get a student reprimanded as Dunn deemed this “unauthentic,” despite the fact that diffusion was and still is prevalent. Indeed, perhaps there was always market mediation. The dynamics changed, however, with the emerging American market dominance: the market was no longer the mediator, but the primary factor. According to Dunn,

The Santa Fe Indian School, through its art classes, is attempting to recover and develop America’s only indigenous art. Much of it has been irretrievably lost, of course, but Indian art students are delving into forgotten places, searching through ethnological papers, studying museum collections, inquiring of their elders, making observations of themselves of what remains of the old cultures, and reconstructing their racial heritage as a basis for building new things which will contribute to America’s cultural progress.16

The field of Indian Art grew substantially during the years Dunn was instructor. There was already considerable demand for Indian art, but the advent of the Federal Indian Arts and Crafts Board in 1935 and federal policies of creating economic stimulus through the arts, added to the demand. In fact, there were so many requests for showings of Santa Fe Indian School art student’s work, that at one point, engagements exceeded 30 shows per year.17 By 1938, the most successful Native artists were graduates of the Santa Fe Indian School. Dorothy Dunn left her teaching position at the school after only five years. However, the Santa Fe Indian School continued teaching art to Native students according to the principles and styles she created under the direction of former student Santa Clara artist and educator, Geronima Montoya Cruz. Despite continued institutional difficulties and problems with administration, under Cruz, the school continued to teach Dunn’s methods through the forties and fifties until the end of the school in 1962.

There were many changes that affected the school during the forties. Many students were lost in World War II and tourism dropped dramatically. Also, many graduates returned to their reservations following training and only produced art to supplement their income. Other problems involved the curriculum; while other schools modified their curricula to meet changing times, the Santa Fe Indian School did not. By the late fifties, the school was considered a dumping ground for problem students, a legacy that would follow the institution until its demise.18 The same styles of painting that Dorothy Dunn had taught in the 1930’s were now institutionalized and being taught on a broader level; if a Native artist’s work did not include the stylistic components that were recognized as traditional, their work was not regarded as marketable or authentic. Indeed, this often holds true today.

In 1959, the University of Arizona organized a conference on Indian art, sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, and held at the University of Arizona in 1959. The purpose of the Directions in Indian Art conference was,

To bring into an organized work conference a group of persons qualified through experience and training to explore and set forth the current status of Southwest Indian art. To resolve possible ways and means of preservation and development of Southwestern Indian arts and crafts through: 1) Education of the public in the appreciation of this art, 2) The betterment of the economic conditions of the Indian craftsman and artist, and 3) Opportunities for education of the Indian artist in a period of transition.19

The participant list reads like a who’s who of Indian art at the time. According to the conference
proposal the University sent to the Rockefeller Foundation, potential participants included,

Indian Craftsmen and artist and other Indians closely connected with these interests; traders who have been and are in direct contact with the Indian; members of the staffs of museums, art galleries, university departments of art and anthropology, Indian arts and crafts guilds, Indian school and other institutions and organizations which have a direct connection with or interest in Indian art.20

Some of the actual presenters included Dr. Frederick Dockstader, who at the time was the Assistant Director of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation; Dorothy Dunn, the former Santa Fe Indian School teacher largely responsible for training an entire generation of Native artists in the Studio Style; Dr. John Adair; Bertha Dutton; Joe Herrera, an Indian artist from Cochiti; Tom Bahti, Indian Trader from Tucson; Pablita Velarde, Santa Clara artist; Fred Kabotie, Hopi artist and educator; Allan Houser, Apache artist and educator at Inter-Mountain Indian School; Charles Loloma, Hopi artist; Clara Lee Tanner, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Arizona and wife of Indian trader John Tanner; and Lloyd Kiva New, Cherokee artist and educator, who would go on to run the Institute of American Indian Art just a few years later.21

Dunn is credited with facilitating the larger acceptance of the Studio Style. However, she clung tenaciously to her beliefs that this style was the direct result of an unacculturated past, as is evidenced by her statement at the Directions conference:

Indian painting is, first of all, art, but in the greater implications of human relationships and history it is something more—something perhaps of a genetic aspect in the riddle of mankind. Unless the legends, songs, ceremonies, and other native customs are recorded by the people themselves, painting must continue to be the principal contributor of Indian thought to the world art and history.”22

Today, her writing reads at best, as one who romanticizes Indians and at her worst, maternalizing and matronizing.

In contrast to the goals of the conference and to Dunn’s remarks, Lloyd New noted,

Let’s admit, sadly if you must, that the hey-dey of Indian life is past, or passing. Let’s also admit that art with all peoples has been a manifestation of the lives of those people, reflecting the truth of the times. And if Indian culture is in a state of flux then we must expect a corresponding art. An art whose main concern is recording the past is called history and an art whose main concern is narration of the present is news reporting, and is better done with the pen, not the brush. Effective stylization may be ever so successful as decoration but may not be art.23

Dunn’s maternalistic attitudes contrast greatly with Kiva New’s assimilationist viewpoints, which are well documented. In fact, Dunn and New seemed to be at odds most of their professional lives, as evidenced by numerous papers in the Dunn archives at the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Perhaps these differences were due to generational differences. Or, maybe cultural differences as Dunn was white, on the outside looking in, while New was Indian and trying to get out. Either way, they did not agree on much.

Of the other Indians invited to speak—Pablita Velarde, Fred Kabotie, Charles Loloma, Mrs. Joe Herrera—Allan Houser was the only one to speak of problems with the then current art training of Indians. He suggested more practical art training such as commercial art, stating “... commercial art, which pays well, is a competitor to creative art which offers nothing but starvation.”24 Either the other Indian artists/participants said little or their remarks were not recorded. However, what is recorded demonstrates the mixed feelings of Indian participants, some with feelings of gratitude for white patronage, while others were concerned with the general state of Indian education.25

The project planners and organizers at the University of Arizona had lofty goals and in October of 1959, just seven months after the Directions in Indian Art Conference, the University of Arizona proposed, sought, and obtained funding from the Rockefeller Foundation for a series of art workshops for young Indian artists. Citing changing economic times and the conflict between traditional and contemporary viewpoints in terms of its effects on younger artists, the proposed workshops sought to bring selected Indian artists between the ages of 17 and 25, to the University for a series of intensive six-week summer workshops, over the course of three years, 1960–1962.

The workshops were designed to expose the young artists to a variety of media, instructors, and hands-on experiences. The students had access to both Indian anthropological resources and historic and contemporary Western art sources. They learned everything from design to marketing principles from both Indian and Anglo instructors. The workshop culminated each year with an exhibit and critique of their work.26
The first Southwest Indian Art Project workshop took place on June 6–16th, 1960 with 24 participants. The second workshop was held June 12–22nd, 1961 with 23 students including Fritz Scholder, who went on to become one of the most recognizable and famous Indian artists or artist who happened to be Indian. The Southwest Indian Art Project changed significantly during its final year of 1962 due to unforeseen circumstances. This was the year that the BIA opened the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe on the old Santa Fe Indian School site. They hired all three Indian instructors away from the Southwest Indian Art Project, including Lloyd Kiva New, and they built on what had been done at the University of Arizona. Further, IAIA accepted 16 students from the Southwest Indian Art Project. In response, the coordinators of the Project changed the summer workshop program, scaling it back to the acceptance and support of “selected students from those returning students” for regular academic study. The University of Arizona eliminated the studio aspect altogether and allowed the remaining eight students to concentrate on whatever area of study they chose. Of this group, Fritz Scholder was awarded a fellowship as a Graduate Assistant plus full scholarship, room and board, travel and materials.

Most people are unaware of the University of Arizona Rockefeller conference or its influence on Native art and artists and, and the fact that IAIA, while influenced by the Rockefeller funded Southwest Indian Art Project summer institutes, was not an outgrowth of them. The BIA and the Indian Arts and Crafts Board created IAIA through a joint effort. George Boyce was the founding director, although at the time the position was superintendent. Lloyd New was hired as the Head of the Art Department and a number of key staff, mostly Indian, were hired, many from the Bureau of Indian Affairs Intermountain Indian School in Utah, including Allan Houser and his wife. In fact, Boyce believed that the success of IAIA was because he hired Native staff and instructors. He deliberately hired Indian artists he considered successful; they were either instructors or they had a national reputation. Those he did hire, Allan Houser, Charles Loloma, and Otelle Loloma significantly influenced the course of the school and the direction of Native art, as they had the most contact with students. The teachers influenced the students and the students then influenced the teachers. IAIA broadened the field of Native arts to include all of the arts, not just painting as the SFIS had embraced.

Boyce was the director/superintendent of IAIA from 1962–1967 and some refer to these years as the “golden period:” a period when much national and international attention was focused on the school and for good reason. During this time a number of students graduated who went on to national acclaim, including T. C. Cannon, Doug Hyde, Kevin Red Star, and Earl Biss. These artists are often referred to as the first generation of the post-studio style as they were the first artists to transcend the Studio Style that Dunn and Cruz taught for so many years at the Santa Fe Indian School.

In 1968, Lloyd New, former Arts Director took over as director of IAIA and he ran the school until 1978. This era was a time of considerable change in IAIA, reflective of the changes in Indian Country and the changing social climate of the United States. While the nation wrestled with Viet Nam, civil rights issues, and political changes, Indian Country was struggling with Indian self-determination, various federal policies, and the American Indian Movement. These social and political changes affected the school and the students attending. New instituted changes: he hired former students, developed a cultural center, and worked to transition IAIA from a high school to a college. In 1968, Russell Means, then an AIM leader, spoke on campus, greatly affecting the student body. During New’s tenure, many problems manifested. Inbreeding in staff, due to Indian hiring preferences and hiring of former students, had led to stagnation in style. The school’s work had become complacent and the reputation of IAIA declined. The year New retired, 1978, the last high school class graduated. Former graduates of the seventies include Dan Namingha, Roxanne Swentzell, and Grey Cohoe. IAIA had effectively propelled Indian arts to a new height. However, times had changed, and so had policies. The era of the BIA school was over. By this time, in addition to art school and art programs at universities, there were tribal colleges and American Indian Studies programs in universities. Indian artists had numerous choices as to where to get their education.

During the 1980s, as transition and change affected IAIA and as they struggled to compete with other educational institutions in recruitment of students, a new generation of Native artists not affiliated with IAIA garnered national attention. Little is published about IAIA after the 1980s and records have yet to be archived and are currently inaccessible for research.
The 1980s and 1990s generations of non-IAIA trained artists reads like a Who’s Who of current Native art. Indeed this time period was the beginning of a period of growth in Native American art. No longer was IAIA the only school that artists received their training from; although, Santa Fe remains the center of the Native Art world, despite developments of art markets in other parts of the country.

Many of today’s best recognized Native artists attended various universities and received traditional art school training, including Truman Lowe, Jaime Quick-to-See Smith, Kay Walking Stick, Emmi Whitehorse, Edgar Heap-of-Birds, Diego Romero, Dan Lomahaftewa, Tony Abeyta, Anita Fields, Marcus Amerman, Shelly Nero, James Luna, Nora Naranjo-Morse, and Mateo Romero. However, these artists have transcended the boundaries and limitations of the term Indian artist and some even critique what it means to be Indian in their work. Many, if not most of them do not participate in the art/culture system of marketing their identity to establish value for their art. Perhaps they are reacting to the art that came before them or perhaps the market itself. In any case, there is a divergence between artists who are Indian, producing art for a larger audience and Indian artists, producing art for the Native art buying public.

By the mid-2000s, an entirely new generation of Native artists has taken its place beside the early modernists, the IAIA graduates, and those who worked outside of the art/culture system. Often, these artists create works that are socially critical, self-referential, or overtly humorous. Many of this generation are self-trained or have little formal training. Still others learned the dual system taught at IAIA; create art for the market and art for yourself.

Some IAIA graduates who have transcended the system include Hoka Skenadore or Marla Allison. Just a few of the other artists of this generation and caliber include, Kade Twist, Virgil Ortiz, Will Wilson, and Sarah Sense. One of the best known artists of this generation is Steve Yazzie. His work, like that of Emmi Whitehorse, transcends the label of American Indian Artist. He is an artist who happens to be Indian and his work is recognized throughout the world, and not for being a Native artist, but for being an artist.

These younger generations have pushed the boundaries of Native American art. While the art/culture system is still firmly in place, new exhibits at museums and galleries have broadened the boundaries of American Indian Art even further. The National Museum of the American Indian works with artists such as Emmi Whitehorse and James Luna, who represent a broad spectrum of variances in Native Art. In recent years, NMAI has become very supportive of socially critical Native art. In 2008, the Heard Museum in Phoenix, AZ, presented the group exhibition Remix: New Modernities in a Post-Indian World, which eventually went to the NMAI in New York City. This exhibit addressed issues of identity in American Indian Art. Further, galleries such as the Berlin Gallery at the Heard Museum and its curator, Andrea Hanley, have pushed open new doors for American Indian artists. The art chosen by this curator for the Berlin Gallery, challenges the Art/Culture system and continually breaks down barriers for all Native artists, not just those represented by the gallery.

The new blood from younger generations is exciting. Exhibitions at museums that support these generations is even more exiting. Clearly there are many artists, who are rejecting the art/culture system that is so pervasive in the American Indian Art world, but what the future holds for American Indian Art remains to be seen.

NOTES


2. Ibid., 222.


5. Ibid.


9. Mullin cites Bruce Bernstein’s 1993 UNM Dissertation in saying that Indian Market as it is presently known started in 1971. Despite the Southwest Indian Association for Indian Art’s (SWAIA) marketing the event as contiguous since 1922, prior to the 1950s it was not an annual event. In fact, from 1942–1971 the market was held at the annual Santa Fe Fiesta and was not a separate event, in 1971 the event was reorganized under SWAIA who separated it from the Fiesta and located it in the Plaza in Santa Fe.


11. Mythology reference to Dunn, generally referred to as creating the studio style when in fact she did not, she only taught what was already being taught in the region.


18. Ibid., 59.


20. Ibid.

21. “Directions in Indian Art: The Report of a Conference Held at the University of Arizona on March 20–21, 1959” (Tucson, 1959). Note: the participants are listed here as they were listed in the program.


28. “Southwest Indian Art Workshop Catalogue,” in *The Arizona State Museum–University of Arizona Southwest Indian Art Project files* (Tucson: 1961). It is interesting to note, that Scholder until his death in February 2005, insisted that he was not Indian, just of Indian descent. In addition, he ceased creating subject matter that referenced Indians in the early 1970s.


30. Ibid.


32. Ibid., 83.

33. Ibid.

34. The inaccessibility of IAIA records is a real shortcoming in American Indian Art history. Not only are they not cataloged, they are stored in boxes and completely unavailable, in any form, to researchers. There is a fairly complete history in Garmhausen’s book, but it only goes up to the inception of IAIA. Little is written or published on the subsequent decades.
The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), part of the Smithsonian Institution, is the premiere museum of Native American art and culture, containing the largest and most comprehensive collection of Native American art and artifacts in the world. With objects from North, South and Central America, holdings include approximately 800,000 objects, spanning 10,000 years of history through the present, from over 1,000 Native or indigenous cultures.

The National Museum of the American Indian was created by an act of Congress in 1989 and signed into law by President George Bush, Sr.; Public Law 101-185. The acquisition of the vast holdings of the Museum of the American Indian became the foundation of the National Museum of the American Indian. The Museum of the American Indian, which was founded by George Gustav Heye (1874–1957), contained the personal collections of Heye who traveled extensively throughout the western hemisphere. The NMAI collection contains 800,000 objects and a photographic archive of 125,000 images, this collection was assembled over the period of 54 years, beginning at the turn of the twentieth century. Nearly seventy percent of the collections represent cultures in the United States and Canada; the other thirty percent includes objects from Mexico and Central and South America.

NMAI has three facilities including a smaller permanent museum, the George Gustav Heye Center located in lower Manhattan, a Cultural Resources Center which houses and cares for the collections, in Suitland, Maryland, and a large permanent museum on the National Mall in Washington D.C. Additionally, NMAI actively works in collaboration with Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere by facilitating access to the museum’s cultural resources and by cultivating partnerships with communities and organizations through their Community Outreach programming.

The George Gustav Heye Center, located in the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Customs House in New York City, opened in 1994. This branch of NMAI is an exhibition facility for both permanent and temporary exhibitions. It also houses a Resource Center that utilizes computer technology to teach about Native life and links the museum to current Native communities. Also, the Heye Center houses a Film and Video Center that serves the Native filmmakers and community, educators, and the general public.

Built in 1999, the Cultural Resources Center is a research and storage facility for the objects and artifacts in the NMAI collection. It is state-of-the-art in terms of care and storage of the collection and seeks to educate new generations of museum professionals. This facility serves as the center for various museum services, including community outreach, educational outreach, and technological development. It is also a culturally sensitive facility, recognizing that some objects in the collections may have family and community connections, this facility has both public and private areas for use by Native and non-Native researchers and visitors from tribal communities, academics, and artistic and cultural organizations.

In September 2004, NMAI opened a second larger permanent museum on the National Mall in Washington D.C., in front of the United States Capitol. This structure was built by two construction companies including one that is a subsidiary of the Table Mountain Rancheria of Friant, CA, a federally recognized American Indian tribe. The building is 351,263 square feet, 99 feet high and has a dome that rises 120 feet in the rotunda. The creation of the new museum included consultation and collaboration
with 500 Natives from 300 communities. In keeping with the consensus of consultants from Indian Country, the building includes round interior spaces, exterior water features, east-facing entrances, and many interior details which reference Native symbols from various cultures. The Grand Opening took place on September 21, 2004 with an elaborate morning procession of Native Americans in full regalia, traditional to each of their distinctive Nations. The procession proceeded from the Smithsonian Institution’s Castle along the mall toward the U.S. Capitol for the dedication of the new museum.

NMAI is distinctive in that the institution works collaboratively with Native communities to sustain cultural heritage and to promote living cultures. Through extensive educational programs and community outreach, the museum facilitates communication, education and connections with objects, artifacts, art and between people. NMAI is dedicated to not only preserving and exhibiting cultural artifacts from the past, but giving a voice to contemporary indigenous peoples as its exhibitions are presented from a Native perspective and in a Native voice.

Further Reading: http://americanindian.si.edu

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important issues facing American Indians concerns the question of identity: What is an Indian? The historical misrepresentations of “Indians” has been outside of tribal control and perpetuated by American cultural, political, academic, and social institutions that promote, produce and communicate information to the public. Indians have been misrepresented in art, history, science, literature, popular films, and by the press in the news, on the radio, and on television. The earliest stereotypes associating Indians with being savage, naked, and heathen were established with the foundation of America and determined by two factors: religious intolerance for cultural and spiritual differences leading to the destruction of Native cultures, and rejection of Indian cultures as relevant subject matter by traditional historians in the writing of U.S. history.

The demise of the Indian presence, accompanied by the westward movement of pioneers and viewed as a major American victory, was the result of a struggle among whites for economic, political, social, and religious independence. The ideology of Manifest Destiny was the propaganda used against Indians to justify our extermination. Noted writer D’Arcy McNickle (Métis, enrolled by the Flathead Tribe) recalls that “Until the third decade of the present century, Indian policy was rooted in the assumption that the Indians would disappear.” The enduring perception of Indians as an enemy pending extinction cleared the way for anyone to create stereotypes of Indians and to exclude any serious treatment or study of us. Challenged by this inimical history, this book, Wiping the Warpaint Off the Lens, builds on scholarship and interpretation by Native people who have worked to share the totality of the American story in our images.

Over the last twenty years, Native Americans have made some outstanding film and videos. My discussion of these films and videos draws on my

experiences as both a Native American and a video maker. As Native American filmmakers, we have faced many struggles in our attempts to make films, competing for limited resources and struggling to overcome popular stereotypes that present us as unintelligent and refer to us in the past tense rather than as people who inhabit the present. What really matters to us is that we be able to tell our own stories in whatever form we choose. This is not to say that whites cannot tell as good Native story, but until very recently whites—to the exclusion of Native people—have been the only people given the necessary support and recognition by society to tell Native stories in the medium of film.

The chance to remedy the lack of literature about telling our own stories is deeply connected to being self-determined as an Indian. It is part of a social movement that I call “cultural sovereignty,” which involves trusting the older ways and adapting them to our lives in the present. These rights and traditions include defending our birthrights as agreed to by treaties, speaking our tribal languages, practicing ancestral methods of food harvesting such as spear fishing and whale hunting, gathering medicinal herbs, and using animals and birds for ceremonial purposes.

Our films and videos are helping to reconnect us with very old relationships and traditions. Native American filmmaking transmits beliefs and feelings that help revive storytelling and restore the old foundation . . . The oral tradition is fundamental to understanding Native film and video and how we experience truth, impart knowledge, share information and laugh. Traditional Native American storytelling practices and oral histories are a key source of our recovery of our authentic identity. Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna) believes that the ability to tell stories is a way of life for Pueblo people. She believes that older stories and newer stories belong to the same creative source that keeps the people together. Furthermore, she states that “the Origin story functions basically as a maker of our identity: with the story, we know who we are.” Simon Ortiz (Acoma) writes that in his experience the power of stories—such as the origin stories shared among the Pueblo people—is that words take hold of a storyteller and “go their own way.” Story making at this instant becomes the language of experience, sensation, history, and imaginations. Today’s storytellers continue the practice of an art that is traced back countless generations and safeguard that the stories are being carried into the future . . .

That the oral tradition is a continually evolving process is apparent in Aboriginal and Native American films and videos, which are extensions of the past in our current lives. Additionally, stories and their telling may also connect us to the universe of medicine—of paranormal and sacred power. Storytellers are highly valued because they have the power to heal the spirit. One of the reasons for making films is to heal the ruptures of the past, recognizing that such healing is up to the viewer.

Poet Luci Tapahonso (Navajo) explains how Navajo stories are viewed as being true by members of her tribe: “A Navajo audience is unlikely to doubt the storyteller’s assertion that the events related did indeed occur. It is also understood that the stories or songs do not ‘belong’ to the teller, but that her or his role is that of a transmitter.” Native filmmakers are “transmitters” too! The integrity associated with storytelling or filmmaking in this context remains sincere . . .

DETERMINING OUR SELF-IDENTITY

In 1989, Charlene Teters (Spokane) attended a University of Illinois basket ball game with her son and daughter. After watching a half-time performance by the university mascot named Chief Illiniwek, her life was radically altered. The mascot was a student dressed in Plains Indian regalia wearing an eagle feather headdress and “Indian” warpaint who pranced around the arena to ersatz “Indian tom-tom” music played by the university band. Teters, a graduate student at Illinois at the time recalls seeing her children slump in their seats as the befeathered mascot led a crowd of cheering fans. She was acutely aware that her own and her children’s’ Indian heritage was violated by the performance of Chief Illiniwek.

Teters questioned the administrators at the University of Illinois about the “Indian” mascot, noting that it was offensive to her American Indian beliefs and practices. University officials were defensive and claimed the mascot was a long-standing tradition meant to honor historical Indians. Teters continued to question the mascot issue and began a personal protest of it, standing on campus with a sign that read “Indians are human beings, not mascots.” But instead of receiving support for her efforts to raise student awareness about the unsuitability of having a mascot that misrepresents Indians, she was seen as a threat. The sports fans who upheld the use of the mascot were remarkably hostile in their resistance to eliminate the practice. As news spread of her protest, her criticism produced a backlash of attacks.
against her and her family from university students, alumni, local businesses, and state officials. Teters’s persistence brought national attention to the mascot issue as other universities and high schools with mascots named after Indians began debating their continued use of them. The University of Illinois Regents voted to retain their mascot tradition with support from the state of Illinois. A bill was passed to protect the mascot, although Illinois governor Jim Edgar later vetoed it.

In 1992, Teters graduated with an M.F.A. from the University of Illinois and vowed to continue her opposition to “the Chief.” She is a founding member of the National coalition on Racism in Sports and the Media. In 1998, Teters was featured by ABC News with Peter Jennings as the “Person of the Week” for her advocacy against racism in targeting Native Americans.

Teters’s history of public challenge to the commercial exploitation of American Indians is the subject of the nationally televised documentary In Whose Honor? By Jay Rosenstein, in which she states, “Our people paid with their very lives to keep what we have left. And we have to honor that sacrifice.”

The revolutionary artist role with which Teters identifies with is not unique, nor is the Indian mascot tradition the only mis-education that Indians need to recover from and redress. Another form of mis-education about Indians is their negative portrayal by Hollywood. Victor Masayesva Jr., a Hopi filmmaker, responded to a hundred years of Hollywood movie portrayals in Imagining Indians (1992). Masayesva features the personal experiences of Native people who have participated in Hollywood productions from the late 1930s to the 1990s and exposes their manipulation by Hollywood filmmakers, comparing their behavior to early Indian agents who took land from Indians for white settlement. Masayesva translates this historical practice and applies it to white filmmakers who take aspects of Indian culture and use their own interpretation of the culture to make their films.

In Imagining Indians, Masayesva views the portrayal of “imagined Indians” found in Hollywood movies and the manufacture of Indian art objects as parallel activities that contribute to the commodification and dehumanization of Native people. One scene in the film takes place at the annual event known as the “Santa Fe Indian Market,” where the production of Indian art is strictly commercial and driven by collectors who don’t care if a set of Indian Kachinas are exactly alike . . . A collector interviewed at the market admits “We’re totally saturated and there’s no space to lay these rugs on the floor, and there’s no set place to house these dolls (holding up a set of Navajo dolls), but this becomes a disease, one just keeps buying, buying, buying.” This replication of popular images of Indians for commercial purposes—whether in films or other forms of culture—contributes to a loss of respect for culture, confused identity, and weakened beliefs about what it means to be a Native American. In a further demonstration of unraveling popular images of Indians, Masayesva turns to his own community of Hopi Indians, who are viewed as a peacefully united people with sacred beliefs. In 1994, a Hollywood film crew sought to film at the Hopi reservation in a place revered by a group of elders who opposed filming there. However the elected Hopi tribal government accepted a payment in exchange for allowing the filming and the matter was dismissed.

While Masayesva relied on historical parallels and real-life events to expose some of the effects on Indians of the years of stereotyping, Sherman Alexie (Spokane/Coeur d’Alene) confronted stereotypes by turning them on their heads and getting people to laugh with Indians rather than at them. His serialized novel The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fist Fight in Heaven (1993) became the basis for his screenplay for Smoke Signals (1998 Miramax), directed by Chris Eyre (Cheyenne/Arapaho). The film is about two young men, Victor and Thomas, who grow up in the shadow of a family tragedy that sets up the undercurrent of their uneven relationship at a reservation in the Northwest. The plot focuses on Victor, the recent death of Victor’s father, and the journey the young men take to revisit their past while recovering the father’s remains. Alexie’s writings creatively explore the range of experiences found in any community that shares values and traditions. Histories are not an exhibition of Native or Indian culture, but a rendering of the feelings of Natives today . . .

The decade of the nineties produced an abundance of Native media about the changes that took place in the 20 years since Deloria called for Indian self-representation. Filmmaking, print journalism, radio programming, and the Internet are compiling our individual stories into the larger story of Native survival and continuance. The result is a growing sense of unity about our place in history and the role we have in helping shape the future . . .

All filmmaking is a risk taking venture, but too often the rationale given by funding organizations for rejecting Native American film proposals is that
they are not as good as other proposals and that as filmmakers we lack experience. The underlying attitude is that we as Native filmmakers are unconventional in our approach to filmmaking and too often personally invest to a fault in wanting to make films about our people. But it is only through our participation in filmmaking that we can help to create mutual understanding and respect.

The comprehension of culture as it relates to Native filmmaking comes from the storytelling approach that always pays homage to the past but is not suspended there. The currency of our experience is energized by self expression that validates and comforts our desire to participate in the world of ideas. The process also works to detox our own ingrained stereotypes of Indians that block our creativity. Creating films and other visual art is a dynamic within Native American life that, according to art curator and scholar Rick Hill (Tuscarora), “comes from our ancestors to which we are bound to add our own distinctive (traditional) patterns.” Hill’s reference to art as a part of life also affirms Masayesva’s perspective that filmmaking is not a separate activity but an integral one.

As a general rule Hollywood “Indian” movies are set in the late nineteenth century America. This time frame, according to Navajo filmmaker Arlene Bowman, is a problem when “the average American cannot accept Native Americans’ present realities and always look at Indians in the past; I am not putting the past down but we are for real and living today.” Bowman, who has a degree in motion pictures and television from the University of California at Los Angeles and has produced two major films, has not been able to access mainstream media in part because the accomplishments of Native American filmmakers are not recognized as valid if they do not conform to expectations of how Indians look and act in movies.

Following the enormous popularity and financial success of *Dances with Wolves* (1990), several new film and television projects were announced, including Kevin Costner’s own TIG Productions documentary titled *500 Nations*, which was shown on prime-time CBS-TV in 1995.

Two years before, in 1993, Ted Turner held a press conference to announce his Native American media initiative. This was at the height of the controversy over his ownership of the Atlanta Braves baseball team and his endorsement of the “tomahawk chop” by Braves fans, an arm gesture that is offensive to Native Americans. Turner’s project, the Native American Series, was comprised of TV documentaries, a book, and several historical dramatic films, which were broadcast on Turner Network Television.

Both the Costner and Turner projects were seen by Native filmmakers and writers as hopeful opportunities to be hired as writers, producers, and directors and to promote new images and current views held by Native peoples. I was disappointed, after watching only portions of the Costner and Turner programs, to see that they were merely recycled images of historical photographs of Indians taken by white photographers with emphasis on the social problems facing Indians.

Phil Lucas (Choctaw) was hired to direct one of the documentary programs, and Hanay Geiogmah (Kiowa/Delaware) was listed as cowriter for the Native American Series, but it was obvious that they did not have decision-making power, given the revival of stereotyped images of Indians in many of the programs. Ruth Denny, a journalist for the Circle, an independent Native newspaper published in Minnesota, wrote an editorial about the Costner and Turner projects after she received no response to her request for information from their production companies on how Native Americans could apply for jobs on these productions. In hindsight, her criticism was justified when she wrote, “Native Americans do not need any more Kevin Costner’s, Billy Jacks, and John Wayne’s . . . The need for the Indian experts is over.” Denny is referring to America’s history of Indian experts who are white and male.

Directing, producing, and writing for films and television are professional careers not typically associated with Native people, but there have been some refreshing changes in Hollywood of late. A new generation of Aboriginal and Native American actors have appeared in title roles in movies that feature Indians. The nineties have seen a number of Native Americans pursing acting careers in film and television in Canada and in the United States, including Adam Beach (Ojibwe) and Evan Adams (Cree), who were in *Smoke Signals*; Irene Bedard (Inupiat/Cree) who was in the title role of *Lakota Woman* (1994), was the voice of Pocahontas in the Disney production of *Pocahontas* (1995), and was also in *Smoke Signals*. More seasoned performers who also need to be acknowledged include Tantoo Cardinal (Métis/Cree), whose credits began in 1975 with projects in Canada and who was highly acclaimed in the United States after her appearance in *Dances with Wolves*; Gary Farmer (Cayuga), who became a Native cult hero for his role in *Powwow Highway* (1989) and was
in *Smoke Signals*; Graham Green (Oneida), who received an Oscar nomination for his performance in *Dances with Wolves*, Steve Reevis (Blackfeet), who had a unique role in *Fargo* (1996) and was featured in the independent film *Follow Me Home* (1997), directed by Peter Bratt; Wes Studi (Cherokee) who portrayed *Geronimo* in the contemporary remake of *Geronimo* (1993), a role he earned after his performances in the most recent rendition of *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992) and *Dances with Wolves*; Sheila Tousey (Menominee), who was cast as a key role in *Thunderheart* (1992) and was featured in the HBO film *Grand Avenue* (1996), written by Greg Sarris (Coastal Miwok).

Although most films and videos produced and directed by Native people document actual life stories, some are narrative films. Native fiction reveals insights familiar to Native people through characters acted by Native people who identify with these roles as belonging to their peoples experiences. An early one of these was *Return of the Country* (1983), written and directed by Bob Hicks (Creek/Seminole) as his graduate thesis film in directing at the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. The film’s plot revises all historical assumptions by having Indians discover America and establish a Bureau of Caucasian Affairs, a twist on the actual Bureau of Indian Affairs established by the U.S. federal government. Hicks used his creative license to reverse the dynamics of white and Indian relationships throughout *Return of the Country* by having white children abandon English, shed their European-Style dress, and turn away from Christianity.

Another early narrative film is *Harold of Orange* (1984), written by Gerald Vizenor (Ojibwe). The film is about Harold, an indigenous Indian from the reservation, who applies for a grant to open coffee-houses on the reservation. Harold and his friends, nicknamed “the warriors of Orange,” travel to the city in a school bus to present their proposal to a foundation. Their visit, which is an adventure for Harold and his buddies and an education for the whites at the foundation, is very humorous to audiences who know the underlying themes associated with the paternalistic attitudes toward the Indians shown in *Harold of Orange*, such as the myth that all Indians are alcoholics and the insensitive display of ancestral Indian remains in museums. *The Honor of All* (1989), directed by Phil Lucas (Choctaw), is a reenactment of the debilitating effects of alcoholism in an Aboriginal community named Alkali Lake and tells the story of the cultural and spiritual recovery of an entire community. *Tenacity* (1994), directed by Chris Eyre (Cheyenne/Arapahoe), was completed while Eyre was enrolled in the M.F.A. filmmaking program at New York University. The film opens with two young Indian boys about ten years old playing combat on a rural road and their encounter with two white males in a truck who have been partying. *It Starts with a Whisper* (1993), codirected by Shelley Niro (Quinte Bay Mohawk) and Anna Gronau, is about a serious young Aboriginal woman who is unsure of herself and is taken for a joyride by her amusing spirit aunts. *Haircuts Hurt* (1993), directed by Randy Redroad (Cherokee), is a short film about a Native Woman’s decision to have her young son’s hair cut at a “redneck” (bigoted) barbershop.

As this sample of films shows, Native American filmmakers have many stories to tell about themselves and their culture. If they can be given opportunities to share their work, we just need to sit back, watch and listen.
Sherman Alexie stands at the back of a dark, crowded theater at last month’s Palm Springs Native American Film Festival, scanning the audience for reactions.

The festival is showing the film made from Alexie’s first screenplay, *Smoke Signals*, in honor of its 10th anniversary, and he’s keen to see how it has held up over time. “I don’t know if I can watch the whole thing,” he says, “too many flaws.” Onscreen, Alexie’s memorable road-trip buddies Victor (Adam Beach) and Thomas-Builds-the-Fire (Evan Adams) sit in a trailer watching old cowboy-and-Indian movies. “The only thing more pathetic than Indians on TV,” says Thomas, “is Indians watching Indians on TV.” The crowd erupts with laughter and Alexie smiles. It’s a great line, and at the time it was written it was certainly true. Despite the dawn of political correctness in the ‘90s, depictions of Native Americans as either bloodthirsty savages or as the stoic, spiritual antecedents to hippie culture continued to dominate the big screen.

But *Smoke Signals* threatened to change all that. The first major film written, directed and acted by Native Americans, *Smoke Signals* was both a critical and commercial success. Selected for the dramatic competition at Sundance and winner of the festival’s Audience Award, it was bought by Miramax and went on to bank $6.8 million at the box office on a budget of less than $2 million. More importantly, it offered Native Americans starved for positive and accurate depictions of themselves something they could watch and be proud of.

The film’s success appeared to be a harbinger of a new wave of Native filmmaking. What’s happened since? “Absolutely nothing,” according to Alexie. Indeed, a Native film with the cultural impact of *Smoke Signals* has yet to be replicated, and Alexie feels partly to blame. After their film took off, he and director Chris Eyre were bombarded with offers to work together again, but instead of capitalizing on the momentum, the two had a falling-out. Alexie, who was already well known in the literary world as the author of more than 17 books, drew the lion’s share of the film’s media attention and chose to roll with the praise, leaving Eyre feeling neglected.

“Basically we acted like typical Hollywood assholes,” says Alexie.

The two split ways with mixed results. In 2002, Alexie wrote and directed *The Business of Fancydancing*, which despite an interesting, semiautobiographical narrative about a reservation-born poet’s struggle to maintain his cultural roots in the white world, was missing Eyre’s directorial precision and went straight to DVD. Meanwhile, Eyre directed the thoroughly forgettable *Skins*, as well as several films for television (including 2003’s *Edge of America*), all of which lacked Alexie’s artistic edge.

If the creative duo who launched the Indian world’s first hit has sputtered, the world of Native film has continued to grow, albeit slowly. In 2001, Inuit director Zacharias Kunuk’s *The Fast Runner* won the Camera d’Or Prize at Cannes. This year, the Palm Springs Native American Film Festival received more than 360 submissions, up from 180 the year before. Perhaps most notably, *Smoke Signals* star Adam Beach earned strong reviews and serious Oscar buzz for his portrayal of Ira Hayes in Clint Eastwood’s *Flags of Our Fathers*.

Sundance, where *Smoke Signals* first began its amazing run, has also continued to provide a major outlet for Native filmmakers. This year, Creek director Sterlin Harjo’s *Four Sheets to the Wind* screened in the dramatic competition and went home with a Special Jury Prize for its leading lady, Tamara Podemski, who plays a reservation girl struggling to cope with city life and the loss of her father.

Yet despite a series of critical successes and the unwavering support of Sundance, which has used the festival as a showcase for Native films dating back to the first edition in 1985, commercial viability has remained elusive.

“Sundance shows around 120 feature films, and only a fraction get picked up and distributed,” says Bird Runningwater, associate director of the Sundance Institute’s Native American and Indigenous Initiative. “But it does seem that, most often, Native films fall into the category of those not being picked up.

*Four Sheets to the Wind* might be one of the best films out there that no one has ever seen. Despite drawing favorable comparisons to the box-office dynamo *Garden State*, and despite Podemski’s lauded performance, the film has yet to land a theatrical distribution deal. “It’s heartbreaking because we saw firsthand how audiences responded to the film,” says Podemski. “Someone just needs to get the balls to put it out there.”

Ironically, Podemski found out after talks with several high-level executives, the problem with the film is that it isn’t “Native enough.” “This is a regular film about a family that just happens to have a full Native cast,” she explains. “And I was told that the industry just doesn’t know what to do with that yet. They only know how to market something that is noticeably ‘Native.’”

That people can’t yet see the film is especially crushing for Podemski. For a Native actress, positive and challenging modern roles are difficult to come by. “There’s definitely a tendency to want to dress us up in buckskin,” she says.

*Smoke Signals* director Eyre agrees. “I don’t think a lot of people see value in telling stories about modern Indians,” he says. “But I don’t see the value in films that show the past. They all end the same way—the Indians die.”

The blame doesn’t fall entirely on the industry, however. Palm Springs Native American Film Festival programmer Thomas Harris, who screened all 360 of this year’s entries, says many Native filmmakers rely too heavily on the tragic realities of reservation life and not enough on substantive storytelling. “Right now, the ratio of documentaries to narratives is about 80/20,” he notes. “Which makes sense, because, with digital technology, documentaries can be made very cheaply. But there just aren’t enough narrative features out there.”

Podemski feels that the desire to inject activism into cinema has hampered the ability of many Native filmmakers to tell compelling stories. “I think our natural instinct is that we have to fight for something or communicate something on a larger level—to change society’s consciousness about Native Americans,” she says. “But I do think there is a need to focus on story and character and the craft of filmmaking, as opposed to a political or social statement that sometimes gets tied up in the narrative.”

**Sherman Alexie is more blunt:** “If I see one more fishing-rights documentary, I’m going to scream.”

Making a narrative film takes money, however—something most Native filmmakers don’t have access to. One continuing source of hope is that wealthy casino tribes will begin to invest in Native films. But many casino tribes are cautious about risking their money in the movie business after several tribes were financially burned by 2004’s million-dollar debacle *Black Cloud*. Written and directed by Rick Schroder (yes, that Rick Schroder), this story of a Navajo boxer’s attempt to make the Olympic team was duly panned by critics, a financial disaster, and replete with virtually every conceivable Native cliché (from the medicine man-like grandfather to characters’ conversations with the “spirit world”). Three years later, the film continues to be a source of both humor and embarrassment. That tribes would back a Rick Schroder vehicle instead of supporting one of their own remains one of the greater mysteries of the Native film world.

Still, challenging and thoughtful Native narratives are getting made. Both Alexie and Runningwater cite veteran Sundance filmmakers Blackhorse Lowe (*5th World*) and Cedar Sherbert (*Gesture Down*) as names to watch out for in the future.

“There are more Native Americans working in fiction filmmaking now than ever before,” says Runningwater. “While production values are often quite low, they find ways to make their films. The ultimate challenge is telling an original story that audiences can identify with.”

Tracy Rector, a Seminole filmmaker who runs the Superfly Filmmaking Seminar for Native youth, sees the next generation of Native filmmakers potentially
bridging the gap between the desire to tell truthful indigenous stories and the ability to make movies that resonate with a larger audience. “There’s a huge gothic culture on the rez these days,” says Rector, “so you’re seeing that reflected in the work of young filmmakers. I’m seeing loads of really smart and funny zombie movies from my kids. I actually think it might be the next wave in Native cinema.”

Native Zombie movies?

“You know, we did have one zombie submission,” notes Harris. “It was about a Native American zombie possessed with the spirit of the white man. A really fantastic idea, but not very well executed.”

That may soon change. Blackhorse Lowe is allegedly working with the Sundance Screenwriters Lab to develop a Navajo zombie/horror film, while another experienced Native filmmaker recently contacted Rector about producing a zombie flick.

Alexie, for one, isn’t surprised. “Since George Romero turned the zombie movie into one of the more politicized allegorical cinematic forms, it might be natural for the most politicized allegorical ethnic group, us Injuns, to naturally be drawn to the form.”

Meanwhile, Alexie’s own filmmaking future remains uncertain, zombie or otherwise. “I’ve dealt with some Custers in my time in this industry,” he says, admittedly humbled by his experiences in the film business. Nonetheless, he and Eyre have reconciled and are hoping to start work on a new project together. The pair recently engaged in serious talks with HBO about shooting Alexie’s script about a remote Native Alaskan fishing village, but the project fell through. “They wanted to turn it into Rudy with whales,” says Alexie.

 Given the industrywide perception that there’s no market for culturally authentic Native films, neither Alexie nor Eyre envisions the next Smoke Signals breaking through anytime soon.

“We really need that bankable star who can carry a project,” says Eyre. “I tell studio executives that all the time and they say, ‘You’ve got that one guy.’ I just think to myself, ‘Oh, really? That one guy, huh?’”

For now, all eyes will be on Adam Beach, who just landed a recurring role on NBC’s popular crime drama Law and Order: Special Victims Unit. It’s the first major role for a Native actor in which his ethnicity won’t be the thrust of his part. “That could really be huge for us,” says Eyre.

As for Podemski, she just signed on for a part in a Fox television pilot about the original Dutch colonists of Manhattan. “It’s a buckskin role,” she laughs, “but it’s a really nice one.”

And so Indians will still be watching Indians on TV, no longer ashamed of what they see, but hoping for that breakout star who can carry them back to the big screen.

Native American Public Telecommunications

Native American Public Telecommunications (NAPT) supports the creation, promotion, and distribution of Native public media. NAPT:

• Produces and develops educational telecommunication programs for all media including public television and public radio;
• Provides training opportunities to encourage increasing numbers of American Indians and Alaska Natives to produce quality public broadcasting programs;
• Promotes increased control and use of information technologies by American Indians and Alaska Natives;
• Provides leadership in creating awareness of and developing telecommunications policies favorable to American Indians and Alaska Natives;
• Builds partnerships to develop and implement telecommunications projects with tribal nations, Indian organizations, and Native communities.

www.nativetelecom.org

Visionmaker Studios

• VisionMaker Video (VMV) is a service of NAPT and functions to promote and distribute Native public media.
Many films produced by VMV are documentaries shown on PBS’s curated shows, such as *Point of View* (P.O.V.) and *Independent Lens* or become part of public television’s schedule.

www.visionmaker.org

**Native America Calling**

Native America Calling is a live call-in program linking public radio stations, the Internet, and listeners together in a thought-provoking national conversation about issues specific to Native communities.

Each program engages noted guests and experts with callers throughout the United States and is designed to improve the quality of life for Native Americans. Native America Calling is heard on 52 stations in the United States and in Canada by approximately 500,000 listeners each week.

www.nativeamericancalling.com

**Native American Music Awards**

The Native American Music Awards (NAMA) was created to promote and support Native Music on a national level.

NAMA is directed toward Native Youth on reservations in order to give them the needed inspiration and opportunities to pursue a professional career in music and to garner greater exposure.

Organizational objectives are targeted at getting artists up to date on professional industry standards regarding copyrights, publishing, and proper management and booking agent representation as well as touring and getting major record labels to start signing these artists.

The NAMA ceremony honors indigenous people north and south of the US and Canadian borders.

NAMA began 10 years ago as a grass roots initiative among industry professionals and record labels such as Canyon, SOAR, Silverwave, Turtle Island, and others.

The initial NAMA show was launched with 56 annual recordings and has increased to nearly 200 each year. Members from various communities and tribal radio stations serve as the advisory board.

The NAMA awards ceremony was styled on other national music awards shows. All current Grammy award winners for the Native category have previously won a NAMMY from NAMA.

www.nativeamericanmusicawards.com

**Aboriginal Peoples Television Network**

Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) is a television network that developed originally from Television Northern Canada (TVNC). TVNC was an Aboriginal network with northern and Aboriginal themed programming that broadcast from the Yukon to northern Labrador beginning in 1991.

APTN is a mandatory service available in over 10 million Canadian households and commercial establishments with cable, direct-to-home satellite (DTH), telco-delivered, and fixed wireless television service providers.

APTN is aimed at both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal audiences, with programming to interest all viewers: children’s animation, youth, cultural and traditional programming, music, drama, news and current affairs, as well as live coverage of special events and interactive programming, most notably APTN National News: Contact.

www.aptn.ca

**American Indian Film Institute**

The American Indian Film Institute (AIFI) is a nonprofit media arts center founded in 1979 to foster understanding of the culture, traditions, and issues of contemporary Native Americans.

The organization’s roots stretch back to 1975, when the first American Indian Film Festival was presented in Seattle. In 1977, the festival was relocated to San Francisco, where it found its permanent home.

AIFI is the major Native American media and cultural arts presenter in California, and its festival is the world’s oldest and most recognized international film exposition dedicated to Native American cinematic accomplishment.

The goals of AIFI are educational: to encourage Native/non-Native filmmakers to bring to the broader media culture the Native voices, viewpoints, and stories that have been historically excluded from mainstream media; to develop Indian and non-Indian audiences for this work; and to advocate for authentic representations of Indians in the media.

www.aptn.ca

**Programs**

The American Indian Film Festival, presented at San Francisco’s historic Palace of Fine Arts (since 1977) and UA Galaxy Theatres, provides an audience of nearly 5,000 an opportunity to see films by and about American Indians, including many works unavailable in the U.S. through theatres, home video, or television.

The Film Library and National Distribution Initiative uses the research library and catalogue Films of the American Indian Film Festival 1975–2000 as the basis of a pilot program to promote film works to educational, tribal, and home markets.

Tribal Touring Program includes an outreach festival of select works from the American Indian Film Festival and week-long digital video workshop intensives for youth.

www.aifisf.com
Native Networks/National Museum of the American Indian/Smithsonian Institution

- In 2001 the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) launched the Native Networks Web site. The site provides information about new productions and media makers, current areas of special interest, and accomplishments in the field.
- The goal of the Native Networks Web site is to increase interconnectivity and information flow among Native media organizations, media producers, and their audiences.
- Native Networks events at festivals bring together media makers presenting works—in film, video, radio, television, and new media—to discuss ideas, discuss resources, and share concerns and interests.
- Because about 40% of festival participants come from Latin America and 60% from the United States and Canada, festival workshops are presented, through simultaneous translation, in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, and, on occasion, in indigenous languages.

www.nativenetworks.si.edu/nn.htm

American Indian National Center for Television and Film

- The Institute of American Indian and Alaska Native Culture and Development (IAIA) partnered with ABC Disney, CBS, FOX, and NBC/Universal to establishing the American Indian National Center for Television and Film.
- Located in Los Angeles, the National Center’s goal is to respond to the need for Native American producers, directors, actors, writers, editors, and others to become actively engaged in the creation of media to more accurately represent contemporary Native American communities.

www.iaia.edu/ainctf/index.html

WEB PAGE EVALUATION CHECKLIST

The web is a great place to do research, but remember that not everything is on the web, especially in American Indian Studies. It is important to remember that putting documents on the web is easy, cheap, unregulated, and unmonitored. This means that the burden is on you, the user, to establish the validity, authorship, timeliness, and integrity of what you find on the Internet. Unlike with most print publications on the web, there are no editors who verify, edit, and proofread written material so that it meets publishing standards. If you want to use the Internet for research, you will want to carefully evaluate any site you use. When you find it necessary to reference information you find on the Internet, you will want to make sure the sources are credible. Here are some key criteria on which to evaluate web page content:

1. Is the information accurate?
   - Can the accuracy of the information be verified by other legitimate sources?
   - Is the information free of spelling and grammatical errors?
   - Is this information available in print as well as online?

2. Is the author legitimate?
   - Is the author qualified to write on this topic?
   - Can this information be verified?
   - Is the URL domain preferred? For accuracy and legitimate factual information, stick with sites ending with .edu or .gov.

3. Is the information objective?
   - Is this public service information?
   - Is the information clearly distinguished from any advertising on the site?
   - Is there a description of the site’s sponsor and its purpose?
   - Look for links that say About Us, Philosophy, Background, or Biography.
   - Where did the author get the information? Look for links to scholarly journals or academic books; expect footnotes, links, and/or other documentation to determine the credibility of the writing.
   - Use Google to search for the author’s name to see what others are saying about the author.

   - Wikipedia warning: This popular Web site is not evaluated or checked for factual accuracy; anyone can create or edit a Wikipedia page—which means it is not necessarily legitimate or accurate! To be on the safe side, do not use Wikipedia as a source.
   - Blog warning: These popular web pages are created by anyone who has something to say; they are easy to create and are peoples’ opinions and not evaluated or checked for sources.
   - Is the page somebody’s personal page? Look for a personal name in the address or a commercial web address extension, such as aol.com or geocities.com.
4. **Is the information current?**
   - When was the data gathered?
   - When was the information written and first published?
   - When was the page last revised?
   - For factual information, you want the source to be current; if the information on the page is undated, don't use it!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Theresa Harlan, *Creating a Visual History*
1. Why must we reject the reduction of Native images to sentimental portraits and stereotypes?
2. What does the author mean by “ownership of Native representations” from Native memories?

Emory Sekaquaptewa, *One More Smile for a Hopi Clown*
1. Sekaquaptewa states that “the heart of the Hopi concept of clowning is that we are all clowns.” Explain what he means by this statement.

Traci L. Morris, *But Is It American Indian Art?*
1. What is the distinction between sacred Native American art and Indian art that is part of the art/culture system, and why is it important for us to recognize this distinction?
2. Explain the role that white patrons of the arts and collectors have had in shaping commercial Indian art. What have been the pros and cons of this mediation, and how does it relate to “authentication” and Indian identity?
3. Do you or does someone in your family create art and if so, what role does the art market (Native or otherwise) play in the economics of the art?

Traci L. Morris, *The National Museum of the American Indian*
1. What aspects of the National Museum of the American Indian make it unique?

Beverly R. Singer, *Wiping the Warpaint Off the Lens: Native American Film and Video*
1. Explain and give examples of how film depictions of stereotypical representations influence the public’s view of American Indians.
2. Singer identifies contemporary Native filmmakers as storytellers. Why do you think she says this? What is the role of storytellers in traditional Indian society?

Mathew Fleischer, *Gone with the Wind: A Decade After Smoke Signals, Success Remains Elusive for Native American Filmmakers*
1. Have you seen any of the Native films mentioned in this reading or in Reading 5? If so, explain how the film is different than non-Native films and give examples of the ways that it expresses a Native perspective.
2. What does Chris Eyre mean when he says, “I don’t think a lot of people see value in telling stories about modern Indians, but I don’t see the value in films that show the past”?

Web Page Evaluation Checklist
1. Why is it important to take a critical look at information found on the web? What are the four questions that one should ask when consulting the web?

KEY TERMS
Alexie, Sherman
American Indian Film Institute (AIFI)
Authentic Indian art
*Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show*
Charlene Teters and Chief Illiniwek
Eyre, Chris
digital divide
Dorothy Dunn
Hopi clowns

Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA)
Imagining Indians
Indian Country Today
Indian mascots
National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI)
Native history/American history
Native image-making
Smoke Signals

SUGGESTED READINGS


