

Reframing History through the Art of Contemporary Native American Female Artists

By Autumn Thaggard

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Auburn University at Montgomery
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Master of Liberal Arts

Montgomery, Alabama

6 May 2023

Approved by

Robert C. Evans

Dr. Eric Sterling, MLA Director

Dr. Robert C. Evans,
Professor Emeritus of English

Dr. Matt Ragland, Associate Provost, Graduate Studies

COPYRIGHT

© 2023

Autumn Thaggard

All Rights Reserved

Abstract

For decades, Native American art has been overshadowed by Euro-American art. Judged from the non-Native perspective as a survival of a primitive art form, Native American art symbolizes the survival of Native Americans as a people since their traditional and authentic art forms refuse to be stamped out by the dominant white society. Within the category of arts, Native American arts and crafts are deemed the only form of Native American arts worth knowing, according to the number of Native American decorative items in museums and the subsequent research on these items. The limited amount of scholarship on contemporary Native American art continues to show the association of Native American people with the past. By researching the work of three contemporary Native American artists we can see that there is more to Native American art than the past. The work of Joan Hill, Helen Hardin, and Wendy Red Star, when viewed from a historical perspective that incorporates Native and non-Native scholarship, shows the connection between the past and present history of Native Americans in America. By focusing specifically on these artists and their work of Native American women, the complicated history of Native Americans and the struggles of Native American women is evident.

Acknowledgments

This thesis is based on research conducted on Indigenous groups in America. I am extremely grateful for all of the help and guidance that I have received from the faculty at AUM. The completion of my thesis would not have been possible without the support of my thesis director and second reader. I would especially like to thank Dr. Eric Sterling, my thesis director. His guidance and advice supported me through the writing process. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my second reader, Dr. Robert Evans. Thank you for agreeing to be my second reader. I appreciate your insightful comments and moral support. Thank you to my professors at AUM for encouraging me to pursue my academic interests. I would also like to acknowledge the love and support of my family and friends. Thanks to my family for cultivating my love for learning.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Acknowledgments.....	4
List of Figures.....	6
List of Abbreviations	7
Introduction to Native American Issues	8
Chapter 1 Truth behind the scholarship.....	18
Chapter 2 Joan Hill	30
Connecting to culture.....	31
The role of women in Creek and Cherokee society.....	42
Chapter 3 Helen Hardin	59
Reorienting Native American art.....	60
Self-representation in abstraction	65
Chapter 4 Wendy Red Star	79
Humorous battle against stereotypes	80
Apsáalooke Feminist: living out tradition.....	85
Chapter 5 Conclusion	100
References	106

List of Figures

Figure 1 <i>Morning in the Indian Village</i>	32
Figure 2 <i>Women's Voices at the Council</i>	44
Figure 3 <i>Prayers of a Blue Corn Mother</i>	60
Figure 4 <i>Changing Woman</i>	68
Figure 5 <i>Zonnie, from the Nanabah Suite</i>	73
Figure 6 <i>Allegory of America</i>	77
Figure 7 <i>Dakota Squeeze #6</i>	81
Figure 8 <i>Apsáalooke Feminist #3</i>	88
Figure 9 <i>Mother and child—Apsaroke</i>	89

List of Abbreviations

AAM	American Alliance of Museums
AIM	American Indian Movement
MMIW	Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women
NMAI	National Museum of the American Indian

Introduction to Native American Issues

In 2020, the National Gallery of Art procured its first painting by a Native American artist. Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith's *I See Red: Target* is a collage of images that responds to the local and national branding and stereotyping of the Native American identity.¹ Within the white-walled gallery, the canvas, colored predominately red, rages against quintessential pop art American classics such as Andy Warhol's *Green Marilyn* and Roy Lichtenstein's *Look Mickey*. For a space claiming to represent the art of the nation, the National Gallery of Art places a single female artist of color among many male artists of white European descent, then neglects to provide an online image description along with the image itself. Perhaps the establishment prefers to let the image speak for itself rather than relying on a Western view of a Native American narrative. This possible forethought goes against the stereotypical treatment of Native Americans by the United States. Mimicking the stereotype of Native Americans as a vanishing race, the art world continually neglects the merits of contemporary forms of Native American art, preferring to think of Native American art as solely functional. Baskets, weaving, pottery, and beading and other forms of arts and crafts are only worthy as examples of the past lives of Native Americans. These decorative arts are routinely constructed as the only forms worth pursuing over the traditional high arts of Western painting and sculpture. Deconstructions and misinformation along with a lack of Native input lead to conflicting contradictions about what Native American art actually is.

What is Native American Art? Often categorized as folk art, outsider art, arts and crafts and described as ethnological, anthropological, primitive, native, and traditional, Native

¹ "Major Painting by Native American Artist Jaune Quick-To-See Smith Acquired by National Gallery of Art," *National Gallery of Art*, July 2, 2020, <https://www.nga.gov/press/2020/quick-to-see-smith.html>, Accessed 14 Oct. 2022.

American art is frequently reduced to static stereotypes. The category of Native American art conjures images of pottery, wood carvings, masks, totem poles, instruments, etc. Throughout the history of museums and popular culture, when talking about Native American art, people usually refer to functional purpose objects with decorative qualities. Due to the prevailing assumption from the nineteenth century of the Native American's vanishing culture, Europeans set out to save Indigenous cultures through collection of "curios" brought back to Europe by Spanish conquistadors.² These anthropological items with artistic elements are generally considered the traditional arts. These arts, like the people who created them, are often encased in their own category alone outside of time, outside of American art and history. These judgements, based off of anthropological texts and art history writings from the nineteenth century, continue to place Native Americans at the primitive level of the hierarchy of cultural evolution.³ This separateness brings into question different interpretations of Native American art and Native Americans. How should Native American art be classified? Should style be considered as a defining categorical feature of Native American art? Should Native American art be judged with the same criteria as Western art? Importance is given to these questions since clear categories and definitions are how we understand the world. With categories and structure, we can make sense of things that we do not understand.

Over time these questions and others have been addressed in different ways. One of the most visible answers is the creation of Native American specific museums and organizations.

The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI, Washington, D.C., 2004), the IAIA

² Joseph Traugott, "Native American Artists and the Postmodern Cultural Divide," *Art Journal*, vol. 51, no. 3 (1992) *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/777346>, Accessed 6 Aug. 2022, 37.

³ Janet C. Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, "'Encircles Everything': A Transformative History of Native Women's Arts" in *Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists*, Jill Ahlberg Yohe and Teri Greeves eds., (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2019) 44.

Museum of Contemporary Native Arts (Santa Fe, NM, 1962), and the Heard Museum (Phoenix, AZ, 1929) are a few examples of Native American visibility in the mainstream world. In addition to these three institutions, there are numerous others dedicated to the history, culture, and arts of Native Americans. Instead of relying on the dominant culture to determine which works of art were understood as “authentic” and “traditionally” Indian, Native American museums create a space for Indigenous agency to address the lack of inclusion in museums regarding categorization and definition.⁴ Issues of categorization and definition have defined the history of Native American art and Native Americans for decades. The contemporary art of Native Americans represents the contemporary identity and struggles of Native Americans today. Numerous Native Americans struggle with their identity in relation to the racial categories of America. For decades, the only two racial categories that mattered in America were white and black. In the South, Native Americans who stayed after the Indian Removal of the 1830s were classified as “free people of color,” a part of a definitive non-white category but distinguished from black slaves, forcing Native Americans to fight for their racial identity.⁵ Native Americans are the only racial group in America who have to prove their “Indianness” in order to be recognized and seen by the government as legitimate. Tribes use blood quantum, a percentage of one’s mix of Indian and non-Indian ancestry, as one of the deciding factors in tribal eligibility.⁶ Proving any racial identity has become increasingly difficult since Native Americans, similar to most Americans, today have mixed ancestry. Mixed heritages and cultural influences are

⁴ Melanie Anne Herzog and Sarah Anne Stolte, “American Indian Art: Teaching and Learning,” *Wicazo Sa Review*, vol. 27, no. 1 (2012) *JSTOR*, doi:10.1353/wic.2012.0003 Accessed 13 Sept. 2022, 86.

⁵ Denise E. Bates, *The Other Movement Indian Rights and Civil Rights in the Deep South*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2012) 71.

⁶Jean Dennison, “The Logic of Recognition,” *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 1 (Winter, 2014) 15.

reflected in their art along with commentary on land, racial stereotypes, history, and sovereignty issues that have plagued Native Americans for decades.

Ever since the arrival of European ships on the shores of America, Native Americans have been fighting for their land and the right to sovereignty. Encroachment, unfair land treaties, and the mass Indian Removal of the 1830s are a few instances of the exploitation that Native Americans experienced at the hands of the United States. Hostilities between Native Americans and whites often revolved around land. Disputes over land ownership and natural resources continue into the present, with the national attention given to the Dakota Access Pipeline protests in 2016. Relatively recent campaigns like Landback, a movement fighting for reclamation of “land, language, ceremony, food, education, housing, healthcare, governance, medicines, and kinship” carries on the crusade that was unofficially started when indigenous people’s land was first stolen.⁷ One of the most infamous examples of an area of land that organizations like Landback are fighting for is Mount Rushmore and the public lands of the Black Hills. Disputes over the land seemingly ended when the Supreme Court ruled in 1980 that the Sioux nation receive payment for the lost land since the U.S. government and white settlers continually violated the 1868 treaty that granted control of the land to Native Americans.⁸ Land and sovereignty issues frequently appear in contemporary Native American art since Native American artists regularly use their art to comment on their history and other social justice

⁷ “LANDBACK Manifesto,” *LANDBACK*, 2021, <https://landback.org/manifesto/>, Accessed 13 Sept. 2022.

⁸ Lori Walsh and Chris Laughery, “United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians: The Supreme Court case to buy the Black Hills,” *South Dakota Public Broadcasting*, May 12, 2022, <https://listen.sdpb.org/arts-life/2022-05-12/united-states-v-sioux-nation-of-indians-the-supreme-court-case-to-buy-the-black-hills>, Accessed 20 Mar. 2023.

issues. Historically stripped of basic human rights, Native Americans are treated as second-class citizens constantly fighting for recognition in opposition to long-standing negative stereotypes.

Stereotypical thinking and imagery fight against the complex identity of Native Americans today. To this day, Native Americans are considered by the general public to be a dying race. The words “Native American” conjure up images of buckskin clothing, headdresses, teepees, braids, powwows, reservations and casinos instead of the contemporary image of Native Americans as a people that have changed with the times. Preconceived notions persist since media representations are overwhelmingly one-sided, and the prioritization of white people in history continues to aid in the notion that Native Americans and their art are things of the past. Decorative arts are often relegated to separate parts of natural history museums while contemporary Native American arts are seldom seen in art museums. If Native American art is included in museums, it is usually categorized as decorative arts located in the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas section. Cultures long lost to time and progress are thrown together usually without any regard to the distinct differences besides the inclusion of exhibition labels. Popular nineteenth century depictions of Native Americans such as George Catlin’s works promoted painted pictures of a “timeless” people preserved in a painting that would never progress. For some, Catlin’s portraits are a lasting reminder of the Noble Savage and how modernity physically and socially changed America.⁹ For others, Catlin’s work is a testament to a group of people who are often trivialized in history. The hindering of the progress of Native American history was aided by the use of ethnographic displays of “primitive peoples” as a way

⁹ Alison Griffiths, “Native American Representation in Early Cinema,” in *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture*, Elizabeth S. Bird ed., (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996) 82.

to measure white progress.¹⁰ Museums often focus on the pre-civilization decorative arts and display these objects as dioramas of the past. Wendy Red Star, an Apsáalooke multimedia artist, describes this phenomenon when, feeling homesick, she went to a natural history museum, knowing that she could find Crow objects there. After walking past dinosaur bones to the display of the Crow objects in a dark gallery, Red Star realized that visitors “assume that these people no longer exist” because their objects and the people who used them are reconstructed in dioramas.¹¹ This acknowledgement of assumptions about Native American people is further complicated by the pan-Indian experience.

Pan-Indianism calls for unity as the various Native American tribes work together to fight for social justice and recognition. One disadvantage of this movement is the sacrifice of tribal distinctions. The tribal recognition and traditions that Native Americans and activists have fought for would be lost in the actuality of a homogenized pan-Indian identity.¹² Without pan-Indianism, the non-native public might be even less informed than they already are about Indigenous people. Instead of division, some Indigenous people found more power in solidarity. With more visibility as a united people, organizations such as the American Indian Movement (AIM) influenced the passing of laws that benefited Native Americans. Regardless of how damaging stereotypes and visual assumptions are, they create conversations and identify issues. Without knowledge about specific tribes, the different materials and symbols found in Native American art may have no significance to a non-Native audience. The trouble with a pan-Indian experience or a pan-Indian identity is that it does not seem to exist except in the instance of

¹⁰ Griffiths, “Native American Representation in Early Cinema,” 83.

¹¹ “Wendy Red Star: A Scratch on the Earth,” *YouTube*, uploaded by StateoftheArtsNJ, 25, Mar. 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyJiXXXH2WE>, Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.

¹² Nancy Marie Mithlo, “*Our Indian Princess*”: *Subverting the Stereotype*, (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2009) 64.

generational trauma. History tends to consolidate different tribal groups to fit the larger narrative of American history. One classic example is the Indian Removal of the 1830s, a horrible blight on American history. This removal is one instance of Native American history that has been incorporated into mainstream American history. The sentimentalized version of this removal of the Southeastern Native American tribes out West was promoted as the tragically nostalgic “Trail of Tears.” The public continues to associate the “Trail of Tears” only with the Cherokee when in actuality the Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole nations were also removed as a part of the Trail of Tears. Native Americans are often clumped together since it is easier for the public to understand a simple version of history instead of trying to differentiate between all of the varying cultural distinctions. Treating all Native Americans the same negates the fact that each specific Indigenous culture differs in regards to languages, traditions, religions, and experiences.

Another stereotype focuses solely on Native American women. For example, prior to removal and assimilation, most Native American tribes functioned in a matriarchal society. Within this society, Native American women were the primary artists tasked with creating functional artistic pieces like basketry, pottery, beading and costuming.¹³ In addition to the stereotypical identity of Native Americans as a vanishing race, Native American women have also been the victims of stereotypical imagery with the historical terms of “squaws” and “Indian princesses.” Stereotypical Native American woman are either the asexual, plump “housewife” or the sensual, earthly Land O’Lakes maiden.¹⁴ Due to historical white-washing, the voices of

¹³ Fredrick J. Dockstader, *Indian Art in America: The Arts and Crafts of the North American Indian*, 3rd ed., (Greenwich, CN: New York Graphic Society, 1966) 22.

¹⁴ Gülriz Büken, “Construction of the Mythic Indian in Mainstream Media and the Demystification of the Stereotype by American Indian Artists,” *American Studies International*, vol. 40, no. 3 (2002) *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41279925>, Accessed 18 Aug. 2022, 54.

Native American women are drowned out by non-native historians and artists similar to how art museums have excluded women and people of color from the high/fine art sphere. Less than 1% of Native American artists are considered “established” or “noteworthy” enough to warrant interviews or mentions in exhibits.¹⁵ One of the most damaging and dangerous images that has persisted is of Native American women as commodities or exotic curiosities. In addition to the influence of patriarchal societies, Indigenous women were seen as sexual objects in contrast to the pure image of Euro-American woman. The objectification of Native women is visualized in three well-known Native American females: Malinche, Pocahontas, and Sacagawea. Each plays an intrinsic part in the history of America, and yet it is their visual portrayals that help carry on their legacy. These three historical figures are depicted in paintings, sculpture, animation and other art forms. Pocahontas, probably the most famous of the three, is usually presented from the English perspective. Simon van de Passe’s engraving of Pocahontas from the 1600s shows her wearing European clothes, accepting her life as an Englishwoman, with her baptism in the Christian faith and marriage to an Englishman, while rejecting her Native American way of life.¹⁶ Disney’s film *Pocahontas* from the 1990s also utilizes the image of Pocahontas to support their agenda of a love story. A nonthreatening noble figure defined by her sole purpose to save or aid white men, this mythologized image of Pocahontas conforms to the trope of the sexualized Indian princess.¹⁷ These two examples show the myriad of ways that different depictions of the same person are manipulated for different agendas.

¹⁵ Nancy Parezo, “Indigenous Art” in *A Companion to American Indian History*, Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury eds., (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) 215.

¹⁶ Rebecca K. Jager, *Malinche, Pocahontas, and Sacagawea: Indian Women as Cultural Intermediaries and National Symbols*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015) 146.

¹⁷ Elizabeth S. Bird, “Savage Desires: The Gendered Construction of the American Indian in Popular Media” in *Selling the Indian Commercializing & Appropriating American Indian*

Before the colonization of America, Native women had different but equal roles within society. Outsiders were unable to understand the significant political and societal power of Native American women within the matriarchal society, but that did not stop them from adopting derogatory mindsets towards Native American women. The classic Madonna/whore categorization of women is forced on Native American women with the labels of “Indian princess” and “squaw.” Images of Pocahontas and Sacajawea, as examples of the Indian Princess, survive to further the white narrative of America, while the “squaw” remains anonymous since as the wife/servant of Native American men she is ignorant and submissive.¹⁸ Developing from these archetypes are the specific derogatory Indian “squaw slut” or “squaw drudge” dichotomy. Native American women are either “wanton harlots willing to prostitute themselves and participate in acts of sexual hedonism” or “prey to physical exploitation and abuse at the hands of Indigenous men.”¹⁹ Forcing the blame on Indigenous women with an outsider’s misogynistic trope actively affects women today, perpetuating a damaging image while the media and general population continually ignores Indigenous cases. The result of these objectifications is highlighted by the case of Gabby Petito, a young, attractive white female whose case captivated the world through social media and news coverage in 2021. As the world followed Petito’s case to its conclusion in Wyoming, significantly less coverage and attention was given to the 710 Indigenous people missing in Wyoming between 2011 and 2020.²⁰

Cultures, Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer eds., (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001) 79.

¹⁸ Lucy Lippard, “Independent Identities,” in *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century*, W. Jackson Rushing III ed., (New York: Routledge, 1999) 135.

¹⁹Gregory D. Smithers, “Predatory Colonialism: Indigenous Women and the Violence of Sexual Objectification in the United States,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 30, no. 2, (May 2021) 254.

²⁰ “Gabby Petito's death is tragic. But I wish missing women of color got this much attention; Considerable resources were dedicated to finding Petito's body. Yet Indigenous people in

Centuries of cultural stereotypes supported by society have decreased the perception of value of Native American lives. In 2022, May 5 was officially made Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons Awareness Day to draw more attention to the gross negligence and overall invisibility of cases involving Indigenous people.²¹ Besides increasing awareness and confirming the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) movement, this recognition does not provide a solution for this crisis. A single day or law will not erase the devastating reality that for centuries Native Americans and their problems have been expendable.

Using art to address these real-world dilemmas opens a door for artists to illuminate the plights of their people. Art has been used as a means of expression when words and other actions fail. Joan Hill, Helen Hardin, and Wendy Red Star are female Native American artists who address these issues with their work and challenge the stereotypical image of Native American women and their art. By focusing on the pan-Indian and pan-American experience, Native Americans and non-Natives can identify different connections within an image in addition to specific cultural meanings. Hill, Hardin, and Red Star have different racial backgrounds and come from different parts of the United States. All are contemporary artists but Hill and Hardin's works are from the twentieth century while Red Star's work is from the twenty-first century. Works by all three show the vivid cultural vivacity of contemporary Native American art that comments on the past and present.

Wyoming are more likely to disappear and to be killed, and their cases are barely noticed," *Guardian* [London, England], 25 Sept. 2021, Accessed 21 Oct. 2022.

²¹Joseph R. Biden Jr., "A Proclamation on Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons Awareness Day, 2022," May 4, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/05/04/a-proclamation-on-missing-or-murdered-indigenous-persons-awareness-day-2022/>, Accessed 21 Oct. 2022.

Ch. 1

Truth behind the scholarship

Browsing scholarly works on art history, one is likely to be overwhelmed by the sheer amount of texts/works on European/Western art. The various specializations within art history continue to be dominated by the Western canon that prefers to keep Native art in a non-progressive state. The majority of art history classes, art museums, and research tends to focus on European and North American art created by artists of European origin, which gives importance and visibility to art made by a specific group of people. Usually art outside of this white sphere is utilitarian based art, not contemporary art. Using the word “utilitarian” to describe these arts constructs a strict separation between the art that is made exclusively for visual pleasure and the art that is not.²² Art for art’s sake appears to have European origins with style evolutions and cultural changes reflecting progress over time, yet people of color and their art are hindered by the barriers of white institutions created for the white population. To this day, art history gives priority to Indigenous art predating the past 100 years, using “traditional” practices instead of contemporary practices, materials, and subjects.²³ Art of the colonized tends to focus on pre-contact art or decorative art. Since the age of colonization and collection, research has followed the museum practice of collecting and studying “primitive” cultures. These cultures, otherwise known as non-white, were not allowed to progress naturally in the same way as other cultures due to the ethnographic obsession with preserving the past instead of admitting that colonization happened and changed everything. One example is the insertion of Native Americans into white history as a way to display “primitive peoples” as a measurement of civilized progress.²⁴

²² Parezo, “Indigenous Art,” 216.

²³ Herzog and Stolte, “American Indian Art: Teaching and Learning,” 87.

²⁴ Griffiths, “Native American Representation in Early Cinema,” 83.

Frequently studies on Native Americans gravitate towards the historical past aided and imbedded by the public perception of Indigenous people as marginal relics. Within art history, most of the art history books on Native American art continue the pattern of focusing on traditional decorative arts, which have an artistic aspect but are made for utilitarian purposes. Most of the first studies of Native American art reflected the collecting nature of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Following the same direction as museums, art history scholarship is not an unbiased collection of facts; it is often connected to colonialist structures that determine the presentation, collection, and display of objects studied by art historians.²⁵ A majority of Native American art history scholarship was published throughout the 1990s and 2000s with a few from the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. Previous studies of Native American art tend to explore Indigenous cultures through an anthropological and/or ethnological lens, preferring to classify Native Americans and anything associated with them as artefacts of a dying race. Except for theme issues or controversial topics, art writings are normally devoted to fine art in opposition to Native American art, which is labeled as an exotic, ethnic art.²⁶ Within this category, scholars focused on the decorative arts of Native Americans as a collective past instead of a progressive individualistic art history.

Early writings on Native American art echoes the construction of Native American art set by museums and collectors. These studies focus solely on the traditional arts and crafts of Native people and not on the contemporary Native American art that can be categorized as high or fine art. Anthropological studies like Frederick Dockstader's *Indian Art in America: the arts and*

²⁵ Jill Ahlberg Yohe, "Animate Matters Thoughts on Native American Art Theory, Curation, and Practice" in *Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists*, Jill Ahlberg Yohe and Teri Greeves eds., (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2019) 170.

²⁶ Parezo, "Indigenous Art," 215.

crafts of the North American Indian were common from the 1890s to the 1960s. While there are plenty of large glossy photographs of Native objects in the book, there is no information about the individual artists except for the tribal affiliation, date of construction and function of the object. Although this lack of information is not necessarily the fault of the author, art historians often dismiss craft as methodologically unknowable because scholars lacked critical information on individual artists and provenance.²⁷ This lack of specificity is a reflection on the different approaches to American art versus Native American art. Highlighting the divide between fine arts and crafts, Native American art was assumed to be communally based segregated from the Western importance of individualism.²⁸ Dockstader's vast introduction to Native American art, from prehistory to the 1950s, emphasizes the "primitive artists" in summarizing statements. Reviews of this book reinforce the separation between European art and Native American art with mentions of the so-called primitive artists' appeal to modern artists. Review suggest that somehow unschooled Indians and Eskimos achieved the goals of modern artists through a deeper understanding for three-dimensional forms, fine designs and decorative colors.²⁹ This evaluation hints at the exploitive nature of the relationship between whites and Indigenous peoples.

Written from an ethnographical and anthropological perspective, writings about Native American art are usually about one category of Native American art known as arts and crafts. Books like Dockstader's are almost exclusively about this category. Other literature from the end of the nineteenth century to the late twentieth century that focuses specifically on Native

²⁷ Ibid., 212.

²⁸ Mithlo, "*Our Indian Princess*": *Subverting the Stereotype*, 76.

²⁹ John C. Ewers, "Primitive Artists," *Science*, vol. 135, no. 3497, 1962, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1707877>, Accessed 4 Nov. 2022, 34.

women's art uses the category of craft to force anonymity and sexist assumptions onto their art.³⁰ At the same time, Native American crafts were taken out of their cultural context and repurposed according to society's perception of arts and crafts as a lesser art. There is a divide between fine arts and other types of art as seen in the placement of Native American "crafts" in natural history museums instead of in art museums. Native American crafts, often studied from museum collections, were believed to be authentic objects created communally from a specific tribe while individual Native American artists hoping to exhibit in these white-dominated fine arts museums had to reject tribal status and be seen as an artist first and a Native American second.³¹ Connotations of this limited category not only confined, but also commercialized Native American art. Before the inclusion and diversity initiatives that are more prevalent today, Native American pots, baskets, blankets and other crafts were treated as if they did not belong in fine art museums, but these objects belonged within white households. Native American art displayed at the Columbian Exposition in 1893 was given value by "civilized" white women not as savage arts but as family arts endowed with inherent moral value that provided Native American women with an income.³² The popularity of Native American arts and crafts made for profit not only aligned Native American art with Western art, but also further separated Native American art from Western art. For example, only a certain type of art was accepted as Native American art. Native American art had to adhere to the prescribed definition of Native American art as "authentic" and "traditional," which was determined by the demands of the dominant white

³⁰ Berlo and Phillips, "'Encircles Everything': A Transformative History of Native Women's Arts," 45.

³¹ Mithlo, *"Our Indian Princess": Subverting the Stereotype*, 76.

³² Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer eds., *Selling the Indian Commercializing & Appropriating American Indian Cultures*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001) 165.

culture thereby shaping their consumption in the marketplace.³³ Within the arts and crafts genre of scholarship, scholars study indigenous cultural distinctions often neglecting to profile individual artists. *Arts and Crafts of the Native American Tribes* by Michael G. Johnson and Bill Yenne (2011) and *Art of Native America: The Charles and Valerie Diker Collection* by Gaylord Torrence (2018) exemplify relatively recent publications that are still concerned with items (arts and crafts) from the eighteenth and nineteenth century. This issue does not suggest that the study of these items is unimportant, but rather that there needs to be an overall broadening of topics in Native American art history. These topics are generally determined by those who have easier access to museums, universities and other educational institutions – white people. The prevalence of works on the arts and crafts of Native Americans shows the prevailing nature of Native American art and its associations with the decorative or craft side of utilitarian objects.

Another problematic issue within the canon of Native American art history deals with categorization. Early attempts to classify Native American art according to Western values ensured that Native American art stayed solely in the control of the white world as seen in the many studies of Native American art authored by non-native scholars and artists. Janet Berlo, W. Jackson Rushing, and David W. Penney are a few non-native art historians who specialize in Native American art. Non-native domination in the early history of Native American scholarship allowed for informed outsiders to define Native American art. Most non-native scholars are aware of the legacy of criteria determined by Euro-American collectors, patrons, and curators, including the common assumption that true Native American art must be uncontaminated by Western influences.³⁴ In other words, Native American art was not supposed to evolve in the

³³ Herzog and Stolte, “American Indian Art: Teaching and Learning,” 86.

³⁴ Yohe, “Animate Matters Thoughts on Native American Art Theory, Curation, and Practice,” 173.

same way as art from other cultures. Classifications still exist today since Native American art is placed not alongside art but within the Native American section as a subject in libraries. This separation also occurs in museum exhibitions, with Native American art only on view as part of ethnicity-themed exhibitions. Expressing this problem, Native American artist Kay WalkingStick says, “separate is still not equal; it marginalizes the art.”³⁵ If there is no contemporary Native American art on display alongside Euro-American art, then how can the public perception about Native American art change? With this in mind, it can be difficult to find works on current Native American topics.

This difficulty in finding works is particularly true for contemporary art. The social upheaval and social consciousness of the 1960s and 70s provided a space for Native American voices within the canon. Ethnic pride movements of the time enabled the political mobilization of Native Americans.³⁶ Before this time, Native Americans were hardly ever in the public eye speaking on social issues. Now, however, Native Americans had a platform to speak on contemporary issues and reflect on their past, which was prominent in the contemporary art of this time. Native American artists like Oscar Howe, Fritz Scholder, R.C. Norman, T.C. Cannon, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, and others gained notoriety during the second half of the twentieth century as artists redefining Native American art as a contemporary art form. In 1958, Oscar Howe catalyzed the debate that continues today when he questioned the Philbrook Indian Annual art competition. His abstract painting was rejected on the basis of being “not Indian” and not

³⁵ Kay WalkingStick, “Native American Art in the Postmodern Era,” *Art Journal*, vol. 51, no. 3, 1992, *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/777343>, Accessed 21 Mar. 2023.

³⁶Russell Thornton, “Health, Disease, and Demography,” in *A Companion to American Indian History*, Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury eds., 76.

adhering to the conventional ideal of “pretty, stylized pictures” of Indian Art.³⁷ He questions the Western notion that Native American art can only be one thing, which is usually not determined by Native American artists. Howe calls out the policing nature of Native American art, arguing that Native Americans are “herded like a bunch of sheep, with no right for individualism, dictated as the Indian has always been” and, sarcastically, “only the White Man knows what is best for him.”³⁸ Howe and his contemporaries showed that Native American artwork is living, breathing, changing, and evolving like other artistic categories and like work by other artists. This recognition goes against the system of scholarship focusing on creations from the past and the public perception of the static nature of Native American artistic forms. Yet unlike the vast collection of studies on white artists, only a limited amount of scholarship focuses on individual Native American artists. Native American artists, regardless of contemporality, are usually included in a collection about Native American artists or a collection about different types of Native American art. *Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists* (2019), about the exhibition of the same name, was one of the first scholarship and exhibitions that focused on female Native American artists from different time periods. This work was a product of previous research’s lack of inclusion of Native American female contemporary artists.

However, it was not until the 1990s that scholarship about Native American art reflected on the problematic history and marginalization of Native American art. During this decade, Native American artists, in reaction to the Columbus quincentenary celebration, created works rooted in culture, politics, and innovation, demanding the production of a more inclusive, social,

³⁷ Susannah Gardiner, “Who Gets To Define Native American Art?,” <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/who-gets-to-define-native-american-art-180979968/>, Apr. 25, 2022.

³⁸ Gardiner, “Who Gets To Define Native American Art?”

and political text.³⁹ Works such as *The Early Years of Native American Art History: The Politics of Scholarship and Collecting* (1992) by Janet C. Berlo addresses these problems. Berlo's book is a collection of essays that focuses on the creation of traditional Native art by Euro-Americans through the re-evaluation of perceived facts, falsehoods, appropriations, scholarly schematics, and public reactions.⁴⁰ Interest in Native American art within art history and institutions continues to be a viable research topic, with articles such as "Inclusivity or Sovereignty? Native American Arts in the Gallery and the Museum since 1992" (2017) published more than twenty years after Berlo's book. Issues that negatively affected scholarship about Native American art from the twentieth century are as present in the scholarship about Native American art today. Other books from the 1990s that are not specifically about art history but the visual culture of Native Americans in the United States are equally impactful considering the limited amount of books about contemporary Native American art. *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture* (1996), edited by S. Elizabeth Bird, and "Ethnicity and the Looking Glass: The Dialectics of National Indian Identity" (1997), by Jeffrey R. Hanson, explore the racial stereotypes of Native Americans and the development of the Indian identity promoted by society. Exploring the ethnicity of artists is helpful when visual stereotypes of Native Americans persist.

Scholars are aware and often note the lack of studies on Native Americans. Books written before the twentieth century tend to come from a non-Native perspective since the authors are non-Native. Authors often preface their work with an acknowledgement that the lack of

³⁹ Margaret Dubin, "Sanctioned Scribes: How Critics and Historians Write the Native American Art World," in *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century*, W. Jackson Rushing III ed., (New York: Routledge, 1999) 154.

⁴⁰ Janet C. Berlo ed., *The Early Years of Native American Art History: the politics of scholarship and collecting*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press; Vancouver: UBC Press 1992) 15.

scholarship by Native American scholars about Native American art and culture is reinforced by the stereotypical imagery and ideologies projected through popular culture, public institutions, and books that leave out or obscure Native American voices.⁴¹ Although non-Native American scholars continue to outnumber Native American scholars, the 1990s and 2000s saw an influx of writings by Native American authors and artists about a variety of topics, such as politics, religion, media, history, etc. Nancy Marie Mithlo, Charlene Teters, Philip J. Deloria, and Devon A. Mihesuah are a few of the Native American scholars with publications from the late 1990s and 2000s. Nancy Mithlo's *"Our Indian Princess": Subverting the Stereotype* (2009) delves into the stereotypic expectations related to Native American females and their work by focusing on the powerful nature of symbols used to inform personal identity.⁴² Mithlo's work, along with work by other Native American scholars, combats centuries of misconceptions about Native Americans, which in turn includes visual perceptions of Native Americans and their art.

Knowing the historic mistreatment of Native Americans that continues today along with the increase of Native American visibility, it is difficult to ignore the role of art as activism. Recent studies of art today connect past and present interpretations within the work of contemporary Native American artists. Their contemporary works use art as a form of activism relating to the past/present situation of Native Americans in America by expressing personal, communal, and cultural values.⁴³ The work of contemporary artists from the twentieth and twenty-first century can be interpreted as activism as the world becomes more concerned with

⁴¹ John Paul Rangel, "Moving Beyond the Expected: Representation and Presence in a Contemporary Native Arts Museum," *Wicazo Sa Review*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2012, doi:10.1353/wic.2012.0008, Accessed 16 Nov. 2022, 32.

⁴² Mithlo, *"Our Indian Princess": Subverting the Stereotype*, 2.

⁴³ Rangel, "Moving Beyond the Expected: Representation and Presence in a Contemporary Native Arts Museum," 41.

writing the wrongs of the marginalized. Topics of history, race, environment, sovereignty, and gender are more prominent today than in past scholarship. To account for the limited scope of Native American art writings and the subsistent stereotypes that persist, Native American artists use various artistic genres to address their past and present. The genre of landscapes become politically charged with messages of environmental rights and comments on racialized white manifest destiny inherent in depictions of colonized nations.⁴⁴ Portraits of Native American people by Native American artists combat racial and gender stereotypes since the earliest images of Native American peoples were constructed by non-Natives. Before the involvement of Native Americans in their own portrayals, portraits revealed more about the non-Native ideology of modernity than they did about the attitudes of real Native American people.⁴⁵ The promotion of non-Native American values can also be found in photographs of Native American people. Photography as a medium presents a version of truth that is difficult to refute or deny since photography during the nineteenth and twentieth century was unlike painting or other man-made art forms that are easily manipulated. Edward S. Curtis, known as the “One Body Image Taker” among the Crow Indians, advertised his photographs as presenting romantic images of free Southwestern Native Americans.⁴⁶ Capturing the last Native Americans untouched by white society, Curtis’s photographs, seen from the perspective of the 1960s and 70s, were used as examples of white people’s obsession with the imagined romantic primitivism of Native

⁴⁴ Karen Ohnesorge, “Uneasy Terrain: Image, Text, Landscape, and Contemporary Indigenous Artists in the United States,” *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2008, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30114281>, Accessed 14 Oct. 2022, 44.

⁴⁵ Bonnie Duran, “Indigenous Versus Colonial Discourse: Alcohol and American Indian Identity” in *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture*, Elizabeth S. Bird ed., (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996) 113.

⁴⁶ Joe Medicine Crow, *The Image Taker: The Selected Stories and Photographs of Edward S. Curtis*, Curtis, Gerald Hausman and Robert W. Kapoun eds., (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2009) vii.

Americans that is still present today. During the late nineteenth century, non-Native photographers used photography to document the trope of the “vanishing Indian” and manufacture manifestations of the Euro-American definition of Indians.⁴⁷ When viewed from a present perspective, work by Native American artists regardless of medium or subject can be seen as a form of social justice.

Another expansion of recent scholarship on Native American art is dependent on the recent interest in diversity and inclusion. With this interest comes more specific books on Native American art and more technology-based work on Native American art. Compared to other types of books and media on artists, books and media focusing on a single Native American artist are practically nonexistent. The gaps in Native American art history reflect art history and museums as a whole that privilege the importance of white male artists over all others. In 2022, the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) launched a diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion initiative to transform the standards of museums, which is necessary for the future of museums and vital for serving a diverse public.⁴⁸ Changing this standard is a slow and arduous process but it is happening with initiatives like the one started by the AAM. This slow process will hopefully have an effect on the art included in museums and on the type of research that is published. One of the difficulties of studying three contemporary female Native American artists is that there is a limited amount of scholarship on these specific artists. However, technology, in the form of video recordings, is an increasingly valuable resource, especially for artists who are no longer living. For example, Joan Hill’s oral history recording is helpful to better understand

⁴⁷ Herzog and Stolte, “American Indian Art: Teaching and Learning,” 86.

⁴⁸ “Diversity, Equity To Become Required for Museum Accreditation, Standards,” *American Alliance of Museums*, Oct. 17, 2022 <https://www.aam-us.org/2022/10/17/diversity-equity-to-become-required-for-museum-accreditation-standards/>, Accessed 21 Mar. 2023.

her work in relation to her background and the history of the time. Having the Native American perspective, along with an art history background, keeps researchers from falling into the trap of erasing the Native viewpoint as many non-native scholars did in the past. With the increased use of technology, the ability to continue the tradition of oral histories makes it easier to understand the purpose of the artists since they are speaking with their own words. The use of video and other forms of technology to interview Native American artists connects differing cultures and allows for interdisciplinary approaches to Native American art history and criticism.⁴⁹ Another recent development is that contemporary artists have begun to publish books about their work. Wendy Red Star's work along with interviews with the artist are explored in *Delegation* (2022) and *Wendy Red Star: B'ilukaa* (2023). Books like these are extremely insightful for non-native scholars and for the general public who might not be aware of the history and different cultural significances within Native American art. It is with this awareness that I approach the research of three female Native American artists and interpret their work from a historical background, taking into account the individual artists, their style and the cultural significance. By focusing on the depictions of female Native Americans by female Native American artists from different areas and cultural affiliations and time periods, I illuminate the vivid communitive nature of contemporary Native American art. With these three artists representing other Native American artists, I showcase the need to study artists from outside the standard typical cannon of Euro-American artists. These female Native American artists address racial, gender, and identity issues with their work and challenge the stereotypical image of Native American women.

⁴⁹Phoebe Farris, "Visual Power: 21 St Century Native American Artists/Intellectuals," *American Studies*, vol. 46, no. 3/4, 2005, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40643899>, Accessed 23 Mar. 2023, 252.

Ch. 2

Joan Hill

Joan Hill, one of the most awarded Native American artists, is not a household name similar to other artists of her time like Andy Warhol or Jean-Michel Basquiat. I first encountered her work on a random Google search. Born during the heyday of The Indian Reorganization Act (1934), another attempt to right the wrongs of the past land allotments and assimilation policies with self-determination, Hill did not grow up on a reservation and was not raised in the Native American culture. As a Muscogee Creek of Cherokee ancestry, her description of her life goes against the stereotypical knowledge that all Native Americans reside on reservations and are engaged culturally with their tribe. Hill actually had to conduct research to paint “Indian” paintings.⁵⁰ To “authentically” paint Indian paintings, Hill had to reconnect with her identity as a Native American through her art, a recurring theme among other Native American artists. As a result of her research and art education, Hill’s paintings adopt aspects of flatstyle. Flatstyle is a style of “Indian” painting curated by different American Indian schools that originated in New Mexico and Oklahoma; Hill even attended Bacone College, where the flatstyle differed through the use of brighter colors, discernable movement, and perspective.⁵¹ Paintings in this style were popular during the early to mid-twentieth century. The popularity of the limited shading and lack of perspective in flatstyle ensured that self-expression and self-representations, often considered essential purposes of artists, were restricted.⁵² The flatstyle became another cage created by the

⁵⁰ “Joan Hill: Oklahoma Native Artists,” *YouTube*, uploaded by oohrp, 12 Aug. 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vbsl57mCjhs>.

⁵¹ Joshua Miner, “Remediating the ‘Famous Indian Artist’: Native Aesthetics beyond Tourism and Tragedy,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2018, *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.5250/studamerindilite.30.2.0079>, Accessed 14 Sep. 2022, 88.

⁵² Miner, “Remediating the ‘Famous Indian Artist’: Native Aesthetics beyond Tourism and Tragedy,” 88.

dominant white society to contain and control Native Americans through their art forms. This control of Native American art mirrors the efforts of the federal government to assimilate Native Americans into white society through the eradication of Native American languages, clothing, and religions. U.S. government boarding schools and other reform projects helped indoctrinate Native Americans into American society by immersing Native Americans in the English language, Christian religion, and Western ideology of individualism.⁵³ Like reservations that confine Native Americans to specific tracts of land, the promotion of certain styles confines art to specific interpretations. Native American art programs, competitions, and markets created by white people encouraged specific styles cultivated by white patrons and non-Native contemporaries that sustained a form of “cultural imperialism.”⁵⁴ Native American painting was ushered into a separate category that could be controlled and othered from Western art with concepts of aesthetics.

Connecting to culture

Within the Bacone style, Hill developed her own stylistic way of painting. Hill’s stylized “Indian” paintings often depict the world with vivid colors and stripped back figures that capture the viewer’s imagination. Due to the simplicity of Hill’s paintings, every choice has a meaning. However, with all works of art, it is easy to impose unnecessary meanings onto every part of the composition. *Morning in the Indian Village* (1975) bathes the world in warm light from the rising sun, faintly visible from the hazy background. Two faces stamped into the sea of yellows and oranges stand out. The female faces are clearly visible against the watercolor-like

⁵³ Elizabeth Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890-1915*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009) 46-47.

⁵⁴ Miner, “Remediating the ‘Famous Indian Artist’: Native Aesthetics beyond Tourism and Tragedy,” 87.

background that adds a sense of movement and transience.



Fig. 1 Joan Hill, *Morning in the Indian Village*, painting, 1975, <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/titled-morning-in-the-indian-village-joan-hill/PQEsL2svKYWXOA?hl=en>.

The stillness of the figures hint at the persistent fighting nature of Native Americans. Regardless of the public perception that was developed from before the 1970s when this work was painted, Native Americans are still here, still living, and still visible with the passing of time.

Discouraged from using European techniques such as modeling and perspective, Native American artists from the Indian schools, such as Dorothy Dunn's Studio School in Santa Fe, NM and Bacone College in Muskogee, OK, were instructed by their teachers to paint traditional lifestyles that further cemented their place in the past as disconnected from the contemporary.⁵⁵ Despite the internal and external changes to Native American culture, in the form of removal, termination, and assimilation, destruction remains elusive. Hill's painting captures the sunrises and sunsets of her living culture.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 87-88.

The passing of time is implied in the title and in the rising sun that floods the picture with light. Further adding to the light and temporal atmosphere is the depiction of fire. The semblance of fire is present in the color orange. Fires started during the night are sustained until they finally die down to smoke and ashes, yet Native Americans remain. Native Americans have survived through disease, colonization, forced removal, assimilation, and other trials to be present in the modern age. Yet Hill's figures are not surrounded by the modern technology or symbols of industrialization of the era. A separateness from mainstream culture – white culture – is present in her artistic style. No one style dominates the 1970s. Instead, the remains of minimalism, pop art, and conceptualism are present from the late 1960s to the 1970s. Within Native American art, the 1960s ushered in a major stylistic change away from “bambi” art that defined Native American painting to modern depictions of Native Americans influenced by American art. In contrast to some of her contemporaries, Hill is less drastic in her renderings of Native American subjects and life, preferring to take possession of the Bacone style of Indian paintings while also putting her own interpretation on what has come to be known as “traditional.” The Bacone style emphasizes more complex renderings of garments, feathers, hair, facial features, anatomy, color, multi-faceted compositions, and greater action.⁵⁶ Hill quietly opposes this tradition with an exclusion of details. There are no garments, feathers, anatomy, or great action. The simplicity of two faces against a backdrop of yellow makes for a fine picture, which is completely in line with the often detrimental limitations of “bambi” art. Bambi art, a criticism of flatstyle from the 1950s, involved a formulaic constricting individuality of artists and their art.⁵⁷ Hill's pretty

⁵⁶ Ruthe Blalock Jones, et al., “Oklahoma: A View of the Center,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2007, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20737376>, Accessed 19 Sep. 2022, 5.

⁵⁷ Traugott, “Native American Artists and the Postmodern Cultural Divide,” 36.

picture, which is easy for audiences of any ethnicity to appreciate, does not mention directly the Indian removal of the 1830s that forced Hill's ancestors to leave their home in the Southeast and resettle in Oklahoma. There is also no explicit allusion to the social climate of the 1970s when liberation movements were abundant. Although these ethnic pride movements lifted part of the stigma of identifying as a Native American, those of mixed-race like Hill continued to struggle with certain aspects of Native American racial identities.⁵⁸ In addition to appealing to different Indigenous cultural groups, this painting addresses Hill's mixed cultural identity. The omission of anything depicting a specific Indigenous cultural group relates to Hill's Creek and Cherokee identity. Hill has documented Creek and Cherokee ancestors but because Native Americans were forced to choose their tribal enrollment on the Dawes rolls, everyone in Hill's family except for her great-grandfather sided with the Creek people. But her great-grandfather died six weeks before the rolls were finalized, and because of this, Hill could not enter an all-Cherokee art show.⁵⁹ Although Hill identifies as Creek and Cherokee and has the ancestry to back up her claim, the federal government and certain tribal groups may not accept her racial identity due to the Dawes rolls. Hill's personal issue simulates the problems that countless Native Americans have with proving their racial identity. For Native American artists who depend on their art as a form of income, the importance of racial identity and tribal enrollment is crucial and controversial, especially with the enforcement of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990. Hill's personal racial identity, along with the lack of cultural detail in *Morning in the Indian Village*, reflects Native American's struggle with identity in terms of the importance of tribal membership and the federal government's definitions of Native Americans.

⁵⁸ Thorton, "Health, Disease, and Demography," 76.

⁵⁹ "Joan Hill: Oklahoma Native Artists," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vbsl57mCjhs>.

While the 1970s were not known for new artistic styles, it was a time for new concern for people of color, women, and the environment. Viewed from the perspective of the 1970s wave of activism *Morning in the Indian Village* is more than a pretty painting. It is an act of survivance in which Hill's style and narrative show Native American visibility over the fictional definition and imagery of the dominant culture's authentic Indian.⁶⁰ Native Americans, through their representations of visibility, show resistance with their existence. Hill uses color to flesh out her narrative, mainly using yellows and oranges to show the morning light that covers the whole scene including the two women. Orange and yellow take the place of skin tone and the bodies of the women. Disconnecting the visual implications of skin color in relation to racism is implied by the use of the color black to outline important facial features: eyes, nose, lips, eyebrows, cheekbones, and chin. The lack of definite bodies is contrasted with the solid faces of the Native American women. The bodies resemble different parts of a fleeting fire, which held importance for the Creeks in that the placement and layering of the orange paint gives no physical form to their bodies, but conveys the spirit of their bodies. The image of traditional bodies, with arms, torsos, and legs, are not present here, which is one of Hill's artistic choices that stands out. A form of a body is present in the orange paint that is brighter in some places and fainter in others, which possibly represents the way that a fire is intense in the center and flickers as it dissipates into the air, leaving behind a trace of smoke. Crossed legs can be seen in the light brown paint that could represent the wood that grounds the fire and the two female figures. Hill appears to be appealing to the spiritual nature of Native American's connection to the land by keeping the composition sparse. This association of Native Americans with the environmental protection of

⁶⁰ Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890-1915*, 88.

the Earth is particularly relevant to the 1970s due to a certain television advertisement with which most Americans are familiar. An example of the non-Native interpretation of Native Americans' relationship with the land is present in the "Crying Indian" ad from 1971. On Earth Day in 1971, Keep America Beautiful aired an anti-pollution public service advertisement showing a modern polluted world with the image of a stereotypical American Indian man that misappropriated American Indian culture.⁶¹ Showing the Native American connection to the land before modernity and industrialization is an Italian actor, known for portraying Native Americans in films, wearing an Indian costume riding on a horse and paddling a canoe. This imagery perpetuates one side of Native Americans that is confining and limiting. Exhibiting the social climate for Native Americans during the 1970s, the "Crying Indian" ad is an example of Native Americans' lack of agency over the overwhelming environmental problems and over their own image. Hill reclaims self-agency as a Native American artist, painting Native Americans with a lack of stereotypical imagery that creates a timelessness that is not rooted in modernity or antiquity.

On the other hand, the static nature of the two figures can likely refer to the static image of Native Americans in the United States. Hill engages with issues affecting Native Americans such as identity, land, and stereotypes. While images and knowledge of other "American" racial groups have evolved into more comprehensive histories, Native Americans have been confined to the past. Since the 1800s, non-Natives have controlled the image of Native Americans, with George Catlin's paintings recasting all Indian life with Plains traits and Charles Wimar's

⁶¹ "National Congress of American Indians Acquires Rights Retires 'Crying Indian,'" Feb. 23, 2023, *Keep America Beautiful*, <https://kab.org/national-congress-of-american-indians-acquires-rights-retires-crying-indian/>, Accessed 29 Mar. 2023.

romantic portrayal of Jemima Boone's kidnapping by an obviously Plains Indian.⁶² These are only two examples of a vast campaign to promote the romantic Native American, which extolls a romanticized past that is present in other forms and representations of Native Americans. Even in the decades before Hill's painting, the stereotypes of the ignoble savage as culturally and racially inferior and the noble savage as savable through assimilation take precedence over real Native Americans.⁶³ Stereotypes, even the dated, seemingly harmless ones, reduce Native Americans to one-sided characters instead of seeing them as real people. Hill's painting could be seen as romanticized since the two figures are not surrounded by the modernity of the 1970s and there is no overt message of the struggles of Native peoples during this time period. By viewing this painting from a 1970s point of view, this scene becomes culturally sanitized since it seems to be untouched by the 1969-1971 Occupation of Alcatraz, a protest to reclaim the land. Hill also does not include any of the recognizable Plains Indian symbols of the past, such as traditional clothing, tipis, and buffalos. From an outsider's point of view, there is nothing identifiably "Indian" about Hill's painting except for the title. The absence of obvious stereotypes changes the way that Native Americans are usually seen.

In light of the knowledge of Native American history with the land, the landscape of Hill's painting has more depth than meets the eye. Land treaties, removals, and allotments have dominated the relationship between Native Americans, whites, and land. From the beginning of Native Americans' interaction with settlers, land has been Native Americans' greatest resource. Unlike language and other forms of culture, land can be returned and demands for the return of land can be supplied. For Hill, land is important since her family owned land in Oklahoma due to

⁶² Jeffrey R. Hanson, "Ethnicity and the Looking Glass: The Dialectics of National Indian Identity," *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 2, Spring 1997, 199.

⁶³ Hanson, "Ethnicity and the Looking Glass: The Dialectics of National Indian Identity," 204.

the allotments. Hill recognizes that “the Native American was no good to anybody until he was dead because the sooner they kill him the sooner they got his land.”⁶⁴ An ownership and connection to the land is evident in her painting’s composition. Instead of being distant figures or mere blots on the landscape, the two female Native Americans are central figures. By placing these two figures into the American landscape, Hill’s painting rebels against the European landscape genre that tries to contain nature and exploit the earth through a disguised colonialist and manifest destiny desire.⁶⁵ Hill’s figures are more than an accessory of the landscape or a touristic trinket of the artist. The two figures are situated firmly in the scene between the background and the foreground that grounds them in the intersection of the two colors and the horizontal/vertical lines. Hill validates their place in this scene with the central location of the two figures in the negative space. This assertion is heightened by the frontal facing pose and the direct gaze. Looking directly at the viewer, the figures are fighting against the Trail of Tears trope, which consisted of the face turning away to confirm the fact that in the world of the viewer, the Native American is a tourist.⁶⁶ Hill creates a relationship between subject and viewer with the eyes looking out at the viewer to create a point of connection. Often the lack of eye contact can also show weakness or submission, which is not present here. The stereotypical Native American does not belong in this world that has changed, but Hill’s depictions of Native Americans are a part of the changing landscape since the rising sun shows change. This painting is not solely a landscape or a portrait. The separate parts of the scene work together in harmony, providing Hill’s Native American figures with a sense of permanence. They are a part of the

⁶⁴ “Joan Hill: Oklahoma Native Artists,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vbsl57mCjhs>.

⁶⁵ Ohnesorge, “Uneasy Terrain: Image, Text, Landscape, and Contemporary Indigenous Artists in the United States,” 45.

⁶⁶ Miner, “Remediating the ‘Famous Indian Artist’: Native Aesthetics beyond Tourism and Tragedy,” 100.

landscape. Hill's figures, like actual Native Americans, are not going to disappear. The lack of tropes in this painting shows Native Americans reclaiming space in the land.

This painting addresses the stereotypical image of Native Americans by refusing to add unnecessary fodder to this composition, such as "Indian" clothing and teepees. Native Americans are free to exist away from stereotypes of the past that are extremely harmful to Native Americans of the present. Hill's figures are not only resisting racial stereotypes but also gender stereotypes of Native American women. The women in this scene are not engaged in doing "women's work," such as farming or raising the children. Perhaps they are engaging in some morning ritual or quiet reflection, but regardless of the specific action, they are sitting together. In Native American communities the kinship bonds were greater and broader than the familial bonds of Western society. The precontact Creek household or huti facilitated their basic needs with the multigenerational extended family living together and cooperating in subsistence and productive activities.⁶⁷ Over time, intermarriage between Native American women and white men along with the pressure to conform to patriarchal society, contributed to the destruction of most matrilineal societies. Although repercussions from the past have ultimately changed traditional ways of life, Native American communities refuse to be eradicated, instead continuing to keep traditional ways of life alive. In the matrilineal society of some Native American cultural groups, the women especially nurtured these kinship connections while empowering the community with knowledge of their collective past that honored ancestors and guided the future.⁶⁸ Hill's work can be interpreted as reasserting Native American identity through different

⁶⁷Cameron B. Wesson, *Households and Hegemony*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008) 23.

⁶⁸Smithers, "Predatory Colonialism: Indigenous Women and the Violence of Sexual Objectification in the United States," 254.

symbolic meanings based on Hill's culture since she is Creek and Cherokee. One of these symbols is fire.

Fire fuels an important role in the life of humans. Functioning in different capacities of daily survival, fire can transcend daily life with numerous symbolic meanings. Interpretations of symbols can vary with changing cultural viewpoints. Interpreting the orange in Hill's painting as a fire, the cultural symbology speaks to another audience that is specific to Native American cultural groups such as the Creek and Cherokee. Fire was an important part of daily life and ceremonial rituals such as the Busk or Green Corn ceremony. The sacred fire was a visible symbol of Creek cosmology, a representation of the lasting origin and migration of the Creek people. Survival is dependent on keeping traditions and memories alive through different forms, such as a symbolic fire that could be recreated in any location. The migratory nature of certain Native American groups contrasted with settlers at the time who were used to fixed settlements, not moving with the seasons or communing with nature. With the act of extinguishing the old sacred fire to light a new fire, the Creeks reinforced their origin and migration stories with every fire.⁶⁹ Similar to the relighting of fires, an essential part of Native American culture is oral histories retold to every generation to ensure the survival of Native American people. This connectiveness appears in Hill's figures through the closeness of the two figures and the depiction of the fire creating a place associated with storytelling, warmth, and kinship. Regardless of the voluntary and involuntary movement of Native American people, their cultural symbols and rituals live on and cannot be taken away, no matter how hard others try to trample or assimilate them. On a more personal specific level, females had a close connection to fire. In addition to making goods, gardening, and doing housework, the girls' duties included

⁶⁹ Wesson, *Households and Hegemony*, 51.

maintaining the fires that Creek women burned in their yards as they cooked food throughout the day.⁷⁰ With this connection, it becomes imperative to recognize the necessary purpose of women in this society. In order to protect the whole of the society while ensuring survival, men and women functioned in separate but equally important roles. On a practical level, fire was a form of pest control and growth stimulation that attracted deer, turkey, and other wild game to the vicinity while generating the growth of berries, wild fruits, wild herbs, and other useful items that Creek women collected.⁷¹ Hill identifies with these roles from the past by depicting these two figures as belonging to an Indian village, implying that this was life for some Native Americans. Viewed from the historic culture of the artist, the composition of the painting and Native American history is intrinsically linked.

The importance of land to Native Americans has not changed in centuries, with the value of land increasing in significance as Native Americans continue to fight for stolen land. The inclusion and significance of the fire with the spatial relationship between the two figures and the sun hint at the mass migration of Native American people to the West. With the combination of the rising sun and its relation to the two figures, there is a possible link to the Indian removal. Hill's title tells the viewer that it is morning, so the sun is rising. Since the sun rises in the East and sets in the West the relationship between the two figures and the sun is significant. There is no abstraction in the rendering of the sun, and the two women are clearly identifiable to the viewer. The two figures have their backs to the East, facing away from the rising sun and facing away from the ancestral lands located in the Southeast that the Creek and Cherokee, among other

⁷⁰Benjamin W. Griffith, *McIntosh and Weatherford, Creek Indian Leaders*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1988) 23.

⁷¹ Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003) 56.

groups, were forced to leave behind. They are situated surely in their Western surroundings (perhaps Oklahoma) where a majority of Creeks migrated and where the Muscogee (Creek) Nation now resides.⁷² Using Hill's personal family history and the history of the removal, we can assume that the sun can be seen as coming from their previous home in the East to illuminate their current home in the West. Hill's figures represent Native Americans looking towards the future while continuing to include their past. The sparse background gives additional importance to everything included in the composition. Without any specific features to identify the location but with knowledge of the history of Hill's own Native American background, it is possible that the Indian village is somewhere in the West since Hill's family was removed to Oklahoma. The non-specific details allow for all viewers to identify with the figures instead of a select group of people. Hill's painting walks a fine line between conforming to the nostalgic trope of a "timeless" people that hinders natural progress and appealing to the sometimes trivial ornamental importance of a little Indian painting.⁷³ Perhaps *Morning in the Indian Village* elicits a different reaction since the Native American point of view is present because the artist is a Native American. Hill succeeds in creating a painting that can be as layered in meaning as the viewer wants it to be. Her work continues to be as potent today as it was in the nineteen-seventies due to the simple narrative it implies.

The role of women in Creek and Cherokee society

The importance of female figures continues in Hill's work in the 1990s. As a decade, the 1990s mirrors the social movements of the 1960s and 70s, with the passing of the Native American Languages Act, the Arts and Crafts Act, and the Native American Graves Protection

⁷² Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World*, 21.

⁷³ Griffiths, "Native American Representation in Early Cinema," 83.

and Repatriation Act. These acts symbolized the continued movement towards protecting Native Americans. In an effort to avoid criticism and continued backlash in relation to dealings with and treatment of Native American people, these various acts sought to return the stolen culture to Native Americans. Each progression of recognition and small step to appease the public essentially put a band-aid on the centuries-old wounds of Native Americans. These acts that culminated in the 1990s highlight the predatory nature of the relationship between the United States and Native Americans. The Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 is still controversial and directly affects artists today. In an effort to protect Native American artists and patrons from competition, the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 solidified the political importance of Native American arts while the act itself functioned as a way to regulate the production of Native American arts and the identity of artists.⁷⁴ Often dismissing or removing the Native voice in favor of blanket apologies, Native American artists used their work to comment on the state of Native Americans in America. Hill's work becomes increasingly political during this time. Hill's visible political subject matter can be seen in her painting *Women's Voices at the Council* (1990). A part of a series started during the 1970s, this painting shows the influence of the Vietnam War that occupied the American public during the 1960s and 70s with the theme of war and peace.⁷⁵ Political agency is a continual struggle for Native American nations and the importance of self-sovereignty is often a complicated issue for non-Natives to understand.

For those unfamiliar with customs of Native American groups, such as the Creek and the Cherokee, the title situates the viewer in the scene. The prominence of females in this painting

⁷⁴ Mithlo, "*Our Indian Princess*": *Subverting the Stereotype*, 83.

⁷⁵ "Joan Hill's *Women's Voices at the Council*," *Smithsonian American Art Museum*, <https://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/native-women-artists/online/joan-hill>, Accessed 19 Sept. 2022.

shows the viewer that women are at the center of this event. *Women's Voices at the Council* differs from Hill's previous work with the lack of the landscape and the inclusion of numerous figures. At first glance, it is clear from the context and the title that this is a meeting with political importance and women have an important role to play in this society.



Fig. 2 Joan Hill, *Women's Voices at the Council*, acrylic on canvas, 1990, <https://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/native-women-artists/online/joan-hill>.

Before the Creeks were removed from the Southeast, they had a National Council where civil and war leaders converged in a primarily social annual conference that transformed into a more legislative body. It transformed because the Creeks faced hardships due to the growing

population and power of white settlers.⁷⁶ The abundance of females in Hill's council is in vast contrast to the political dynamic of the American government. In American society, gender roles divided labor, with men usually having greater access to social, educational, and economical opportunities while women had to fight for rights to vote and hold office.⁷⁷ During the 1970s to the 1990s, there were a few notable women in the U.S. government, with Sandra Day O'Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg being the most iconic. While the U.S. government has yet to have a female president, in 1985 Wilma Mankiller became the first female chief of an American Indian tribe as the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation.⁷⁸ In addition to the gender inequality that is prevalent in the U.S. government, the governments differ in their decision-making processes.

This council is clearly displayed as a meeting of Native American women, and there are no other figures or objects that unnecessarily complicate the painting. With historical context, there is a deeper meaning to the narrative of the clear and simple composition. The political theme at the forefront of this painting is important since Native American lifeways are constantly under attack. In the previous home of the Creeks and Cherokees, known from 1832 as the state of Alabama, lawmakers approved bills that forbid all laws, usages, and customs of the Creeks and Cherokees that violated the constitution and the laws of the state.⁷⁹ With the formation of states, the customs and culture of Native Americans were outlawed. For the Creeks and Cherokees under the authority of Alabama law, the right to meet in any council assembly and

⁷⁶ Griffith, *McIntosh and Weatherford, Creek Indian Leaders*, 8.

⁷⁷ Kira Sanbonmatsu, "Women's Underrepresentation in the U.S. Congress," *Daedalus*, vol. 149, no. 1, 2020, *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48563031>, Accessed 9 Mar. 2023, 42.

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Brando, "Wilma Mankiller," National Women's History Museum, 2021, Accessed 9 Apr. 2023.

⁷⁹ Michael D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985) 147.

make laws was illegal.⁸⁰ In the Southeast, the laws of the states often conflicted with Native American lifestyles. The theft of right to self-sovereignty that impacted many Indigenous cultural groups as their lands became states did not end with the creation of reservations and allotments. Native Americans continue to struggle with the right to self-sovereignty in the form of federal and state tribal recognition. With the depiction of this women's council, Hill rebels against the history of the U.S. governmental decisions that directly affect Native Americans. Hill is probably aware of the fickle relationship between the U.S. government and Native American communities as a result of the constantly changing policies of self-determination and termination during the twentieth century.⁸¹ With her work, Hill recognizes the political organization of Native American groups within America.

With this painting, Hill emphasizes her Creek and Cherokee identity by representing symbols of Native Americans and their government. Hill showcases specific Creek and Cherokee symbolism by including different elements in the composition. Creek towns were divided into red towns, associated with war and providing red stick bearers, and white towns, associated with peace and providing councilors who spoke for peace.⁸² Hill uses the colors in her painting to signify these different meanings. Her color palette is simple because she uses only black, white, red, and tan. Depending on the viewer, colors can have different meanings. For example, white can symbolize purity or peace. Black can symbolize death or seriousness. Red might symbolize passion, luck, or blood. Tan, a version of brown, could represent the earth and the natural world. The stark contrast of the white background with black and red makes the

⁸⁰ Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis*, 147.

⁸¹ Devon A. Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: decolonization, empowerment, activism*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003) 55.

⁸² Griffith, *McIntosh and Weatherford, Creek Indian Leaders*, 7.

bright white and red stand out. In the Creek council, in terms of decision-making, white represents peace and red represents war. Due to these symbolic meanings Hill's use of color becomes very significant. Using the overwhelmingly white background as a symbol of peace with the careful use of red, Hill seems to be advocating for peace. However, the small red disk in the background against the white could represent a looming threat of war.⁸³ The shade of red that Hill uses is not fighting against the other strong colors of black and white because it is a muted shade of red. If composed in a different way, all of the contrasting colors could show division. Because red means war and white means peace, the two sides could be seen as opposing each other, but without the two sides, the whole system would not work. This balance is present in the egalitarian society of Indigenous groups, with Hill using color to show the benefit of balance since men and women have equal roles in religion, politics, and economy.⁸⁴ This balance and need for peace is especially relevant during the decades when the painting was conceptualized and then finished. The Vietnam War of the 1970s and the Gulf War of the 1990s heightened the public awareness of tragedy and waste of life as a result of war. By emphasizing white, she promotes peace. Peace is emphasized with the knowledge that in Western cultures, white in war often means surrender, another form of peace. A calmness permeates the scene with the bright color against the lack of color. Hill uses strong colors although the red is a bit more muted and natural like clay. While the colors themselves have significance, they are also used to illustrate the various cultural objects in the scene.

From the white feather headpiece to the brown tortoiseshell ankle shackles, color is essential to differentiate the cultural items present in the scene. The central figure appears to be

⁸³ "Joan Hill's *Women's Voices at the Council*," <https://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/native-women-artists/online/joan-hill>.

⁸⁴ Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: decolonization, empowerment, activism*, 42.

wearing a feather attached to a headband. The white feather headpiece that the central figure wears sets her apart from the other female figures. She can be recognized as the matriarch of the clan or a Beloved Woman, a term used by the Cherokee and the Creek people. Women honored with this position are recognized as leaders in the community and are responsible for taking part in decision-making, such as calling for peace or war since Creek Beloved Women affected public opinions.⁸⁵ This woman holds a special position, as designated by the central placement and the clear visibility to viewers. The woman is slightly taller than any of the other women in the painting, especially with the addition of the headpiece. As an easily identifiable material, the feather in her headband connects her to nature and cultural practice. Feathers, particularly eagle feathers, are sacred indicators of high rank and due to the pan-Indian development “princesses” of powwows usually wear a crown with one eagle tail feather in the back.⁸⁶ To outsiders, the feather is a signifier of Native Americans since the feather worn in the hair is a common trope of Native American imagery perpetuated by stereotypes of the Plains Indian warrior imagery. The central woman continues to stand out among the other women, with the additional decoration on her clothes. Hill continues to reinforce the theme of peace with the white feather and the white shell necklaces.

Like feathers, jewelry is a status marker or an extension of the self. A form of unspoken communication like the feather and other personal adornments, jewelry serves several purposes as a form of expression, identity, culture, and communication. These necklaces or collars are

⁸⁵ Kathryn E. Holland Braund, “Guardians of Tradition and Handmaidens to Change: Women’s Roles in Creek Economic and Social Life during the Eighteenth Century,” *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1990, *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1185653>, Accessed 30 Dec. 2022, 242.

⁸⁶ James H. Howard, “Pan-Indian Culture of Oklahoma,” *The Scientific Monthly*, vol. 81, no. 5, 1955, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/22049>, Accessed 7 Mar. 2023, 217.

possibly expressing a special status or familial bond since the only two figures wearing the necklaces also have the same hairstyle. Hill illustrates the close bonds within a matrilineal society with the use of the necklace and same hairstyle to indicate a mother-daughter bond. Jewelry is a vestige of Native American identity since each group has different styles and methods of making jewelry. The use of specific materials, designs, and methods tell the story of different cultural groups. For example, the jewelry of Southwestern Indigenous groups is the most clearly identifiable with the materials of silver and turquoise, which is distinctly different from Southeastern groups who used white shells and bones, then later glass beads acquired through trade with white settlers. The white shell beads found in Hill's rendering of the necklace, along with fringed deer-hide dresses, evokes Muscogee attire before contact with Europeans.⁸⁷ Before interactions with Europeans and the removal from the East, Native Americans traded amongst themselves and developed their own societies. Hill's purposeful inclusion of the white necklace shows the materials that are native to the ancestral homeland of the Creek and Cherokee. The white shells used in the belt of the central figure could be an iteration of the wampum belt made from white shells from the Northeast that symbolizes peace agreements.⁸⁸ While some traditional culture was lost during removal and assimilation, this painting, finished in the 1990s, shows that traditional culture and ways of life are important and alive. The style and simplicity of Hill's painting is an example of a culture traveling through different times and locations to show that it is possible to be true to tradition and change with the times.

⁸⁷ America Meredith, "Joan Hill's *Women's Voices at the Council*," in *Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists*, 301.

⁸⁸ "Beads, wampum, white," *Indiana Memory Hosted Digital Collections*, <https://indianamemory.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/nativeam/id/22>, Accessed 29 Mar. 2023.

Hill depicts a people and a land before time with the incorporation of traditional Native American attire that reflects a way of life that was dominant before the arrival of Europeans. Using the tan color as a representation of clothing made of animal hides, Hill appeals to Native American and non-Native audiences with visualizations that are familiar to both. Before the introduction of European textiles, Creek women processed deerskins and other hides for the creation of clothes, blankets, shoes, shelter, and decorations.⁸⁹ Actively involved in the making of their products, Creek women were necessary to the function of society. Although women's roles evolved with the growing dependence on the deerskin trade, women did not lose their importance. Because Hill is part Creek and Cherokee, the history of the Southeastern Native American groups' involvement with the deerskin trade is relevant. The Creeks' role in the deerskin trade facilitated the growing economic relations between Native Americans and whites that brought forth an irrevocable change to Native American life. Often using the profits from the trade to purchase manufactured goods such as metal tools and cloth, Native Americans became dependent on manufactured products that diminished established lifestyles. The dependence on European manufactured goods gave more importance to male economic pursuits (such as hunting), leading women to become dependent not only on foreign goods, but also on their hunter husbands who supplied the deerskins for trade.⁹⁰ By showing the figures in her painting wearing the tanned deerskins that were common during the eighteenth-century, Hill brings the past into the present since Native Americans do not wear these clothes often. Native Americans might wear similar clothes on special occasions or for special events, but they do not wear the clothing most associated with them on a daily basis. Clothing changes with the times, which is

⁸⁹ Braund, "Guardians of Tradition and Handmaidens to Change: Women's Roles in Creek Economic and Social Life during the Eighteenth Century," 243.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 244.

true for all cultures as materials, fashions, and influences change. Including this dress of the past is a sign of matrilineal kinship, matrilocality, residence, town organization, and ceremonies that persisted after the removal.⁹¹ By depicting traditionally Native American objects, Hill brings the “old” Native American to a modern audience.

The women in Hill’s painting are wearing brown tortoiseshells, which are another sign of common Native American cultural beliefs and traditional rituals. Women known as “shell shakers” wear these shells, filled with pebbles, on their ankles as a way to keep rhythms for the men who sing during important dances.⁹² A council gathering is an event to celebrate or commemorate; consequently, it is worthy of proper attire and other accoutrements. The specific placement of the shells adds to the female-centric narrative. While handheld turtle rattles were used by men, the ankle turtle rattles were used by younger women.⁹³ Contemporary women are now often reviving traditions of Southeastern indigenous groups that are still used in the Southeast and by the Southeastern groups that were removed. The Cherokee of Oklahoma perform the Green Corn ceremony and Stomp dance that emigrated with them from the Southeast — ceremonies and dances often involving multiple rattles attached to women’s ankles.⁹⁴ The tortoise is culturally relevant for Southeastern groups and is native to the southern part of North America, but the turtle is culturally important to many Native Americans. Due to the creation story involving land growing off of a turtle’s back, many Native Americans refer to North America as Turtle Island. The turtle continues to be a powerful symbol, with the South

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁹² Meredith, “Joan Hill’s *Women’s Voices at the Council*,” 301.

⁹³ Andrew Gillreath-Brown and Tanya M. Peres, “Identifying Turtle Shell Rattles in the Archaeological Record of the Southeastern United States,” *Ethnobiology Letters*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2017, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26423687>, Accessed 29 Dec. 2022, 111.

⁹⁴ Gillreath-Brown and Peres, “Identifying Turtle Shell Rattles in the Archaeological Record of the Southeastern United States,” 111.

Dakota Coalition Ending Domestic and Sexual Violence adopting the turtle as their symbol since Indigenous people recognize the protection and feminine spirit of the turtle as Mother Earth.⁹⁵ Using color to signify cultural significance, Hill continues to endow her narrative with the color red.

The Native American community has a long history with the color and the word “red.” One theory of the racial identity of Native Americans as red evolved from interactions with ethnical descriptions of people who called themselves white and their slaves black.⁹⁶ During the early history of Native Americans and Europeans interactions, the identification of red men or red people might not have negative connotations since red has significance to the Southeastern tribal groups as a strong and powerful color. Equating the color red with the skin tone of Native Americans is not a recent association due to the belief that the redness of the Native Americans came from cultural lifestyle/environment or historical sources—not biology.⁹⁷ Hill visualizes this connection by using the same shade of red for the women’s skin tone and the red disk in the sky that could represent the sun. It is possible that Hill is criticizing the eighteenth-and nineteenth-century thought process of European Americans that assumed that the skin color of Native Americans would “whiten” over time.⁹⁸ Hill could also be reasserting the difference between Native American lifeways and other lifeways considering that red stands out against the neutral colors. If Hill used brown for the skin tone, then there might be a loss of symbolism and the importance of women to this scene would be less impactful. The use of red to empower Native

⁹⁵ “Sacred Turtle Woman,” *South Dakota Coalition Ending Domestic and Sexual Violence*, <https://sdcedsv.org/aboutus/sacredturtlewoman/>, Accessed 29 Mar. 2023.

⁹⁶ Nancy Shoemaker, “How Indians Got to Be Red,” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 102, no. 3, 1997, *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2171504>, Accessed 5 Apr. 2023, 629.

⁹⁷ Andrew K. Frank, *Creeks and Southerners: Biculturalism on the Early American Frontier*, Indians of the Southeast, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005) 51.

⁹⁸ Frank, *Creeks and Southerners: Biculturalism on the Early American Frontier*, 51.

American people simulates the reclamation of the color red in the 1960s and 1970s with the Red Power Movement and the Women of All Red Nations – two activist groups. By redefining the purpose of the word and the color into a proud symbol of cultural empowerment, Native Americans use red to fight against the negativity associated with racist “redskins” imagery and terminology. Hill’s use of the color associates the color specifically with Native American women. For Native American women, red is a sign of power and recognition. The red handprint over the mouth symbolizes the MMIW movement that represents such ideas as the unheard voices of the missing, media and law enforcement silence, and oppression of Native American women.⁹⁹ Hill’s interpretation of red reclaims the word and the color and dismantles its negative association with Native Americans.

Females have importance in Hill’s council because presumably women hold all of the positions since there are no men present. In Hill’s scene, no males appear in the leadership roles, whereas Western culture emphasizes predominantly male-oriented government. Recently, gender equality has begun to improve as more women have begun to occupy roles in leadership and government. Within the last few years, there have been several record highs in the U.S. government, with women holding 28% of seats in Congress, 25% in the Senate, and 28.7% in the House.¹⁰⁰ However, these numbers are far behind the ideals of gender parity that would eliminate the gender imbalance in politics. Just as Native Americans are often reduced to stereotypes, women are subjected to sexist beliefs related to emotions and physicality that affect stereotypical

⁹⁹ “Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW),” *Native Hope*, <https://www.nativehope.org/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-mmiw>, Accessed 11 Apr. 2023.

¹⁰⁰ “Women in Elective Office 2023,” Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), 2023 New Brunswick, NJ: Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University-New Brunswick, <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/current-numbers/women-elective-office-2023>, Accessed 9 Mar. 2023.

gender roles. These gender roles are present in almost all societies where women are meant to have sole responsibility for childcare and homemaking. Popular films and television shows perpetuate this notion since they think it is inappropriate for women to have high-powered careers and successful homelives.¹⁰¹ As seen in *Women's Voices at the Council*, women are more than wives and mothers, although Hill does represent these roles by including a child. In the Creek and Cherokee community, women's experience is valuable not only in community decision-making but also in providing food for the household and constructing household goods since women in the past were responsible for preparing and planting large, communal village corn fields.¹⁰² Women were major parts not only of the livelihood of their "nuclear" family but also of the interwoven network of kinship that created community. Working in harmony, men prepared fields to help with planting while women, performing their primary duties of child-rearing and food cultivation, tended the crops with the children.¹⁰³ By involving every person in the community, Native Americans ensured that important aspects of their lifestyles continued with each new generation.

Regardless of the emphasis on Hill's painting on age and time, modernity is also captured through the depiction of a community of multigenerational women. The older woman in black in the middle is surrounded by middle-aged or younger women; there is also a small child (holding her mother's hand) who is slightly turned toward the viewer. Three different generations are easily identifiable, which implies the passing down of culture and history. The female-dominated matrilineal household is depicted by presenting a variety of age groups, such as mature women,

¹⁰¹ Nannerl O. Keohane, "Women, Power & Leadership," *Daedalus*, vol. 149, no. 1, 2020, *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48563044>, Accessed 10 Mar. 2023, 242-243.

¹⁰² Braund, "Guardians of Tradition and Handmaidens to Change: Women's Roles in Creek Economic and Social Life during the Eighteenth Century," 242.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

their unmarried children, married daughters, grandchildren, and elderly relatives.¹⁰⁴ Hill shows how culture is passed down by depicting an actual example of this process since varying age groups from adolescence to elder are present in this council event. Documenting each stage of life from childhood to adulthood, Hill captures the roles of women as well as categories of aging, such as daughter, mother, and grandmother. Although various life stages of women are definitely present in other cultures, Hill shows that there is more to a woman's life than stereotypical roles by painting the matriarch in a leadership role. Since *Women's Voices at Council* was painted for the Oklahoma Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, Hill is clearly situating women in the present (1990s) as viable, thriving parts of society.¹⁰⁵ She shows matriarchs leading by example, because one of the most powerful ways of knowing that something is possible is by seeing it. By involving all generations in her painting, Hill also suggests that there is a future for Native Americans. This scene might represent to some the vanishing Native Americans and might imply to some that Indigenous culture differs from mainstream American culture since Native Americans are frequently associated with pre-contact versions of themselves. However, Hill's use of pre-contact items highlights the importance of females to the cultural survival of her culture's traditions.

As a Native American woman painting Native American women, Hill depicts women who distinctly differ from the Native American female figures depicted by white male artists. There is a real depth to these women as fully formed characters in this narrative. Hill's women do not conform to stock female character standards since they are neither faceless, sexless wives

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 241.

¹⁰⁵ Meredith, "Joan Hill's *Women's Voices at the Council*," 301.

who serve men nor are they sexual exotic princesses who tempt men.¹⁰⁶ All of the figures are completely covered and do not look directly at the viewer. Their gaze is not averted in weakness or shame. They are not performing for an audience; instead, Hill seems to have caught the women in the middle of an action. These women are not sexualized or seen as objects and thus differ from one of the most popular and recognized depictions of a Native American woman. Disney's film *Pocahontas*, released in 1995, five years after Hill's painting, capitalized on the sexualization of Pocahontas even though it is an animated film for children. The animators illustrated an extremely mature, physically developed, and sexualized adult version of Pocahontas in an effort to realistically promote the main plot point: her love story with John Smith. Using supermodels, idealized Western beauties, for inspiration, Pocahontas is portrayed as a sexual object who must be physically attractive enough to tempt the white male colonizer.¹⁰⁷ The relatively recent timing of the film's 1995 release and its popularity continue to show the domination of this myth and of this male fantasy of a female Native American figure. Created in the same decade as third wave feminism, such portrayals of Native American women can sometimes be interpreted as having feminist agendas. One issue within this wave, however, is the issue of sovereignty. Comparing Disney's image of Pocahontas with Hill's image of Native American women shows two versions of how images of Native American women are used for a greater purpose. Both narratives emphasize the importance of sexual sovereignty to correct or obscure historical injustices affecting the health and wellbeing of Native American women

¹⁰⁶ Bird, "Savage Desires: The Gendered Construction of the American Indian in Popular Media," 89.

¹⁰⁷ Leigh H. Edwards, "The United Colors of 'Pocahontas': Synthetic Miscegenation and Disney's Multiculturalism," *Narrative*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1999, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20107179>, Accessed 14 Mar. 2023, 154.

today.¹⁰⁸ Sexual sovereignty is not usually an issue in societies rooted in traditional matrilineal kinship systems because women had autonomy over their bodies and sexuality. Exhibiting white feminist traits in the form of independence, the physical image of Pocahontas becomes less feminist and more fetishized through the eyes of whites. Pocahontas, one historical figure who has come to represent the Native American people, was rendered by a white male animator who forced her image to conform to the white male ideal. Hill paints a very different picture, not of an isolated historical figure but of a historical cultural event. Both the film and the painting communicate the remaining ramifications of colonization by showing the influence of the patriarchal society on a Native American figure and the revival of matrilineal cultural traditions. In the same decade as these works, sexual sovereignty informed empowerment movements by supplying necessary tools to undermine historical misrepresentations and defend sexual subjectivity and bodily autonomy.¹⁰⁹ The Pocahontas plot abuses history to promote a specific narrative since Pocahontas is drawn as a young woman when in reality she was around eleven the first time she met John Smith. Some might interpret this “love story” as a suggestion that Native American people invited conquest by white people. The Pocahontas/Princess myth is an original American story that grounds America’s national identity by making Pocahontas serve as the amenable symbol of white Americans’ right to conquer, because she sacrificed everything for the new nation.¹¹⁰ The relationship between Pocahontas and John Smith is one example of the symbolic union between whites and Native Americans that would set the tone for the succeeding paternal relationship between Indigenous people and the U.S. government, with the U.S.

¹⁰⁸ Smithers, “Predatory Colonialism: Indigenous Women and the Violence of Sexual Objectification in the United States,” 277.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Bird, “Savage Desires: The Gendered Construction of the American Indian in Popular Media,” 79.

government acting as the powerful father and Native Americans serving as the helpless children. This relationship between Native Americans and the U.S. government directly echoes the past, making Native Americans dependent on systems that are controlled by others. Hill's work can be seen as celebrating women by taking ownership over politics that affect their way of life. The overt absence of colonialization in Hill's scene is in opposition to the belief that Native Americans and their cultural practices are dead through assimilation. Hill's painting, focusing solely on women, is especially poignant since in the past, Native American women have had no control over decisions regarding their bodies. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Indian Health Service was accused of sterilizing at least 25% of Native American women aged 15 to 44 through enforcement and misinformation.¹¹¹ But Hill's painting implies that women's rights affect not only women but whole communities because women are responsible for the next generation. *Women's Voices at Council* is appealing to women today because women, regardless of race, continue to fight for their rights as seen in the ongoing abortion rights issue in America. With the knowledge of the true history of Native American women, the widespread distortion of their history continues to have a lasting damaging effect. There is much to be learned from the work of contemporary Native American artists, because whereas "most contemporary artists blithely dismiss history; Native artists must confront and correct it."¹¹²

¹¹¹ Jane Lawrence, "The Indian Health Service and the Sterilization of Native American Women," *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2000, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1185911>, Accessed 17 Mar. 2023, 400.

¹¹² Lippard, "Independent Identities," 138.

Ch. 3

Helen Hardin

Helen Hardin is part of a multi-generational line of female artists that includes her mother, Pablita Veldarde, and her daughter, Margarete Bagshaw. Hardin's art differs drastically from Hill's work and the work of other Native American artists. She explored a new style within Native American art by moving away from the so-called "traditional" Indian art that her mother painted to a more abstract, geometric "modern" style with her depictions of kachinas and women. However, according to ethnography, Hardin's style stays rooted in tradition since Indian art was inherently geometric, conventional, and abstract.¹¹³ Hardin, like most Native Americans, lives in two worlds, and her work appeals to both Native American and non-Native viewers. Her works reclaim her spirituality as a Santa Clara Pueblo although she was raised as a Catholic. The dichotomy of being half-white and half-Native American plagued Hardin throughout her career, and her depictions of females tend to reconcile the two halves of her life and identity. This division is best expressed in Hardin's own words as she describes herself as "Anglo socially and Indian in her art."¹¹⁴ Looking at her figures, the construction of the geometric shapes that make up her painted figures can be representative of the different parts that make up humanity. Hardin sought to humanize the impersonal inventory of decultured ancient Indian iconography that is usually found in museums by de-tribalizing and de-mystifying its meanings to non-Indian viewers.¹¹⁵

¹¹³Elizabeth Hutchinson, "Modern Native American Art: Angel DeCora's Transcultural Aesthetics," *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 83, no. 4, 2001, *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3177230>, Accessed 11 Aug. 2022, 754.

¹¹⁴Jay Scott, *Changing Woman: The Life and Art of Helen Hardin*, (Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Pub., 1989) 17.

¹¹⁵Scott, *Changing Woman: The Life and Art of Helen Hardin*, 18.

Reorienting Native American art

Stylistically, *Prayers of a Blue Corn Mother* (1974) challenges the typical idea of Native American art during the 1970s by employing elements of Cubism and Constructivism. Hardin is personalizing a Native American subject matter, the blue corn ceremony, in a visual language that Westerners or Euro-Americans understand.



Fig. 3 Helen Hardin, *Prayers of a Blue Corn Mother*, 1974, *Changing Woman*, pg. 128.

Looking back at the recent style of the 1960s, American painters such as Warhol and Rosenquist are aware of European art movements since they employ the large, flat forms of synthetic Cubism.¹¹⁶ Hardin adopts aspects of Cubism with the flattened picture plane and the various geometric shapes. The geometric shapes in Hardin's work provide order and simplification to

¹¹⁶ John Sandberg, "Some Traditional Aspects of Pop Art," *Art Journal*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1967, *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/774918>, Accessed 25 Nov. 2022, 233.

forms encountered in everyday life in a comprehensible abstraction. By using these forms, Hardin provides a new way for outsiders and insiders to look at Indigenous culture. Her colors are not typical of the Cubist and Constructivism style but of the Southwest region, with bright desert hues. Her style is also personal to her interests since she employed drafting tools to form her shapes and lines. Harkening back to Hill and the traditional way of painting, using tools or mechanical devices were not the “Indian” way. Hardin’s work combines the spiritual with the worldly that is found in her depiction of kachinas. Kachinas, as intermediaries between people and gods, are in constant flux between two worlds, like Hardin aiming to engage white viewers while simultaneously allowing Native American viewers to view the same material in a new context.¹¹⁷ Hardin continues combining Native American and non-Native viewpoints by using the symbolism of ritualism and religion in *Prayers of a Blue Corn Mother*.

Native American spiritual association of rituals with blue corn is present in the title and the composition. Prayers are a form of worship in most religions, but for some Native American religions and some Christian denominations, prayer is ritualized. Native Americans following the spiritual traditions of their ancestors often pray to different spirits; similarly, Catholics pray to different saints. Hardin compares kachinas, spiritual being of Pueblo peoples, to Catholic saints as both are venerated beings responsible for different things.¹¹⁸ It is this similarity along with others that made it less difficult for the Pueblos to adopt Catholicism as their religion during the forced conversions. In the 1600s, the Spanish were ruthless in their goal to control the Pueblos of New Mexico and Arizona, with Franciscan priests relentlessly attacking the practice of Pueblo

¹¹⁷ Scott, *Changing Woman: The Life and Art of Helen Hardin*, 47.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 46-47.

religions.¹¹⁹ In spite of the revivals of traditional Native American religions, the lasting impact of religious assimilation is still present as seen by Hardin's Catholic upbringing. Native American religious symbols and Christian symbols continue to be significant for Hardin's work since Pueblo spirituality and Catholicism share common traits. Roman Catholics and Pueblos each have a distinct priesthood, ritual chanting, elaborate altars, complex religious calendars, and venerated figures.¹²⁰ The use of incense and beads, along with Catholic saints and Pueblo mystic figures, furthers the connection between these two religions. Within these two religions, the figure of the Mother is vital. Mother Nature in her many forms and the Mother Mary are venerated. Nature is feminized since the Earth gives birth and life to those who inhabit it. With Native American religions, the mothering nature of caretaking is present since the Earth's well-being depends on human action.¹²¹ First Mother, Mother Corn, Sky Woman, and other female figures show the importance of females in Indigenous creation myths, nature rituals, and religious celebrations. The Blue Corn Woman or the summer mother has specific importance for Hardin as a Tewa Pueblo since this figure is seen as one of the first mothers.¹²² Similar importance is given to mothers in Catholicism since Mary gave birth to Jesus, the savior of humanity. Those of Catholic faith express their specific devotion to Mary, the mother of Jesus, with Hail Marys and Salve Regina. As a Native American person with a Catholic background, Hardin includes aspects of the ritualism of Catholicism and the Pueblo religion in the

¹¹⁹ Duane Champagne and Kenneth M. Morrison, "Native American Religions: Creating through Cosmic Give-And-Take," *Native America: Portrait of the Peoples*, (Visible Ink Press, Jan. 1994) 460.

¹²⁰ Willard Hughes Rollings, "Indians and Christianity" in *A Companion to American Indian History*, Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury eds., 126.

¹²¹ Champagne and Morrison, "Native American Religions: Creating through Cosmic Give-And-Take," 473.

¹²² Rayna Green and Frank W. Porter III, "Chapter 2: A Look at Their Traditional Roles," *Women in American Indian Society*, Jan. 1989, 20.

composition. There is one vital difference between Christianity and Indigenous religions. As a monotheistic religion, Christianity revolves around the relationship and sole worship of the male figure of God. Through the acceptance of a male God, the superiority of males to females is reinforced and women are expected to obey the authority and will of man.¹²³ In contrast to the monotheistic Christian religion, followers of Native American religions praise many spiritual entities, and women have important roles in their creation stories. Hardin, aware of the power of women, often depicts women in a spiritual way. Regardless of varying religious aspects, Hardin's work is undeniably spiritual.

The composition of *Prayers of a Blue Corn Mother* is comprised of different shapes and colors that work together in a sort of spiritual order. The repetitious shapes, specifically the shapes of prayer with the open mouths, insinuate spoken prayers, perhaps in the form of Catholic and Pueblo chanting for rituals or ceremonies. The four circle figure heads with circular open mouths implies the repetitious nature of prayers in Native American religions and the daily set times for prayer in the Catholic denomination. Native American cultures often have special religious events that occur seasonally since life before contact with Europeans used to revolve around the seasonal cycle of planting and harvesting, often coinciding with religious ceremonies. A few of these annual ceremonies included saint's day festivals, summer corn and harvest dances, deer and buffalo dances, and masked or unmasked kachina dances.¹²⁴ These reoccurring ceremonies are of a cyclical nature, constant in their natural repetition. For Pueblos, the circle is more than a shape it is a way of life, for Pueblos were always preparing for the next ceremony,

¹²³ Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: decolonization, empowerment, activism*, 48.

¹²⁴ Tisa Wenger, "We Have a Religion: The 1920s Pueblo Indian Dance Controversy and American Religious Freedom," (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009) 21.

creating a constant never-ending cycle, a circle.¹²⁵ Circles have specific importance since they often appear in Hardin's other works. The three circle figures in the background echo the circular figure of the Blue Corn Mother and possibly act as a choir (for Western viewers) or spiritual entities (for Native viewers) since they have no body, and the only facial features they have are eyes and mouths. In Western Christian culture, these shapes could be interpreted as a choir since they resemble the choir dress worn by members of the choir that obscures the body, showing only the face. For other viewers, these circles could be spiritual entities because spirits are not required to have corporal bodies since they are not human. More than human but less than divine, it is more plausible that these faces are kachinas since they resemble kachina masks with open mouths and slitted eyes.¹²⁶ Left to the viewer's interpretation, they could represent other participants in the prayer activity. Different interpretations can be also applied to the importance of corn in this ceremony.

Corn is a crop largely associated with Native American culture. As an important part of the pre-contact Native American diet and the relationship with the land, corn is one of the crops introduced to the colonizers that could grow and survive in the New World. Corn as a whole is a symbol of the Native Americans' relationship with the colonies. Corn can also act as a symbol of Native Americans. Corn, like Native Americans, has persisted through time and hardships to be a part of Indigenous food and mainstream society. Blue corn is distinctly Southwestern Native American, yet it is also mainstream with non-Native people incorporating it into their cuisine. As the foundation of Hopi and Pueblo agriculture and life, the corn plant is a living entity with a body that provides nourishment like a mother.¹²⁷ *Prayers of a Blue Corn Mother* directly

¹²⁵ Scott, *Changing Woman: The Life and Art of Helen Hardin*, 152.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 127.

connects the land with Native Americans. Although settlers cultivated the land to do their bidding, Native Americans worked with the land to take care of it while also using it to sustain life. In order to flourish, humans were responsible for the domestication of corn. The numerous Native American stories about the origin of corn and its relation to women demonstrate the metaphorical nature of Native American understanding of their relationship with the natural world.¹²⁸ The blue corn is clearly displayed in the mother's hand and stands out against the various lines and colors. The dark turquoise of the corn is set against a variety of yellows, oranges, and reds. Warm colors surround the dispersal of the different shades of turquoise, seeming to emanate from the turquoise blue corn. The power of the blue corn is equated with the power of the woman, as the woman is seen gripping the corn in her hand holding it up close to herself. To the Tewa Pueblos, Hardin's cultural group, the first mothers were known as Blue Corn Woman and White Corn Maiden.¹²⁹ Assuming similar roles, women and corn act as symbols of nature giving and sustaining life for the future.

Self-representation in abstraction

In spite of growing up at the Santa Clara Pueblo, a federally recognized tribe also known for producing pottery, Hardin spent the majority of her life in the Anglo world. Although Hardin was surrounded by Native American culture, she was raised by parents who instilled non-Indian ethics.¹³⁰ Not entirely Native American, not entirely white, Hardin was divided into two different worlds with different cultures that seem to be constantly in opposition. In Hardin's portraits, women are looking inward and outward with a focus on understanding and harmonizing their

¹²⁸ Clara Sue Kidwell, "Native American systems of Knowledge," in *A Companion to American Indian History*, Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury eds., 90.

¹²⁹ Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: decolonization, empowerment, activism*, 42.

¹³⁰ Scott, *Changing Woman: The Life and Art of Helen Hardin*, 17.

various emotions and societal roles in two worlds.¹³¹ In either world, Hardin can be seen as an outsider, and being female made being an artist even more difficult or easier depending on who you ask. Some believed that Hardin had an easy time as an artist because she ticked all of the boxes as half-Native American, half-white, and female.¹³² Like many before her, she was treated as a token of the time.

Determined to reconcile her differences and stay true to her beliefs, Hardin rebels against the preconceived notions of what Native American women should look like and what their paintings should look like. Hardin created a series of paintings during the 1980s known as her “woman series” that consisted of three works: *Changing Woman*, *Medicine Woman*, and *Listening Woman*. Hardin’s style is simultaneously progressive and conventional. The geometric style is different from how Native American women are normally portrayed. Her modernist method of portraying women resembles illustrations of the past, specifically rock art. Each figure in her woman series is increasingly more geometric and abstract compared to *Prayers of a Blue Corn Mother*. However, her work is not so abstract that the viewer does not recognize these figures as women. The changes in her work during this period reflect the changes happening in her life. By focusing specifically on her first painting in this series, *Changing Woman* (1981), viewers can see the influence of Hardin’s life on her work.

During the 1980s, when Hardin was creating her “woman series,” she was also fighting breast cancer. A reflection of herself and women in general can be seen in Hardin’s “woman series.” Diagnosed with breast cancer in 1981, the same year that she completed *Changing Woman*, Hardin chose to focus on lone female figures to emphasize the sexism in society during

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 131.

the 1970s and 1980s. Fighting a predominately female disease, Hardin and other women with breast cancer also had to fight the predominately male medical field and its definitions of femininity. Although breast cancer, the most common cancer among women, is a disease of women, men controlled the way it was dealt with socially, politically, and scientifically.¹³³ Debates about treatment and causes were rampant during the latter half of the twentieth century, with mastectomies being a common treatment. At this time, mastectomies were not perfect because they often annihilated the breasts. In the 1960s and 1970s, breast reconstruction surgeries increased, reconfirming the association of breasts with beauty, sexuality, and femininity.¹³⁴ The common breast cancer treatments of mastectomy and chemotherapy affected women not only physically but emotionally as well. Hardin endured both treatments before succumbing to the disease in 1984. Perhaps her series documents her journey through this process. This self-portrait forces Hardin to face a reflection of the woman she was and the woman she was becoming as she endured treatments for breast cancer. Those close to death often reflect on the past, but Hardin's portraits reconfigure the pieces. With the figure of the changing woman, there is a more optimistic interpretation of a self-renewing entity possibly symbolizing hope for change.¹³⁵ Based on the title alone, *Changing Woman* can be interpreted in a multitude of ways.

Changing Woman may depict the prominent female figure in the Navaho creation myth who is revered for her femininity and fertility. While Hardin was not a part of the Navaho group, she did grow up in New Mexico, which is one of the states that the Navajo occupy. Living in a

¹³³ James S. Olson, *Bathsheba's Breast: Women, Cancer, and History*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) 196.

¹³⁴ Olson, *Bathsheba's Breast: Women, Cancer, and History*, 115.

¹³⁵ Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: decolonization, empowerment, activism*, 42.

state populated with different tribes, she was probably familiar with this story. Using the word “change” to describe this woman implies that this changing woman is manifesting the changes of life and the cycle of seasons present in humans and in nature. She has different names in other Native American cultures from the Southwest. On the whole, women are a major part of Native American creation stories. The positive role of women in these stories originates from their ability to give birth. Bodily changes related to menstruation and pregnancy can be found in the belief that Cherokee women came from Corn Mother, and the first mothers of the Tewa Pueblos are called Blue Corn Woman and White Corn Maiden.¹³⁶ Hardin’s *Changing Woman* brings this spiritual figure to earth and reality through abstract forms.

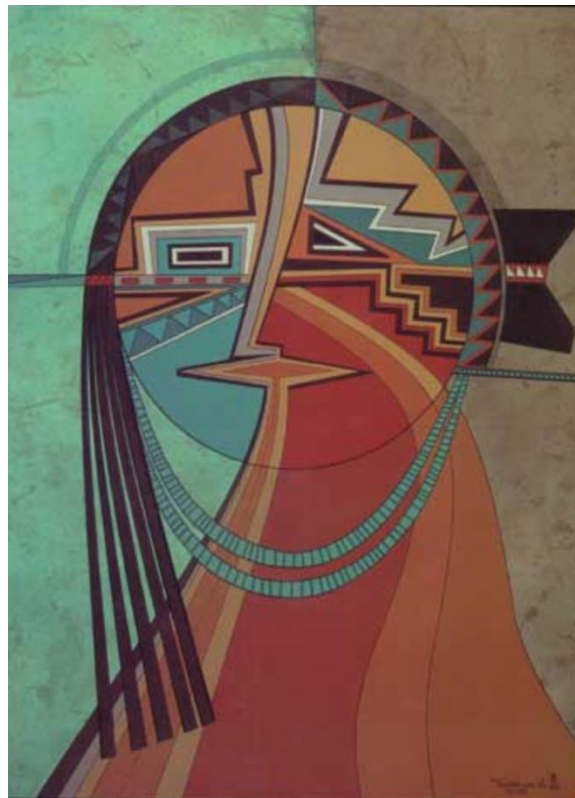


Fig. 4 Helen Hardin, *Changing Woman*, acrylic, 1981, *Changing Woman*, front cover.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Looking at the life of an artist, we can perceive new meanings in a work. Hardin constructs the *Changing Woman* by documenting the life changes that women go through and setting these changes alongside Hardin's personal changes. Physical changes that all women are able to experience, such as menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause, coincide with the emotional lifestyle changes of girlhood, womanhood, wifeness, and motherhood. Hardin endured these changes and more since she was a mother and later had breast cancer. Certain body parts, specifically the breasts, also exhibit changes, swelling and tenderness, related to specific female functions such as menstruation, pregnancy, and breastfeeding. In the latter half of the twentieth century, American society saw the female breast as a symbol of fertility and arousal.¹³⁷ For Hardin, the loss of a breast did not make her less of a woman but only a changed woman. She never considered herself beautiful or a sex object regardless of the judgements from whites and other Native Americans who considered her attractive.¹³⁸ In *Changing Woman*, she plays with this idea of womanhood and female sexuality by depicting the main symbolic figures (and the other female figures in her woman series) as lacking definite bodies. Using her geometric abstract style, Hardin could have easily used geometric shapes and lines to create a body, yet she does not create a typical feminine body. There is no semblance of breasts, a part of females that have been idolized and scrutinized by men just like the female body as a whole. Lines coming from the mouth and the nose widen to form a shape that might resemble a body. There is a natural curve that stems from the circular face that resembles the curve of a shoulder. The curvature hunches the head down slightly to direct the eyes downward, which creates an overall downward curve.¹³⁹ Preferring to focus on inner emotions rather than on physical

¹³⁷ Olson, *Bathsheba's Breast: Women, Cancer, and History*, 110.

¹³⁸ Scott, *Changing Woman: The Life and Art of Helen Hardin*, 143.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 138.

aesthetics of standardized female beauty, Hardin uses the simple curved lines of the body to lead the viewer back to the main features of the face. Without the clearness of the face, the lines alone resemble a mountain or a diminishing road of lines. This road leads viewers back to the woman's face, forcing them to value the inner thoughts and emotions of the woman since thoughts reside in the mind and emotions show on the face. This emphasis on mind over body might refer to the sexist judgement of women according to the way they look instead of the way they think. From the angle of philosophy, the mind represents a capability for abstraction and reason, reducing the body to a physical object occupying space; since all of the well-known thinkers – Aristotle, Descartes, Kant – are men, the positive values of the mind are usually equated with masculine attributes and the negative values of the body with femininity.¹⁴⁰ Hardin, in her depiction of women, appears not to represent the physical body. Presumably she does this in order to completely eliminate any form of objectification or sexualization from her portraits.

Women have been defined by their bodies and other physical features for centuries. Classical visual depictions of women hardly ever hint at the inner life of these members of society. Since ancient times, women have been depicted by men as sexual objects. The female body has been more scrutinized in visual media than other bodies. Usually valued according to male standards of physical attraction, the breasts are only one part of the female anatomy that changes in accordance with different physical developments. *Playboy* magazine is one example of a product that catered to men and that negatively affected women. Creating and reinforcing a cultural expectation, *Playboy* implied that large breasts were beautiful and sexy and that American woman needed them to be beautiful and sexy.¹⁴¹ In addition to being subject to

¹⁴⁰ Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*, (London: Routledge, 1992) 14.

¹⁴¹ Olson, *Bathsheba's Breast: Women, Cancer, and History*, 112.

personal preferences regarding their physical form, women are also subject to changing cultural norms. From the Greek ideal of the proportional body found in countless museums and textbooks to the photoshopped perfection of magazine covers that litter stores and social media, women's bodies are manipulated, mutilated, and monitored. Men are usually at the helm of this kind of judgement, especially in visual representations of women. Their power results in the unbalanced relationship between male artists and their female subjects, with males controlling the ways the female image is presented. The prominence of the so-called "male gaze" in different visual media highlights the male vision of women's bodies. With her own body under scrutiny as a Native American female artist and also as a patient, Hardin no doubt felt the male gaze as most women do. The relationship between male doctor and female patient resembles the relationship between the male artist and the female subject. Women were diagnosed with breast cancer that men tried to fix; women suffered while men decided to operate, radiate, and reconstruct them.¹⁴² The necessity of breast reconstruction and the use of prosthetics emphasize the fact that women supposedly must have breasts, an assumption which shows society's obsession with the female body. The relationship between breasts and physical beauty placed new value on breasts, with small-breasted women wanting to enhance breasts and breast cancer survivors wanting to preserve them.¹⁴³ However, the extreme importance that people, including women, give to aesthetic qualities of the female body is not present in Hardin's woman series. Because Native American women are treated as objects of sexual desire, their emotional and intellectual qualities are neglected and their self and place in their community are redefined.¹⁴⁴ Women's feelings

¹⁴² Olson, *Bathsheba's Breast: Women, Cancer, and History*, 196.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁴⁴ Smithers, "Predatory Colonialism: Indigenous Women and Violence of Sexual Objectification in the United States," 262.

about mastectomy varied, but most women felt mutilated after the procedure. They compared their bodies to a scarred and destroyed war zone. Through reading, Hardin was aware of the traumatic nature of mastectomies, but trauma never crossed her mind because her sole focus was on eliminating the cancer.¹⁴⁵ The surgery she and others endured made many women feel less like women, as if the surgery took away a physical part of their womanhood. But Hardin did not feel this way because she had never felt herself to be merely a sexual object. To her, the one part (the breast) did not equal the whole (the woman). Her *Changing Woman* represents this idea of the complete woman in terms of physicality, mentality, spirituality, and emotionality. Her work causes the viewers to rethink their visual associations with the word “woman” and the way that women have been portrayed for centuries. Hardin’s depiction of this woman is stylistically and contextually different from depictions by male artists.

In contrast to their male peers, female Native American artists depict Native American women from their own experiences and point of view rather than offering standard portrayals of Native American women. Hardin is aware of this difference and actually discusses her work in relation to the work of male Native American artists. Hardin, talking about R. C. Gorman’s woman series, notes that his emphasis is always on the “body, on the hands, on the boobs, on the feet, and everything was usually massive and masculine.”¹⁴⁶ Hardin’s observations are accurate when one compares her depiction of women with Gorman’s woman series. In Gorman’s paintings, often the woman’s face is turned away. More emphasis is placed on the body since it is large and occupies most of the frame and the head is small. Contrasting with Gorman’s women, the head shown in Hardin’s *Changing Woman* is more detailed and occupies the center

¹⁴⁵ Scott, *Changing Woman: The Life and Art of Helen Hardin*, 143.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 138.

focal point. Gorman's women are either sitting or reclining in a posed portraiture, seemingly waiting to be painted.



Fig. 5 R. C. Gorman, *Zonnie*, from the *Nanabah Suite*, 1974, lithograph, 37 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 32 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (95.9 x 81.9 x 4.4 cm), Smithsonian American Art Museum.

The seated position adds to the passive feeling that these women are objects to be looked at on a purely surface level. The level of complexity seen in Hardin's women does not seem present in Gorman's work. Comparing a male version of Native American women with a female version of Native American women continues to show the legacy of the patriarchal relationship between male artists and female subjects. Without the right of self-representation, females are forced to battle against men's perception of women. In the 1980s, there was a feminist shift from the "patriarchal" gaze of looking at women to women negotiating images of themselves to make

something of themselves.¹⁴⁷ Hardin is able to represent women in her own style since the figure shown in *Changing Woman* has no discernable body parts. Showing that women can be emotional, intelligent, and sensitive, Hardin prefers to let the circle containing the face communicate her “intellectual series” to the viewer.¹⁴⁸ Different colors, shapes, and designs inhabit the circle face, creating a narrative different from the narrative implied by the established perfection of the golden ratio and the homogenized image of Native American women. The mathematical equation of physical beauty relies on symmetry of the face and balance of the features. Hardin rejects the European standard for beauty by rejecting the importance of physical beauty in society. The face as a perfect circle contains one triangle eye and one rectangle eye clearly delineated by the nose. While geometry and shapes usually lead to symmetry, Hardin contradicts tradition by not using perfectly equal lines in the formation of her shapes. The figure shown in *Changing Woman* is constantly changing, with internal emotions externalized by all those irregular collapsing rectangles.¹⁴⁹ The most obvious example of disproportion is found in the acute triangles and angles. These acute triangles are located mostly on the right side, while zig-zag lines form the acute angles. There are other irregular shapes and lines in the face, adding to the abstract nature of the face. Looking at all of the parts separately might imply imbalance and fracture, but all the parts work together to create a legible face. This portrait of the “maelstrom within mind” is present in the “multifaceted presentation of psychological levels.”¹⁵⁰

Hardin’s composition connects different shapes by using a cool and warm color palette. By splitting the face into four parts, with the vertical line of the nose that extends past the mouth

¹⁴⁷ Helen McDonald, *Erotic Ambiguities: The Female Nude in Art*, (London: Routledge, 2001) 38.

¹⁴⁸ Scott, *Changing Woman: The Life and Art of Helen Hardin*, 138.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

and the horizontal line that bisects the face, Hardin perhaps represents different parts of an inner life. She connects these parts by using the same colors and designs in the four sections of the face. Starting with the designs, she presents acute angles and triangles in the upper right side and lower left side of the face. In the other two parts of the face, a different kind of angle and shape is present. Right angles and rectangles occupy the upper left side and the lower right side of the face. These corresponding designs come together, creating a scene of community and continuity, not divisiveness. The colors mimic the same relationship of connection to the whole of the picture. Turquoise is featured in three of the four sectors, breaking up the different shades of warm colors. For the lower right side of the face, the shade of mustard yellow matches the same shade of yellow in the other parts of the face. Hardin's use of shape and color provide both difference and similarity. All the different parts that make up a woman are represented in all of the different parts that complete this work. The "map of the psyche" is present in the outward representation of identity disguised as a female kachina.¹⁵¹

Combining the spirituality of the kachina with the physical form of women, Hardin manages to frame Indigenous art styles in a formation that is contemporary. For those unfamiliar with Hardin's inspiration of Southwestern pictographs and petroglyphs, her work might be classified as originating from Europe since she uses aspects of Cubism and Abstraction. Hardin's attraction to geometry stems from her ancestral childhood since she was exposed to anthropology texts that contained the works of Hohokam, Mogollon, and Anasazi peoples.¹⁵² Hardin's geometric forms represent her Native American culture, especially Southwestern rock art motifs. Rock art frequently depicted anthropomorphic figures without emphasis on the body, along with

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid., 112.

stylized, geometric forms such as spirals.¹⁵³ With this information in mind, it is more likely that Hardin took inspiration from the archaic art form of her ancestors than from European-derived art styles. The acceptance of Cubism and Abstract Expressionism as Hardin's primary inspiration probably comes from the anthropological and archaeological dismissal of rock art as significant until the twentieth century.¹⁵⁴ Hardin employs many of the traits found in rock art in her work by avoiding the realism of familiar objects. Rock art distorts the image with fragmentation, condensation, omission, medium change, and multiplication.¹⁵⁵ When we look at *Changing Woman*, we can see elements of fragmentation and multiplication found in the breaking of the face into smaller parts and the repetition of lines and shapes. Hardin's use of an artistic form that is native to her people allows for her work to have a greater historical significance than non-Native interpretations of Native American women.

Outside of Native American artistic representations of Native American women, Native American women are usually overly sexualized and commodified. The first visual characterizations of America were of Indigenous women, such as the image of the Indian Queen. The Indian Queen reigned as the sole representation of America until 1765, when the bare-breasted Amazonian Native American Queen decorated in leaves, feathers, and animal skins dominated illustrations.¹⁵⁶ Nicolaes Berchem's *Allegory of America* from the mid-late 17th century is one example of early representations of America. Illustrations show Indigenous

¹⁵³ Richard A. Rogers, "From Hunting Magic to Shamanism: Interpretations of Native American Rock Art and the Contemporary Crisis in Masculinity," *Women's Studies in Communication*, vol. 30, no. 1, Spring 2007, 86.

¹⁵⁴ Rogers, "From Hunting Magic to Shamanism: Interpretations of Native American Rock Art and the Contemporary Crisis in Masculinity," 87.

¹⁵⁵ Sandberg, "Some Traditional Aspects of Pop Art," 228.

¹⁵⁶ Rayna Green, "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture," *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1975, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25088595>, Accessed 30 Sep. 2022, 702.

women barely clothed or scantily clad, with feathers, spears, or arrows included in the depiction. By using Native American women as an allegory for America, white male artists of European descent promoted the association of Indigenous women's bodies with the colonial conquest of fertile America. Numerous depictions portrayed Indigenous women as bare-breasted, highlighting the importance of the breast to the Western gaze. Showcasing all of the rich resources of the land along with Indigenous people implies that Indigenous people are one of these resources to be used and abused. Hardin's representation of Native American women is not offering or selling anything.



Fig. 6 Nicolaes Berchem, *Allegory of America*, drawing, mid-17th–late 17th century, 17 5/8 x 11 13/16 in. (44.8 x 30 cm), <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/335063>.

There is no body to clad scantily and there are no body parts to exploit. Because she lacks features to sexualize and objectify, she symbolically fights against the common traits of female beauty that are stereotypical in depictions of Native American women.

Ch. 4

Wendy Red Star

Wendy Red Star is an Apsáalooke multi-media artist who works primarily with photography, a medium usually dominated by white males. Like the other two artists, Red Star addresses Native and non-Native viewers by exploring topics of identity, gender, and politics. In terms of photography and other visual art forms, Native Americans have not been able to capture or control their own image. Beginning in the nineteenth century, there are numerous white photographers whose images of Native Americans informed the public perception of Indigenous peoples. Treated like their objects, Native Americans became commodities, without a history or context, recontextualized to fit the concept of primitive people.¹⁵⁷ These visual representations of Native Americans promoted them as a disappearing race that was close to extinction. During the nineteenth century, Native Americans were seen as an invisible people with a vanishing culture, which led whites to see themselves as saviors. Anthropologists, ethnographers, artists, and photographers set out to save the remaining “traditional” cultures of Indigenous peoples before they were contaminated by outside influences.¹⁵⁸ For photographers, this meant that Native American subjects became artefacts preserved in photographs. Edward Curtis, a white male photographer, gained popularity during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for his photographs of Native Americans in the West. Through the superior means of photography as a form of truth, the imagined, fantasy, and sometimes fake portraits of Native American people in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries became staples of anthropological, historical, and documentary photography and were often used as weapons in the fight to define “Indianness.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Traugott, “Native American Artists and the Postmodern Cultural Divide,” 37.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Lippard, “Independent Identities,” 138.

This legacy of non-Native photographers capturing the image of Native American peoples lasted until the 1970s and 1980s, when Native American photographers started capturing their own image. Dugan Aguilar, James Luna, Larry McNeil, and other Native American photographers of the 1970s and 1980s questioned the status quo of Native American photography. Red Star, a later photographer, is a product of those who came before her. She continues to question and confront stereotypical images and ideas of Native American people by turning the camera back on herself.

Humorous battle against stereotypes

In her series *White Squaw* (2014), Red Star interjects herself into the narrative of an adult Western romance novel series by assuming the role of the heroine. Each of the twenty-four photos features Red Star on book covers in various poses of parody, surrounded by text and images of sexual innuendos. Although these books were published in the 1980s and 1990s, they perpetuate the popular colonial captivity narratives featuring “white squaws” from the seventeenth to late nineteenth century.¹⁶⁰ In these photos, the term “white squaw” is easily visible as it is centered at the top of each cover in brightly colored capital letters against a white background. Not only is the term “white squaw” highly derogatory, but it is extremely harmful to the representation of Native American women. Through the lens of white culture, a squaw appeared in different media as a two-dimensional object of ridicule, and after WWII, white women viewed “squaw drudges” as an expression of housewife drudgery forced upon them by American men.¹⁶¹ Even if the viewer is not aware of the offensive term “squaw,” the accompanying images convey the message. The sixth picture in Red Star’s photo series uses the

¹⁶⁰ Tiffany Midge, “Fifty Shakes of Buckskin: Satire as a Decolonizing Tool,” *Wendy Red Star: Delegation*, (United States; Aperture, 2022) 133.

¹⁶¹ Smithers, “Predatory Colonialism: Indigenous Women and Violence of Sexual Objectification in the United States,” 266.

book title *Dakota Squeeze* and shows Red Star dressed as a stereotypical Indian in feathers, beads, and braids.

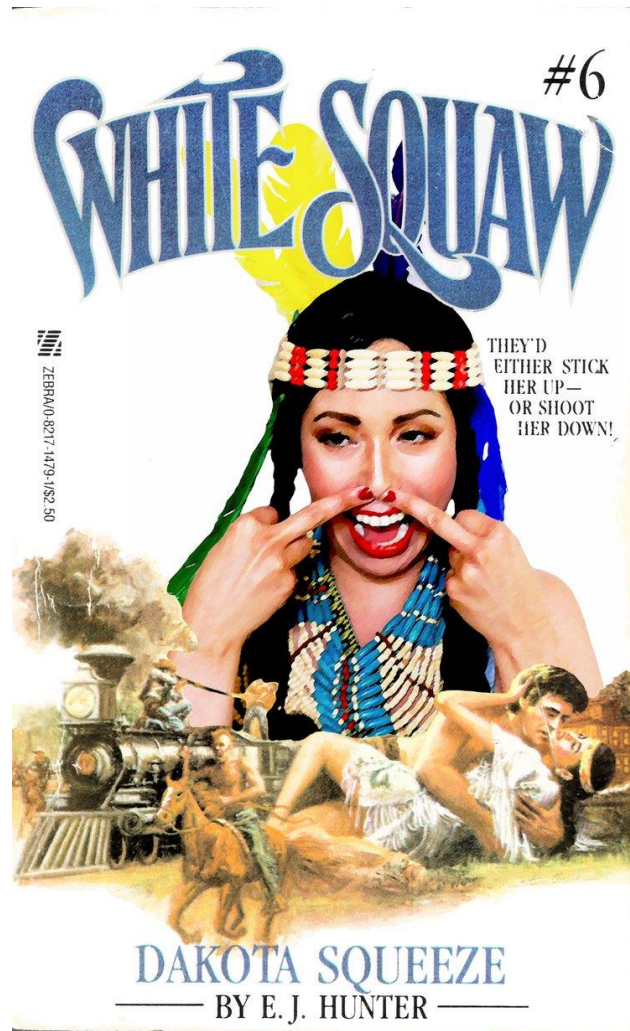


Fig. 7 Wendy Red Star, *Dakota Squeeze* #6, 2014, *Wendy Red Star: Delegation*, pg. 165.

There are no visual or textual markers that associate her with her Crow identity. There are also no visual features that are distinctly Dakota, a subset of the Sioux Indians. Instead, Red Star and the female figure in the lower right corner wear the stereotypical Indian ensemble: a non-descript fringe dress and choker necklace worn as a headband. This stereotypical image of Plains Indians, prominent in Curtis's photographs, continues today in much popular culture. The book designer

uses the imagery that most Americans are accustomed to i.e., stereotypical imagery associated with the Plains Indian. Red Star is dressed similarly in prominent beads and feathers. To most non-Native viewers, this imagery is a costume that anyone can put on. In fact, Red Star bought an “Indian Princess” costume at Target and fake turkey feathers to portray this character.¹⁶² To most non-Native viewers, putting on this costume has no meaning. In Red Star’s culture, the “wisdom feather” or eagle butt feather is worn during ceremonies and represents the soul of the bird, but in order to play this “white squaw” character, Red Star wears a cheap Indian costume.¹⁶³ In order to comprehend the stereotypical representation of Native American women, Red Star has to show that Native Americans are real people. As seen through the numerous initiatives calling for more diverse representation, self-representation is a crucial part of constructing an independent identity that has been integral to feminist art and photography since 1970.¹⁶⁴ Red Star’s research-related artworks continue to redefine the images of the past.

Red Star is aware of the history behind these stereotypes and directly confronts them in this image. While she is not looking directly at the viewer, she still confronts the viewer and the stereotypes with her hand gestures. She is playing on the innuendo on the cover, “They’d either stick her up – or shoot her down!,” by “shooting the bird” to the viewer. Instead of “sticking up” a finger gun, Red Star is “giving the finger” to the word “squaw” and the offensive images. By confronting viewers with an offensive gesture, Red Star wants to “own that word.”¹⁶⁵ Despite those who believe words are just words, the continued use of sexist and racist words has real-

¹⁶²Wendy Red Star, “Back to the Blanket: Wendy Red Star in Conversation with Josh. T. Franco,” 33.

¹⁶³ “Wendy Red Star: A Scratch on the Earth,” *YouTube*, uploaded by StateoftheArtsNJ, 25, Mar. 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyJiXXXH2WE>, Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.

¹⁶⁴ Lippard, “Independent Identities,” 134.

¹⁶⁵ “Wendy Red Star: Apsáalooke Feminist,” *YouTube*, Portland Art Museum, Mar. 13, 2016 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXFkvWPUU0s>, Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.

world consequences, with stereotyping and racial profiling causing irrefutable harm. Like images, words have power, and over time their meanings may change, but the history behind their original meanings taint their present use. The derogatory and racist word “squaw” is now so utterly offensive that it is officially being removed from federal lands since this word is part of perpetuating “legacies of oppression.”¹⁶⁶ While words can be dismissed as “just words,” it is harder to dismiss images, especially photographic images. The title, *Dakota Squeeze*, likely refers to the main female character, identifying her as a “Dakota” and a “Squeeze.” These words imply two things about her: her racial identity and her social status. According to the other book titles, her “tribal” identity is interchangeable since she is also identified as a “Comanche” in one of the other titles in the series. Such phrasing allows white viewers to assume that all Native Americans are the same, despite the countless different cultural groups that exist all over America. The social status or purpose of the “squaw” in this book is as a “squeeze,” a slang term for girlfriend or boyfriend.¹⁶⁷ A more salacious definition implied by the visuals is a sexual partner or, more bluntly, “a side-girl.” Like the centuries-old connotations of the word “squaw,” the sole purpose of the *Dakota Squeeze* is to exist to do men’s bidding. The images and text in this series work together to perpetuate – but also mock – an untrue racial and sexual stereotype based on historical misperceptions.

The sexual innuendos and sexual relationship portrayed on these book covers are a small part of the way Native American women are often sexualized in works of art. Since colonial times, Native American women have been overly sexualized by outsiders. Unlike portraits of

¹⁶⁶ “Secretary Haaland Takes Action to Remove Derogatory Names from Federal Lands,” *U.S. Department of the Interior*, Nov. 19, 2021, <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/secretary-haaland-takes-action-remove-derogatory-names-federal-lands>, Accessed 29 Nov. 2022.

¹⁶⁷ *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/squeeze>, Accessed 3 Apr. 2023.

fully clothed, modest European women, portraits of Native American women depicted these women as symbols of “savage sexuality.” They were frequently depicted topless to display the women’s body, with feathers and tobacco leaves used as decoration.¹⁶⁸ The white character on the cover of *Dakota Squeeze* is in a compromising position that thoroughly displays her bare legs and arms. The steam train and western location (a location associated with the Dakota tribe) imply a scene set during the latter half of the nineteenth century. During this time, women were not allowed to own or display their sexuality without being seen as whores or, in the case of the *White Squaw* series, as “squeezes.” Proper, “civilized” white women were covered up in long dresses that denied any hint of sexual availability. The book cover hints at the sexual availability that has often been forced on Native American women, especially because of the way the photo depicts this woman’s clothing and her relationship with the man. The author of this book series is profiting from a centuries-old stereotype of Native American women. When commercialized, the Native American woman is either a sensual, seductive Land O’Lakes maiden or an asexual hardworking wife.¹⁶⁹ Like those before him, the putative author of this series, E.J. Hunter, is using the image of Native American women to sell his books. Red Star, by including herself in the narrative, parodies the public’s fascination with the stereotypical culture of Native American people.

The fact that Red Star is a female Native American photographer portraying Native Americans is important. This is especially true because photography and other visual arts have long been dominated by men and the “male gaze.” Euro-American males have usually taken photographs of Native Americans, expressing their own desires onto their Native American

¹⁶⁸ Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: decolonization, empowerment, activism*, 59.

¹⁶⁹ Büken, “Construction of the Mythic Indian in Mainstream Media and the Demystification of the Stereotype by American Indian Artists,” 54.

subjects. The many white male photographers taking photographs of Native American women ripped Indigenous agency away from these women and dispossessed Native Americans of their own images.¹⁷⁰ Red Star “flips the script” through self-representation since, as an actual Native American person, she says she can “do a way better job than Becky,” the main character in the book series.¹⁷¹ With this level of control, Red Star achieves the signature of satire so frequent in her work. Her overall mockery reappropriates problematic artefacts while offering texts and images seen from a new perspective, a female Native perspective. These new texts and images have the ability to interrogate racist and sexist notions and transform this bigoted, stereotypical trash to the level of art.¹⁷² Gender stereotypes do not discriminate between races, and Native Americans are not immune to gender stereotypes. By creating her series, Red Star gains some empowerment and participates in a little bit of “Indian humor.”¹⁷³

Apsáalooke Feminist: living out tradition

Red Star’s *Apsáalooke Feminist* (2016) series consists of different photographs of Red Star and her daughter. These self-portraits adopt the serious tone of European portraiture, which is quite important in the established hierarchy of art. Starting with the title of the series, *Apsáalooke Feminist* reveals the complications of being a Native American woman. The title, combined with the photograph, recognizes the issues that many Native American women struggle with today. Red Star clearly identifies herself and her daughter as Apsáalooke. For those who do not know the meaning of “Apsáalooke,” viewers can identify this as a foreign word. More people would be

¹⁷⁰ Midge, “Fifty Shakes of Buckskin: Satire as a Decolonizing Tool,” 134.

¹⁷¹ “Wendy Red Star: Apsáalooke Feminist,”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXFkvWPUU0s>.

¹⁷² Midge, “Fifty Shakes of Buckskin: Satire as a Decolonizing Tool,” 134.

¹⁷³ “Wendy Red Star: Apsáalooke Feminist,”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXFkvWPUU0s>.

familiar with the word “crow,” and when crow is capitalized, it becomes the name of the Crow Indians. Crow is the name given to Native American people in Montana, while Apsáalooke is the name that this group uses to refer to themselves. Using the English name recalls the oppression of colonization that forced anonymity and simplification onto Native American people.¹⁷⁴ Instead of identifying as an Indian woman or a Native American female, Red Star refutes the systematic naming categorization that resulted from the anthropological study of so-called primitive cultures. Moving away from using racist and gendered names, Red Star titles her work by using words that do not homogenize, sanitize, and dehumanize Native American people.¹⁷⁵ Red Star uses the native name of this cultural group of Native Americans to display the Apsáalooke as a distinctive culture of the Crow Nation in her photographs. “Apsáalooke” is an uncommon word to most people, whereas “feminist” is a well-known word with multiple connotations. The two are not mutually exclusive, but there is a notable distinction between “feminist,” a word with European origins, and “Apsáalooke,” a distinctly Native American word. Red Star, like most people, is probably aware of the history of the word “feminist” and the way it has been used, usually in the context of white-centered social movements beginning in the eighteenth century. Women of color have frequently been left out of the different “waves” of feminism. Women’s right to vote, the women’s liberation, and the most recent fight against sexual harassment are all parts of the overall feminist movement, placing white women first in the issues of feminism. Red Star, by placing these two words together, directly addresses the problem of racial issues versus gender issues within minority communities. In the past, issues dealing with race in America have often been seen as more important than issues involving

¹⁷⁴ Jordan Amirkhani, “Setting the Stage Self-Portraits and the Politics of Looking,” *Wendy Red Star: Delegation*, (United States: Aperture, 2022) 140.

¹⁷⁵ Amirkhani, “Setting the Stage Self-Portraits and the Politics of Looking,” 140.

gender, at least in minority communities. During the ethnic pride movement of the 1970s, male leaders of the AIM, acting as the aggressive Plains warrior, were more concerned with combatting racism than with advocating for gender equality, an emphasis which was seen as involving personal gain for Native American males.¹⁷⁶ Looking at the history of these issues provides an answer to the question of why there are not more women who identify as feminist in Native American communities, since being Native American does not exclude Native American women from being women. However, issues of gender intersect with other major issues that Native Americans face, such as sovereignty and decolonization. These issues feed into each other and influence each other, in contrast to white feminism, which is often viewed as a separate issue that only affects women.

As an artist, Red Star is both the female photographer and the subject of her photographs. She is in control of showing herself as an example of a Native American woman while also addressing racial and gender issues. Another angle to the meaning of the title of her work is the irony of combining the words “Apsáalooke” and “feminist.” Her references to feminism stems from the use of a word that can be described as “white” since it originated from European languages and is often used to describe members of the white population. Red Star, however, uses it to describe the matrilineal culture of the Crow Nation. Accepting conventional white feminism as a product of colonialism, Red Star believes that within the numerous sects of the feminist movement, there must be space for Apsáalooke feminism, a historically and culturally specific form of feminism for Crow women.¹⁷⁷ Native American women and feminist beliefs are intertwined, with some even seeing Native Americans as the first feminists due to the matrilineal

¹⁷⁶ Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: decolonization, empowerment, activism*, 164, 168.

¹⁷⁷ “Apsáalooke Feminist,” <https://www.wendyredstar.com/apsalooke-feminist>, 2022, Accessed 3 Apr. 2023.

society common in Native American tribes and also due to women holding positions of power and importance in Native American society. Feminine power and Native power are manifested through the medium of photography, with Red Star owning her own image. She uses her place behind the camera to focus on herself as a representative of the Crow Nation.



Fig. 8 *Apsáalooke Feminist #3*, Archival pigment print, 2016, 35 x 42 inches
<https://www.wendyredstar.com/apsalooke-feminist>.

Because Red Star has control of the scene and the conception of the *Apsáalooke Feminist*, she takes the importance of her female Native gaze to the mass-dominated world of photography and high-art museums. This particular series, along with works by other Native American artists, was included alongside the works of Edward Curtis in the exhibition *Contemporary Native Photographers and the Edward Curtis Legacy: Zig Jackson, Wendy Red Star, Will Wilson*

(Portland Art Museum). The inclusion of Native American photographers highlights the Native American vision in dialogue with Curtis' understanding of Native American culture and his role in representing Indigenous peoples.¹⁷⁸ As is true of any photographer's work, Red Star's photograph illustrates the photographer's point of view. Looking at the work of Curtis and Red Star, it is apparent that their visions differ. Within her community, Red Star focuses on the Crow Nation, and her self-portraits are one aspect of the Crow Nation as seen from the female perspective. This perspective is lacking, however, in Curtis' work, which focuses overwhelmingly on portraits of males created by a male. It was difficult to find a Curtis photograph of Crow women to compare with Red Star's *Apsáalooke Feminist*, but Curtis' photograph of an Apsaroke mother and child is the closest in similarity to Red Star's work in terms of the sitters it depicts.

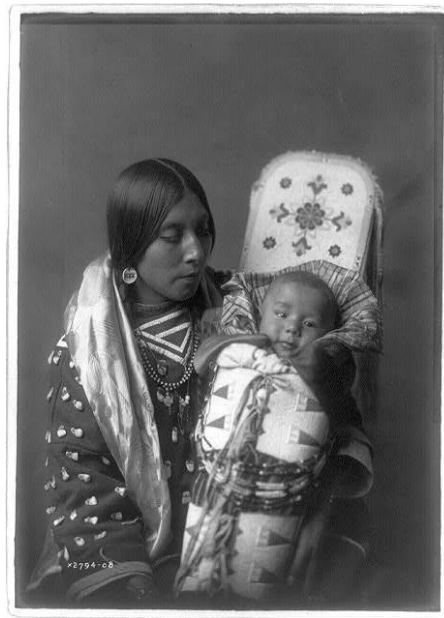


Fig. 9 Edward S. Curtis, *Mother and child—Apsaroke*, photograph, 1908, Library of Congress, www.loc.gov/item/90708185/.

¹⁷⁸ “Contemporary Native Photographers and the Edward Curtis Legacy: Zig Jackson, Wendy Red Star, Will Wilson,” <https://portlandartmuseum.org/exhibitions/contemporary-native-photographers/>, Accessed 10 Feb. 2023.

Comparing these two works emphasizes the contemporary truth of two photographers, one Indigenous and one white, representing the same subject. Contrast creates a relationship between these two photographs, that symbolize the past and present, the romanticized other and empowered self, the woman and child alone and women at home.¹⁷⁹ Curtis' *Mother and child* (1908) appears to be capture a moment in time preserved by the camera. The photograph resembles those found in history books, especially because of its black and white color tone. As a preservation of history, this mother and child are documented as specimens set against the kind of plain black backdrop normally used in cataloging artefacts. The lack of details in the photograph forces the viewer to focus on the specifics in the frame, such as the elktooth dress, the cradleboard, and the facial expressions. The Apsaroke woman has an identity only as a Native American mother because that is all that the viewer is allowed to see. There is no context to her history, such as the various abusive land acts happening during the early 1900s when this photograph was taken. Also absent from the photograph is the complex, constant changing relationship between the individuals' and their tribal nations' environment.¹⁸⁰ The plain background, the lack of personal details, and the color and gaze all eradicate the identity of this person. In contrast, Red Star's work erupts with personality and life. As a response to these turn-of-the-century photographs, Red Star created her series as a modern update and revision of these portraits.¹⁸¹ Red Star's work differs vastly from popularized photographs of Native American people because her work is fully formed and modern. Red Star has a mastery over her own

¹⁷⁹ Sue Taylor, "Indigenous Images," *Art in America* 104 (5), 2016, 57.

¹⁸⁰ Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890-1915*, 16.

¹⁸¹ "Wendy Red Star: Apsáalooke Feminist," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXFkvWPUU0s>.

image, a mastery which is usually not afforded to Native Americans. She is responsible for everything both behind the camera and in front of it.

The Apsáalooke identity is present within the frame of Red Star's photograph, which depicts Red Star, her daughter, and their surroundings. Life is present in the bright colors and tactile textures. Looking specifically at *Apsáalooke Feminist #3*, Red Star and her daughter appear at home, lying on the couch and sitting on the floor surrounded by articles commonly found in a home. This photograph suggests a part of their history by implying the past, present, and future found in the clothing and the set design. Red Star and her daughter are outfitted in traditional elktooth dresses. In the Crow community, elktooth represented the wealth or prestige of the family, and the amount of elktooth on a dress symbolizes the hunting and trading abilities of Crow men in the family.¹⁸² Outsiders might see these teeth merely as a kind of bead used purely for decoration without realizing the greater cultural significance of these materials. Curtis, as an outsider, mentions several times that the intense thoughts and labor behind these embellishment on garments enabled women to “beautify themselves in the eyes of the men.”¹⁸³ But these materials and their use imply a history passed down through the generations – a kind of history that continues to live on in the community since Curtis' Crow woman also wears an elktooth dress.

In contrast, Red Star and Beatrice are adorned with other representations of their culture implied by their jewelry. They are wearing headbands, earrings, bracelets, and rings. Their earrings are not small, nondescript objects but visible, dangly, fabric earrings representing their love of Crow culture. Red Star's earrings feature horses, an important part of her culture and her

¹⁸² Wendy Red Star, “The Elk-Tooth Dress,” *Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists*, 141.

¹⁸³ Edward S. Curtis, *The Apsaroke, or Crows, The Hidatsa*, (Place of publication not identified: Native American Book Publishers, LLC, 2015) 20.

personal life. According to Red Star, Crow fathers want their daughters to barrel race.¹⁸⁴ Red Star grew up riding horses and owning them. The Crows' love for their horses can be seen in their embellishment of saddles and the prominent use of horses in powwows. Beatrice's earrings have red flowers – perhaps roses, since Beatrice is wearing the same earrings in Red Star's work, *Apsáalooke Roses* (2016). These red roses possibly symbolize the passion and love both mother and daughter feel for their culture. The earrings featured in works depicting Red Star and her daughter alongside each other imply the passing down of cultural knowledge, exemplified in the earrings and other objects, through the matrilineal line.¹⁸⁵ The headbands and bracelet appear to be beaded. As the clothing and the accessories suggest, the Apsáalooke were known for their beadwork. Red Star is wearing a ring made out of turquoise, a semiprecious stone recognized as being distinctly Native American and one found in jewelry throughout the Southwest. Beatrice wears a red bracelet that contrasts with her mother's blue ring. The red of the bracelet stands out and calls attention to the pose of Beatrice's hand. Beatrice's open hand presents dolls to the viewer.

The dolls that Beatrice displays exemplify Native American heritage since the dolls mimic the appearance of Red Star and her daughter. The identifiable features of long dark hair, red lips, and elktooth dresses reiterate the Crow identity present throughout the photograph. Red Star's grandmother, Amy Bright Wings Red Star, used to make Crow dolls.¹⁸⁶ Beatrice presents products of cultural and personal significance. To most viewers, dolls are innocent playthings for

¹⁸⁴ “Wendy Red Star: Apsáalooke Feminist,”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXFkvWPUU0s>.

¹⁸⁵ Julia Bryan-Wilson, “Wendy Red Star’s Material Conceptualism,” *Wendy Red Star: Delegation*, (United States: Aperture, 2022) 41.

¹⁸⁶ “Wendy Red Star: Apsáalooke Feminist,”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXFkvWPUU0s>.

children, usually female children. Toys, like dolls, are tools of instruction used to train children in the principles of adult society and future roles.¹⁸⁷ Dolls, as parts of material culture, exemplify issues of representation. Red Star's Native American dolls differ vastly from more mainstream dolls such as Barbie. Starting in the 1980s, Mattel released the first Indigenous Barbie doll. Since then other Indigenous Barbies have featured the same brown eyes, medium brown complexions, and long straight black hair imposed on the standard Barbie body type.¹⁸⁸ The Native American Barbie catered to white consumers, allowing the toy industry to profit from the conventional notions of Indigenous women, while using the uniform Barbie model featuring stereotypical Native American elements. By keeping the essential body figure and facial features of the white Barbie, Mattel suggested that Native American women can look only one way, at least according to Barbie. Mattel also implies that all it takes to identify as Native American are stereotypical clothes and brown skin tone. The Native American dolls reflect the values of Euro-American culture and force European ideas of social order onto the indigenous cultural world.¹⁸⁹

In contrast, Red Star's dolls are not sexualized or romanticized, partly because they do not use the Indian Princess image. The addition of the dolls in the scene calls attention back to the home since these dolls might have been handed down, thereby functioning as signifiers of family heirlooms. Homemade dolls might be the only way that Native American youth could see themselves represented in culture from a neutral perspective without the influence of stereotypes. Unlike other forms of culture, such as Hollywood films and classic literature, dolls can be made

¹⁸⁷Doris Yvonne Wilkinson, "Racial Socialization Through Children's Toys: A Sociohistorical Examination," *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1974, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2783625>, Accessed 12 Feb. 2023, 98.

¹⁸⁸Maureen Trudelle Schwarz, "Native American Barbie: The Marketing of Euro-American Desires," *American Studies*, vol. 46, no. 3/4, 2005, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40643901>, Accessed 13 Feb. 2023, 297, 299.

¹⁸⁹Schwarz, "Native American Barbie: The Marketing of Euro-American Desires," 307.

more easily and can give children the ability to imagine and roleplay with representations of themselves. Although accurate representation may seem to be a miniscule source of validation in the importance of representing different cultures, they do allow everyone to be recognized and seen. Toys, especially dolls, can perpetuate racist myths and stereotypes even in child play, which implies the need for more important and authentic representations.¹⁹⁰ Acting as a material example of belonging in the world without feeling outside pressure to conform to stereotypes, these dolls help fight against white ideals of race and femininity. They help subvert the unrealistic body and beauty standards normally present in dolls created to cater to white customers. By including these dolls in the forefront of her photograph, Red Star shows the audience the relevance of dolls for multiple generations, from Red Star's grandmother to Beatrice.

References to the contemporary era that might have more significance as identifiable examples to viewers are found in the décor. Looking at the blankets, the couch, and the background, the viewer can see modern influences. The design on the blankets and the background resembles Pendleton blankets, a fact which shows the influence that Native American culture has on contemporary American culture. The Pendleton company is based in Portland, Oregon, just like Red Star, who lives and works in Portland. Blankets exemplify another form of Native American art found in Native American and American society since blankets serve the same purpose in both societies: they symbolize warmth, goodwill, and design. In some Native communities, Pendleton blankets are given as gifts as recognition of respect or

¹⁹⁰ Wilkinson, "Racial Socialization Through Children's Toys: A Sociohistorical Examination," 106.

acknowledgement of good deeds.¹⁹¹ Nowadays, Pendleton blankets can be found in any household or community. Part of the story of America, Pendleton blankets are signs of multiculturalism. Although this fact is unbeknownst to some, Pendleton is not a Native-owned company, regardless of their trade history with Native Americans and their trade value among Native Americans. Pendleton acknowledges the Native inspiration for the designs it uses and sometimes the company even collaborates with Native American artists. Pendleton says it is “dedicated to its American heritage, authenticity and fabric craftsmanship,” just as Red Star is dedicated to hers.¹⁹² Red Star’s use of multiple blankets in her photo, along with showing Red Star herself lying on the couch, creates a comfortability and lived-in setting, which makes sense since Red Star shot the photos in her living room. All the aspects of the photograph, when united, create a heightened reality in which Red Star and her daughter are presented as real people living in the modern world, even if they do not wear elktooth dresses every day. Another heightened part of reality is obviously the gathering of items that Red Star artfully arranges within the frame of the photograph. By grounding the scene with contemporary, commercially mass-produced products such as the blankets and the IKEA couch, she creates an authentic realness. The abstract background and floor continue to sharpen the image of Red Star and her daughter among their carefully curated objects. Wavy vertical lines in the background and horizontal lines on the floor solidify the realness of the two figures. The seemingly meaningless background and floor contribute to the narrative of the photograph through the use of lines. Vertical lines on the background offset the abundance of horizontal lines, creating balance but also leading the eye

¹⁹¹ Shawn Clark and Ruth Wylie, “Surviving a Cultural Genocide: Perspectives of Indigenous Elders on the Transfer of Traditional Values,” *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2021, *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48710317>, Accessed 10 Feb. 2023, 319.

¹⁹² “Company History,” *Pendleton*, 2023, <https://www.pendleton-usa.com/company-history.html>, Accessed 15 Feb. 2023.

downward to Red Star and the couch. The couch's horizontal line cuts off the vertical lines of the background. The floor is made up of continuous horizontal lines that are interrupted by Beatrice's half horizontal/ half vertical figure. A sense of balance is created between the sometimes contrasting horizontal and vertical lines. Working together to guide the eye across these two figures, these lines do not work alone. Red Star and Beatrice work together to create lines that lead to each other. Red Star, positioned in the background, uses her face and body to create lines leading to Beatrice. From the viewer's point of view, Red Star's face is angled slightly down and to the left, following lines created by her arms and torso. Beatrice's body is leaning to the left up towards Red Star. All the lines and shapes show the connection between the mother and daughter, forming a relationship that is highly valuable to matrilineal communities.

The aforementioned details representing Red Star's Apsáalooke identity also represent her female identity. Native American women have a history of making and displaying women's arts, including Indian pots, baskets, and blankets, while other forms of women's art are present in the elktooth dresses, dolls, and blankets.¹⁹³ These examples of female Native American artforms serve artistic and functional purposes in addition to providing cultural knowledge. The act of dressmaking is something that female relatives do for their families. Red Star's grandmother and mother used to make elktooth dresses for Red Star, and Red Star makes her daughter's dresses. Making these dresses is a labor-intensive method of creation as opposed to using easier machine-made clothes, especially since some dresses required more than a thousand elkteeth and other adornments from top to bottom.¹⁹⁴ The creation of elktooth dresses is one area of knowledge

¹⁹³ Erik Trump, "The Idea of Help" in *Selling the Indian Commercializing & Appropriating American Indian Cultures*, Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer eds., (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001) 165.

¹⁹⁴ Curtis, *The Apsaroke, or Crows, The Hidatsa*, 22.

passed down through the matrilineal line, which Red Star herself experienced as she watched her grandmother make elktooth dresses. Women were often responsible for the making of everyday items, such as clothing and blankets. There is a history of Native American women making blankets and using weaving as a means of earning income. Native American women were able to use the traditional crafts of beadwork, quilting, and weaving to earn money and prestige and thereby help their families and communities.¹⁹⁵ While these particular blankets in Red Star's photograph might have been made by machines, they recall the handmade products of the past. Functional artistries are on display in the form of these blankets and dolls. All the dolls appear to be female. Using Red Star's grandmother as an example, it is likely that women made these dolls. When viewed from a Western worldview, dolls are typically made for girls, reinforcing the gender roles of women in society by encouraging girls to "play house" and "play mother."

In today's society, dolls are still predominantly considered girl's toys, but dolls can be used to teach about traditions and culture. The NMAI even has a teacher guide that shows how to use Native American dolls from their collection to teach students about different communities and cultures. Red Star is trying to achieve a similar goal with her art. Red Star represents female identity partly by including her daughter to personify the matrilineal line. This photograph is an actual visible example of how the matrilineal society works and exists in Crow culture, since everything is passed down through the mother's side. Women are essential to the survival of the race since they give birth to the next generation of children, who carry on the culture of the

¹⁹⁵ Lisa J. Udel, "Revision and Resistance: The Politics of Native Women's Motherwork," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2001, *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3347054>, Accessed 17 Feb. 2023, 50.

group.¹⁹⁶ They have a responsibility to keep the culture alive, which is exactly what Red Star does in this photograph.

In this specific photograph of the series, Red Star calls on the long history of female identity in portraiture through her positioning and gaze. For those with a background in art history, Red Star is clearly invoking the classical reclining figure often found in Western art traditions. One of the most famous paintings illustrating this sort of posing that also includes a woman of color is Édouard Manet's *Olympia* (1863). Commonly identified as a prostitute, the so-called Olympia offers her body to the viewer, specifically the male viewer. In works by European artists from this time, white people are usually the only ones portrayed as reclining, while women of color are often seen in the background in subservient roles. Red Star adopts a similar supine position and direct gaze, yet she reverses the power dynamic in the relationship between the subject and the viewer. Red Star is in the same passive, lying position on the couch as Olympia, but her position appears stronger and more controlled. Unlike Olympia, Red Star is fully clothed, and she blocks her body by crossing her arm over it. Red Star uses her elbow to keep herself upright, appearing strong even while lying down in a seemingly powerless and relaxed position. She is not relying on anything but herself to keep herself upright. Her daughter similarly supports herself by leaning on her hand to keep herself sitting upright. This leaning suggests that Red Star and her daughter are relaxing in this space instead of solely using the space to pose, which is in contrast to the 19th-century and 20th-century staples of anthropological, historical, and documentary photography capturing Native American people in an imaginary

¹⁹⁶Clara Sue Kidwell, "What Would Pocahontas Think Now?: Women and Cultural Persistence," *Callaloo*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1994, *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2932084>, Accessed 16 Feb. 2023, 149.

state of faked portraits.¹⁹⁷ When we look at Manet's painting, the woman of color serves as a contrast to the whiteness of Olympia, who has the ability to relax. Having the ability to relax on the couch like Red Star could be a sign of prestige since in the past women of color were often portrayed as working class or lower class and serving as background characters. Red Star is in a place of power instead of servitude. The posing of Red Star's body is balanced by her daughter leaning in the opposite direction while both gaze directly at the viewer, simultaneously connecting with viewers and confronting them. Turning toward the viewer, Red Star and Beatrice directly face viewers, drawing them into the narrative of the photo by using their gaze to engage the present audience.¹⁹⁸ Red Star's gaze asserts her place as a female Native American artist. She dares the viewer to challenge her place here in the present. Beatrice's gaze, combined with her slightly closed-mouth smile, is more inviting and less challenging. She is inviting the viewer to look and learn, not judge. In the carefully controlled, often culturally sanitized portraits of Native Americans, their facial expressions were usually the only defense Native American sitters had against misrepresentation or emotional repression.¹⁹⁹ Femininity radiates from Red Star's photograph, as does her Apsáalooke identity. It also does not hurt that this work by an Apsáalooke female photographer depicts Apsáalooke female subjects displaying female forms often found in works of art.

¹⁹⁷ Lippard, "Independent Identities," 138.

¹⁹⁸ Miner, "Remediating the 'Famous Indian Artist': Native Aesthetics beyond Tourism and Tragedy," 92.

¹⁹⁹ Lippard, "Independent Identities," 138.

Ch. 5

Conclusion

Looking at Native American art from multiple perspectives shows that art has the ability to act as a mirror of society by reflecting on difficult and uncomfortable topics in a more inviting and accessible form of comprehension. The work of Hill, Hardin, and Red Star crosses barriers and elicits emotions that, to some viewers, will be a call to action. However from both a Native American perspective and a non-Native perspective, it is evident that there must be more in-depth studies on Native American art and artists. The three artists discussed in this thesis are just a small part of the Native American artistic community – a community that needs to be included in conversation, scholarship, museums, universities and other sectors of society. Native Americans are an integral part of the history of America, and their art needs to be included in the canon of American art. Using a “then and now” approach, contemporary artists often reaffirm the relationship between the past and the present by drawing on their ancestral traditions and belief systems to transform contemporary Native American art.²⁰⁰ Crossing barriers that need to be crossed is a sample of current changes happening now. By revealing the past, Indigenous artists show that Native American history is American history. Native American art is American art. Native Americans are a part of America.

In the grand scheme of things, why should we care about art? The world is deeply damaged. Racism, sexism, crime, global warming, mass shootings, natural disasters, and global pandemics have become increasingly worse. What need do we have for art when there are serious problems in the world? Art and the art society are microcosms of everything going on in

²⁰⁰ Kathleen Ash-Milby and Ruth B. Phillips, “Inclusivity or Sovereignty? Native American Arts in the Gallery and the Museum since 1992,” *Art Journal*, vol. 76, no. 2, 2017, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45142470>, Accessed 28 Aug. 2022, 37.

the world. By researching art and artists, we learn that art is an extension of the self. Artists use their art as a form of expression in politics, religion, race, gender, emotions, thoughts, etc. To study Native American art is to study Native American history and thereby understand a people's struggle for self-representation.²⁰¹ Art speaks to each viewer differently, but looking at Native American art as a reflection of broader themes shows that it is beneficial to include this art in the canon. Native American art should not be excluded from approaches often implemented to study American and European art. Native American art must be studied as legitimately as other artworks. Native American art shares in other art's ability to communicate history and to break barriers.

The works by Joan Hill, Helen Hardin, and Wendy Red Star discussed in this thesis connect to broader themes of the world and humanity. Artists' works are examples of how art reflects of the world artists inhabit. Art is more than just art. If viewed historically, the work of Hill, Hardin, and Red Star comments on issues of race, gender, politics, history, and art. Every picture is indeed worth a thousand words, and these three artists challenge stereotypical perceptions and definitions of Native American art. By challenging people to look more closely and by using aesthetic techniques, the art of these women elicits an emotional response – a response that may help to create change. The art of Native Americans can challenge old stereotypes that restrict contemporary Native American people's choices.²⁰² On a broader scale, their art can challenge society and centuries of ingrained information about Native people in a way most viewers will consider palatable.

²⁰¹ Mithlo, "*Our Indian Princess*": *Subverting the Stereotype*, 82.

²⁰² Hutchinson, "Modern Native American Art: Angel DeCora's Transcultural Aesthetics," 754.

Hill's work combines substance and style to make viewers question what they think they see. Women are subjects in many of her works, and contrary to the overly sexualized promotion of Native women, Hill shows women as they truly are in kinship, in leadership roles, and in tradition. In *Morning in an Indian Village*, Hill shows multiple women to challenge traditional race and gender roles. Her content and stylistic choices act as social criticisms of Native American women's often limited roles in the world since her paintings deviate from stereotypes of Native Americans often found in dominant Western culture – stereotypes that promoted pop art and photorealism of the 1960s and 1970s.²⁰³ While white women were fighting for their rights during this time, Native American women were often left out of the conversation. The Red Power movement was largely about Native rights in general. Hill's work connects with 1970s challenges since the Indian Self-Determination Act of 1975 legitimized Indigenous control over their own social and economic development by upholding treaties involving federal financial obligations.²⁰⁴ Hill's art harnesses this ability of control to assist her living culture. In the 1990s, Hill continues advocating for Native American rights with her work *Women's Voices at the Council*. For Hill, "the spirit of a culture is revealed through the artistic expression of its people" and including traditions and values in "art increases awareness of the inner and outer soul."²⁰⁵

Hardin has a different way of achieving the same goals. The product of two worlds, Hardin's art is distinctly both European and Native American. Through her medium, she expresses not only herself but also the self of humanity. *Prayers of a Blue Corn Mother* is created from the perfect puzzle pieces assembled together to create an image. By focusing on the

²⁰³ Farris, "Visual Power: 21 St Century Native American Artists/Intellectuals," 255.

²⁰⁴ Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2014) 209.

²⁰⁵ "Joan Hill: Oklahoma Native Artists," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vbs157mCjhs>.

parts of the whole in this composition that depicts living in two worlds, Hardin overcomes the separation between Native Americans and Americans. Every person is made up of different pieces, and despite differences of race, history, age, gender, and location, we are all human. Connecting the Native American and Western experience into one piece that works harmoniously inspires hope. Hardin captures a form of artistic self-expression that appeals to non-Native and Native people. *Changing Woman* continues this legacy by layering multiple meanings onto female portraits. By incorporating various inspirations within her art, she shows how artists can comment simultaneously on both the past and the present.

Red Star, the most contemporary of the group with art created during the 2000s, is the culmination of those who came before her. After the 1970s, Native Americans are still fighting the same battles that Hill and Hardin were fighting. In general, the general culture's use of stereotypical images and derogatory terms to refer to Indigenous people still continues to inflict pain on Native communities. An absence of Native Americans in American history and in different types of media still promotes limited knowledge about Native Americans to the public. In the art sphere, much work remains to be done by including diversity in every part of the art sector. Red Star joins a growing number of female Native American artists gaining attention in the art spaces that have long been dominated by Euro-Americans. Her multi-media works challenge current conceptions of Native Americans by working with and against stereotypes of Native Americans. The *White Squaw* series displays her form of "Indian humor" by addressing derogatory language and images in a straightforward manner. With her *Apsáalooke Feminist* series, Red Star continues to exemplify political and historical awareness through her art. Providing modern representations of Native American women, Red Star's work is also multi-

layered, like the work of Hill and Hardin. These three artists are admirable examples of Native American women proudly displaying the many aspects of their culture.

Throughout the years, studies about Native Americans went in and out of fashion reflecting the latest trend of government policy and popular opinion regarding Native Americans. In recent years, great strides have been made regarding to the inclusion of Native Americans in society. With different forms of recognition, such as Indigenous Peoples' Day and Native American Heritage month, the "resilience and strength" of Native Americans, "as well as the immeasurable positive impact that they have made on every aspect of American society" is validated, if only briefly.²⁰⁶

Recently, there has been a sort of reckoning with the removal of offensive images and terms in addition to the return of cultural items and human remains. Numerous companies have removed misused images of Native Americans and offensive terms that were used to sell their products. Changes in the art world are also occurring, with a greater number of contemporary Native American art exhibits on display in museums such as The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art (FL), Longmont Museum (CO), the Whitney Museum of American Art (NY), and the Amon Carter Museum of American Art (TX). This increased visibility brings attention to the diverse nature of Native American art. However, most art historical attention still primarily focuses on art that predates the past 100 years or art that is strongly rooted in "traditional" practices instead of art that engages with contemporary practices, materials, and issues.²⁰⁷ Institutions and the public still equate Native American art with the decorative arts, which is

²⁰⁶ Joseph R. Biden Jr., "A Proclamation on Indigenous Peoples Day," 2021, Oct. 08, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/10/08/a-proclamation-indigenous-peoples-day-2021/>, Accessed 21 Oct. 2022.

²⁰⁷ Herzog and Stolte, "American Indian Art: Teaching and Learning," 87.

often studied from an anthropological perspective. Red Star is a prime example of how the art world is discovering that Native American art can change and evolve like other types of art. Using technology and incorporating modernity into contemporary Native American art does not mean that Native Americans are disappearing or that their culture is struggling to survive. There has been an increase in the coverage of contemporary Native American art, with artists and exhibitions bringing attention to the lives and issues of Native Americans today. The Forge Project is one organization contributing to the support of Native artists and the revision of Native American art history. The Project's goal is to supply narratives that are currently missing in American art history through activist collections that correct such omissions.²⁰⁸ Native American art would flourish with the involvement of more Native Americans in positions of power. Ideally, the future of Native American art, will involve more and more representation of such art in institutions, museums, universities, and research.

²⁰⁸ Jeffrey Brown and Lena I. Jackson, "New project spotlights work of modern Indigenous American artists," Jan. 6, 2023, PBS, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/new-project-spotlights-work-of-modern-indigenous-american-artists>, Accessed 11 Apr. 2023.

References

- “Apsáalooke Feminist.” <https://www.wendyredstar.com/apsalooke-feminist>. 2022. Accessed 3 Apr. 2023.
- Ash-Milby, Kathleen and Ruth B. Phillips. “Inclusivity or Sovereignty? Native American Arts in the Gallery and the Museum since 1992.” *Art Journal*, vol. 76, no. 2, 2017, pp. 10–38. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45142470>. Accessed 28 Aug. 2022.
- Bates, Denise E. *The Other Movement Indian Rights and Civil Rights in the Deep South*. (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press 2012).
- “Beads, wampum, white.” *Indiana Memory Hosted Digital Collections*. <https://indianamemory.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/nativeam/id/22>. Accessed 29 Mar. 2023.
- Berlo, Janet C. ed. *The Early Years of Native American Art History: the politics of scholarship and collecting*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press; Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992).
- Biden Jr., Joseph R. “A Proclamation on Indigenous Peoples’ Day, 2021.” Oct. 08, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/10/08/a-proclamation-indigenous-peoples-day-2021/>. Accessed 21 Oct. 2022.
- Biden Jr., Joseph R. “A Proclamation on Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons Awareness Day, 2022.” May 4, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/05/04/a-proclamation-on-missing-or-murdered-indigenous-persons-awareness-day-2022/>. Accessed 21 Oct. 2022.
- Bird, Elizabeth S., ed. *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996).
- Brando, Elizabeth. “Wilma Mankiller.” National Women’s History Museum, 2021. Accessed 9 Apr. 2023.
- Braund, Kathryn E. Holland. “Guardians of Tradition and Handmaidens to Change: Women’s Roles in Creek Economic and Social Life during the Eighteenth Century.” *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1990, pp. 239–58. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1185653>. Accessed 30 Dec. 2022, 242.
- Brown, Jeffrey and Lena I. Jackson. “New project spotlights work of modern Indigenous American artists.” Jan. 6, 2023. PBS, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/new-project-spotlights-work-of-modern-indigenous-american-artists>. Accessed 11 Apr. 2023.
- Bryan-Wilson, Julia and Josh T. Franco. *Wendy Red Star: Delegation*. (United States, Aperture, 2022).

- Büken, Gülriz. "Construction of the Mythic Indian in Mainstream Media and the Demystification of the Stereotype by American Indian Artists." *American Studies International*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2002, pp. 46–56. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41279925>. Accessed 18 Aug. 2022.
- Cambridge Dictionary*. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/squeeze>. Accessed 3 Apr. 2023.
- Champagne, Duane and Kenneth M. Morrison. "Native American Religions: Creating through Cosmic Give-And-Take." *Native America: Portrait of the Peoples*. (Visible Ink Press. January 1994) 441–74.
- Clark, Shawn and Ruth Wylie. "Surviving a Cultural Genocide: Perspectives of Indigenous Elders on the Transfer of Traditional Values." *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2021, pp. 316–46. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48710317>. Accessed 10 Feb. 2023.
- "Company History." *Pendleton*. 2023. <https://www.pendleton-usa.com/company-history.html>. Accessed 15 Feb. 2023.
- "Contemporary Native Photographers and the Edward Curtis Legacy: Zig Jackson, Wendy Red Star, Will Wilson." <https://portlandartmuseum.org/exhibitions/contemporary-native-photographers/>. Accessed 10 Feb. 2023.
- Curtis, Edward S. *The Apsaroke, or Crows, The Hidatsa*. (Place of publication not identified: Native American Book Publishers, LLC, 2015).
- Deloria, Philip J. and Neal Salisbury, eds. *A Companion to American Indian History*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).
- Dennison, Jean. "The Logic of Recognition." *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 1, Winter 2014, pp. 1–35.
- "Diversity, Equity To Become Required for Museum Accreditation, Standards." *American Alliance of Museums*. October 17, 2022. <https://www.aam-us.org/2022/10/17/diversity-equity-to-become-required-for-museum-accreditation-standards/>. Accessed 21 Mar. 2023.
- Dockstader, Fredrick J. *Indian Art in America: The Arts and Crafts of the North American Indian*, 3rd ed. (Greenwich, CN: New York Graphic Society, 1966).
- Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2014).
- Edwards, Leigh H. "The United Colors of 'Pocahontas': Synthetic Miscegenation and Disney's

- Multiculturalism." *Narrative*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1999, pp. 147–68. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20107179>. Accessed 14 Mar. 2023.
- Ethridge, Robbie Franklyn. *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003).
- Ewers, John C. "Primitive Artists." *Science*, vol. 135, no. 3497, 1962, pp. 32–34. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1707877>. Accessed 4 Nov. 2022.
- Farris, Phoebe. "Visual Power: 21 St Century Native American Artists/Intellectuals." *American Studies*, vol. 46, no. 3/4, 2005, pp. 251–74. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40643899>. Accessed 16 Aug. 2022.
- Frank, Andrew K. *Creeks and Southerners: Biculturalism on the Early American Frontier*. Indians of the Southeast. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).
- "Gabby Petito's death is tragic. But I wish missing women of color got this much attention; Considerable resources were dedicated to finding Petito's body. Yet Indigenous people in Wyoming are more likely to disappear and to be killed, and their cases are barely noticed." *Guardian* [London, England], 25 Sept. 2021, p. NA. Accessed 21 Oct. 2022.
- Gardiner, Susannah. "Who Gets To Define Native American Art?" <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/who-gets-to-define-native-american-art-180979968/>, Apr. 25, 2022.
- Gillreath-Brown, Andrew and Tanya M. Peres. "Identifying Turtle Shell Rattles in the Archaeological Record of the Southeastern United States." *Ethnobiology Letters*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2017, pp. 109–14. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26423687>. Accessed 29 Dec. 2022.
- Green, Michael D. *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society In Crisis*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985).
- Green, Rayna and Frank W. Porter III. "Chapter 2: A Look at Their Traditional Roles." *Women in American Indian Society*. Jan. 1989.
- Green, Rayna. "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture." *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1975, pp. 698–714. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25088595>. Accessed 30 Sep. 2022.
- Griffith, Benjamin W. *McIntosh and Weatherford, Creek Indian Leaders*. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1988). <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.aum.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat00622a&AN=aum.145991&site=eds-live>.
- Hanson, Jeffrey R. "Ethnicity and the Looking Glass: The Dialectics of National Indian

- Identity.” *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 2, Spring 1997, pp. 195–208.
- Hausman, Gerald and Robert W. Kapoun, eds. *The Image Taker: The Selected Stories and Photographs of Edward S. Curtis*. (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2009).
- Herzog, Melanie Anne, and Sarah Anne Stolte. “American Indian Art: Teaching and Learning.” *Wicazo Sa Review*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2012, pp. 85–109. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.5749/wicazosareview.27.1.0085>. Accessed 13 Sep. 2022.
- Howard, James H. “Pan-Indian Culture of Oklahoma.” *The Scientific Monthly*, vol. 81, no. 5, 1955, pp. 215–20. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/22049>. Accessed 7 Mar. 2023.
- Hutchinson, Elizabeth. “Modern Native American Art: Angel DeCora’s Transcultural Aesthetics.” *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 83, no. 4, 2001, pp. 740–56. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3177230>. Accessed 11 Aug. 2022.
- Hutchinson, Elizabeth. *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890-1915*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009.
- Jager, Rebecca K. *Malinche, Pocahontas, and Sacagawea: Indian Women as Cultural Intermediaries and National Symbols*. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015).
- “Joan Hill: Oklahoma Native Artists.” *YouTube*. uploaded by oohrp, 12 Aug. 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vbsl57mCjhs>. Accessed 19 Sept. 2022.
- “Joan Hill’s *Women’s Voices at the Council*.” *Smithsonian American Art Museum*. <https://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/native-women-artists/online/joan-hill>. Accessed 19 Sept. 2022.
- Jones, Ruthe Blalock et al. “Oklahoma: A View of the Center.” *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2007, pp. 1–44. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20737376>. Accessed 19 Sep. 2022.
- Keohane, Nannerl O. “Women, Power & Leadership.” *Daedalus*, vol. 149, no. 1, 2020, pp. 236–50. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48563044>. Accessed 10 Mar. 2023.
- Kidwell, Clara Sue. “What Would Pocahontas Think Now?: Women and Cultural Persistence.” *Callaloo*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1994, pp. 149–59. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2932084>. Accessed 16 Feb. 2023.
- “LANDBACK Manifesto.” *LANDBACK*. 2021. <https://landback.org/manifesto/>. Accessed 13 Sept. 2022.
- Lawrence, Jane. “The Indian Health Service and the Sterilization of Native American

- Women.” *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2000, pp. 400–19. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1185911>. Accessed 17 Mar. 2023.
- “Major Painting by Native American Artist Jaune Quick-To-See Smith Acquired by National Gallery of Art.” *National Gallery of Art*. July 2, 2020. <https://www.nga.gov/press/2020/quick-to-see-smith.html>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2022.
- McDonald, Helen. *Erotic Ambiguities: The Female Nude in Art*. (London: Routledge, 2001).
- Meyer, Carter Jones and Diana Royer, eds. *Selling the Indian Commercializing & Appropriating American Indian Cultures*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001).
- Mihesuah, Devon A. *Indigenous American Women: decolonization, empowerment, activism*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).
- Miner, Joshua. “Remediating the ‘Famous Indian Artist’: Native Aesthetics beyond Tourism and Tragedy.” *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2018, pp. 79–105. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.5250/studamerindilite.30.2.0079>. Accessed 14 Sep. 2022.
- “Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW).” *Native Hope*. <https://www.nativehope.org/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-mmiw>. Accessed 11 Apr. 2023.
- Mithlo, Nancy Marie. *“Our Indian Princess”: Subverting the Stereotype*. (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2009).
- “National Congress of American Indians Acquires Rights Retires ‘Crying Indian.’” Feb. 23, 2023. *Keep America Beautiful*. <https://kab.org/national-congress-of-american-indians-acquires-rights-retires-crying-indian/>. Accessed 29 Mar. 2023.
- Nead, Lynda. *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*. (London: Routledge, 1992).
- Ohnesorge, Karen. “Uneasy Terrain: Image, Text, Landscape, and Contemporary Indigenous Artists in the United States.” *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2008, pp. 43–69. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30114281>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2022.
- Olson, James S. *Bathsheba’s Breast: Women, Cancer, and History*. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).
- Rangel, John Paul. “Moving Beyond the Expected: Representation and Presence in a Contemporary Native Arts Museum.” *Wicazo Sa Review*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2012, p. 31-46. doi:10.1353/wic.2012.0008. Accessed 16 Nov. 2022
- Rogers, Richard A. “From Hunting Magic to Shamanism: Interpretations of Native American Rock Art and the Contemporary Crisis in Masculinity.” *Women’s Studies in Communication*, vol. 30, no. 1, Spring 2007, pp. 78–110.

- Rushing III, W. Jackson, ed. *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century*. (New York: Routledge, 1999).
- “Sacred Turtle Woman.” *South Dakota Coalition Ending Domestic and Sexual Violence*. <https://sdcedsv.org/aboutus/sacredturtlewoman/>. Accessed 29 Mar. 2023.
- Sanbonmatsu, Kira. “Women’s Underrepresentation in the U.S. Congress.” *Daedalus*, vol. 149, no. 1, 2020, pp. 40–55. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48563031>. Accessed 9 Mar. 2023.
- Sandberg, John. “Some Traditional Aspects of Pop Art.” *Art Journal*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1967, pp. 228–45. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/774918>. Accessed 25 Nov. 2022.
- Schwarz, Maureen Trudelle. “Native American Barbie: The Marketing of Euro-American Desires.” *American Studies*, vol. 46, no. 3/4, 2005, pp. 295–326. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40643901>. Accessed 13 Feb. 2023.
- Scott, Jay. *Changing Woman: The Life and Art of Helen Hardin*. (Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Pub. 1989).
- “Secretary Haaland Takes Action to Remove Derogatory Names from Federal Lands.” *U.S. Department of the Interior*. November 19, 2021. <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/secretary-haaland-takes-action-remove-derogatory-names-federal-lands>. Accessed 29 Nov. 2022.
- Shoemaker, Nancy. “How Indians Got to Be Red.” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 102, no. 3, 1997, pp. 625–44. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2171504>. Accessed 12 Apr. 2023.
- Smithers, Gregory D. “Predatory Colonialism: Indigenous Women and the Violence of Sexual Objectification in the United States.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 30, no. 2, May 2021.
- Taylor, Sue. “Indigenous Images.” *Art in America*, vol. 104, no. 5, May 2016, pp. 57–62. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=115177785&site=eds-live.
- Traugott, Joseph. “Native American Artists and the Postmodern Cultural Divide.” *Art Journal*, vol. 51, no. 3, 1992, pp. 36–43. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/777346>. Accessed 6 Aug. 2022.
- Udel, Lisa J. “Revision and Resistance: The Politics of Native Women’s Motherwork.” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2001, pp. 43–62. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3347054>. Accessed 17 Feb. 2023.

- WalkingStick, Kay. "Native American Art in the Postmodern Era." *Art Journal*, vol. 51, no. 3, 1992, pp. 15–17. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/777343>. Accessed 21 Mar. 2023.
- Walsh, Lori and Chris Laughery. "United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians: The Supreme Court case to buy the Black Hills." *South Dakota Public Broadcasting*. May 12, 2022. <https://listen.sdpb.org/arts-life/2022-05-12/united-states-v-sioux-nation-of-indians-the-supreme-court-case-to-buy-the-black-hills>. Accessed 20 Mar. 2023.
- "Wendy Red Star: Apsáalooke Feminist." *YouTube*. Portland Art Museum. Mar. 13, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXFkvWPUU0s>. Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.
- "Wendy Red Star: A Scratch on the Earth." *YouTube*. uploaded by StateoftheArtsNJ. 25 Mar. 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyJiXXXH2WE>. Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.
- Wenger, Tisa. "We Have a Religion: The 1920s Pueblo Indian Dance Controversy and American Religious Freedom." (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009).
- Wesson, Cameron B. *Households and Hegemony*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).
- Wilkinson, Doris Yvonne. "Racial Socialization Through Children's Toys: A Sociohistorical Examination." *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1974, pp. 96–109. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2783625>. Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.
- "Women in Elective Office 2023." Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP). 2023. New Brunswick, NJ: Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University-New Brunswick. <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/current-numbers/women-elective-office-2023> (Accessed Mar. 9, 2023).
- Yohe, Jill Ahlberg and Teri Greeves, eds. *Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists*. (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2019).