

NATIVE ARTS OF NORTH AMERICA



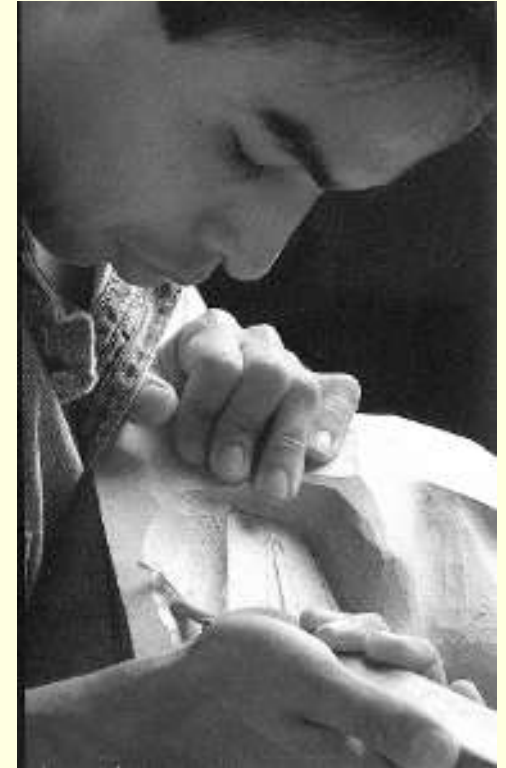
NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN ART



- We concentrate our efforts in looking at the artforms of tribes located in what is now the United States.



AMERICAN INDIAN ART IS A LIVING ART...



- Artforms that have been made for thousands of years, continue to be made today.

AMERICAN INDIAN ART IS A LIVING ART...

- Artforms which are the result of trade, exchange and Contact are also being made today.



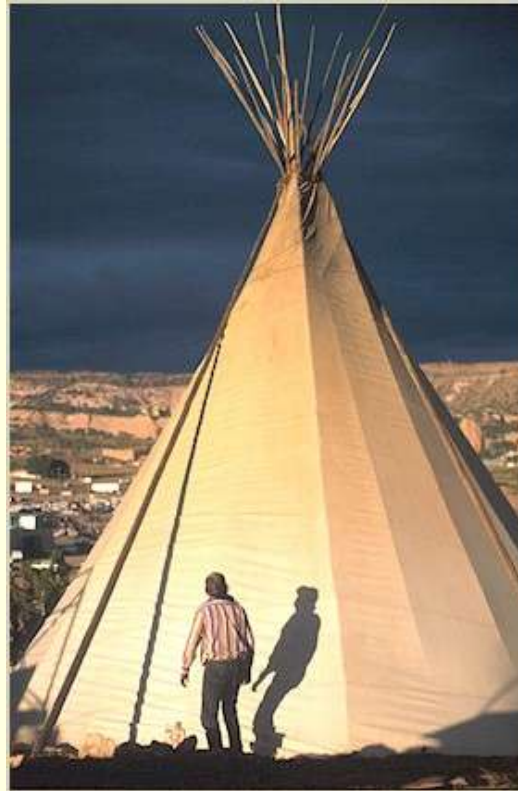
AMERICAN INDIAN ART IS A LIVING ART...



- Today's Native artists use every medium, technique, and tool that is available for artistic expression.

AMERICAN INDIAN ART IS A LIVING ART...

- After all, this is the 21st century and Native people live in today's world.



CONTACT BROUGHT MANY CHANGES



diabetes



T	ᵒ	ᵒ	i
y	A	J	E
ᵒ	F	Γ	ᵒ
P	G	M	ᵒ

16 of the 77 Cherokee alphabetical characters

• Smallpox

Changes in lifestyle, natural resources, trade goods, and culture.

(CHANGES IN ARTEFORMS...



- Tiny glass seed beads nearly replaced the use of porcupine quills, seeds, nuts, carved stone and shells as materials to decorate personal clothing and items.

(CHANGES IN CLOTHING...

- Trade wool (also called Stroud cloth), and colorful calico fabrics have replaced some animal hides, pounded fiber and cotton textiles.



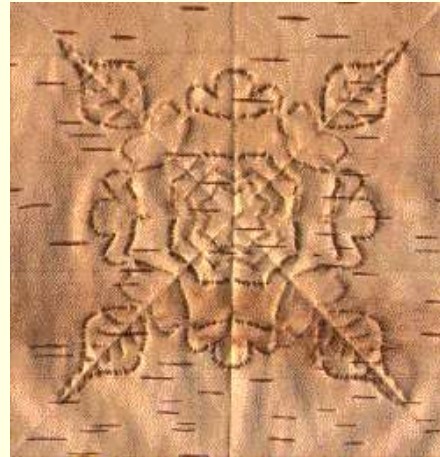
(CHANGES IN DESIGN MOTIFS...

- Traditional design motifs have been altered and modified, at the same time that new ones have been introduced and adapted.



(CHANGES IN ARTISTIC MEDIUMS...

- Paintings are made today on canvas and paper, rather than hides and bark.

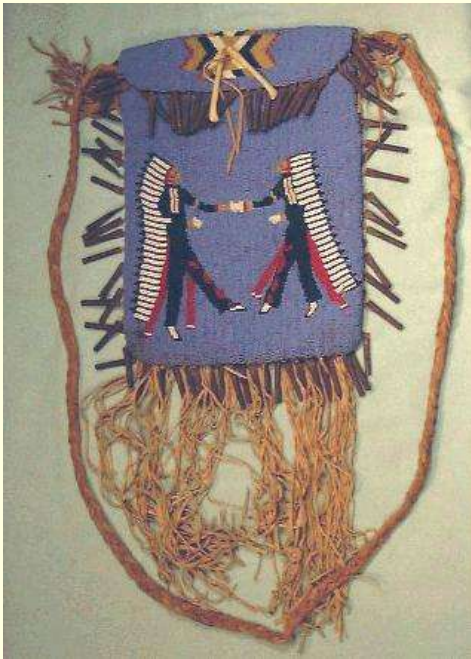


(CHANGES IN SOCIAL STATUS...

- Status could be enhanced through personal displays of trade goods and by incorporating new and exotic motifs and images into work.
- There are gender distinctions in artforms, some artistic traditions fall into the purview of women's arts and others, into the realm of men's arts.



WHEN VIEWING A NATIVE ARTEFORM:



We can appreciate the superb, and often ingenious, use of the local mineral, animal and vegetal wealth available to the maker.

WHEN VIEWING A NATIVE ARTFORM:



We can observe how closely the crafts reflect the environment of a particular cultural area.



WHEN VIEWING A NATIVE ARTEFORM:



We can recognize that the beauty of the items is a tribute to the skills of the makers and the cultural forces which motivated the artists.



Forces which continue to motivate Native artists today.



THERE IS A TENDENCY TO VIEW
NATIVE ART AS CURIOSITIES CREATED
BY PEOPLE WHO NO LONGER EXIST...



Such thinking is in error!



These are **LIVING** cultures, not dead ones!

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

- Native art encompasses the sacred and the secular, the political and domestic, the ceremonial and the commercial.
- The visual arts have always been conduits of culture within Native communities as traditions are transmitted from one generation to the next.



NATIVE ART IS BOTH SACRED AND SECULAR

- Art is social, meant to enrich tribal ceremonials
- It has significance beyond the pictorial or design elements
- Many artforms personify the forces and phenomena of the natural world.
- All things have sentience, and are alive - including artforms...if they are created in the proper way.



THERE IS A GREAT DIVERSITY OF FORM AND EXPRESSION IN NATIVE ART



- Each tribe is influenced by its religious and social customs.



- Raw materials are limited to what occurs in the local environment, or what is traded in.



- The lifestyle of the people determines the type of materials and goods that are valued.

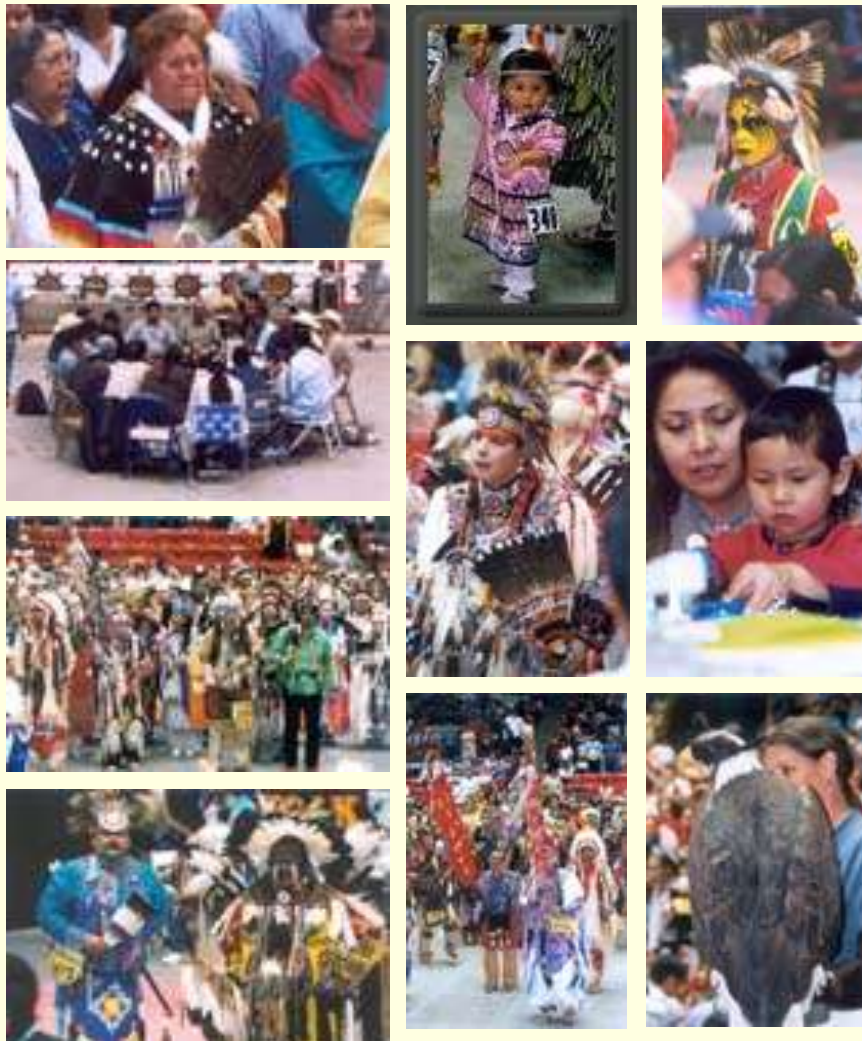
THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY



Today the visual arts within Native communities serve as some of the most eloquent and forceful articulations of the politics of identity.



ISSUES OF IDENTITY INVOLVE:



- Tribal recognition
- Federal recognition
- Government recognition and blood quantum
- Community recognition
- Cultural affiliation
- Language association
- Bi-cultural and multi-cultural pressures and influences

THE QUESTION OF ADDRESSING THE NATIVE

- There are multiple terms used to identify Native people.
 - American Indian
 - Indian
 - Native
 - Amerind
 - Aboriginal
 - First Nations
 - Native American
 - Indigenous
 - First Americans
 - Redskins
- The most common terms of address used today are:
 - American Indian in the US
 - First Nations in Canada
- Some of these are more acceptable than others, but how a person identifies is a personal choice and so there is no single answer and no agreement.
- Some terms that are inappropriate and should NOT be used are:
 - Squaw
 - Brave
 - Papoose
 - Shaman
 - Superstition

VISUAL ARTS

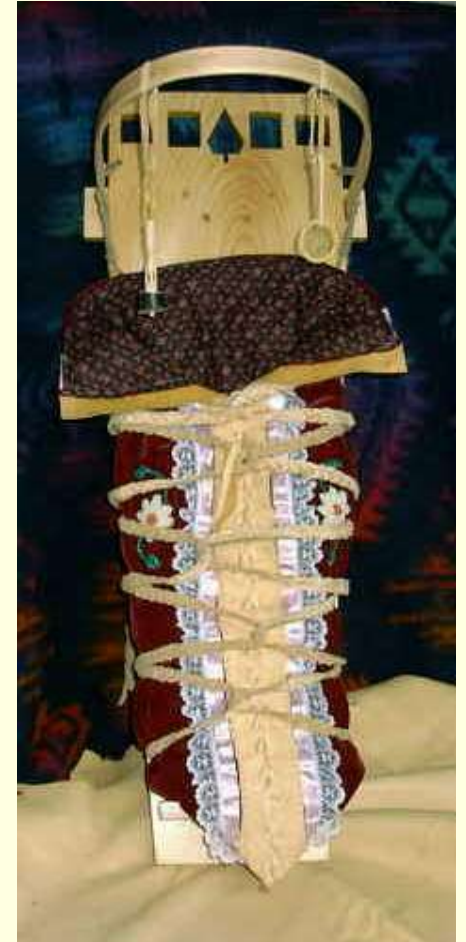
- Since most visual art reflects moments in time...much of the Native art that has survived since Contact represents critical moments in history.
- Some of those visual responses are answers to:
 - Disease epidemics
 - Forced removal from homelands
 - Repressive colonial regimes
 - Enforced religious conversion
 - Contact with foreign cultures



IDENTIFYING NATIVE ART



Subject matter does not determine the classification, it is the ethnic heritage that does. This is art based on ethnicity, not genre art.



WHAT IS AMERICAN INDIAN ART?



What makes a piece of Native art authentic, is that it is made by a person who is American Indian...it is not a matter of the tools or materials which are used.

FOUR CLASSIFICATIONS OF NATIVE ART:



1. Ethnic
2. Tribal
3. Pan-Indian
4. Mainstream



(CLASSIFICATION 1

- Ethnic art encompasses artforms made by a tribal member for another tribal member.



(CLASSIFICATION 2

Tribal art encompasses art that is made by a tribal member for use by individuals outside of the tribal community.



(CLASSIFICATION 3

- Pan-Indian art encompasses arts which are made for the art market, or art trade. These are defined by the expectations of the market, and the demand for their production.



(CLASSIFICATION 4



Indian Mainstream encompasses art which is the most difficult to recognize because it may or may not exhibit any hint of Indian heritage.

It is art that happens to be made by an Indian person and may not reflect the typical imagery or designs associated with Native art.



WHAT IS ART?

How do we define art?

How do we determine what art is, or encompasses?

ART IS A FUNDAMENTAL WAY OF SEEING...

- If we look at the material culture of a people and understand the reasons for its construction, the meaning behind its creation, and the necessity for those items in the lifestyle of the people - then we understand more about the people.
- We can appreciate art from any culture without knowing anything further about the people, but the more we understand about the art and why and how it fits into the culture, the more we understand about the people.
- This class is designed to introduce you to American Indian art as a lens through which to view Native culture.
- This is not an art history class...our focus is on the artform, the artist, the culture, and the continuity of tradition which brings the prehistoric past into the world of today within the works of every Native artist.

ART AND IT'S PURPOSE

- Cultural perspectives vary about the purpose and function of art, and Native art is intended to be functional, as well as aesthetically pleasing
- From the Native perspective, the important aspects of creating an artform are the steps followed in its production, rather than the finished product.



DIFFERENCES IN ART PERSPECTIVES

- Native Perspective:
 - Art is functional in purpose
 - Art has sacred and secular functions
- Non-Native Perspective:
 - Art is for art's sake
 - Art is intended to be aesthetically pleasing



THE SEMANTICS OF TERMINOLOGY



What is the difference between a traditional artform and a contemporary one?

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER ART?



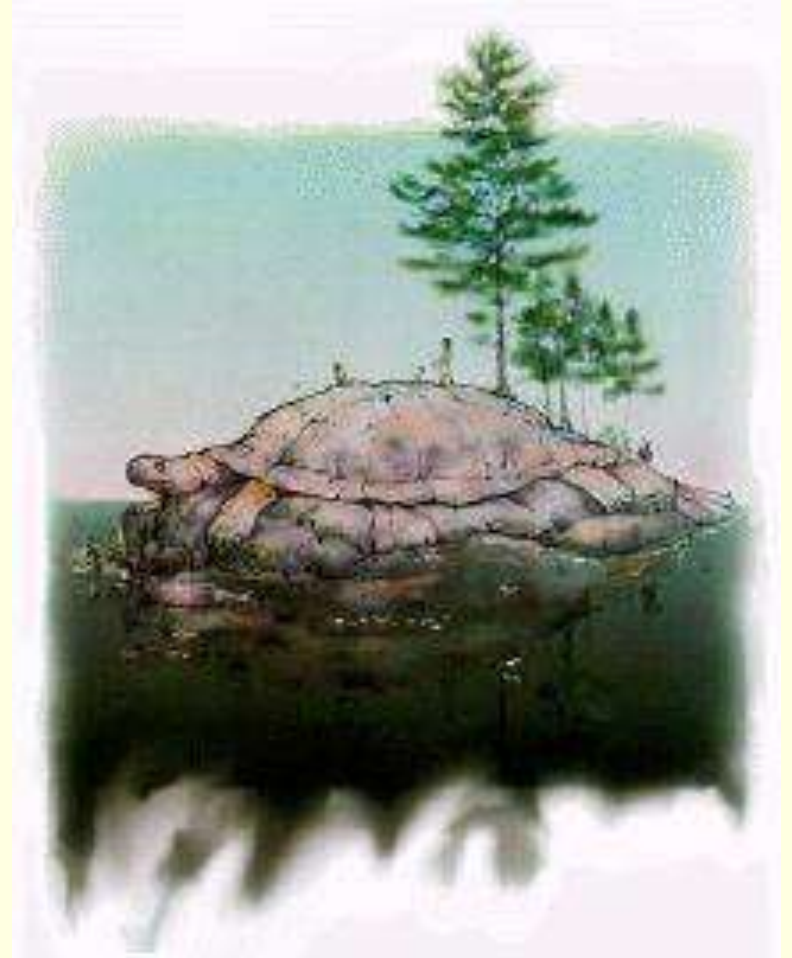
WHAT DOES ART DO?

- Expresses ideas
- Provokes emotional responses
- Teaches visually
- Identifies social issues
- Promotes change
- Encourages and outrages
- Questions



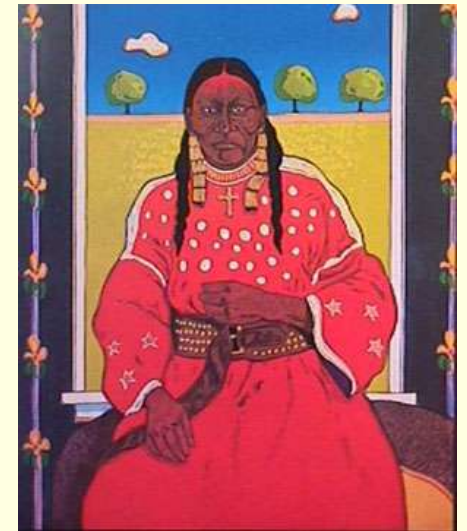
WHAT CAN ART CONVEY?

- Ideas
 - Stories
- CONCEPTS
 - Learning
- Thought
 - CULTURE



FOLK ART VS. FINE ART

- Is there a difference?
- Is it a distinction based on culture?
- Why is your work art, and my work craft?



VISUAL ARTS, MEDIUMS, TRADITIONS



Virtually all artistic mediums have been utilized by Native artists since Contact, and nearly all traditions illustrate change in artforms and conceptualizations as a result.



ART ENDURES THROUGH TIME



Great art is timeless – it endures the ages and transcends time.



WHO DECIDES WHAT AN ARTWORK MEANS?

The artist?



Can art that celebrates ideas that we disagree with, still be great art?

The community?



Can an artwork that means one thing to people when it is created, mean something entirely different to people in another time and place?

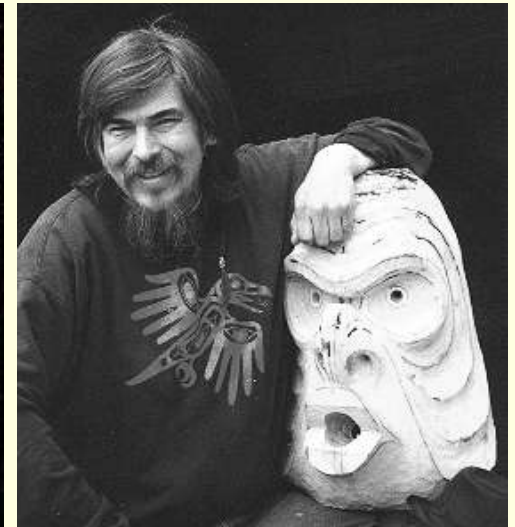


ORIGINS & BELIEFS

- Tribal oral tradition and Western scholars account differently for the origin of the world and the human presence in it.
- Stories of creation are as varied as the peoples of North America. All creation stories explain the world, place people in the world, and provide satisfactory explanations for the believer.
- Respect for Native beliefs regarding the creation of the world is fundamental to understanding the cyclical nature of time and existence.
- There are alternative explanations for the creation of the world and the universe, science is as much a belief system as any other philosophy.

"MADE BEINGS"

- A shared belief among tribes is that all items, animate and inanimate, are given a place in the being of things and to create a new thing from them is a significant act.
- Items can be brought into existence through song, prayer, thought, and artistic expression.



NATIVE ART IS UTILITARIAN,
FUNCTIONAL, PURPOSEFUL...BUT ALSO
DENOTES BEAUTY, STRUCTURE AND
HARMONY.

Objects have always been made to satisfy practical and physical needs, but they also are intended to encompass aesthetic and spiritual needs at the same time.

NATIVE ART CAN BE VIEWED AS A CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATIVE.

- Pre-Contact refers to the prehistoric period before Europeans arrive.
- Contact refers to the arrival of the first influx of Europeans.
- By definition, history begins at Contact because that is when written records are made by early European explorers.



SOME NOTES ABOUT WHAT WE TERM.....ART



- Native languages have no word for art, but there have always been individuals in every tribe whose roles are to create decorative items for use.
- Like people everywhere, Native artisans have always valued the visual pleasure by things made well and imaginatively.
- The purely material and visual features of an object are not necessarily the most important in establishing it's relative value.



ART HAS MANY PURPOSES...

- It is both sacred and secular.
- It serves social and religious purposes.
- It can be a public demonstration of power and celebration
- It can be an instance of personal adornment which enriches the individual and places them in proper relationship to the world.
- Body decoration and clothing has been a traditional vehicle of artistic expression and is a tradition which continues today with pow wow dress and traditional clothing.



CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION...



- The introduction of new trade goods and raw materials as a result of Contact resulted in changing artforms, clothing styles and perceptions.
- New materials were eagerly used along with traditional materials.
- The use and incorporation of trade materials has had a long tradition of artistic expression in Native communities.
- Long before trade was established with Europeans, trade and exchange for exotic and desirable items existed between Native communities.

CULTURAL DECIMATION AND SURVIVAL

- When the first Europeans reached America nearly five hundred years ago, it was a vast, fertile land that supported millions of culturally distinct people who spoke hundreds of different languages.
- While it is true that many Native people were killed defending their sacred homelands, warfare was not the principal cause of their demise. Some demographers estimate that as many as 19 out of 20 Native Americans died of European diseases like smallpox, influenza, and tuberculosis.
- Today, Indian-owned lands comprise less than 2% of the contiguous forty-eight states.
- Native populations comprise only 1% of the country today.

NO WORD EXISTS IN ANY AMERICAN
INDIAN LANGUAGE THAT COMES CLOSE
TO TODAY'S DEFINITION OF ART.

The Native did not set out to create art for its own sake.

In traditional Native thinking, there is no separation between art and life or between what is beautiful and what is functional.

Art, beauty and spirituality are so firmly intertwined in the routine of living that no words are needed, or allowed, to separate them.