

# GILCREASE

J O U R N A L

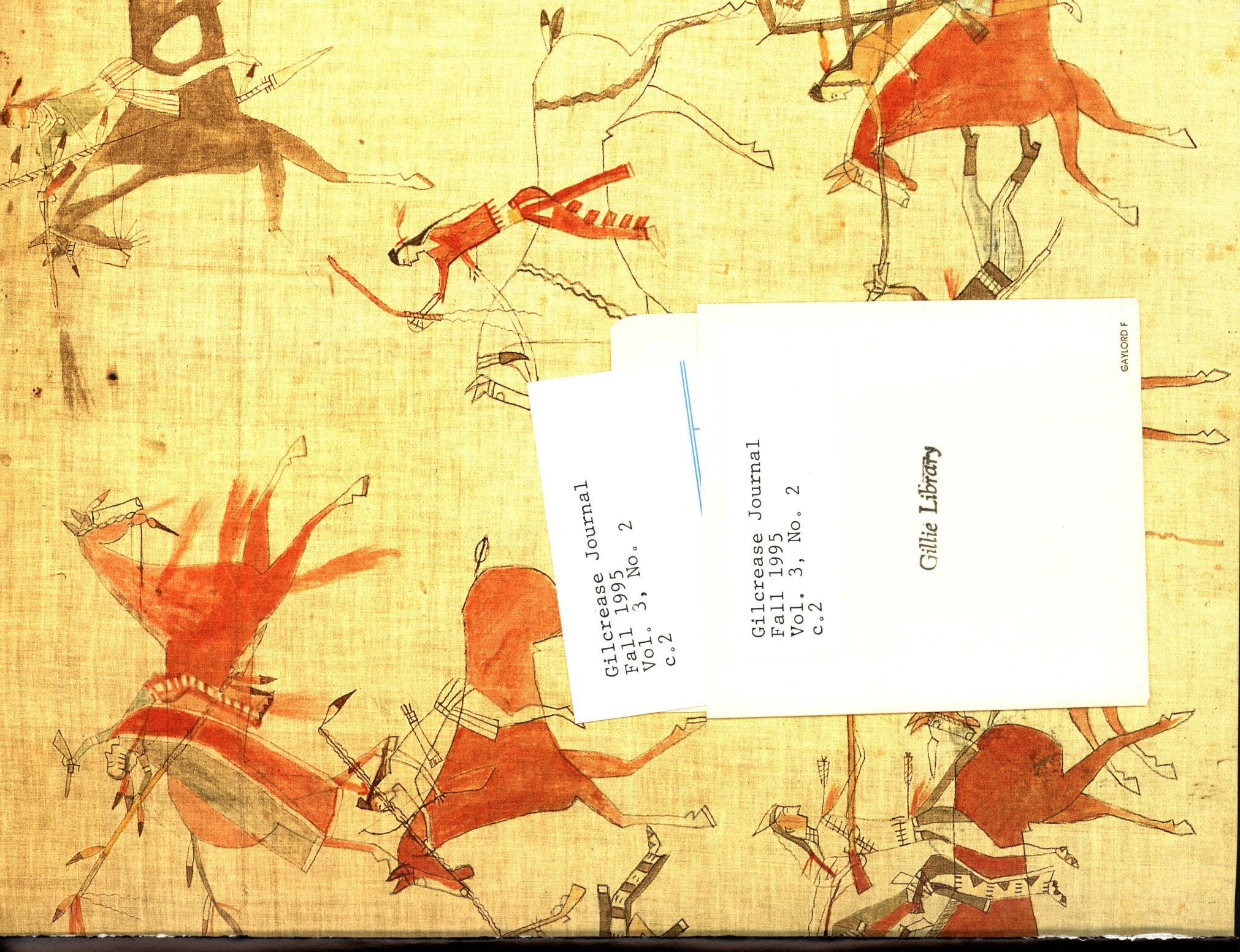
## Oklahoma Indian Art



Fall  
1995  
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c.2

Gillie Library





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# Contents

## OKLAHOMA INDIAN ART

### 6 Like Being Home: Oklahoma Indian Art

Ruthe Blalock Jones examines that unique quality expressed in Native art from the melting pot state of Oklahoma — the unnamed quality that Indian artists call “like being home.” **RUTHE BLALOCK JONES**

### 22 Symbols of Faith and Belief — Art of the Native American Church

Between the 1870s and the turn of the century, a new form of worship spread across the plains. It was based on the ceremonial consumption of the dried tops of the cactus *Lophophora Williamsii* — peyote. The rituals of the Native American Church are visibly expressed in an amazing range of beautiful objects, paintings, and songs. Dan Swan looks at artworks from the Gilcrease Collection that are associated with the religion and its observances.

**DANIEL C. SWAN WITH COMMENTS  
BY HARDING BIG BOW**

PAGE ONE  
WHITE SWAN  
*War Record*  
Watercolor, ink and pencil  
on muslin  
GILCREASE 0127.2219

RIGHT  
KIOWA  
*Water bird fan*  
Feathers, beads, fringe  
GILCREASE 8426.824

FACING PAGE  
WILLARD STONE  
*Lady of Spring (detail)*  
Wood  
GILCREASE 1127.76



### 44

### Kiowa Beadwork

Kiowa beadworker Vanessa Jennings considers the history and meaning behind a selection of fine beaded bags, leggings, and cradle boards in the Gilcrease Collection. **VANESSA JENNINGS**

### 51 Art Deco and the Sculpture of Willard Stone

The sleek, abstract style called Art Deco, which flourished in the 1920s and 1930s, influenced advertising art, home appliances, decorative furnishings, textiles, and architecture — and fine art. Its influence was felt by creative spirits both Indian and non-Indian. Kevin Smith traces the influence of Art Deco on the work of Cherokee sculptor Willard Stone. **KEVIN SMITH**

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# Oklahoma Indian Art

**M**ORE THAN SIXTY-SEVEN TRIBES and bands of Native Americans have been located at various times within the state of Oklahoma — “Home of the Red People” in Choctaw. Yet fewer than half a dozen tribes dwelled within what is now Oklahoma when the Europeans arrived. Although the major reason for Indian settlement in the territory was white policy, as Dr. Rennard Strickland writes in *The Indians in Oklahoma*, “generalizing about the coming of the Indian to Oklahoma is not easy. Tribes came at different times and for different purposes. Divisions of the same tribe were often split by migration. Oklahoma was historically a great and open hunting ground through which passed many native peoples.”

How Oklahoma became home to more Native Americans than any other state in the Union is a serpentine story, but equally complex is even the barest overview of the astonishing cultural differences between the tribes who settled here. Daniel C. Swan, senior curator at Gilcrease Museum and guest editor of this issue of the *Gilcrease Journal*, invites readers to enjoy the richness of Indian art from some Oklahoma’s many tribes through the extraordinary depth of the Gilcrease Collection, and in doing so to catch a flicker of that ineffable “Oklahoma” character that is somehow decipherable across the gulf of their divergent origins.

— CLH

FRED BEAVER (1911-1980)  
*Seminole Making Sofkey (detail)*  
 Tempera on paper  
 Gilcrease 0227.531



## AUTHORS

**RUTHE BLALOCK JONES** (Delaware-Shawnee-Peoria) is a painter and teacher recognized for her sensitive treatment of Native history and women’s life. A former student of Dick West, she is director of the art department at Bacone College.

**DANIEL C. SWAN**, senior curator at Gilcrease, received Master and Doctorate degrees from the University of Oklahoma. He has served as

ethnologist for the State Museum of History, Oklahoma Historical Society; director of the White Hair Memorial, Osage County, Oklahoma; and curator of anthropology at the Science Museum of Minnesota.

**HARDING BIG BOW**, a Kiowa born in 1921 in Carnegie, Oklahoma, is a direct descendant of Chief Big Bow, a Kiowa leader and war chief. Big Bow is a painter and flute carver and a past president of the

Native American Church of Oklahoma. He has devoted most of his life to learning the ceremonial ways of his ancestors.

**KEVIN SMITH**, curator of education at Gilcrease, gained museum experience at the Cherokee Heritage Center in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. His is also an artist, illustrator, and teacher of Native American art history at the University of Tulsa.

**VANESSA PAUKEIGOPE JENNINGS** is the oldest granddaughter of Kiowa artist Stephen Mopope and Jeanette Berry. She lives with her husband Carl Jennings on her ancestors’ original allotment in the Redstone community west of Anadarko, Oklahoma. Vanessa is known throughout the world for her superlative beadwork.



# LIKE BEING HOME

*Oklahoma Indian Art*

RUTHE

BLALOCK

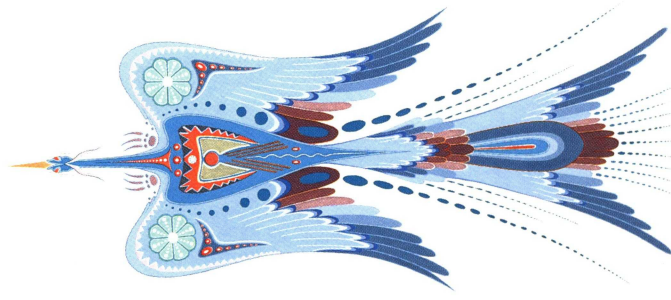
JONES

“One of the unique things about Oklahoma is the multitude of tribes living together. Inter-marriage among Oklahoma tribes is common owing to the boarding school experience, and assimilation into the dominant culture is a fact of life. All of this association and energy, I believe, is reflected in Oklahoma Indian art. I further believe there is something in our Native American art that expresses ‘Oklahoma’.”

It is generally well known that Oklahoma is a melting pot of Indian tribes removed to Indian Territory from other areas. What is less well known is the fact that the various tribes have different beliefs, traditions, dances, languages and other customs. Living side by side has resulted in some blending and blurring of culture, for reasons of politics and survival. Some tribes who were former enemies have formed new relationships and alliances. Most of the tribes respect old traditions and boundaries, and in some instances friendly rivalries persist, adding to the richness of the culture of Oklahoma. The woodland tribes who live in eastern and southeastern Oklahoma have retained their culture through distance and separation from the more nomadic plains and prairie tribes who live in the central and southwest area of the state.

There is a certain genre or style that is singular and owes its existence, to some degree, to the experience of living in the “melting pot.” That unnamed quality is visually identifiable and says “Oklahoma.” I have heard it exclaimed at exhibitions. Other artists have related similar experiences of people making their way across an exhibit hall in a deliberate attempt to see “the Oklahoma section.” Some expatriates say seeing our work is “like being home;” they say it is “good.”

“Good” is a word which carries layers of meaning in Indian Country and is considered a high compliment. The term is not used lightly, and conveys acceptance and affirmation, probably from generations of usage to express a feeling or thought for which there is no



equivalent English translation from the Indian language. When Indian people say an artist's work is “good,” they are validating it in a social or tribal sense relating to content, rather than assessing merits of composition or color harmony. In that context, I offer my thoughts on the contributions of some Oklahoma Indian artists, as well as possible future trends and developments.

Like mainstream art, Indian art can be said to be descriptive of a particular people and geographic area. I believe the art found in this area from earliest times to the present day speaks of particular times and places.

Subsequent to rock and cliff art forms from various locations within the state and artifacts of the Spiro Mounds culture, the earliest painted artworks found in Oklahoma are calendar and hide paintings of the Kiowa, Comanche and Cheyenne-Arapaho tribes. The work of Kiowa artist Silverhorn (1861-1941) is representative of this form. There were also muslin paintings similar to the example in the Gilcrease Collection which recounts the war record of the Crow Indian warrior and painter White Swan (1852-1904).

Closely related are the ledger paintings produced by the Indians imprisoned at Ft. Marion, Florida, during the 1860s and 1870s. Tribal leaders of the Southern Plains Indians were incarcerated to “stop the Indian wars.” At Ft. Marion they created artworks called ledger paintings because they were executed on ledger sheets in bound volumes, perhaps the only materials available. Since I first learned about them in the 1950s during art classes with Dick West at Bacone College, these have been

FACING PAGE

WOODROW W. CRUMBO (1912-1989)

*Peyote Messenger Bird #1*

Tempera on paper

GILCREASE 0227.506

ABOVE

GEORGE SILVERHORN (1911-1969)

*Kiowa Family Moving Camp*

Tempera on paper

GILCREASE 0227.285





among my favorites. They are an expressive record of day-to-day prison life. Given the circumstances of the forced removal of their creators and detention in a strange, distant place far from their familiar homeland, the paintings are especially poignant reminders of the loneliness and homesickness of the men. They simultaneously reveal a sense of humor in the prisoners' adaptation to new experiences and surroundings, an example of "Indian humor" which is so much a part of the individual.

My favorites are those images of warriors on horseback with parasols and beaver hats, and also the courting scenes, all of which reveal the subtle humor of the artists. Publications such as *Plains Indian Art from Fort Marion* by Karen Petersen and exhibitions of works of the Kiowa artist Zotom (1853-1913) and the Cheyenne artist Making Medicine (1843-1931) have introduced the ledger style of painting to a new audience.

Contemporary artists who have adapted the hide painting and ledger style of art to new forms of expression are Kiowas Sharron Ahtone-Harjo, Sherman Chaddleson and Tom Poolaw, and

Virginia Stroud, an adopted Kiowa of Creek and Cherokee descent.

Ahtone uses antique papers, and all have worked on aged paper and canvas. Chaddleson utilizes hide and also paints on fabric which has been fashioned into women's dance

shawls. Poolaw, son of photo historian Horace Poolaw, has made personal statements in acrylic paint on canvas which are reminiscent of the picture stories in the hide paintings of his ancestors. Virginia Stroud's single ledger style piece is the lyrical lithograph *Enemy Treasure*. They have all used available materials of their own time and place like their ancestors at Ft. Marion.



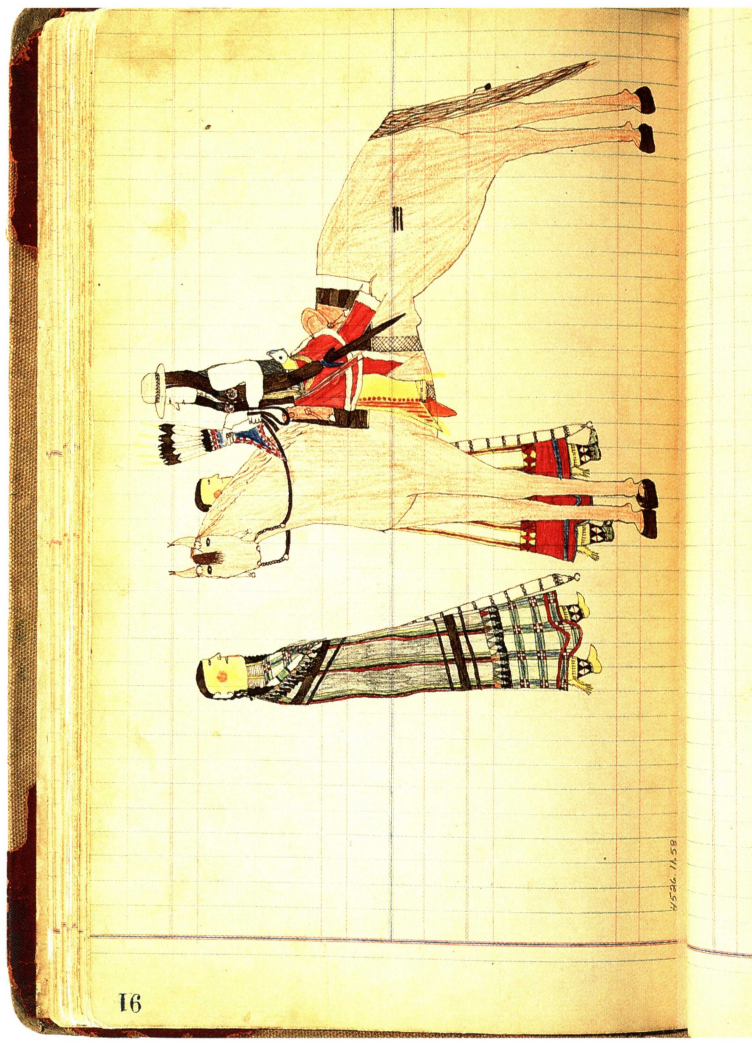
134

**Subsequent to rock and cliff art forms from various locations within the state and artifacts of the Spiro Mounds culture, the earliest painted artworks found in Oklahoma are calendar and hide paintings of the Kiowa, Comanche and Cheyenne-Arapaho tribes.**

FACING PAGE, ABOVE  
WHITE SWAN (CA. 1851-1904)  
*War Record*  
Watercolor, ink, and pencil on muslin  
GILCREASE 0127.2219

FACING PAGE, BELOW  
VIRGINIA STROUD (b. 1951)  
*Enemy Treasure*  
Tempera on paper  
GILCREASE 0227.1804

BELOW  
CHEYENNE  
*Ledger Book, Fort Reno, ca. 1880s*  
Pen and colored pencil on paper  
GILCREASE 4526.11.58



16



Creativity and appreciation of beauty is expressed in weapons, tools and implements as well as on apparel, ceremonial objects and paraphernalia and is seen in all areas of Indian life. Aesthetic expression is not limited to Southern Plains or Oklahoma Indian tribes. It seems to me to be a trait common to indigenous people everywhere.

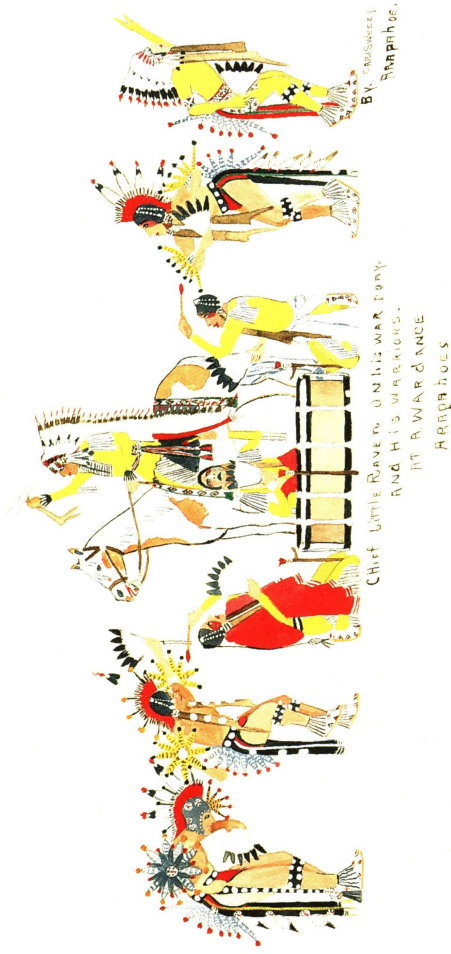
Around the turn of the century, Indians began producing artwork for market to non-Indians. The art was taken away from the home tribal areas and transported to museums and collections for viewing by a white audience.

The anthropologist James Mooney (1861-1921) was an impetus for the creation of several specific pieces such as calendar and hide paintings. He was a special influence on Carl Sweezy (1879-1953), a Cheyenne-Arapaho who completed several commissions for the scholar, and painted in what he called "the Mooney way."

A similar collaboration occurred between the ethnologist M. R. Harrington (1882-1971) and the Shawnee artist Ernest Spybuck (1861-1941). Spybuck depicted the ceremonial cycles of the Shawnee Indians, and also illustrated some dances and ceremonies of their central Oklahoma neighbors the Delawares, Creeks, and Kickapoos. Harrington and Frank Speck (1883-1949) influenced my ancestor the Delaware artist Jacob Parks (1890-1949), a contemporary of Spybuck's who recorded Delaware ceremonials. These artists recorded their time and place primarily in the materials available to them — pencil, ink and watercolor on paper.

Much of the Indian material in museums, particularly the watercolor paintings by these historical artists, can be credited to the influence and commissions of these ethnologists. The artists have

CARL SWEETZ (CA. 1879-1953)  
*Chief Little Raven on His War Pony*  
Watercolor on paper  
GILCREASE 0227.288



illustrated objects and rites which no longer exist and their works have become invaluable ethnographic references. Some works contain specific references to the patron; Spybuck was said to include the likeness of Harrington in his paintings. The words "Made for M," found on the back of some Sweezy paintings, reveal his regard for Mooney. These were also some of the first items produced as art for the market rather than as utilitarian or ceremonial objects.

The anthropologists were not alone in stimulating the creation of Indian art at this time. The Catholic Church and the Indian Service, the forerunner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, were also driving forces. Each institution commissioned art that was produced under the direction and suggestion of whites, then later transported away from the tribe's home area. These and other examples of commissioned art by Indian artists have influenced generations of Oklahoma artists, and they will continue to inform and inspire generations of future artists.

Writing in the catalogue that accompanied the Museum of Modern Art's 1941 exhibition *Indian Art of the United States*, Rene D'Harnocourt spoke of the importance of Oklahoma Indian artists. His words offered a prophetic glimpse of future developments.

Several new art forms have developed among various tribes in recent years that are closer to our own concepts of art and seek to replace functional values with aesthetic ones. The most prominent of these are the murals and watercolors executed by Indian painters in New Mexico, Oklahoma and the Dakotas. These paintings retain much of the style and feeling for proportion displayed in traditional tribal art and may well be the beginning of a new phase of Indian art.

In Oklahoma, this "new phase" began in the 1900s with the Kiowa artists near Anadarko. Brought together by Miss Susie Peters, the field matron for the Kiowa Agency, with assistance from Mrs. Willie Baze Lane and also Sister Olivias and Father Hitto of Saint Patrick's Mission, the Kiowa artists were special students in the Art School of the University of Oklahoma in 1926. New ground was broken when Dr. Oscar Brouse Jacobson (1822-1966), head of the Art School, arranged for Spencer Asah, Monroe Tsatoke, Stephen Mopope, Jack Hokeah, James Auchiah and Lois Smoky to be given art materials and studio space at the



STEPHEN MOPOPE (1898-1974)  
*Kiowa Flute Player*  
Tempera on paper  
GILCREASE 0227.128





ABOVE LEFT

DICK WEST (B. 1912)

*Dream Shield*

Gouache on paper, ca. 1965

BACONE COLLEGE, GIFT OF ED SHAW, 1990

ABOVE RIGHT

ACEE BLUE EAGLE (1909-1959)

*Peyote Dreamer*

Gouache on board, ca. 1938

BACONE COLLEGE, GIFT OF ED SHAW, 1988

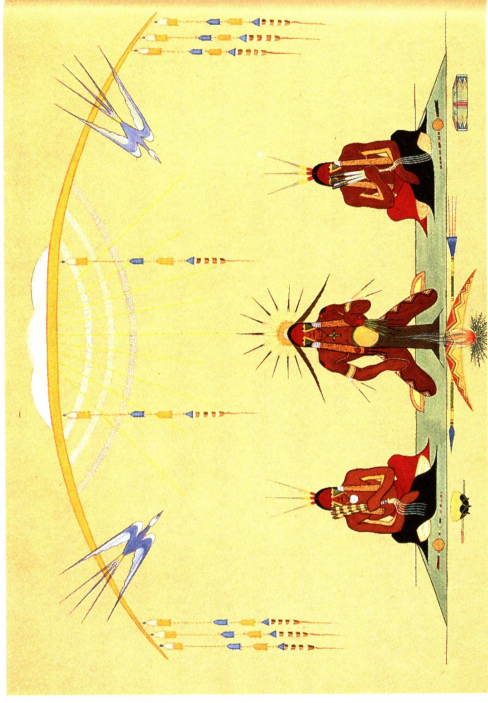
RIGHT

WOODROW W. CRUMBO (1912-1989)

*Burial Ceremony — Spirit Ascending*

Tempera and watercolor on paper

GILCREASE 0227.483



university. The Kiowas were not enrolled in the formal program of study, but were encouraged to interact with other students while working independently in the space which had been set aside for them. There were informal sessions on composition, anatomy, and mixing paint. However, most important, in my estimation, were the personal interest of Jacobson and his assistant Edith Mahier and the opportunity to learn to use the art materials and develop as artists.

In 1927, the Kiowas became internationally known when Jacobson sent their work to the *First International Art Exposition* in Prague, Czechoslovakia. He arranged for the 1929 publication in Nice, France, of their serigraphs in a portfolio titled *Kiowa Indian Art*. The direct descendants of chiefs, warriors, and medicine men, the Kiowa artists participated in the dances, ceremonies, and the Native American Church they depicted in paint.

Artists from other tribes and states followed the first group of Kiowas as special students under Dr. Jacobson at the University of Oklahoma. I call them "second-generation Jacobson artists." Their work was exhibited widely, and three more portfolios titled *Pueblo Indian Painting, 1932; Indian Painters of North America, 1950; and Native American Indian Costume, 1955* were also published in Nice, France.

As a result of Jacobson's administrative position in the Works Progress Administration's Public Works of

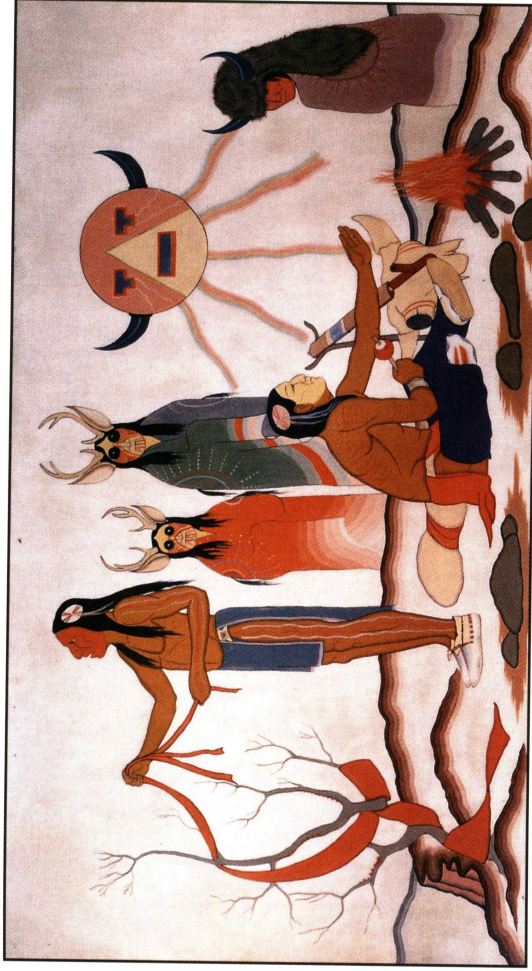
Art project, Indian artists were commissioned to paint murals for post offices and federal buildings, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs building in Washington, D. C. Although some of the artworks have simply disappeared, several are still in place. Others have been acquired by museums including the Oklahoma Historical Society in Oklahoma City. The Kiowa artists' work is especially noteworthy and remains in place in the United States Post Office in Anadarko, Oklahoma. There is also a painting by Dick West in the post office in Okemah, Oklahoma.

I have always thought that the Kiowa artists of the Jacobson era opened the door for the blossoming of Indian art in Oklahoma. A direct connection to the Jacobson era was the beginning of the Art Department in 1939 at Bacone College, Muskogee, Oklahoma. The first art instructor at Bacone was Acee Blue Eagle, Creek-Pawnee (1909-1959), who had been a second-generation special student under Dr. Jacobson.

Other art instructors who followed Blue Eagle at Bacone and who







were also students of Jacobson were Woodrow "Woody" Wilson Crumbo, Potawatomi (1912-1989), Dick West, Cheyenne (b. 1912), and C. Terry Saul, Choctaw-Chickasaw (1921-1976). Both West and Saul were the first in their families to attend college, and both earned Bachelors and Masters of Fine Arts degrees at the University of Oklahoma.

Thomas Gilcrease, who was of Creek descent, also attended Bacone College. Ties were maintained as Crumbo, after leaving Bacone, assisted Gilcrease in beginning his Indian painting collection, and Blue Eagle was called his "protégé." Other



Bacone students associated with Mr. Gilcrease were Willard Stone, Solomon McCombs, and Fred Beaver.

From the 1940s to the 1980s, a period I call the "Golden Age" of Indian painting in Oklahoma, an event occurred that came to be known as the Philbrook Annual Indian Art Competition. Woody Crumbo, who judged the first show in 1946, Acee Blue Eagle, Dick West, C. Terry Saul, and other Jacobson students were consistent award winners and sales of their work at the Annuals formed the nucleus of prestigious national collections. This period also saw the accumulation of prizes, commissions, and

exhibitions by Alfred Momaday, Kiowa (1913-1981); Blackbear Bosin, Kiowa-Comanche (1921-1980); Allan Houser, Chiricahua Apache (1915-1994); Fred Beaver, Creek (1911-1980); Archie Blackowl, Cheyenne (1911-1992); Solomon McCombs, Creek (1913-1980); Franklin Gritts, Cherokee (b. 1914); Pawnees Albin Jake (1922-1960) and Brummett Echohawk (b. 1922); David Williams, Kiowa-Tonkawa (1933-1985); and Cecil Murdock, Kickapoo (1913-1954).

Oscar Howe (1915-1983), a Sioux who specialized in portraying the culture of his tribe, exhibited at the Philbrook Annuals and the spirit of his work closely relates to that of his Oklahoma contemporaries. *Oscar Howe*, a retrospective exhibition, was shown at Gilcrease Museum in 1982.

The Oscar Jacobson home now houses the headquarters of The Jacobson Foundation, which was incorporated in 1986 in Norman, Oklahoma. The legacy of Jacobson and the Kiowa artists is preserved, and the public is informed and educated through exhibitions, lectures, and programs on Indian art presented as living tradition.

Five murals recounting the history and origin of the Kiowas are in the museum at the tribal headquarters in Carnegie, Oklahoma. In the spirit of the original Kiowa artists, contemporary paintings by Parker Boyriddle, Mirac Creepingbear, and Sherman Chaddleson pay tribute to the ledger style and the flat, two-dimensional painting of their predecessors.

Other artists who are continuing the tradition are Comanches Leonard Riddles, Rance Hood, and Doc Tate Nevaquayah, and Kiowas Robert Redbird, Sharron Ahrone-Harjo, Ted Creepingbear, and Dennis Belindo.

Joan Hill, Creek-Cherokee, speaking of Oklahoma Indian art, agrees that "there is a difference" probably relating to our different tribes and backgrounds. Both Hill's ancestral tribes are Woodland, but between them she observes differences and similarities in custom, language, and dress. "It is the same with our art," she said. Laughing, she continued, "I can't define Oklahoma Indian art. Still, it's like pornography — I know it



**While Woody Crumbo was at Bacone, he and his students George Kishketon (Kickapoo), and Calvin Larvie (Sioux) completed three significant murals for the Wacoche dining hall. These paintings detailing Indian spirituality remain on exhibition in their original spaces. They are *Prayer* and *Ceremony of Fasting by Larvie, and Spring Feast*, the central panel featuring the war bonnet and tipi, by Kishketon, according to a recent conversation with Kishketon.**

FACING PAGE, ABOVE  
MURALS, WACOCHÉ DINING HALL,  
BACONE COLLEGE





ABOVE LEFT

C. TERRY SAUL (1921-1976)

*Man in Hat*

Casein on board

BACONE COLLEGE

ABOVE RIGHT

ARCHIE BLACKOWL (1911-1992)

*Flute Player*

Tempera on paper

GILCREASE 0227.45

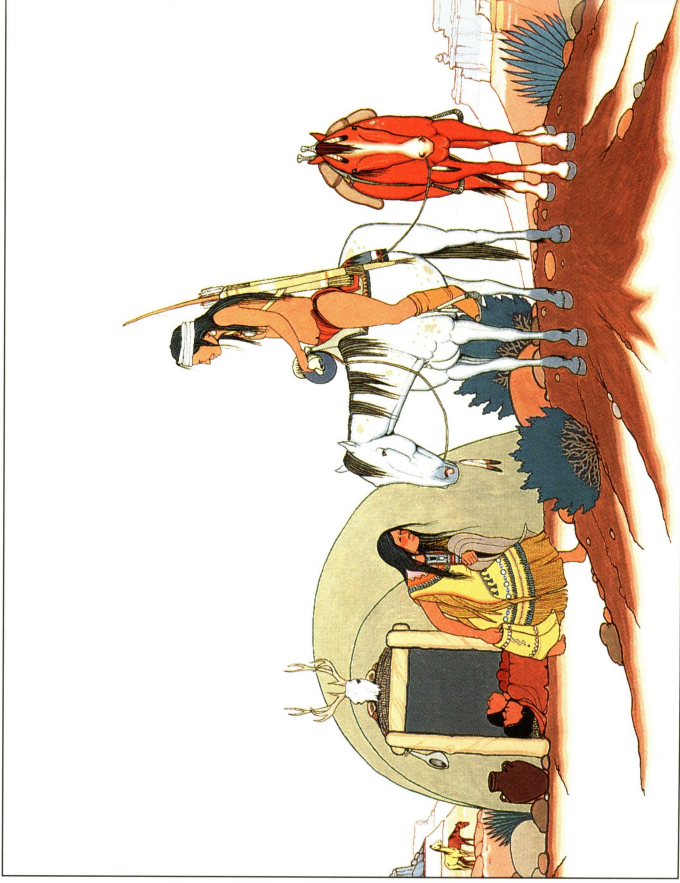
RIGHT

ALLAN HOUSER (1915-1994)

*Sneaking Out*

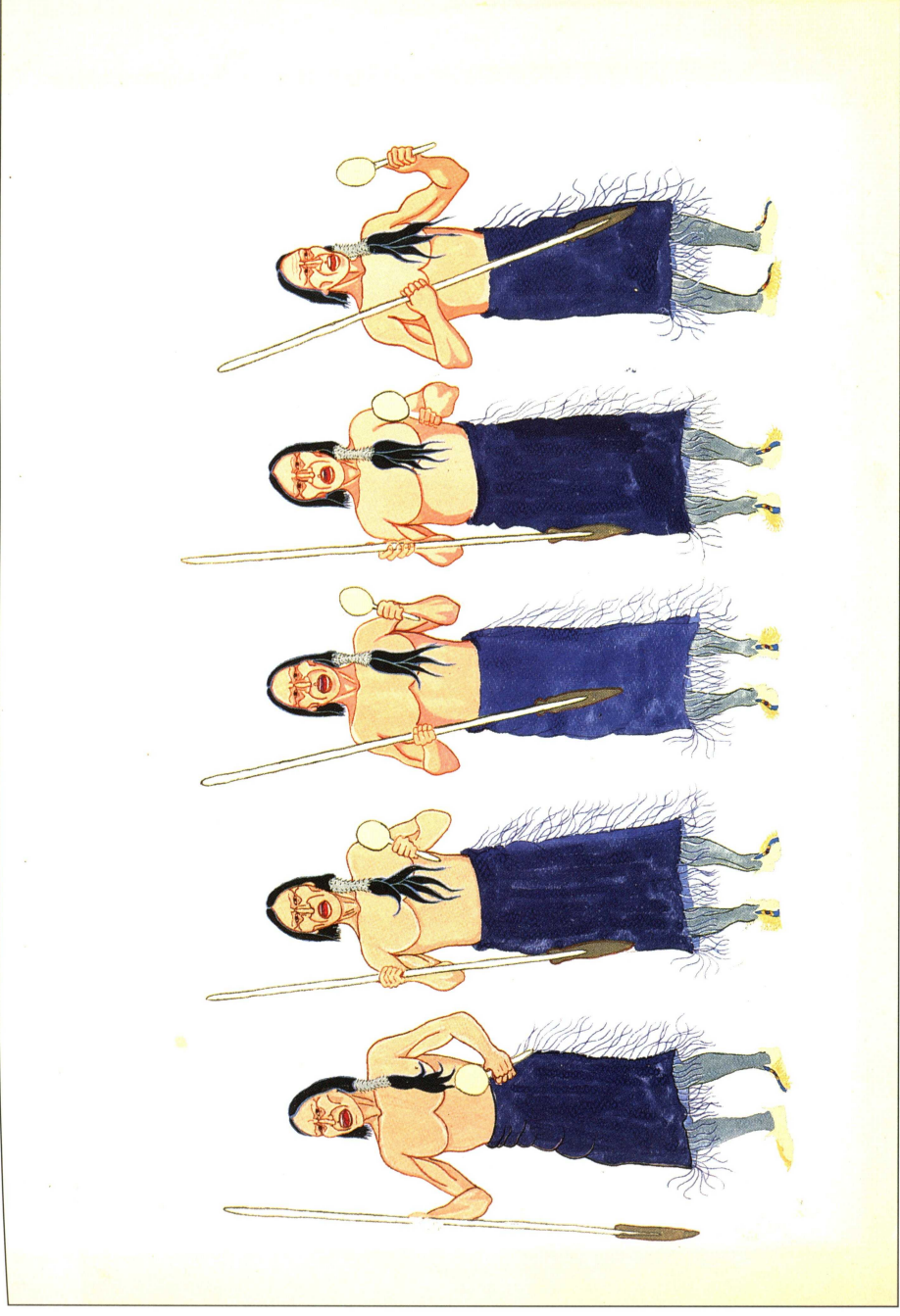
Tempera on paper

GILCREASE 0227.597



when I see it." Hill is currently working on a painting titled *Manifest Destiny* in her ongoing Treaty Series.

Painting was not restricted to Kiowas. Artists from other tribes in Oklahoma have recorded their customs and stories as well. There are also works of social comment such as those of T. C. Cannon, Caddo-Kiowa (1946-1978), in his opera theme works, self-portraits



and others, the like of which have not been seen before or since.

There were the Redcorn and Pahsetopah brothers and Carl Woodring among the Osages, and Yeffe Kimball. Gina Gray and Norman Akers and other Osages who are working today.

Others in the "melting pot" who have made significant contributions are Antowine Warrior, Shawnee-Sac and Fox; Benjamin Buffalo, Cheyenne; Enoch Kelly Haney, Creek-Seminole; Benjamin Harjo, Seminole-Shawnee and Donald Vann, Cherokee. In Muskogee there are Johnny Tiger, Dana Tiger, and the late Jerome Tiger, Joan Hill and Mary Adair Horse Chief, Cherokee. Mike Larsen, a Chicksaw, whose mural in the state capitol in Oklahoma City honors the Osage Indian ballerinas. There are Tillier Wesley, Creek, and Choctaws Jerry Ingram and the sisters Valjean Hessing and Jane Mauldin. Cheyenne artists Merlin Littlethunder and Edgar Heap of Birds address themes of their ancestors using contemporary methods.

Oklahoma Indian art is a synthesis of all that has gone before. In the grand scheme of things it is young, and its youth and the essence of the

DENNIS BELINDO (b. 1938)

*Black Leggings*

Gouache on paper

BACONE COLLEGE





tribes themselves are revealed in the characteristic of bold action scenes and depiction of motion in strong, bright colors.

Doc Tate Nevaquayah, at the time of this writing, is chairman of the Comanche Little Ponies, the warrior dance society of his tribe. He is also carrying on the tradition of the early artists who painted their ceremonies and recorded their time in history. "Yes, there is a difference in Oklahoma art," says Nevaquayah, "and it is because there are so many different tribes in Oklahoma." Nevaquayah notes the careful research done by many Oklahoma artists in order to depict a particular tribe and he further remarks on the importance of the natural landscape as it is expressed in the work of native artists. "The plains are different from the Southwest, with their mesas, for instance, and the Woodland tribes are also characterized by the area where they live."

There is a duality present in the early hide paintings and ledger drawings. The artists observed beliefs and taboos in deciding how much to tell and what was appropriate and acceptable to reveal. The duality, which I believe permeates works from the time of the Spiro Mounds creations to this present day, cannot be ignored. It should be considered when viewing the art. Beliefs about reproduction or the "capture" of an idea or image live on in traditional people of today, and may relate to the fundamental reason many works are created.

As we look toward a new century, exciting trends and voices are emerging. Some who are leading the way are Raymond Nordwall,

FACING PAGE

JOAN HILL

*Women's Voices at the Council*

Lithograph on paper

COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

ABOVE

JICARILLA APACHE

*Envelope (parfleche)*

Rawhide and pigment

GILCREASE 8926.101

**The idea of restraint or "less is more" is seen in attention to pattern and design. There is a point when a line is crossed and too much decoration, color, or movement negates the original intent or purpose in a painting. We Indians like to go to the edge whether in art or in life, and are the first to notice or point out one who has gone too far or is "too on."**





VIRGINIA STROUD (B. 1951)

*Conversation*

Gouache on paper

COLLECTION OF RUTHE BLALOCK JONES

Cherokee-Pawnee-Chippewa; Nita Pahdopony, Comanche; Tom Poolaw, Kiowa-Deleware; Wendy Mahsetky, Comanche; Steve Deo, Euchee; and Bobby Martin, Muskogee (Creek). We look forward to innovative new works from Kevin Connywerdy, Kiowa-Comanche, such as his Native American Church series incorporating mylar, mirror shards and other materials. Daniel Horse Chief, Pawnee-Cherokee; Johnny Diacon, Creek; and Monica Hansen, Cherokee, are also doing interesting



treatments of old themes. Shan Goshorn, Cherokee, and Richard Whitman, Euchee, are involved in the arena of computer graphics, film and video. Whitman continues his thought-provoking theme series such as the *Street Chiefs*, depicting homeless Indian men, and has recently completed a film on the life and art of his friend T. C. Cannon.

One of the things that thrills me most at an Indian gathering is the realization that among the singers at the drum, the dancers and those in the audience, are educators, physicians, attorneys, business executives and other professionals. We are artists, teachers and judges; yet we are still singers, storytellers, stompdance leaders, shellshakers and medicine men. We are roadmen, beadworkers, cooks and ball players, and against all odds we are still here.

By all accounts we should have disappeared, been assimilated into the dominant culture and have become extinct. Like our ancestors, the artists before us, we honor those who have gone on as we record for our descendants our ceremonies and our reaction to the forces of American politics and society.



ABOVE LEFT

RAYMOND NORDWALL (B. 1965)

*Double Trouble*

Monotype on paper, ca. 1988

BACONE COLLEGE

ABOVE

EDGAR HEAP OF BIRDS (B. 1954)

*Installation from the exhibit "is what is"*

Mixed media, 1993

BERKELEY MUSEUM





Lakota (South Dakota) Loose Fan

Macaw, parrot, hawk feathers; thread, glass cut-beads, leather, dyed hackle feathers

GILCREASE GM:TL 1995,22.59

# SYMBOLS OF FAITH AND BELIEF

## THE ART OF THE NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCH

Daniel C. Swan

with comments by

Harding Big Bow

I WAS ABOUT NINE OR TEN YEARS OLD WHEN I FIRST WENT INTO THIS RELIGION. I GOT IN THROUGH MY GRANDFATHER, WHO WAS A HIGHLY RESPECTED MAN AMONG THE KIOWA PEOPLE. AT THAT TIME YOUNG PEOPLE WERE NOT ALLOWED IN THIS RELIGION. YOU HAD TO BE WELL MATURED TO WORSHIP IN THAT TIPI. I WENT IN WITH MY GRANDFATHER AND THEY COULDN'T REFUSE ME BECAUSE OF HIS POPULARITY AMONG MY INDIAN PEOPLE, KIOWA PEOPLE. THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT I WENT IN; ABOUT 1929 OR 1930.

I'VE LEARNED A LOT OF GOOD THINGS FROM THAT. I LEARNED HOW TO RESPECT, HOW TO LOVE PEOPLE. I LEARNED HOW TO DO A LOT OF THINGS AND MET A LOT OF PEOPLE LIKE MYSELF THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AND I'VE CONDUCTED A LOT OF MEETINGS FOR THE DIFFERENT TRIBES. LIKE THE NAVAJO AND CROW. I BELIEVE IN THE OLD WAYS; WHAT I BELIEVE IN AS A KIOWA.

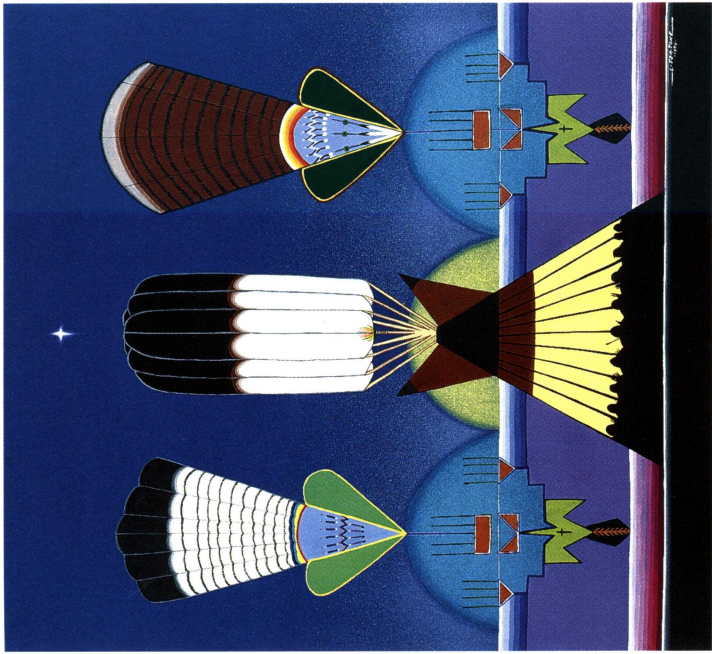
I AM ALSO ONE OF THE SACRED BUNDLE KEEPERS OF THE TRIBE. MY GRANDFATHER ORDAINED ME IN THE OLD RELIGIOUS WAYS, IN THE NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCH. I'VE BEEN THROUGH ALL THE CEREMONIES AND RITUALS CONNECTED WITH THE NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCH.



Harding Big Bow (b. 1921)  
Peyote Symbols  
Tempera on paper  
GILCREASE 0227.1810

OLD PEOPLE SAY IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE A PEYOTE CHIEF YOU'VE GOT TO BE A WELL-QUALIFIED MAN, WELL SET IN YOUR LIFE. AFTER WORLD WAR II, I RAN MY FIRST MEETING AND IT HAS TAKEN ME FORTY YEARS TO REACH THE POSITION OF DEVOTIONAL LEADER. I LIKE TO DO THINGS HONESTLY AND RIGHT IF THERE IS ANY WAY POSSIBLE TO DO SO. I HOPE PEOPLE CAN RECOGNIZE THE VALIDITY OF WHAT IS BEING PRESENTED HERE..." — HARDING BIG BOW, KIOWA ROADMAN AND PAST PRESIDENT, NAC OF THE UNITED STATES, 1990, 1994

*Lophophora williamsii* is a small, spineless cactus that grows on the caliche-rich bluffs of the Rio Grande valley in Texas and the northern plains of Mexico. The cactus contains a complex set of alkaloids, some of which produce physical and mental exhilaration. Called peyote from the Aztec *peyotl*, it has been a physical and spiritual medicine of the Indians of the Americas for over 7,000 years. The dried tops of the cactus have been found in



LEE M. TSATOKE  
(1929-1986)  
*Peyote Design*  
*after Monroe*  
*Tsatoke*  
Cascia on  
posterboard  
GILCREASE  
0227.1675

archaeological sites throughout the southwestern United States and northern Mexico.<sup>1</sup> When first contacted by the Spanish in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Tarahumari, Huichol, Cora, and numerous other Indian groups of Mexico all had ceremonies that centered on the use of peyote. The Lipan Apache, Carrizo, Tonkawa, Karankawa, Mescalero Apache and various Caddoan groups also knew of peyote and included it in their native pharmacopoeias.<sup>2</sup>

During the 1870s a new form of worship based on the ritual consumption of peyote spread from Apachean sources to the reservations of the southern plains. The religion consisted of an all-night ceremony that included a ritually maintained fire, rounds of individual singing and use of peyote as a holy sacrament. The Comanche, Kiowa, and Apache reservation of southwestern Oklahoma quickly became what Omer Stewart has described as the "cradle of Peyotism", where a ready number of converts adapted the religion to local traditions and circumstances. By the early 1900s the ceremonial structure, ritual instruments, and core theology of Peyotism became codified and the religion spread to other tribes within Oklahoma and the surrounding region.<sup>3</sup>



WHEN QUANAH PARKER FIRST INTRODUCED THIS RELIGION HE DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE LAWS AT THAT TIME. THEY STARTED PRACTICING THIS RELIGION, USING THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

ALONG ABOUT THAT TIME THERE WAS AN ANTHROPOLOGIST BY THE NAME OF JAMES MOONEY. HE LIVED AMONG THE PLAINS INDIANS. AS I WAS TOLD ABOUT HIM, HE WAS THE FIRST PERSON THAT SAW A MEETING, HE LIVED AROUND CHARLEY APEKAUM, MY UNCLE. THAT FAMILY WAS AMONG THE FIRST KIOWAS TO PRACTICE THIS RELIGION. AT THAT TIME WHEN JAMES MOONEY GOT INTO THIS RELIGION, THE LEADERS OF IT BEGAN TO REALIZE THAT THEY HAD TO GET LEGAL DOCUMENTATION SO THEY COULD GO ON AND WORSHIP. THAT WAS RIGHT AFTER WHEN QUANAH PARKER PASSED AWAY, HE WASN'T LIVING AT THE TIME THEY INCORPORATED.

AFTER QUANAH DIED THAT'S WHEN JAMES MOONEY WAS AROUND OUR KIOWA PEOPLE, AND COMANCHES, AND CHEYENNE-ARAPAHO PEOPLE. THAT'S WHEN HE TOLD THEM, YOU PEOPLE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO ORGANIZE BEFORE YOU CAN CARRY ON THIS RELIGION. THEY HAD HIM DRAW UP THE LEGAL CHARTER. THAT'S THE BEGINNING OF THE NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCH, THAT CHARTER, THAT'S WHEN THEY LEGALIZED IT. WE WERE THE FIRST TO GET A CHARTER AND THAT'S WHERE THEY GOT THE LEGAL RIGHT TO PRACTICE THIS RELIGION. THERE'S STILL OTHER LAWS THAT THEY HAD TO GET APPROVED FROM THE STATE, LIKE THAT SENATE BILL. THE CHARTER ITSELF GIVES US THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE, TO BE A NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCH CHAPTER. THERE'S ANOTHER ONE THAT WE HAD TO GET TO HAVE THE RIGHT TO USE IT. SENATE BILL 32 IN THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA GIVES THEM THE RIGHT TO USE IT, THE PEYOTE. ANOTHER ONE THAT THEY NEEDED WAS THE RIGHT TO TRANSPORT IT.

JAMES MOONEY WAS THE MAN WHO GAVE THIS NAME TO THIS RELIGION, THE NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCH. — HARDING BIG BOW, 1994

In the late 1880s James Mooney, an ethnologist with the Smithsonian Institution, learned of the peyote religion while in Oklahoma to document the Ghost Dance movement on the southern plains. In an 1897 account of the religion, Mooney described the ceremonial setting among the Kiowa:

*One of the most interesting and impressive religious ceremonies of the Kiowa Indians of Oklahoma is that in connection with the eating of the peyote or mescal plant. The Ceremony begins about 9 o'clock at night... A tipi has been erected for the ceremony in the afternoon, with a shallow fire-hole in the center, around which is built a low crescent shaped mound, with the horns pointing to the doorway at the east. Around the sides of the tipi are laid bunches of fragrant wild sage for the worshipers to sit upon... the devotees sit quietly with their blankets drawn up over the head, with eyes closed or looking into the fire, occasionally holding their hands in prayer toward a sacred peyote placed in the center of the crescent mound. As the fire burns down it is replenished by the fire tender, who carefully piles up the stacks... and gathers the ashes into a white crescent mound just within the higher mound of earth.* <sup>4</sup>

Mooney was also instrumental in the formation of an organized branch of the religion to counter early opposition to Peyotism. The Native American Church was granted a charter in 1918 by the State of Oklahoma, insuring the right of Peyotists to practice their religion. Today the legal right to harvest, possess and use peyote for religious purposes is granted to the members of the Native American Church by a series of international, national and state laws. A number of formal organizations, including the Native American Church of the United States, the Native American Church of North America and numerous tribal, state and local chapters, account for over 600,000 registered members.<sup>5</sup>

Peyotism and the Native American Church have stimulated considerable research, providing a greater

understanding of the chemical and botanical characteristics of *Lophophora Williamsii* and the historical development of the religion in hundreds of tribal communities. This

scholarship has produced a huge literature on Peyotism in the disciplines of

anthropology, history and psychology.<sup>6</sup>

The collections of Gilcrease Museum provide an excellent opportunity to examine the artistic traditions associated with the Native American Church.

The collections contain significant examples of the material culture associated with the religion and numerous paintings and other artworks that have Peyotism as their subject matter. An examination of the cultural and historical contexts in which these diverse works were created can provide a basis for their interpretation as symbolic representations of the theology and doctrine of the Native American Church.

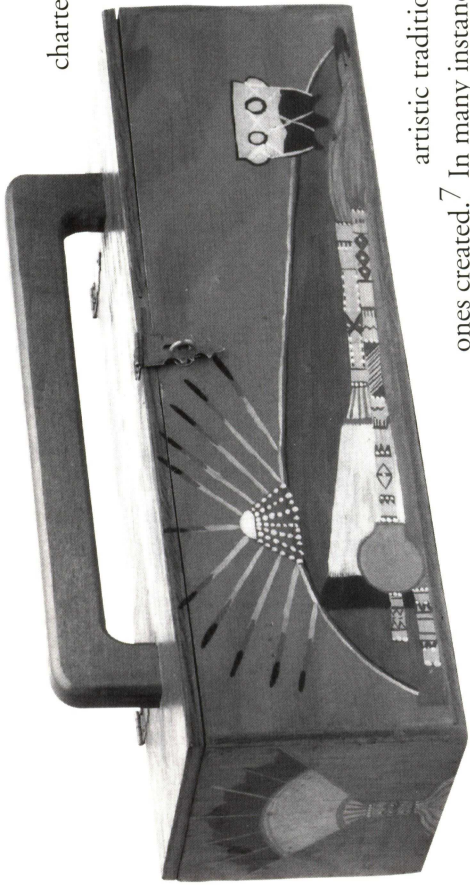
The Native American Church shares a number of features with the Ghost Dance, Christianity and other religious movements among plains Indian societies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In many tribal communities this was a time of accelerated and often cataclysmic change. The tribal religions that had previously provided a spiritual



YANKTON SIOUX  
*Child's Peyote Box*  
Painted "pencil" box  
with carved "peyote  
buttons", paper flag,  
and cut felt

GILCREASE TL1995.22.56,  
A-E





COMANCHE (LAWTON,  
OKLAHOMA)

*Painted Peyote Box*  
Enamel on plywood  
GILCREASE, TL1995.58

charter for the societies and a moral code of conduct for their members were often at odds with the physical realities of the reservation era. In a conscious effort to adapt to new circumstances, tribes adopted new religions.

New systems of belief often produced changes in the religious and secular arts of American Indian communities as previous

artistic traditions were modified or abandoned and new ones created.<sup>7</sup> In many instances the meanings attached to designs and motifs were redefined as an important part of this process, thus creating a sense of continuity in a time of radical change. This often included symbolic elements that had been employed to reinforce and perpetuate the religious idioms and social conditions associated with the sacred bundles, sun dances and military societies of many southern plains Indian communities. William Sturtevant has noted that the incorporation of European trade materials into the artistic traditions of American Indians, particularly beads and metal, was often an important aspect of “the development of new artifact forms and special iconography” that accompanied new religions.<sup>8</sup> Many students of Peyotism and American Indian art history have pointed out that many traditional and contemporary art forms are subsumed under the general category of “peyote art.”<sup>9</sup>

#### THIS FIREPLACE IS THE HOLY SANCTUARY OF THE KIOWA

TRIBE. ITS AN ALTAR, LIKE A PULPIT. THIS HOLY ALTAR IS MADE FROM THE DIRT. THIS MOON THAT WE WORSHIP WITH IS MOTHER EARTH. A KIOWA MAN HAD A DREAM, A VISION ABOUT HOW TO MAKE THIS ALTAR. IT REPRESENTS WHEN THE WORLD FIRST CAME ABOUT, AT THE TIME OF DARKNESS AND LIGHT, WHEN HE CREATED HEAVEN AND EARTH. THE MOON REPRESENTS SOMETHING THAT GOD CREATED, SOMETHING THAT WE ARE USING AS AN ALTAR TO PRAY WITH THIS HOLY SACRAMENT THAT WE PUT ON TOP OF THE MOON. THIS IS LYING THERE THE WAY THAT GOD MADE THE MOON AND THE WAY THAT HE CREATED THIS HOLY SACRAMENT, PEYOTE. EVERYTHING TIES IN THERE, EVERYTHING THAT WE USE IS GOD CREATED, NOTHING MAN-MADE, YOU MIGHT SAY, IS IN THAT SANCTUARY. THAT'S HOW THIS FIREPLACE, THE KIOWA FIREPLACE STARTED, AND NOW, TODAY, THIS MOON, THIS ALTAR, IS ALL OVER THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



MONROE TSATOKE (1904-1937)  
*Peyote Man*

Tempera on paper  
GILCREASE 0227.233

THAT'S HOW IS CAME ABOUT, THIS FIREPLACE OR MOON. THERE'S CERTAIN PEOPLE THAT CAN MAKE THAT ALTAR. YOU HAVE TO BE AN OUTSTANDING PERSON, THAT THEY CHOOSE YOU TO DO THAT. WHEN YOU MAKE THIS FIREPLACE HERE, THE VERY MINUTE YOU GO IN THAT TIPI TO DO THAT, YOU START MEDITATING, YOU START PRAYING ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO. TO BUILD THAT HOLY ALTAR. I DO THAT. I PRAY TO THE HOLY FATHER, TO GIVE ME THE KNOWLEDGE TO DO THIS, AND TONIGHT WHEN I GO IN HERE TO WORSHIP YOU THROUGH MY HOLY ALTAR, AND THE MOTHER EARTH THAT YOU CREATED, THAT THIS WILL HAVE POWER. THAT'S WHAT GOES ON WHEN THEY BUILD THIS HOLY ALTAR. THIS LITTLE CREASE THAT COMES RIGHT THROUGH THE CENTER, THAT COMES RIGHT UP TO THE PEYOTE. THAT'S THE CHRISTIAN ROAD. — HARDING BIG BOW, 1994

The ritual instruments and ceremonial setting of the Native American Church provide core elements that help to define this art. The ritual setting is generally a tipi, erected for the purpose of the service, in which a crescent shaped “moon” or altar has been constructed. A line is incised along the center of the raised mound from tip to tip. A large, dried peyote, referred to as the “chief peyote” is placed on a cross made from sprigs of wild



WOODY BIG BOW  
(1914-1988)  
*Peyote Man*  
Tempera on paper  
GILCREASE 0227.388

sage (*Artemisia vulgaris*) at the center of the crescent.

Three or four individuals serve as the officials of the service, or “meeting” as it is often called. The chief official is the “Roadman” or priest, who sits directly behind the crescent altar on the west side of the tipi and is responsible for conducting the service. Roadmen have considerable authority during the course of the meeting and they are generally elders in their communities with extensive experience in the church. To the right of the Roadman is the Drum Chief and to his left the Cedar Chief, two important officials who have responsibility for the religious items that their names imply. The last official is the Fireman, who sits on the right side of the doorway and is responsible for maintaining the ritual fire that is built between the horns of the crescent altar. The participants enter the tipi soon after dusk and take their seats around the fire and altar.

The ceremony largely consists of rounds of singing and prayer, with important observances when water is taken at midnight and again at dawn when it is accompanied by a ritual breakfast of corn, meat and fruit. Following breakfast the participants rest in the tipi and vicinity, telling stories and visiting. At noon the service is concluded with a meal by both ceremonial participants and non-participating family and community members.

A number of objects that encompass a wide range of media can be examined in connection with the ritual art of the Native American Church. Foremost are the sacred





*Gourd rattles*

Bell gourds, hardwoods,  
glass beads, leather fringe,  
dyed horsehair

GILCREASE (L-R)

TL1995.22.7, TL1995.22.8,

TL1995.22.2, TL1995.22.1,

TL1995.22.5

OSAGE

*Bag*

Buckskin, glass beads,  
dried peyote button

GILCREASE 8427.1165 A-B

instruments used to conduct the ceremony. Each Roadman has a set of objects required to conduct a prayer service which signal his position and authority. Although the number and types of objects used during the service varies both among and within communities, a gourd rattle, feather fan, ritual staff, chief peyote, bone whistle, drum stick and water drum constitute a core inventory.<sup>10</sup>

In discussing peyote art, it is important to make a distinction between objects made for use within a community and those created for consumption outside of the locality. Much of the material culture associated with the Native American Church is created and intended for use by the participants in the ceremony. Staffs, fans, rattles, and drumsticks are generally made by individual participants for themselves and other members of the church. Gifts of ritual instruments are common for both new initiates and for Roadmen on the occasion of their ordination. Lessard and Weidman have noted that objects associated with the

religion are not generally found in shops and galleries and that the few objects made for sale are of insufficient quality to meet local standards.<sup>11</sup> Museums and private collectors have

generally exhibited little interest in the material culture of the Native American Church, evidence of a bias against its 20th-century focus and its Christian influences.

Objects associated with the Native American Church are produced almost exclusively by men, in spite of the fact that the skills and techniques needed for the task are not the characteristic preserve of men alone.<sup>12</sup> Beadwork, for example, is done today, as it was in the past, mostly by women, but the beadwork associated with Peyotism is done by men.



WE USE ALL KINDS OF SPECIES OF BIRDS. THE FEMALE FLICKER FEATHERS ARE YELLOW AND

THE RED ONES ARE MALES, THESE ARE THE KINDS OF BIRDS THAT OUR MEDICINE PEOPLE USE, TO

DOCTOR PEOPLE. WE HAVE A BONE WHISTLE THAT WE USE, IT COMES OUT OF AN EAGLE WING

AND THEY BLOW IT AT MIDNIGHT FOUR TIMES. MY UNCLE TOLD ME, "AS LIFE GOES ON, THERE'S

GOING TO BE A TIME WHEN THE GOOD LORD COMES DOWN TO RE-DO THE WORLD. THAT'S WHEN

YOU'LL HEAR THE TRUMPETS. THAT'S THE IDEA OF BLOWING THE WHISTLE" — HARDING BIG BOW, 1994

OUR BELIEF IS THAT WHENEVER YOU USE THE TOBACCO AND BLOW THE SMOKE, THE VERY MINUTE THE SMOKE HITS THE ATMOSPHERE, OUR BELIEF IS THAT THE PRAYER IS GOING TO TRAVEL TO WHERE IT IS NEEDED, JUST THAT FAST. THAT'S THE WAY WE WORSHIP THOUGH THAT TOBACCO. — HARDING BIG BOW, 1994



*Southern Plains Loose fan*

Scissortail and macaw  
feathers, beads, leather  
fringe, metal, wire, religious  
medals, dyed hackle feathers

GILCREASE 8427.218

OSAGE

Golden eagle feathers, glass  
beads, leather fringe

GILCREASE 8427.219

Feather fans are one of the most important objects associated with the Native American Church, evoking the complex bird symbolism associated with the religion. In addition to the fan of the leader that is passed with the staff and gourd to each singer, many participants have individual fans that they use during the ceremony. A wide range of feathers are used in fans, including eagle, scissortailed flycatcher, hawk, magpie, macaw and other parrots, pheasant, roadrunner and water bird. Feathers are commonly trimmed to uniform size and shape and their shafts extended with dowels or other material to provide uniform length. The shafts of the feathers are often elaborately decorated with wrapped thread-work, colored hackle-feathers, silver wire and beadwork. Fans can be set in a fixed, "flat" configuration or tied in a loose fashion in which the feathers hang from leather thongs that are attached to the base of the shafts.

"We use this fan, made from different kinds of bird feathers, to perform holy orders. To start with, they used to use a feather fan made from two swift hawk tails, twelve feathers on each bird, a total of twenty four. These feathers are arranged to form a circle. On the outside are four eagle feathers, and inside, at the center, is an eagle plume. They say this swift hawk is the swiftest bird in the world, and they say the eagle is the fiercest bird. The plume inside the fan represents the living soul that's in a person. We were told that the tail feathers are there for the swift hawks to try to catch the living soul, the spirit of a man, the soul of each person. They can surround him and catch that living soul. The eagle plume is there so that if any bad spirit comes, the eagle will fight that spirit away. This is the way we were taught by our elders. Today they make fans from red and blue macaw feathers and what they call scissor-tails, really pretty feathers. They bring all these different feathers into the church. They're good, they're God's creations..."

REVEREND EMERSON SPIDER, "THE NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST," SIOUX INDIAN RELIGION: TRADITION AND INNOVATION



Twisted leather fringes are attached to the end of the handles prior to the application of beadwork. Crosses, religious medals, bells, seeds and other materials are often attached to one or more of the fringes. The handles of almost all contemporary peyote fans are fully beaded while earlier examples are either plain or only partially beaded. Feather fans collected by Mooney among the Kiowa and Comanche in the late 19th century have leather handles painted with dry pigments, usually yellow or green. A few of the Kiowa flat fans in the collections of the Smithsonian have small beaded rosettes on the front face of the handles.

The rattles used in connection with the Native American Church are always made from gourds attached to wooden handles. The gourd is filled with small stones, beads, or metal shot and its base is closed with a wooden plug. Twisted leather fringe is generally added to the end of the handle. The gourds are sometimes decorated with incised and painted designs ranging from symbolic line drawings to complex figural scenes and biblical quotations.

The handles of fans and rattles, and segments of the ritual staffs, are beaded in a style of interlocked, net beading referred to as “gourd” or “peyote stitch.”<sup>13</sup> An alternate variant is called “Comanche stitch” or “brickwork” because the beads lay on their side and resemble bricks as laid in a wall. Design elements are limited by the physical constraints of the course of the beads, but the possible patterns and color combinations can be combined to create an infinite variety of highly engaging and vibrant works. Peyote style beadworkers of considerable reputation in the 20th century include David Apekaum,

Tom Littlechief, Joe Rush, Howard Neconi, Nelson Big Bow, Joe Rice and Joe Fish Dupoint.

THE DRUM IS A KETTLE, A NUMBER 7  
OR 6 KETTLE, THAT'S MADE OF STEEL. THEY  
TAKE THIS DEER HIDE, INDIAN TANNED  
DEER HIDE, AND THEY SOAK IT IN WATER.  
THEN THEY PUT WATER IN THAT KETTLE AND  
THEY STRETCH THE DEER HIDE OVER IT. THEN  
THEY TAKE A ROPE AND TIE IT ALL THE WAY  
AROUND, AND THEN THEY STRETCH THE HIDE  
FROM EACH SIDE UNTIL ITS EVEN ALL THE WAY  
AROUND. THAT DRUM, THEY USE IT TO DRUM FOR  
THE MAN THAT USES THE GOURD.

OKLAHOMA  
*Peyote Drum Sticks*

Domestic and tropical hardwoods; carved, incised, checkered. Numbering from left to right, number six is a reshaped commercial stick; numbers seven and nine have inlaid German silver details

L-R, GILCREASE  
TL1995.22.31; TL1995.22.22;  
TL1995.22.36; TL1995.22.26;  
TL1995.22.24; TL1995.22.35;  
TL1995.22.18; TL1995.22.29;  
TL1995.22.17; TL1995.22.32;  
22.28; TL1995.22.21;  
TL1995.22.23



THIS OTHER MAN HE USES THE GOURD TO SING WITH. THE SONGS HAVE WORDS THAT WE USE TO THANK GOD FOR OUR LIVES. WE HAVE WORDS IN THERE FOR OUR GRANDCHILDREN. WE HAVE WORDS IN THERE FOR PEOPLE THAT ARE IN THE HOSPITAL, THAT WE WANT THEM TO GET WELL. THINGS LIKE THAT IN THESE RELIGIOUS SONGS. — HARDING BIG BOW, 1994

Drum sticks, ritual staffs, and the wooden handles of rattles are also decorated with intricate carving that range from incised tipis, birds, stars, and sun patterns to very fine checking and other abstract designs. Domestic and tropical hardwoods are the preferred medium for these objects, including bois d'arc, walnut, purple heart and ebony woods. Drumsticks display a wide range of decorative elements including partial beading, inset rhinestones and metal inlay work.

OKLAHOMA  
*Peyote Bird Pins*  
German silver; Numbering from left to right, number one by Murray Tonepahote; number two an early piece with set rhinestone, from Canton, Oklahoma; number three by Bruce Caesar; numbers four, five, six and seven with hinged tails or wings.

L-R, GILCREASE  
TL1995.22.41;  
TL1995.22.46;  
TL1995.22.40;  
TL1995.22.45; 6027.80;  
6027.158; 6027.77



Feather fans and gourd rattles existed in many American Indian societies prior to the initial development and subsequent diffusion of the Native American Church. A considerable range of style, design and size is discernible in the earliest documented examples of the holy instruments of the religion. King aptly notes that the decoration and detail of these objects increased as they coalesced and evolved in connection with the Native American Church.<sup>14</sup>

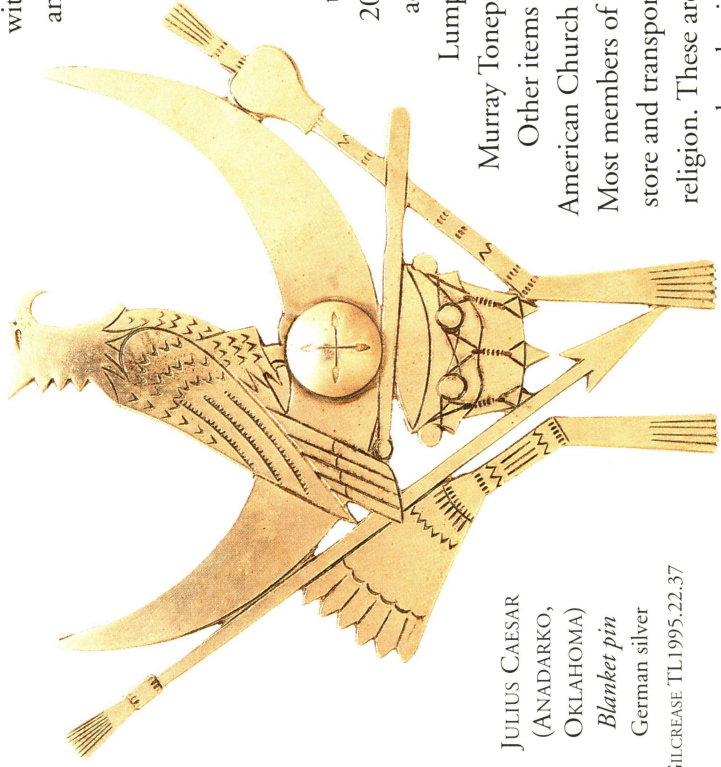
Metalwork has often been recognized as one of the most innovative and unique art forms associated with the religion.<sup>15</sup> Peyote jewelry is a clear example of an artistic tradition that originated in connection with American Indian religious movements of the



reservation era. This category of peyote art is comprised of flat metalwork that is decorated with incised and stamped designs that includes pins, tie slides, earrings, and other items. The history of southern plains metal working can be characterized as a blending of techniques and stylistic trends from both indigenous and European traditions. The preferred medium for this work is German silver, an alloy of copper, nickel, and zinc developed in the nation of its name in the early 1800s. The alloy was quickly introduced in America and is well documented to have been present on the southern plains by the 1850s.<sup>16</sup> Other metals, including sterling silver, coin silver, and brass are also found in southern plains metalwork. As soon as metal trade items became available on the southern plains, Indian metalsmiths began to rework them into decorative and utilitarian objects of local design. By the early 1900s several accomplished metalsmiths were creating jewelry items with themes and motifs associated with the Native American Church.

Marriott and Douglas have suggested that German silver jewelry was not generally associated with the Native American Church prior to 1900 and that it was not until the 1920s that the wearing of jewelry items with designs from the religion was a widespread practice among members.<sup>17</sup> Members of the Kiowa and Cheyenne tribes distinguished themselves as early innovators in the development of the metalwork associated with the Native American Church. Among the 20th-century metalsmiths known for their accomplished peyote jewelry are Homer Lumpmouth, Thomas Tointigh, Kish Whitebird, Murray Tonepahote, Julius Caesar, and Bruce Caesar.

Other items produced in association with the Native American Church provide a rich array of aesthetic creations. Most members of the church use wooden or leather boxes to store and transport the objects used in the ceremonies of the religion. These are often decorated with carved, incised, stamped, and painted designs and scenes related to the ceremony and theology of the church. The metal buckets used to bring water into the service are sometimes painted with religious scenes and designs. Pouches used to hold dried tops of the peyote cactus are another example of the material culture associated with the religion. In previous times these were worn by members of the church as protective amulets. A number of individuals have related that they carried them during wartime military service and they attribute their safe return to these powerful objects. These pouches are commonly decorated with beaded rosettes with designs that represent the sacred peyote.



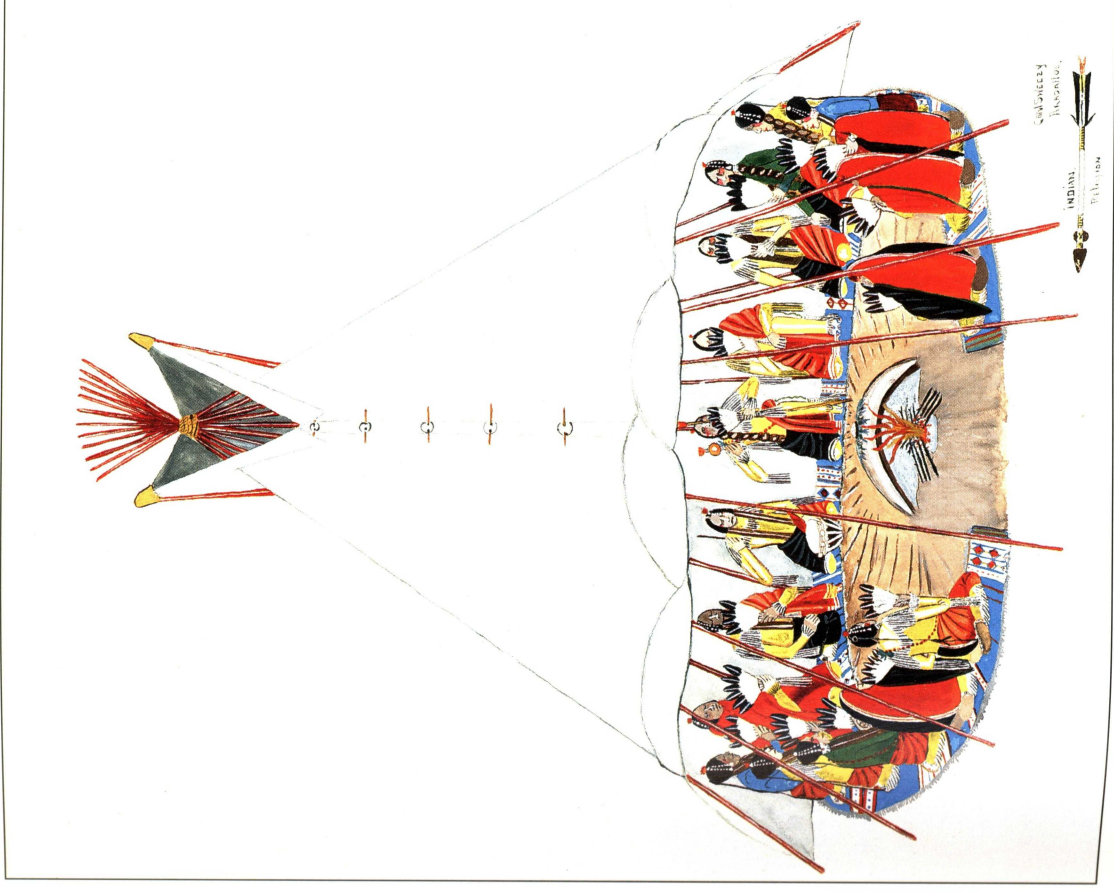
JULIUS CAESAR  
(ANADARKO,  
OKLAHOMA)  
*Blanket pin*  
German silver  
GILCREASE TL1995.22.37

The history of Native American Church-related paintings can be traced along with stylistic innovations attributable to individual artists. The earliest "paintings" associated with the Native American Church are the incised and painted gourds found on the rattles used in the religion. A number of excellent examples from the late 19th century were collected among the Comanche, Kiowa and Cheyenne. Designs reflect the chief peyote, the moon altar, the sun, and various human figures holding fans, rattles and staffs. The style of these designs ranges from line forms of a pictographic nature to profile figures reminiscent of the ledger art traditions of the southern plains.

CARL SWEETZ  
(CA. 1879-1953)  
*Indian Religion*  
Tempera on paper  
GILCREASE 0226.521

An extensive examination of ledger style art led Greene and Weidman to identify Silverhorn (Haungooah) as a major originator of peyote-inspired paintings.<sup>18</sup> Silverhorn provides a bridge between the pictographic art of the 19th century and American Indian painting movements of the 20th century. His father Doahasan created a calendar count for the Kiowa and his brother, Ohettoint, was one of the Indian artists imprisoned at Ft. Marion.<sup>19</sup>

An important set of ledger books in the collections of the Field Museum of Natural History provide the only known examples of 19th-century American Indian drawings that have the ceremony and spiritual content of Peyotism as their subject matter. As the artist responsible for the drawings, Silverhorn can be viewed as the earliest peyote artist and a major originator of the style. The Field Museum ledger books include scenes of the ritual entrance of the participants into the tipi, individuals singing and drumming, and the morning water ceremony. A number also present abstract, stylized renderings of the crescent moon, the sun, the chief peyote, and animals.<sup>20</sup> Silverhorn later produced a wide range of artistic works, including drawings and paintings on paper, hide and muslin. He is also reported to have been an accomplished feather worker and metalsmith.<sup>21</sup>





Two additional early American Indian painters, Earnest Spybuck and Carl Sweezey, were important to both the development of the American Indian fine art movement of the early 20th century and the art of the Native American Church. Their works are characterized by their efforts to reflect the turbulent social, political, and cultural conditions of their times and a reflective representation of previous cultural traditions.<sup>22</sup>

As two of the earliest professional Indian artists, they shared a number of common experiences, including contract work for anthropologists who were eager to document the cultural and social practices of 19th-century Indian societies. Sweezey worked extensively with James Mooney and George Dorsey and Spybuck executed a number of works for M. R. Harrington. Their paintings combined scenes from daily life and traditional practices and observances in a narrative style related to earlier American Indian painting traditions. Among their works are important depictions of the Peyote ceremonies of the Arapaho, Shawnee, Kickapoo, and Delaware. Sweezey's *Indian Religion* (previous page) shows a church service in progress with the tipi rolled up to expose the scene within, a technique that he used in common with Spybuck. The absence of women and the dress of the participants suggests a scene from the past, a style of narrative painting for which Sweezey was well known.

The impact of the Kiowa School on American Indian painting has been well documented for its contribution to the development of an "official" style of American Indian art with respect to the commercial market. Kiowa artists Monroe Tsatoke, Stephen Mopope, Jack Hokeah, Spencer Asah, James Auchiah, and Lois Smokey studied under the tutelage of Oscar Jacobson in the art department at the University of Oklahoma. Their experiences have been characterized as the "crystallization of American Indian easel painting" through the development of a hybrid style that reflected earlier southern plains painting traditions with the addition of new techniques and "a modern approach to expressivism."<sup>23</sup>

Several of the Kiowa artists of the 1920s and 1930s produced important works related to the Native American Church. Monroe Tsatoke can be viewed as the successor to Silverhorn as a major innovator of the genre, making significant contributions to the iconography of Native American Church paintings. Tsatoke was a long-standing member of the Native American Church, converted after his recovery

MONROE TSATOKE  
(1904-1937)

*The Waterbird*

Reproduced from *The Peyote*

*Ritual: Visions and*

*Descriptions of Monroe*

*Tsatoke*, The Gradhorn

Press, San Francisco, 1957,

ed. Leslie Van Ness Denman

(facing page 25)

*This is the design the members of the Peyote Cult take as of greatest importance and authority in their ritual. It is used in many different ways and designs as the messenger bird who flies in the interior of the teepee, to whom prayers may be trusted, and it is the only one who can carry the message to the heart of the unknown mysteries. His shrill cries are very musical to the Kiowas. They regard him as predominate among birds who live on the water. In his worship, when the time for the water comes, which is in the morning at dawn, the Water Bird fan is used.*

*When the Water Song is sung by a father or priest in the morning the priest's face disappears and in its place is the Water Bird, singing, perched upon a staff with a peyote gourd or rattle. The fan is made of the feathers of the wings and the tail of the Water Bird.*

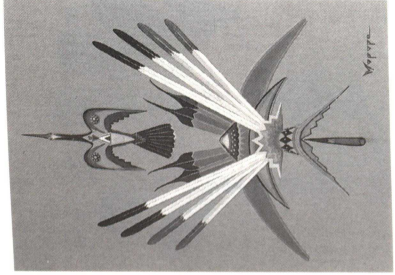
MONROE TSATOKE,

1954, *The Peyote*

*Ritual: Visions and*

*Descriptions of Monroe*

*Tsatoke*



STEPHEN MOPOPE

(1900-1974)

*Peyote Design*

Tempera on paper

GILCREASE 0227.121

STEPHEN MOPOPE

(1900-1974)

*Peyote Meeting*

Tempera on paper

GILCREASE 0227.203



from tuberculosis through his participation in the religion. Tsatoke has been credited with a number of innovations in peyote style painting, including the early incorporation of highly stylized depictions of the peyote bird and other feather symbolism. Tsatoke brought the Native American Church, and his interpretations of its theological content, to wider audiences through his participation in various publications and exhibitions.<sup>24</sup>

Stephen Mopope, another member of the Kiowa school, was a student of Silverhorn and an active member of the Native American Church. His controlled and expressive style produced highly symbolic compositions in which the ceremonial setting is enhanced through the addition of elements from the ritual objects and natural materials associated with the religion. In *Peyote Design* (above left) the sticks of firewood are replaced by the beaded handle of a fan with scissor-tail feathers emerging from the flames of the sacred fire. In *Peyote Meeting* (below) Mopope has placed wings on the tips of the altar and tail





JAMES AUCHIAH  
(1906-1974)  
*Peyote Men, 1929*  
Tempera on paper  
GILCREASE 0227.8

JAMES AUCHIAH  
(1906-1974)  
*Peyote Design*  
Tempera on paper  
GILCREASE 0227.11

feathers under the sticks of firewood, reminiscent of the bird imagery created by the manipulation of the ashes of the fire during the ceremony.<sup>25</sup>

Another member of the Kiowa School, James Auchiah, was also an ardent member of the Native American Church and

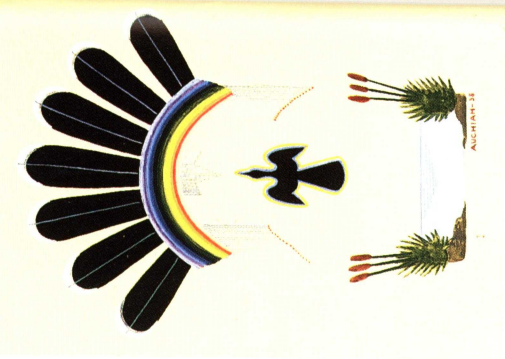
often depicted scenes and symbols from the religion in his paintings. In his

AUCHIAH-29

painting *Peyote Men* (left),

Auchiah depicts two individuals outside the ritual context of the religion. The first individual is smoking a cigar, a common practice as the participants relax after the noon meal that completes the ceremony, while the second figure, replete with drooping feather and bowed head, suggests the fatigue that results from the night-long ceremony.<sup>26</sup>

The Oklahoma style of American Indian painting that traces its roots to the Kiowa artists of the early 20th century continued to evolve through the Indian artists who trained at Bacone College in northeastern Oklahoma. A number of artists who made significant contributions to the

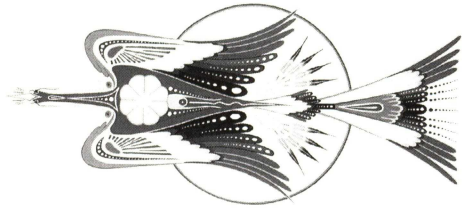


RIGHT  
WOODROW W. CRUMBO  
(1912-1989)  
*Peyote Bird*  
Tempera on paper  
GILCREASE 0227.345

BELOW

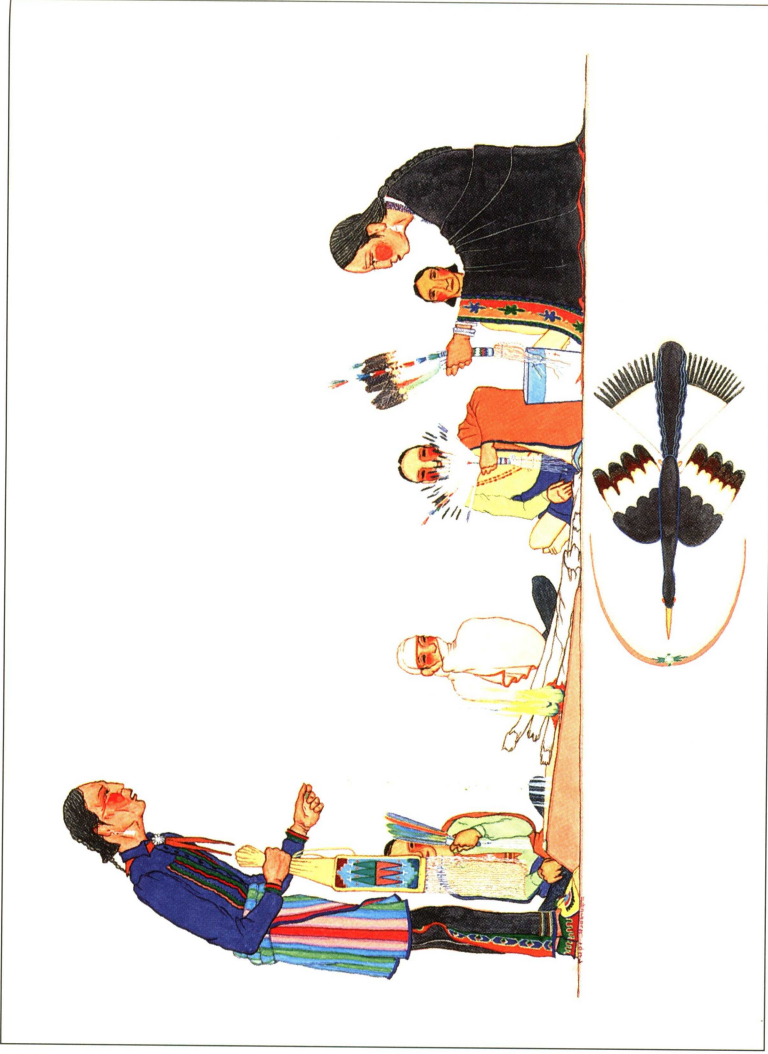
WOODROW W. CRUMBO  
(1912-1989)  
*Peyote Religious Ceremony*  
Tempera on paper  
GILCREASE 0227.577

art of the Native American Church also served as instructors and directors in the art department at Bacone, among them Woody Crumbo and Ruthe Blalock Jones. Crumbo was also an artist-in-residence at Gilcrease Museum in the late 1940s. His painting of a ritual scene from a Native American Church service (below) is indicative of the unique style he developed over his career. In this scene the ritual altar and ceremonial fire have been replaced by a large Peyote cactus with symbols and icons of the religion emanating from it. His highly symbolic painting of the peyote bird (left) is one in a series that he painted for Thomas Gilcrease who later adopted it as the official logo for the museum.

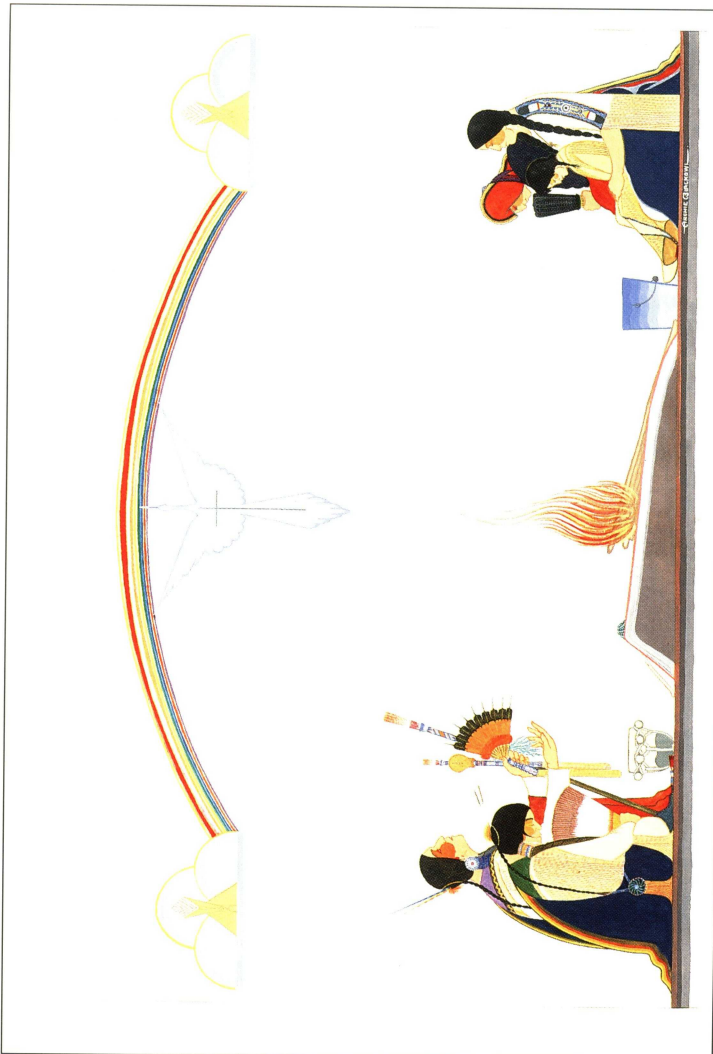


Crumbo





CECIL MURDOCK  
(1913-1954)  
*Morning Ceremony*  
(*Peyote*), 1947  
Watercolor on paper  
GILCREASE 0227.258



ARCHIE BLACKOWL  
(1911-1992)  
*Peyote Ceremony*  
Tempera on paper  
GILCREASE 0227.561

A number of artists have made significant contributions to the narrative genre scenes of the Native American Church first painted by Silverhorn, Swezey, and Spybuck. Cecil Murdock and Archie Blackowl were both active members of the religion and contributed

a range of paintings that are quite effective in capturing the emotion and humility of the participants in the ceremony. This is particularly true for their respective works that detail the water ceremonies of the ritual. Murdock presents a scene from the cedar ceremony that accompanies the prayers that are offered when the morning water is brought into the tipi (facing page, above). In it the Roadman is placing cedar incense on the fire to honor the woman who assumes this solemn responsibility. Blackowl is well known for illustrative scenes of the ceremony that capture the deep religious conviction of the participants. His painting of the midnight water ceremony (facing page, below) presents the point in the service when the Roadman sings the special songs that accompany this event prior to the prayers and the passing of water to the participants. Ruthe Blalock Jones adds additional

RUTHE BLALOCK JONES  
(b. 1939)  
*Medicine Women*  
Gouache on fabriano  
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



dimension to the art of the Native American Church through her scenes that depict women and women's roles in the ceremony. In her painting *Medicine Women*, the artist presents a composition that incorporates the reflective and humble demeanor that women assume during the ceremony.

A wide range of paintings in the collection of the museum document additional contributions to the art of the Native American Church. Working almost exclusively in oils, Tennyson Eckiwaudah devoted his entire career to religious paintings consisting of highly symbolic compositions and dramatic color contrasts. Many of his paintings present a Christ figure emerging from the smoke flaps of a tipi, symbolic of the deep religious spirit generated during a service of the Native American Church.<sup>27</sup> Other artists represented in the collection



TENNYSON ECKIWAUDAH  
(b. 1912)

*Indians in Worship —  
Native American Church*

Oil on canvas

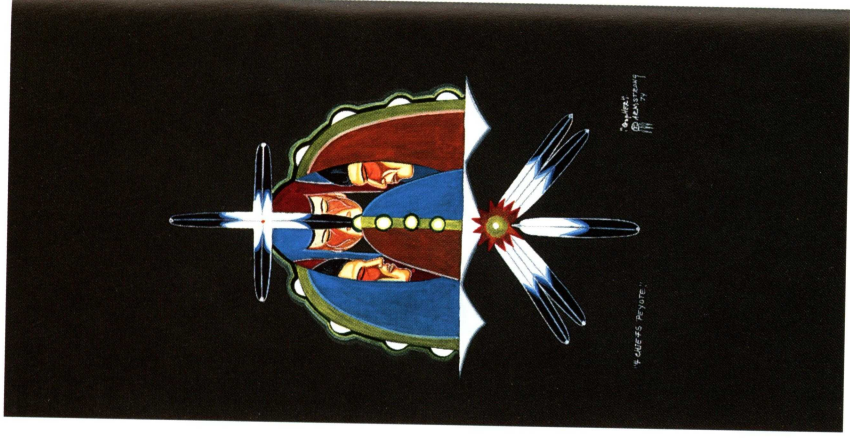
GILCREASE 0127.2002

.....  
GOPHER ARMSTRONG

*Four Peyote Chiefs*

Gouache on paper

GILCREASE TL1995.22.55



through their art of the Native American church include Acee Blue Eagle, Woody Big Bow, Gopher Armstrong, Allan Houser, and Harding Big Bow. Each contributes additional vitality and diversity to the art of the Native American Church through the artist's technical and stylistic approach to the interpretation of symbols of religious faith and belief.

ONE TIME WHEN THE MORNING TIME CAME IT GOT REAL QUIET AT MY HOME PLACE. AT A CERTAIN TIME OF THE YEAR THERE'S A BIRD THAT COMES THERE. HE'S GOT A VERY

UNUSUAL WAY THAT HE HOLLERS. YOU CAN'T FIND THAT NOWHERE ELSE. OUR KIOWA

ELDERS THEY TELL US THAT THIS IS TOE'MAWSAH AH, THEY CALL IT, PEYOTE BIRD, A VERY UNUSUAL BIRD. SPRING TIME THEY COME UP THERE AND EVERYTHING WILL BE QUIET,

REVERENT. WE'LL JUST BE SITTING THERE PRAYING. YOU CAN'T HEAR A SOUND OR NOTHING. THEN WE HEAR A NOISE AND HE GOES TO HOLLERING UP THERE, RIGHT ON TOP OF THAT TIPI

POLE. HE COMES THERE EVERY YEAR. THAT'S A BEAUTIFUL SOUND. THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SOUND THAT YOU EVER HEARD. THINGS LIKE THAT. YOU GOT TO STUDY THESE THINGS OF

CREATION. GOD PUT ALL THINGS HERE FOR A PURPOSE. OUR BELIEF IS THAT ALL THINGS ARE

HERE FOR A GOOD PURPOSE, BUT YOU HAVE TO HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE TO USE IT. — HARDING

BIG BOW, 1994

A number of consistent designs and themes can be isolated through an examination of the art of the Native American Church, each contributing to the unique iconography associated with the religion. The natural elements used in the religious ceremony — including peyote, the earthen altar, the fire, sage, cedar, and water — figure prominently in the art of the Native American Church. Bird symbolism is one of the most important elements of this artistic tradition, ranging from the feathers of the ceremonial fans to highly stylized renditions of the peyote bird.

THE GARMENT, THE CLOTH THAT WE USE, THE RED AND BLUE REPRESENTS DAY AND NIGHT. THEY WEAR THE RED TO THE LEFT AND THE BLUE TO THE RIGHT. THESE THINGS ARE THINGS THAT GOD CREATED, THEY HAVE SUPERNATURAL POWER, RELIGIOUS POWER YOU MIGHT SAY. THAT'S OUR BELIEF IN ALL THE THINGS THAT WE USE. THEY LEARNED HOW TO PRAY WHEN THEY GO IN THAT TIPI, IN THE NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCH. BEFORE THEY WENT IN THERE THEY DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO PRAY. WHEN THEY GOT IN THERE THEY LEARNED. THE NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCH RELIGION SHOWED THEM HOW TO WORSHIP GOD, THEY COMMIT THEMSELVES AND THEY BECAME ORDAINED IN THIS RELIGION. — HARDING BIG BOW, 1994

Mooney provides the earliest discussion of the symbolic content of the art of the Native American Church in his description of a decorated rattle collected among the Kiowa. Based on his discussions with Kiowa members of the church Mooney suggests that a high degree of color symbolism is reflected in the art, with green lines representing the falling rain, yellow circles and yellow hummingbirds representing the sun, or more properly the “auroral morning light” and red, zig-zag lines represent the songs that are sung during the religious service. Mooney states that this is a direct extension of the symbol used in Kiowa pictographs to represent music or songs. The gourd rattle is also embellished with a series of both abstract and figural drawings that include the peyote cactus, the crescent shaped altar, the morning star and a feather fan. Central to the rattle's decoration is a female figure with multiple meanings and interpretations.<sup>28</sup>

The colorful “rainbow” patterns found in contemporary beadwork used on fans, rattles and staffs are interpreted by members of the Native American Church to represent the flames of the ritual fire and the approaching dawn. Other color symbolism in beadwork designs have been explained to me as yellow for lightning, green for peyote, and blue for water. Design elements found in modern peyote beadwork include crosses, feathers, pipes and hearts.

The metalwork associated with the Native American Church provides a rich area for the discussion of symbols and their interpretations. All students of the art form agree that the water bird is the most common design element in peyote jewelry. Marriott describes an early water bird pin made in 1910 by Conklin Hummingbird, suggesting that he may have been the first to adopt this design to the medium. The collection of Gilcrease museum contains several early examples of peyote bird pins from the early 20th century.







# Kiowa Beadwork

When a child is born, the Kiowa rejoice in the new life and the new beginning; they welcome the human being who will replace them in this life. Life is a great blessing. The creation of a cradleboard celebrates that gift of life. Kiowa cradleboards are elegant and distinctive. Some are fully beaded. Sometimes the background is a single color. Sometimes half of the cradleboard background is one color and the other half is a second color. My personal favorites are the cradleboards that are partially beaded on red wool. They still have the exquisite characteristics of Kiowa beadwork. The red wool cradleboards shown here are examples of Kiowa work. As you look directly at the front of one of the cradleboard, you can see that the designs are exactly alike. However, the colors are reversed. The cradleboard is further accented by glass bead drops and hand-rolled buckskin fringe. The top of the cradleboard is covered with a beaded decorative panel that stretches between the boards. Sometimes, the shin sections of woman's leggings that had become worn were recycled by inserting them into the hoods of cradleboards.

The wood used on this cradleboard (at right, facing page) is Bois d'arc. Other woods such as cherry

CARL AND VANESSA PAUKEIGOPE JENNINGS



FACING PAGE

KIOWA

*Toy Cradle Board*  
Wood, glass beads, leather,  
metal conchos

GILCREASE 8426.935

LEFT

KIOWA

*Cradle Board*  
Wood, cloth, glass beads,  
brass studs, leather, cotton  
cloth

GILCREASE 8426.633

RIGHT

KIOWA

*Cradle Board*  
Wool cloth, glass beads,  
wood, leather, brass studs,  
cotton cloth

GILCREASE 8426.629





KIOWA

*Boots*

Leather, beads, metal studs,  
fringe

GILCREASE 8427.439A-B

KIOWA

*Boots*

Leather, beads, metal studs

GILCREASE 8427.440A-B

KIOWA

*Boots*

Leather, beads, metal studs

GILCREASE 8427.444A-B

KIOWA

*Girl's Boots, ca. 1900*

Leather, beads, metal buttons

GILCREASE 8426.745A-B

KIOWA

*Woman's Boots, 20th century*

Leather, beads, silver buttons

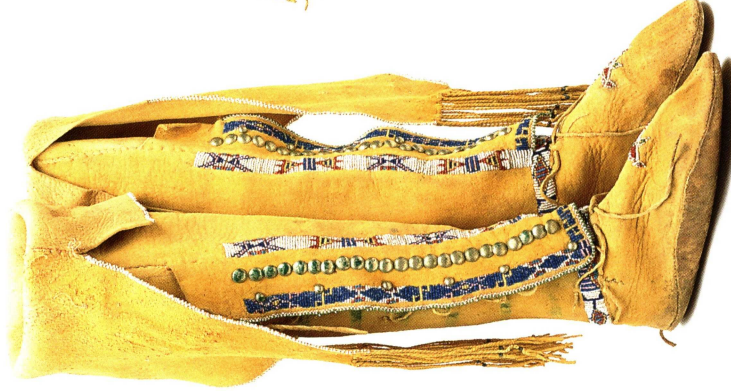
GILCREASE 8427.438A-B

KIOWA

*Boots*

Leather, beads, metal studs

GILCREASE 8427.422A-B



honor him. The leggings that are shown are painted yellow. The design on the moccasin top is characteristic of old Kiowa work. The shin area of the legging top is beaded and further decorated with German silver spots. The most striking characteristics are the coup marks painted on the leggings. Women honored their warrior husbands by adding these marks to their leggings. However, it was the warrior who painted the coup marks on the clothing of the wife that he loved.

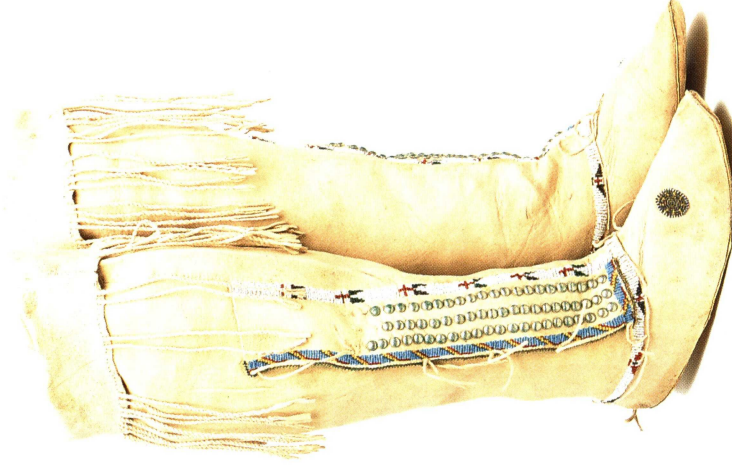
We are living in a time when Indian culture is changing. I had the great fortune of witnessing an event that incorporated the adjustments to today's cultural demands within the ceremonies of our ancestry. Corky Poolaw, a

highly decorated Marine Corps officer and Vietnam War veteran, now retired, asked me to make a pair of leggings to be ready in time for the Kiowa Black Leggings Warrior Society's ceremonials. We later gathered inside a tipi to witness them. It was explained to Corky Poolaw's granddaughter, who was present, that this old Kiowa custom is not often observed in modern times. Many of the women of today are caught up with "princess" clothes and matching colors. It is our great fortune that there are Kiowa who still keep our traditional ways and have the strength to honor their warriors. I was impressed as I watched Corky Poolaw paint the coup marks on his wife's leggings as he explained his Purple Heart

medal, Vietnam campaign medal, and other medals, just as the warriors of the past would have done. I sit and wonder at the woman's leggings from the Gilcrease. The love and respect that Martha Nell and Corky Poolaw have for each other and our traditional Kiowa ways are remarkable. I am reminded of the strength of the relationship between the maker of the legging and her warrior husband. It is important to remember when you look at these clothes that you are looking at more than fashion. There is a reason for each piece to be decorated the way that it is.

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The beaded bags worn by Kiowa women were an integral part of their daily activities. What was







KIOWA  
*Bag (Strike-a-Light)*  
Leather, beads, metal  
GILCREASE 8426.566

COMANCHE  
*Awl Case*  
Leather, beads, metal  
GILCREASE 8426.713A

KIOWA  
*Awl Case*  
Leather, beads  
GILCREASE 8428.711



carried in the bags was as varied as the personalities of the wearers. Examples of items used daily that a woman would want near at hand included a whetstone, a knife, a decorated stick with which to part the hair, flint and steel for starting a fire, sewing equipment and awls — the list could go on and on. The object to be carried dictated the size and shape of the beaded bag. Bags were highly decorated

with tin cones, jingles, bells, glass beads and fringe. The shape of the bag depended on its purpose. The bags shown in this article are the kind used by women and were tied to the right side of the belt.

All of these bags were useful, or even necessary, as in the case of the knife sheaths. Life long ago was a daily battle. A Kiowa woman might use her knife to prepare a meal, but also to defend herself.



Later, during the reservation days, the bags were used for a new purpose. They were used to store the ration tickets provided by the Indian agent that were to be redeemed for food and other supplies. If the tickets were lost, the family could starve.

Today many beaded bags are purely decorative, often worn as dance accessories, and may even have their openings stitched closed. But there is a resurgence of regard

for the traditional ways among many Native people. More and more are learning the true meanings of the Native cultures and the true uses of objects that once might have been obscure.

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After the free days, the Kiowas were brought to Anadarko and the surrounding areas. The buffalo were gone. The Kiowa were forced to depend on the Indian Agent and the Government



KIOWA  
*Bag (Strike-a-Light)*  
Leather, beads, metal  
GILCREASE 8426.568

PLAINS INDIAN  
*Bag (Strike-a-Light)*  
Leather, beads, metal  
GILCREASE 8426.563



for food rations, annuity payments, and other kinds of support. Congress was reluctant to appropriate money in order to honor the treaty rights for Native Americans, just as they are at this time. It was a time of deprivation and hardship.



KIOWA  
*Man's shirt*  
Buckskin, pigments  
GILCREASE 8427.1824

opposed to the dance. That is a fact. Let us step away from that history class and that point of view.

Some of the Kiowas accepted the Ghost Dance. One of the promises of the Ghost Dance was that buffalo and other game would return to the earth. Another promise was that loved ones who had died would return. Those promises were enough to bring many great warriors to participate in a Ghost Dance because their only sons had starved to death. Those promises also lured many prominent traditional women who

had just buried their husbands or another beautiful baby. It was not unusual for women to go without food in order to save a child. In my family, my great-great-grandmother had fifteen children but only a few survived.

Paukeigope, my great-grandmother and my namesake, was one of those survivors. The hardships that the Kiowas had to endure at that time drove many to believe and participate in the Ghost Dance.

This is what I remember and consider when I look at these beautiful and striking Ghost Dance clothes.

These and the other items in the Gilcrease Museum Collection are more than a display. Each piece was connected to a living, breathing Kiowa who continues to exist in the memory of his relatives of today. Each article of clothing is representative of the same earthly feelings that people everywhere feel. Those feelings of love, dignity, self-worth, respect for others, honor, charity and the prayer that brought the Kiowas, their culture, their songs, their dance, their past, present and their hopes for our future are a part of us as we travel this road that we call life.

REDSTONE, USA  
WEST OF ANADARKO, OKLAHOMA  
1995

*In memory of our relatives who  
endured so much so that we could  
have our culture.*

# ART DECO AND THE SCULPTURE OF WILLARD STONE

Willard Stone was a celebrated Cherokee artist who created unique and beautiful sculptures that tell the story of American Indian history.

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WILLARD STONE  
(1916-1985)  
*The Appeal*  
GILCREASE 1127.17

Yet a full appreciation of the work requires an understanding of modern non-Indian influences as well as traditional American Indian influences.



Margaret Archuleta, J. J. Brody, Rennard Strickland, Edwin Wade, and other scholars have established several instances of non-



LEFT  
MARIA MARTINEZ  
*Jar*  
STATE MUSEUM OF HISTORY, OKLAHOMA  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BELOW  
WILLARD STONE  
*Tomorrow*  
GILCREASE 1127.65

FACING PAGE, RIGHT  
WILLARD STONE  
*Lady of Spring*  
GILCREASE 1127.76

FACING PAGE, LEFT  
WILDO MOOTKA  
(1910-1940)

*Fertility Symbols*  
*Watercolor*  
GILCREASE 0237.207

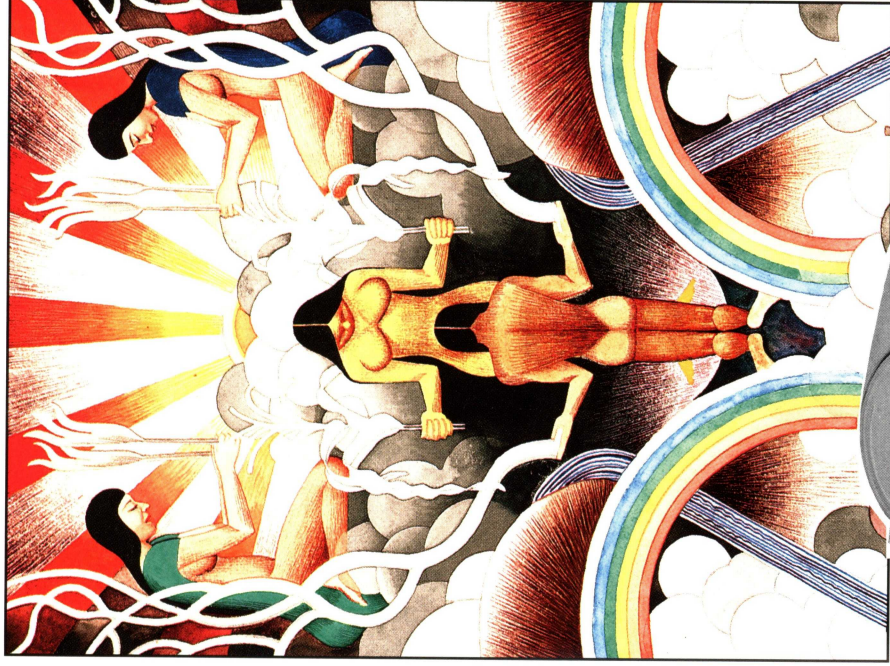
that deliberate influence, any modern Indian artist such as Stone would still be affected by the non-Indian world around him. As members of the broader community, artists — both Native American and non-Indian — are naturally exposed to the various art styles of their time. Art Deco, one of the most popular styles in the history of design, influenced American Indian artists as it did other artists. This popular style provided Willard Stone with one of the vital ingredients for creating his unique style of wood sculpture.

Art Deco flourished during the 1920s and 1930s, but had roots in Europe before the First World War. The style influenced design in

architecture and consumer products well into the 1940s. Art Deco grew out of a preceding movement, Art Nouveau, a richly decorative and ornamental style held in high regard by European aristocracy. With the rapid industrial progress of the 1920s and growth of the middle class, the style became more streamlined and took on a machinelike quality. At a 1925 Paris exhibition entitled



Automobile hood ornament; Compact vacuum cleaner, 1951, courtesy Jennifer Taylor and Maurice Powell; Sunbeam toaster advertisement from LIFE Magazine, September 20, 1943



“Exposition internationale des arts decoratifs et industriels modernes,” the evolving Art Deco

style was introduced. By that time, it was influenced by a diverse array of sources including Meso-American, African, Egyptian, and Oriental art. The style also borrowed simple, abstract and

stylized elements from Cubism. These influences reflected the growing reliance on the machine by the middle class.

Functionalism took precedence and a simplified idea of beauty met the needs of the new modern era. The result was an economical and logical

array of linear forms, geometric forces, and highly stylized natural forms that could be mass



produced. Between the World Wars, Art Deco’s immense popularity helped to sell thousands of products to the American public.<sup>2</sup>

It also influenced many 20th-century American Indian artists. Examples are seen in ceramics from the Southwest and in easel painting. As Edwin Wade points out, artists such as Julian Martinez consciously absorbed non-Indian graphic design elements during the Deco period. John Anson

Warner uses a vessel by Maria Martinez as an example of a “Native American extension of European Art Deco,” and





further theorizes that the use of Deco style by Indian artists contributed to its popularity among white buyers.

Wolfgang Haberland identifies Deco in the works by Nampeyo, and by the San Ildefonso husband-and-wife team Tonita and Juan Roybal. Art Deco is also seen in the “fertility” paintings of Waldo Mootzka.<sup>3</sup> In Oklahoma, Art Deco was seen early in the paintings of the Kiowa artists who studied under Oscar B. Jacobson at the University of Oklahoma in the 1920s. While it is unclear what precise influence Jacobson had on the artists, they were no doubt made aware of Art deco and made use of its influence in their art.<sup>4</sup> During the following decades in Oklahoma, Art Deco was seen in the works of Oklahoma Indian painters

like Acee Blue Eagle, Woody Crumbo, and Paul Goodbear, Jr. Willard Stone was probably familiar with the works of these and other Indian artists who had used Art Deco in their works. Indeed, Stone studied under both Blue Eagle and Crumbo at Bacone College during the late 1930s and later acknowledged their influence.<sup>5</sup>



IN TO THE DEPTHS  
IN THE HEIGHT OF FASHION.  
Women's and Men's Fashion. Apparel—Fifth Floor  
SAKS—FIFTH AVENUE  
PHOTOGRAPH BY HENRIETTA GREGG, NEW YORK

Saks Fifth Avenue  
magazine  
advertisement  
published in  
Germany, April  
1927



Stone was also exposed to Art Deco through the multitude of mass market products created between the 1920s and 1940s. Deco designs on coffee pots, automobile hood ornaments, and other consumer items

were as familiar to Stone as to non-Indians of the period. Late Art Deco, or Art Moderne, continued to be popular in magazines, movie theaters and public murals through the forties. Stone sometimes used

such images, particularly magazine photos and illustrations, for composition ideas.

Stone worked at Douglas Airlines in Tulsa, Oklahoma, during the early 1950s and was exposed to the “streamline deco” made popular during the previous decades in airline, automobile, and other machine industries. While working at Douglas, and perhaps even before that time, he also would have been aware of World War II airplane “nose art” and the Varga calendars that were extremely popular during the period. The Varga images of the 1940s are a good example of the persistence of Deco streamline in evolving popular illustration design. Yet, these images are only superficially reminiscent of Deco while Stone’s sculptures often exhibit a deeper Art Deco influence. The surface smoothness and lack of facial detail of Stone’s *The Woodcarver* is more suggestive of a 1920s Art Deco vision of a metal robot than of a sensuous human form. On the other hand, *Lady of Spring* exhibits both human sensuality and a more organic abstraction.



FACING PAGE  
PAUL GOODBEAR  
(1913-?)

*Animal Dance, 1939*  
14238/12, MUSEUM OF INDIAN  
ARTS AND  
CULTURE/LABORATORY OF  
ANTHROPOLOGY, SANTA FE,  
NM

FACING PAGE  
WILLARD STONE  
*The Woodcarver*  
GILCREASE 1127.64

LEFT  
WILLARD STONE  
*Lady of Spring*  
GILCREASE 1127.76

ABOVE  
ALBERTO VARGAS  
*June 1946 gatefold*  
*illustration*

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Although Stone may not have directly copied Art Deco images, such sculptures show that he was clearly affected by them.

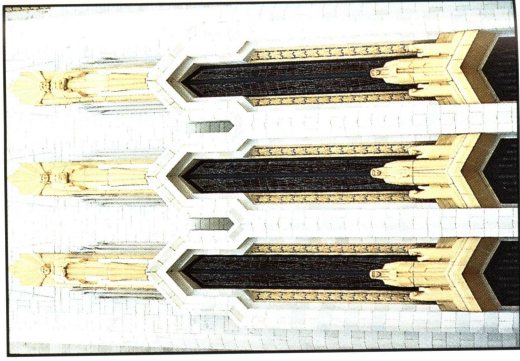
Stone was born and raised in northeastern Oklahoma, an unusually rich area of Art Deco architecture in the Southwest. Tulsa, in particular, was a unique center for the Art Deco style through the 1920s and 1930s. The economic abundance of the oil industry allowed Tulsa to develop the character of its appearance at a time when Art Deco was being adopted by urban centers



throughout the nation. Deco may have impressed Stone during his youth and perhaps more consciously during his formative years as a visual artist. He spent a good deal of time in Tulsa during one of his most experimental periods, from 1946 to 1949. This was the time of his residency at the Thomas Gilcrease

Institute of American History and Art. An observant artist, he must have been affected by the architectural and sculptural Art Deco legacy that, in part, defined the city's aesthetic.<sup>6</sup>

Architectural detail,  
Boston Avenue  
Methodist Church,  
Tulsa, Oklahoma



While Stone may not have been aware of the modernist influence of urban Deco architecture on his work, he was keenly aware of another influence, that of Thomas Gilcrease. Gilcrease encouraged Stone to experiment in addressing contemporary issues. During his residency at Gilcrease, Stone created some of his most innovative wood sculpture. Pieces like *War Widows* and *Unity of Purpose* are modern in both theme and style. Stone sought input and approval from Gilcrease and was affected by his patron's enthusiasm for the modernist stylization of natural forms.<sup>7</sup>

Stone would not have verbally acknowledged the influence of Art Deco since the term was not even coined until the 1960s, during a revival of the style. However, Art Deco was particularly suited for a sculptor who tried to incorporate modernism into a figurative tradition to please both himself and his patrons. Art Deco had one foot safely on the foundation of the figurative past and the other in the abstract world of the future. It was this characteristic that made the Deco style so popular to the masses

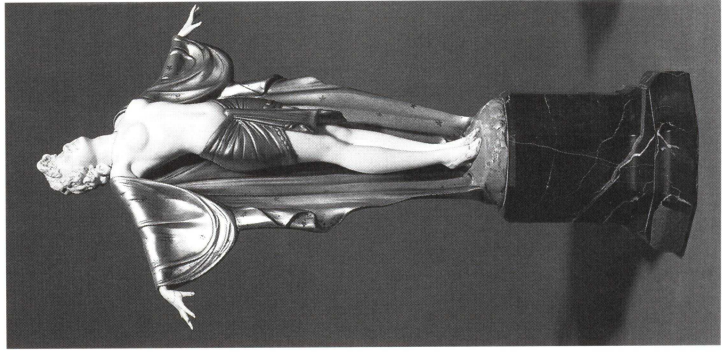
FACING PAGE  
WILLARD STONE  
*The Cherokee Follower*  
(two views)  
GILCREASE 1127.72

ABOVE  
WILLARD STONE  
*War Widow*  
GILCREASE 1127.56



who were somewhat uncertain of modernism, yet wanted to be modern.

Willard Stone lived in a time, in a region, and within a lifestyle that attuned him to what would later be called Art Deco. And clearly it was a style that suited his own situation as an artist. The most compelling evidence of the influence of Art Deco on Willard Stone is his sculpture itself. Like other figurative Deco sculptures, Stone's pieces never totally abandon realism, yet tend toward abstraction. The result was a singular style of wood sculpture, one recognized as unique to Oklahoma.<sup>8</sup> In both subject matter and technique Stone's works often initially impress the viewer not necessarily as ethnic, but as fine modern sculpture, decorative and elegant. A journalist wrote in 1966, "Though he works with pocket knife and chisel, his art is smooth, delicate and subtle. He does some Indian pieces, but more often birds, animals, feminine figures and abstracts of such rare



FERDINAND PREISS  
*Spring Awakening*  
Cold-painted bronze  
CHRISTIE'S, LONDON



FACING PAGE  
WILLARD STONE  
*Our Atomic Baby*  
GILCREASE 1127.74

BELOW  
WILLARD STONE  
*Unity of Purpose*  
GILCREASE 1127.78

RIGHT  
WILLARD STONE  
*Bird*  
GILCREASE 1127.75



quality that one hardly believes they can be made of wood."<sup>9</sup>

Art Deco was at least used by Willard Stone simply as a source for stylization. Stone's sculptures have a smooth shiny surface, lacking texture, recalling the shiny metals that were the original favorite materials of the Deco style. They more often incorporate the flowing, curvilinear Deco style rather than the geometrical style of early Art Deco. One of the best examples is *Tomorrow*. This sleek expression of forward fluid motion is nearly inseparable from design of the Art Deco and Art Moderne periods.<sup>10</sup>

Although his work is generally more sophisticated and expressive than most Art Deco sculpture, it should be noted that Stone called himself a craftsman rather than a fine artist. He considered his work to be accessible and understandable to a broad spectrum of people, not restricted to an artistic "elite." That same characteristic in Art Deco caused more elitist



art critics to consider it a design style, rather than a “high art” movement. Willard Stone would not have minded the distinction.

1. Two of the best discussions on the influences of non-Indians on 20th-century Native American artists are found in Brody, 1971 and in Wade, 1986.
2. Both of the cited works by Duncan are good sources for general information about how Art Deco was both embraced by the American public and later scorned by critics.
3. See *Pollination of the Corn* in Wade, 1986, page 192.
4. See Brody, 1971, page 122.
5. A good example of Art Deco in a work by Acee Blue Eagle is *Thunderbird*, in Silberman, 1978, page 47.
6. The only comprehensive work on the subject is in Johnson, 1980.
7. See the Willard Stone letters, archives, Gilcrease Museum.
8. Archuleta and Strickland, page 96.
9. Frome, page 134.
10. See *Speed* by Harriet W. Frishmuth in Duncan, 1988, page 133 in addition to the illustrations provided.

WILLARD STONE  
*Tomorrow (detail)*  
GILCREASE 1127.65



S f l f c t f d  
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