

# American Indian Art Tour

## connections with

### HA 180 Byzantine- Medieval Art History



This tour includes work by living artists as well as reproductions of architecture and art objects from European and North American civilizations from the 10th through 12th century. The discussion will help us consider our contemporary collection within broad themes going further back in history. We'll have discussions with partners and take some notes with our observations, and I'll share artists' information for context.

Drawing connections between required reading images and contemporary artworks might help you understand both objects more deeply. Art of pre-contact North America is usually not included in this survey class, but there is a chapter in your textbook. To help everyone involved with the tour examine commonly held misconceptions, a few additional example reproductions will be shown to illuminate stereotypes and myths about Native American people and cultures. The myths include associations we might have with native people as

Savage: Responsible for their own demise absolving white responsibility, newspaper drama and violence perpetuated character of bloodthirsty, insatiable once provoked, untrustworthy

Wilderness dwelling: Archaeological findings about irrigation and architecture dispel the myth of all native people being nomads, unable to develop and use the land properly

Vanishing: ours is a living artist collection, individual cultures have histories of migration, immigration, survival and adaptation

Authentic: American pop culture film and entertainment have created a "typical" native

Ecological: debunked by evidence of drought and depleted resources, deforestation

Generalizations abound even though there are over 150 native languages spoken, and there are 567 nations currently within the US and 634 nations within Canada.

2nd floor Regnier Center

Because **allegories** were translations of abstract ideas into concrete images, Medieval European artists used allegories in writing and art because they were accessible to almost any level of education. We see artists in different cultures across time use allegories.

**Wendy Red Star** (American Indian, Crow, b. 1981)

*Four Season Series, Spring*

*Four Season Series, Indian Summer*

*Four Season Series, Winter*

*Four Season Series, Fall*

All photographs printed 2006

Four Archival pigment prints on Museo silver rag mounted on Dibond



Born in Billings Montana of Irish and American Indian heritage, Wendy Red Star was raised on the Crow Reservation. After graduating from college, Red Star moved to Los Angeles where she was struck by the lack of natural environment. Lonesome for home, she wandered into the Natural History Museum of LA to explore the American Indian exhibits. She was taken with the dioramas in the museum and was inspired to explore issues of display and authenticity versus representation of American Indian culture in her *Four Seasons Series*. In these pseudo-dioramas, using kitschy wallpaper, blow-up plastic animals, 1970s panoramas of mountains and lakes and artificial plants, the artist assembles a cathartic, mocking look at indigenous life, and she poses wearing her traditional Apsaalooka or Crow regalia, including the elk's tooth dress. These photographs blur the line between fact and Western fantasy. Red Star states, "I don't take art too seriously, so all of it has some sort of humorous aspect to it... The issues with American Indian art are so complex that there is not much I would have to do for social commentary, because the commentary is already there... A lot of my work is anti-romanticism—which usually means just telling the truth."

In another series she Photoshopped a 70's sci-fi background and posed herself in futuristic regalia:

See **Sits With The Stars**, from the series "Thunder Up Above" 2011, pigment print on Fine Art Pearl Collection Portland Art Museum:



We also own the photo with her wearing this jingle dress:

**Medicine Rock Child**, from the series "Thunder Up Above," 2011

Pigment print on Fine Art Pearl

**Wendy Red Star** (American Indian, Crow, b. 1981)

*Untitled (silver jingle dress)* from *Thunder Up Above Series*, 2011

Fabric and jingles

- The use of a singular color scheme focuses attention on the textures, doesn't it?
- Is this purely sculptural (just for looking at), or could someone have actually worn this?
- Other than the jingle cones, what materials has the artist added to the dress?
- What fashion era does this remind you of? What about this artwork is futuristic?
- What about it looks old-fashioned?
- Look at a picture of a jingle dress from a recent pow wow – how is this dress different?

Our silver jingle dress, made for the series *Thunder Up Above*, explores the idea of American Indians representing the First People in the Final Frontier (*Star Trek*). The artist states, "I was thinking fierce ambiguous beings ... someone you would not want to mess with. There is strength behind the design and character represented. Inspiration came from powwow regalia, patterns from the Victorian era – puff sleeves in particular – and 1980s prom dresses." Traditional jingle dresses made of fabric in solid colors were adorned with jingles on the sleeves, top and bottom. Red Star notes, "Typically the traditional jingle dress is mid-calf in length and the dancers are very prim and proper. I chose to shorten the dress and exaggerate the puff sleeves." The jingles she uses are made from chewing tobacco can lids rolled into cones.

Jingles are also called "prayer cones" <https://www.powwows.com/jingle-dress-dance/>

The Jingle Dress Dance began with the northern Ojibwa in the early 1900s and became prevalent in the 1920s in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and in Ontario, Canada. The story of the dress began with a vision in a dream. A medicine man's granddaughter grew sick, and as he slept, his spirit guides came to him and told him to make a jingle dress for her. If she danced in it the dress would heal her. The dress was made, and the community came together to watch her dance. At first, she was too sick to dance alone so people carried her, but soon she was able to dance alone and was cured of her sickness.

It's speculated that the sickness she was experiencing was a part of the 1918 flu pandemic, which hit the Native American communities hard close to the Great Lakes. This was closely followed by a federal ban on ritual dancing in the 1920s on reservations. The dance has since been not only a dance of healing, but also one of cultural pride.

#### Similarities

celestial radiant woman

abstracted setting

Moon

Horizontal division

Feathers

Purple color

Regalia

These manuscripts served as allegory of the triumph of the Christian church over enemies.

Maius (teacher of Emeterius), Monastery of San Miguel de Escalada, *Woman clothed with the Sun Escaping from the Dragon*, Morgan Beatus manuscript, Spain 940-945 CE, 15 x 11" in the collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York

Dramatic decorative patterns turn the narrative into ornamental abstraction. Bands of color stand for realms from heaven to hell and the earth in between; the earthly landscape is a blue stripe with clumps of green foliage. Heaven is suggested by white floral stars. The fantastic beast with seven heads signifies the end of the world.

Art History Connection for Docents:

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This manuscript was made at a time with cultural fusion and political tension in Spain.

Within the Mozarabic Christian Asturian kingdom, monks and nuns used shapes and colors that recall Germanic Visigothic barbarian metalwork with a Christian theme, context and material. The Visigoths were among the aristocratic elite until the Islamic conquest in 711 CE, and they were allowed to continue practicing Christianity as long as they paid extra taxes and acknowledged authority of the new rulers. Ende (a woman) and monk scribe Emeterius, made the page with the *Bird Battling the Serpent* (see the image at Shyatesa White Dove's parrot olla).

Monks copied and illustrated triumphant writings of abbot Beatus (d. 798 CE) in the Monastery of San Martin of Liebana in northern Spain. Beatus created the *Commentary on the Apocalypse* from the *Book of Revelations* in defense of the Roman Church's struggle against Muslim and Christian heretic Adoptionists.

The visionary Hildegard von Bingen created the manuscript illustration with the "Celestial Egg" map of the universe. In the mid-12th century she was mother superior of the monastery she had founded at Rupertsberg, Germany. At a very early age she had begun experiencing regular holy visions that continued throughout her lifetime. In addition to being a nun with mystical and prophetic insights, she was a political and social moralist, musical composer, poet, naturalist, herbalist, gemologist, author of medicinal and botanical texts, and playwright.

**Linda Haukaas** (American Indian, Sicangu Lakota/Puerto Rican, b. 1952)

*Commodification of Indian Art*, 2009

Graphite on paper bag

- Paper bags are not a typical drawing surface, are they?
- Besides the hairstyles, what do all 3 figures have in common?
- The tiny figures in the clothing are all shown in profile, aren't they?
- The artist used crosshatching to suggest texture in the middle figure's skirt, didn't she?
- Where do you see the darkest values?
- How is this artwork similar to the beaded bags next to it?
- How does the drawing's format relate to the title?

Linda Haukaas is considered one of the leading contemporary artists utilizing traditional narrative pictographic art forms. As a self-taught artist, she relies on historical Lakota aesthetics in creating contemporary dolls, pictorial drawings and painted hide bags. In the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Euro-American media such as ledger books and colored pencils were adopted for artworks that were formerly painted onto bison hides. Haukaas is perhaps best known for her contemporary-style ledger drawings, which emphasize profiles of humans and animals without background or indication of setting. Haukaas creatively synthesizes the past with the present, as she pushes cultural boundaries; ledger art is an art form historically reserved for men. Linda Haukaas is sister to Thomas "Red Owl" Haukaas who has 4 beaded works in our collection.

She states, "recognition and the subsequent skyrocketing increase in value of American Indian antiquities has spilled over to contemporary art. As old and very good works become scarce, buyers look to contemporary tribal arts. The Indian Market scene was developed for economic opportunities. These markets have been around more than 80 years. They have been vital to our exposure and sales. We create, release our 'souls' for sale, feed our families, and create again. We are aware of market shifts. Functioning under the 'Bling' economic model, we are particularly sensitive to trends that affect our commerce."

In Medieval church sculpture, a common theme is the battle between good and evil, sin and salvation. For the past thousand years throughout the Western hemisphere there have been struggles between conquerors, settlers, barbarians and empires. Our region was founded with the concept of Manifest Destiny. Western books and film throughout the 20th century propagated the theme of domination over the less developed "child-like" and war-like native population.

See John Gast's *American Progress*, 1872: This is reproduced as a mural when you enter the Johnson County Museum. We have a general lack of inclusion of Native American history in education, people in our community are commonly unaware of vast systems of trade and communication networks during pre-contact times. Descriptions of specific land formations and landscapes, seasonal migrations, winter count and ledger drawings were native forms of mapping places. [See Ledger Drawing example.](#)



## Similarities

### Narrative

### Multiple figures

Some are much larger than others

### Monochromatic

### Arch shape, circles

Lines (registers) divide areas with people

### Patterns

### Asymmetrical details

### Feathers

### Confrontation theme

We see the clash between calvary and natives and question who the victor might be. There are no questions about who is damned in the Medieval carving:

**Last Judgement** tympanum stone relief carving, west portal, Cathedral of St. Lazarus, Autun, France 1120-35 CE

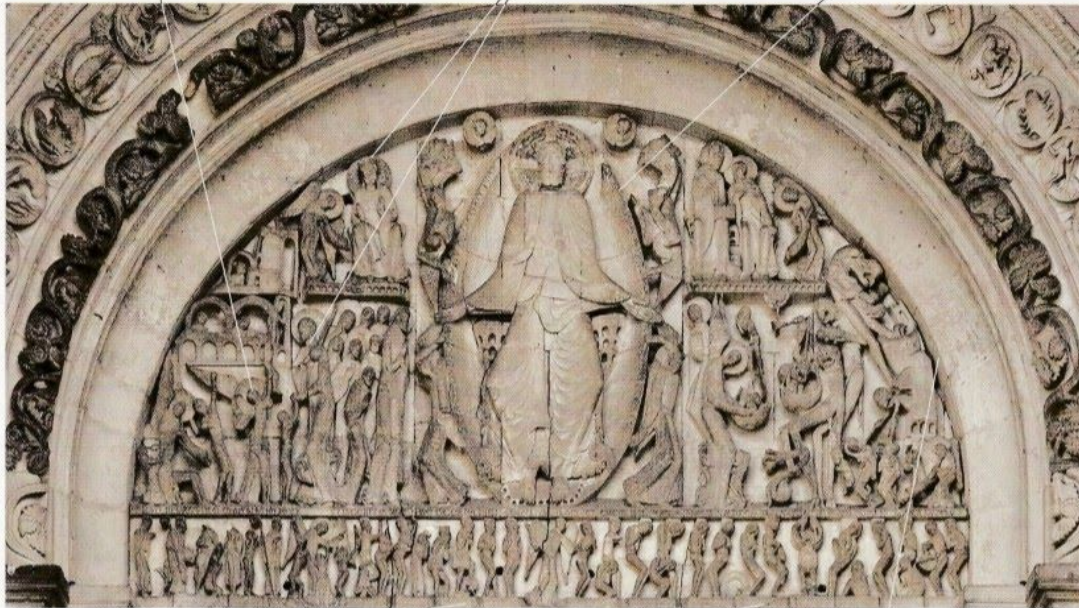
Formerly attributed to Gislebertus (he was a Cistercian count, patron of Autun) the name of the artist/stone carver is unknown. See the diagram from Marilyn Stokstad's *Art History*:

### THE LAST JUDGMENT TYMPANUM AT AUTUN

In one of the most endearing vignettes, an angel pushes one of the saved up through an open archway and into the glorious architectural vision of heaven. Another figure at the angel's side reaches up, impatient for his turn to be hoisted up into paradise.

Christ's mother, Mary, is enthroned as queen of heaven. Below, St. Peter—identified by the large keys slung over his shoulder—performs his duties as heavenly gatekeeper, clasping the hands of someone waiting to gain entrance.

This inscription proclaims "I alone dispose of all things and crown the just. Those who follow crime I judge and punish." Clearly, some of the viewers could read Latin.



The cross (a badge of Jerusalem) and scallop shell (a badge of Santiago de Compostela) identify these two figures as former pilgrims. The clear message is that participation in pilgrimage will be a factor in their favor at the Last Judgment.

The incised ornament on these sarcophagi is quite similar to that on ancient Roman sarcophagi, one of many indications that the Autun sculptors and masons knew the ancient art created when Autun was a Roman city.

Interestingly, hell is represented here as a basilica, with a devil emerging from the toothy maw that serves as a side entrance, capturing sinners for eternal torment. The devil uses a sharp hook to grab *luxuria*, the female personification of lust.

**Diego Romero** (American Indian, Cochiti Pueblo, b. 1964)

*Dancing Coyotes*, 2007

Earthenware

- The design is more symmetrically balanced than the tapestry, isn't it?
- Are the coyotes natural-looking, or are they stylized and simplified, like cartoons?
- What geometric shapes make up the coyote's body?
- Besides checkerboards, what patterns do you see?
- How did the artist use line to show motion?
- Do you think the bowl was meant to be looked at, or was it to be filled with stuff?

Coyote is a figure that Diego Romero has turned to repeatedly during his career, and his representation of this trickster figure was inspired by the graphic, blocky style of the late New York graffiti artist Keith Haring. Although Romero's depictions of coyote sometimes reflect the trickster's negative influences such as drinking too much, the figures on this bowl enact a playful dance. Their tongues protrude from their elongated snouts and their pointed ears identify them as animals, yet they also display human characteristics. Emblematic of frivolity, happiness and fun, these coyotes are apparently having a good time as they frolic across the floor. Despite the cartoon-like quality of this scene, design elements such as the checkerboard decoration on the rim and the black and white palette reflect the artist's interest in pottery decoration of the ancient Mimbres culture. Like many contemporary Indigenous artists, Romero blends modern influences with mythological characters and aesthetics of the past.

Diego Romero received a BFA from Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, California, in 1990 and an MFA from University of California Los Angeles in 1993. — Denise Neil-Binon

When referring to the historic Southwest, we use the preferred term **Ancestral Puebloan** - "anasazi" is Navajo for "enemy ancestor." Romero shows a UFO in reference to Roswell.

Similarities

Stars

Patterns of dark and light

Geometric shapes

Animals

Ground line

Excited gestures, active poses

**Bayeux Tapestry**, wool embroidery on linen, Norman Anglo-Saxon from Canterbury, Kent, England, 1066-1082 CE, 20" height, collection of Musee de la Tapisserie, Bayeux, France

Stokstad wrote it "speaks to us of the folly of human greed and ambition." The embroidery had cues for musicians to reference when it was displayed during feasts of relics in the cathedral. People in this scene are reacting to Halley's Comet, and we see Harold the king who defied William the Conqueror. **See Diego Romero's True Tale**, Nelson-Atkins Museum.

**Shyatesa White Dove** (American Indian, Acoma Pueblo, b. 1956)  
*Traditional Acoma Water Olla with Polychrome Parrot and Floral Motif*, 1986  
Ceramic

- The design is repeated 3 times around the vessel, isn't it?
- Other than the flowers, what **plants** do you see?
- This work is mostly warm earthy colors, isn't it?
- What cool neutral **colors** do you see?
- Where do you see geometric **shapes**? *Circles in flowers, squares in birds, triangles...*
- Which part of the design accentuates the form the most?

Inspired by her grandmother, Connie O. Cerno, to continue the pottery traditions of Acoma Pueblo, Shyatesa White Dove began making pottery in 1984. White Dove specializes in the polychrome designs frequently associated with art from Acoma, and the parrot and floral design depicted on this pot is one of her favorite subjects. The depiction of parrots on Southwest pottery finds its roots in ancient Mimbres culture. Some anthropologists believe that the people of Acoma Pueblo, as well as Laguna Pueblo, are descendants of this pre-contact culture. Parrots are not indigenous to New Mexico, but they were revered by the Mimbres people, who traded for these exotic birds with the tribes of Mesoamerica. Archaeological evidence suggests that parrots and macaws were used for ceremonial purposes. The importance of these tropical birds is carried on in their representation on contemporary Acoma pottery. — DN

Trade brought macaw birds and the ceremonial use of feathers to the Southwest US. Puebloans associated macaws with the south, the sun and powerful spiritual forces. Trade routes from Mexico abounded in pre-contact centuries (Chaco canyon, NM was perhaps a pilgrimage site; radiating roads were straight indicating they served a more ceremonial purpose than thoroughfare). Chaco canyon and Cahokia (St. Louis) were massive urban centers that were no longer active when European settlers came through, and much is still to be learned about the people who lived there.

#### Similarities

Birds

arcs

Patterns, linear curl

Feather lines, leaf shapes

polychrome

In this allegory, the bird is the symbol for Christ and the serpent is the symbol for Satan. It's one of many representations of good vs. evil:

Manuscript page with the *Battle of the Bird and the Serpent*, illustration for the *Commentary on the Apocalypse* by Beatus, made for Abbot Dominicus at the monastery of San Salvador at Tabara, Leon Spain, 975 CE, tempera on parchment, 15 x 10"  
now in the collection of the Cathedral Library, Gerona, Spain



**Jason Garcia** (American Indian, Santa Clara Pueblo, b. 1973)

*Pair of painted tiles from the Grand Theft Auto Series, 2007*

Mineral and carbon paint on clay

- The artist used a range of warm colors and neutral colors, didn't he?
- Are the outlines all the same thickness, or is there variation?
- Instead of shading gradations, the artist used contour lines to define the forms, didn't he?
- Both figures have traditional ceremonial jewelry, don't they?
- What architectural structures do we see in the background? The foreground is more detailed than the background, wouldn't you say?

*St. Michael the Archangel, 2007*

Clay

- The angel is wearing a similar style necklace as the man in the tile artwork, isn't he?
- What words would you use to describe the setting?
- The background is more stylized than natural, wouldn't you say?
- Besides the flames, which areas are *not* outlined in black?
- This is a Christian subject that can be found in Medieval and Renaissance European art; has anyone seen St. Michael in other art media? Manuscripts, relief sculpture
- We see the archangel Michael holding the scale of judgment as an attribute; where else did the artist repeat the semi-circle shape?
- Where are the most detailed areas?

Jason Garcia is from a family of Santa Clara Pueblo potters, and he relies on traditional pottery methods including gathering native clay, the use of organic clay slips, and outdoor firing techniques. However, Garcia departs from convention by painting his tiles with innovative, non-traditional designs. He made his first graphic tile in 2002, which solidified his place within contemporary Pueblo pottery. Garcia's clay tiles often depict the intersection between Puebloan culture and modern society. His imagery frequently includes references to comic book superheroes, video game characters and pop culture icons. Tiles from his *Grand Theft Auto* series blend illustrations from the cover of the video game with scenes from Pueblo life, deftly joining worlds that may, to outsiders, seem unrelated. The figures, wearing traditional regalia, are depicted in a Pueblo village. By blending traditional depictions with contemporary imagery such as cars and motorcycles, Garcia's work reminds the viewer that Native people are not relics of a romanticized past, but active participants in contemporary society.

Garcia received a BFA from the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, in 1998, and an MFA from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 2016. — DN

Stokstad: Hierarchical societies, ceremonial centers, towns with monumental architecture, and elaborate artistic traditions came after a shift from hunter gatherer bands toward agricultural sedentary life within settled communities. This brought population growth.

What do we think of when we think of a strong Medieval economy?

See photo of Chaco's Pueblo Bonito and Dover, England Castle, built around the same time.

Paul Jentz stated "Some romanticized notions of the Puebloan past stand on the assumption that sixteenth-century Spanish colonials encountered native communities that had remained relatively unchanged for hundreds, if not thousands, of years."

Acoma remains active, isolated up on a mesa, where people settled in the 1200s after the fall of Chaco (attributed to drought). See Garcia's series of comic-book Pueblo Revolt tiles.



There are currently 19 active Pueblo communities with several distinct language groups. Ancestral Pueblo society has a legacy ranging from their

- Population growth, elite families with Great Houses in the complex
- Development of architecture with timbers hand carried from far away
- Trade of copper bells and marine shells, macaws
- Pilgrimage to Great Kivas, the circular ritual theaters
- Ceremony

→ Astronomy

3rd floor

Ready-made 20th-century objects in art allow artists to appropriate meaning and forms. Here we also see allegory in beadwork and sculpture.

After acquiring horses from the Spanish in the 1500s, Plains people did not need to range over larger territories in search of game. Being able to spend more time in one place allowed women time to quill. Each nation had its own patterns and traditions associated with the quill work.

The word “bead” is derived from the old English word “bedu” meaning prayer. Prior to European contact, beads in North America were made from gold, silver, jade, bone, turquoise, and hand polished shell. Southwestern Ancestral Pueblo people traded turquoise throughout the region and into Mesoamerica. People from the Pacific coast traded sea shells to the Southwest cultures; people from the Atlantic coast and the gulf of Mexico traded beads to the Mound Builders of the Mississippi River valleys. Seed beads reached the Plains in the mid-1840s.

**Thomas "Red Owl" Haukaas** (American Indian, Lakota, b. 1950)

*Dreamer Doll*, 2009

Brain-tanned deerskin, brain-tanned moose, cotton, wool, feathers, human hair, porcupine quill, antique pony beads, buffalo hide, antique Chinese coin and metal

First inspired by his great-grandmother's beadwork, Tom “Red Owl” Haukaas learned the process as a child watching relatives stitch beads onto cloth and prepared hides. He received his first heirloom beads as a young adult with his eyes set on medical school and relatives presented him with beads so that he could make artwork to sell and raise funds to cover his tuition money. Haukaas utilizes the lanes stitch, two-needle overlay and backstitch, three of the most common stitches used by traditional Northern Plains bead workers. Displayed in a found apothecary jar, *Dreamer Doll* demonstrates Haukaas' contemporary take on a traditional art form. In the Plains cultures, it was often the grandmother's responsibility to construct a child's first doll, which was used to teach the girl traditional roles, appropriate dress and cultural practices. Girls were given cradles and sewing supplies with their dolls while boys were given warrior gear, bows and arrows. Dolls representing both genders were used by all children simply for play.

“No face” dolls, like *Dreamer Doll*, were created in order to instill humility. More intricate dolls were created for trade and display. Modern versions may be dressed in the traditional style of clothing worn by individuals in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Regarding the work *Dreamer Doll*, Haukaas states, “The three commentaries this piece represents are, first, gender definition and gender roles are not set in stone globally. Each culture defines those for themselves. Second, cultures often have their own religion and those differences need to be respected. Third, each culture has its own values and institutions.”

Born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Haukaas is now based in Santa Fe, New Mexico and Tampa, Florida. Haukaas earned an MD in Psychiatry in 1987 from Michigan State University.

### *Economic Conundrum, 2010*

Brain tanned elk hide, antique and contemporary glass beads, Nymo thread, cotton cloth and Hawk bells

Haukaas creates functional beaded cradles for his relatives. Haukaas' art cradles are aimed at opening dialogue on issues of cultural importance. *Economic Conundrum's* surface design is an allegory. Birds in a frenzied flight – representative of the banks and mortgage companies leaving their customers holding the bag – allude to the economic upheaval many United States citizens, and world denizens, are undergoing. Haukaas states, "We may be scattered, but we know we will land ... just not sure if it will be in financial terra firma. The cradle speaks to what I ultimately think is the most important question: as the populace navigates through this mess, have we learned anything from it, or are we willing to allow mortgage companies and banks to continue the 'questionable' practices that threatened to topple our country's security?" The artist also notes the irony that a member of the Rosebud Lakota Tribe renders this situation through art. "Our people have not yet felt the vagaries of the market place due to the constant level of poverty. It is mainstream folks who are now living like Indians. This is not pretty for them."

See [photo of Haukaas' Boy's Shirt in GEB](#).

### *Lakota Creation Narrative Shirt, 2016*

Vintage and contemporary seed beads, vintage tubular beads, cotton thread, pencil, ink, handmade German silver crosses, metal, cotton cloth and brain tanned deer hide

Lakota artists have a tradition of creating beaded clothing. Haukaas continues this practice in his *Lakota Creation Narrative Shirt*, which is fully beaded on the front and back and features images of bison, horses, birds and a human figure. The shirt is a masterwork, incorporating lane stitch as well as curvilinear beaded appliqué. Haukaas included seed beads of blue, pink and lavender set against fields of pale yellow and brick red. In addition to the beaded imagery, the artist has embellished the arms and bottom tabs of the shirt with green tubular beads and fringe constructed from cotton cloth. The central scene, depicted in the lower third of the garment, portrays a human standing on two bison as he emerges through the earth. He is flanked on either side by vegetation; a symbol of a medicine wheel floats above his head. The bilateral design motifs are mirrored on the back of the shirt,



where the artist slightly changed the palette, adding to the dynamic aesthetic of his representation of the Lakota creation narrative. — DN

Glass beads make tiny points of color, much like a mosaic. Take a look at these two bags:

Similarities

Portrait

Emphasis on head

Radiating lines in blues

Tiny bits of glass, glittery metallic

Arc shape

Billowing white sleeves

No sense of ground, figure floats

**Transfiguration apse mosaic**, Monastery of St. Catherine, Mt. Sinai, Egypt, artists from Constantinople c. 550 CE

Body-sized halos called **mandorla** in Byzantine art envelop the central Christ figure. He is depicted here calm and relaxed like a classical Roman athlete or orator.

**Kenneth Williams** (American Indian, Seneca/Arapaho, b. 1983)

*Strength to Overcome*, 2009

Czech cut beads, vintage steel cut beads, ermine skins, dyed horse hair, metal bells, smoked brain-tanned deerskin, vintage wool broadcloth, brass beads, vintage glass beads, satin ribbon, human hair, and cotton calico

- How did the artist use color to make the man's face look 3-D?
- Are the beads all sparkly, or are some matte and opaque?
- Besides the blue lines, what other bead patterns do you see? Did the artist make this on a loom within a grid structure, or did he hand stitch the beads in directional rows that lead our eyes around and through the composition?
- How do the tassels and embellishments relate to the figure in the design?

Kenneth Williams spent his early years on his father's Seneca reservation in New York state. As a teenager, he began to take on more complex projects with his mother's family of master bead workers at the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. *Strength to Overcome* is a mirror-bag format completed in a very contemporary style. He said, "Using vintage materials connects me to the past while I am working in the future." The figure, based on a family photo from the early 1900s, is Williams's great-great-great grandfather, Runs Medicine. "I loved the way he is dressed; I was bestowed a similar war bonnet upon completion from college, and its power and status is a great honor. For me to be able to carry one as well is humbling." The title came to Williams after a very difficult time in his life experiencing many untimely deaths, "All of these things affected me deeply. It seemed that by doing this beadwork, I was comforted and it became my avenue to overcome these tragedies...It also ties into the many world-wide losses such as poverty, loss of many jobs among people, bad

economic times, war etc. Therefore, this bag is my tribute to strength and hope that we as a Native people and the United States, will have the 'strength to overcome' all of these current issues."

Kenneth Williams earned a BA in Museum Studies from The Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 2007. He is the manager of the Wheelwright Museum trading post.

### *He Was Iconic, 2014*

Czech cut beads, vintage beads, 24k gold glass electroplated beads, sterling silver beads, antique metal beads, freshwater pearls, lapis, red turquoise, 14k gold beads, brass hawk bells, brass buttons, human hair, merino wool tassels, handmade French gold metallic tassels, brain tanned smoked deer hide and dupioni silk

Williams has long admired the Hopi jewelry artist Charles Loloma (b. 1921 - d. 1991), whose innovative work shifted the aesthetic of Native American jewelry in the Southwest. The elaborately beaded bag, *He Was Iconic*, pays tribute to Williams' idol. Out of respect for Loloma, Williams sought permission from the family before taking on this project. The front of the bag features a beaded portrait of Loloma seated at his workbench. The likeness of the artist, created using single stitch beadwork technique, is a highly accurate depiction. Loloma's famous signature is depicted on the left side of the portrait, set against swirling, curvilinear patterns in purple seed beads, Loloma's favorite color. The backside of the bag is adorned with **figural images inspired by the jewelry maker's designs**. Beading onto brain tanned, smoked deer hide, Williams, following in the footsteps of Loloma, used only the finest materials to embellish this bag, including freshwater pearls, 14-karat gold beads, lapis and Merino wool. In every aspect of the design and construction, this work of art is an homage to Loloma. - DN

#### Similarities

Colorful

Gold

Individual work with hands

Framed with pattern

Illuminated head

Letters and pictures

Symbols for identification

Animal hide/skin surface

Carolingian ***St Mark the Evangelist*** by Frankish scribe Godescalc, ink and colors on vellum 781-783 CE, in the collection of the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris

The lion is St. Mark's source of inspiration and his iconographic symbol. This is one of the first surviving manuscripts written in a new legible script. The vellum surface used for manuscripts is calf skin.

We see the *Song of A New Day* is modestly covered in flowing poncho and fluted skirt, and for Puebloans, the long hair symbolizes rain. There is no identification of who she is as an individual:

**Cliff Fragua** (American Indian, Jemez Pueblo, b. 1955)

*Song of a New Day*, 1983

Alabaster

Allegorical figures throughout history have been created by artists to embody natural concepts. In this example the allegory was used to teach Old Testament poems -

**David the Psalmist** in the Paris Psalter, ca. 950 CE, paint on vellum, 14" x 10"

Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

Dogs watching sheep call back to classical Orpheus charming the wild animals with his music. The woman on the left is Harmony, the other is Echo the nymph, and the man below is a personification of Mt. Bethlehem according to the text identification.

#### Similarities

Music

Person playing stringed instrument

Hat shape

Stone

Diagonal asymmetrical composition

calm/sad facial expression

**Ryan Benally/Haskeya-Teh-Des-Wod** (American Indian, Navajo, b. 1977)

*The Guitar Man*, 2006

alabaster

- This sculpture has natural colors, doesn't it?
- This is a relief carving- is the relief carving high or low?
- Would you say the texture is smooth or rough, or both? Besides the rough texture in his shirt, where else do you see rough textures?
- The man is smaller than life-sized, isn't he?
- The subject of this work is noticeably contemporary, unlike the others in this hall, isn't it? Other than his plain white collared shirt, what do you notice about his clothing?

**See unknown artist, stone minstrel carving with lute**, ca. 1190 CE Purbeck marble, Beverley Minster, Beverley, England.

Beverley was a center of secular music during the Middle Ages, a fact reflected by the numerous minstrel carvings. During this time, figures in art, both religious and secular, were depicted in familiar clothing and settings so that viewers and pilgrims could relate and connect to art on a deeper spiritual level.

How do we contemporary people know Christianity was prevalent across pre-Renaissance Europe? ANSWER: Churches and cathedrals were built aligned with major political regimes.

**312 CE** Constantine combined Christianity, Roman law and Greek culture and Christianized the Roman Empire. They built Constantinople in Byzantium (Istanbul, Turkey).

**800 CE** Charlemagne was the first Frankish king crowned Emperor of Rome by Pope Leo III and became “heir” to Constantine.

Roman empirical traditions of building and art making spread to the “barbarian” areas across Europe in the Middle Ages. Stockstad (1988, p. 106)

“The Goths, Lombards, Franks, Norse, Celts and Anglo-Saxons brought to Medieval Art an abiding preference for dynamic abstract art. By means of color and line the artists sought to create, or to capture, the essence of forms in motion as symbols of pure energy. The artists’ love of light and color in the form of gold and jewels or enamel, the complexity of engraved filigree interlaces, the creative representation of imaginary beasts and birds, and the astonishing metamorphoses of geometric patterns into zoomorphic forms give barbarian art its distinctive character. When these people came into contact with the art of the Greco-Roman Mediterranean world, they adopted individual motifs or types, especially recognizable human figures, and occasionally the static architectonic compositions, but they rejected the Classical artists’ attempts at the representation of carefully observed surface reality and modeling in light and color. The ancient Classical artist sought to bring clarity and stability to nature; the barbarian sought to re-create its complexity and shifting diversity.”

For art in pre-Renaissance European societies, the emphasis was the message and function of the artform, not necessarily the artist’s innovation and fame.

#### MEANWHILE, IN NORTH AMERICA

**800-1500 CE** Mississippian mounds were constructed and used through the Southeast.

**1050-1200 CE** Chaco Canyon road system was constructed, and Cahokia was flourishing as the largest Mississippian site. At its height, Cahokia exceeded the population of London.

Qualities of spiritual power and ritual context are essential to understanding Native American art - we need to learn the social history and accept visual culture studies as being equal to fine art (crafts and performance, film, commercial and popular art, photo and video) including dance and oratory traditions. This begins with careful consideration looking at our own Eurocentric bias, and we consider hierarchies of race, gender and class in canons. “New art history” takes into account colonialism, as well as touristic commodification.

Personal devotion in addition to community contributions are central to many Native American artforms. Artwork was created for mass worship, and the shaman, healer, or chief elder would commission elaborate ritual equipment or clothing. Small groups with shared clan identity would gather seasonally for trade, ceremonial observance and sociability.

- Janet Catherine Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art* (2015)



According to Paul Jentz in *Seven Myths*, nationalistic white history in our country focuses on a dichotomy of heroes and villains. As early American settlers commemorate colonization, the myth of the innately “savage” Native American served an essential purpose. The very first images Europeans saw of Native Americans reminded them of innocent primitive Eden, like Adam and Eve living naked and harmonious with nature.



In 1502 Amerigo Vespucci described Caribbean natives living without shame. Stereotypes formed early: animal lust, gluttony, without discipline, without kings and laws ordained by God to humans. These concepts grew from the ancient European myths of hairy “Wild Men” and, even worse, “Wild Women” who were even more sinful heathens with biological inferiority to white individuals.

Late 1500s imperial English books encouraged colonization justified by the myth that the Natives Americans lacked intelligence to make full use of natural resources. Then later, for others, Native Americans were considered somewhat respectable as “natural geniuses” unburdened by science and scholarship.

A common misperception of Native Americans is that they are frozen in their primitive state - Europeans were looking back to mythology in 8th century BCE ancient Greece as an analogy to make the strange more familiar. People thought of a primordial “golden age” as a delightful counterpoint to an industrial European life of toiling.

Puritans saw Native American people serving as agents of the devil in a cosmic dramatic battle between God and Satan, so massacre and eradication was justified. On the other hand one could become a “good savage” by submitting and aiding colonists (*see Baptism of Pocahontas, 1840, by John Gadsby Chapman in US Capitol rotunda*), and within this myth, Native American people become tragic victims to colonization as opposed to active agents who made choices to ally, assimilate or not.

What about Kansas, and the art & cultures of the Midwest? What about the “Wild West”?

Expansion into pristine wilderness was core to an American Ideal, [see Bierstadt and Moran](#). Artists included tiny native people in their picturesque masterpieces to provide scale, but it was a theatrical effect to arouse curiosity and delight among the white European Americans.

**100-500 CE** Hopewell society from the Ohio River Valley influenced archaic hunters living on the Plains. They developed a **Plains-Woodland** way of life. With skills to grow corn and other food, native people began to have a larger more reliable food supply, and their camps and villages became numerous throughout Kansas. - Kansas History Museum

**500 CE** The Cuesta people were a later Woodland culture to settle in southeastern Kansas. Their villages had up to 200 people clustered in river valleys; they hunted and grew corn. Wichita, Osage, Kansa, Pawnee and Plains Apache all have roots in early Plains cultures. They lived in permanent villages with large gardens and had temporary structures for seasonal bison hunts. - Kansas History Museum

Throughout the Americas for the next several hundred years, artistic traditions would continue to emerge, develop and be transformed as the indigenous peoples of various regions interacted. The sudden incursions of Europeans, beginning in the late 15th century, would have dramatic and lasting impact on these civilizations and their art. - Stokstad

“Quivira” is a place named by explorer Francisco Vázquez de Coronado in 1541, for the mythical “Seven Cities of Gold” that he never found. Colonization continues to this day.

**1898** the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway (ATSF) hired European American artists to make posters promoting romantic visions for tourism, enticing travel to the Southwest through a sense of mystery, commodifying exotic “ancient” native customs and rituals.

Plains cultures became the “typical” or “authentic” Native American because of 20th century radio, film, dime novel stories, and advertisement imagery concurrent with westward expansion across the Plains.



Albert Bierstadt, *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak* (1863), oil on canvas, 73 × 120" The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY

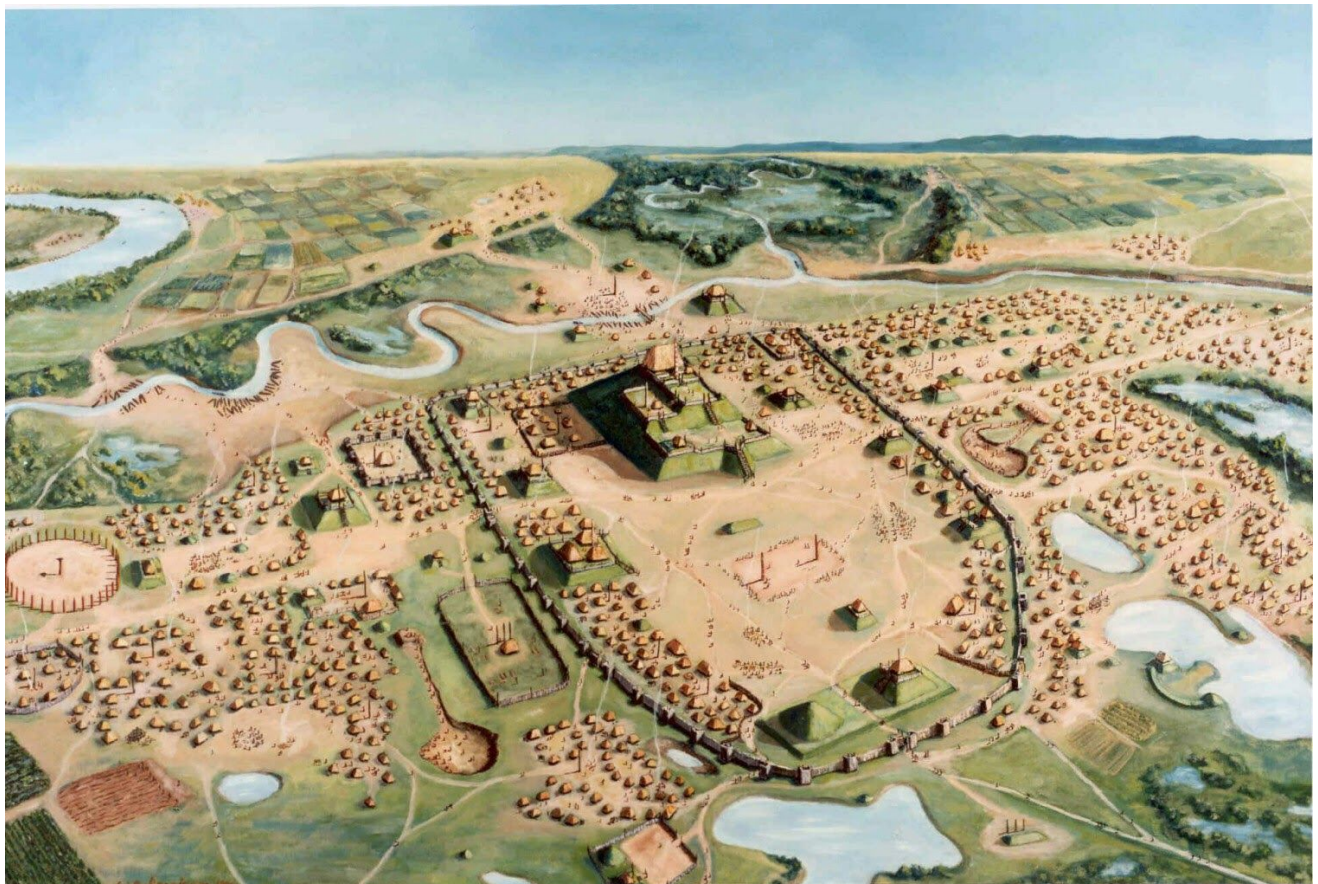
Thomas Moran, *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, 1872, oil on canvas, 84 x 144", Smithsonian American Art Museum



What were some similar qualities between pre-contact Native American cultural sites and concurrent cities in medieval Europe?

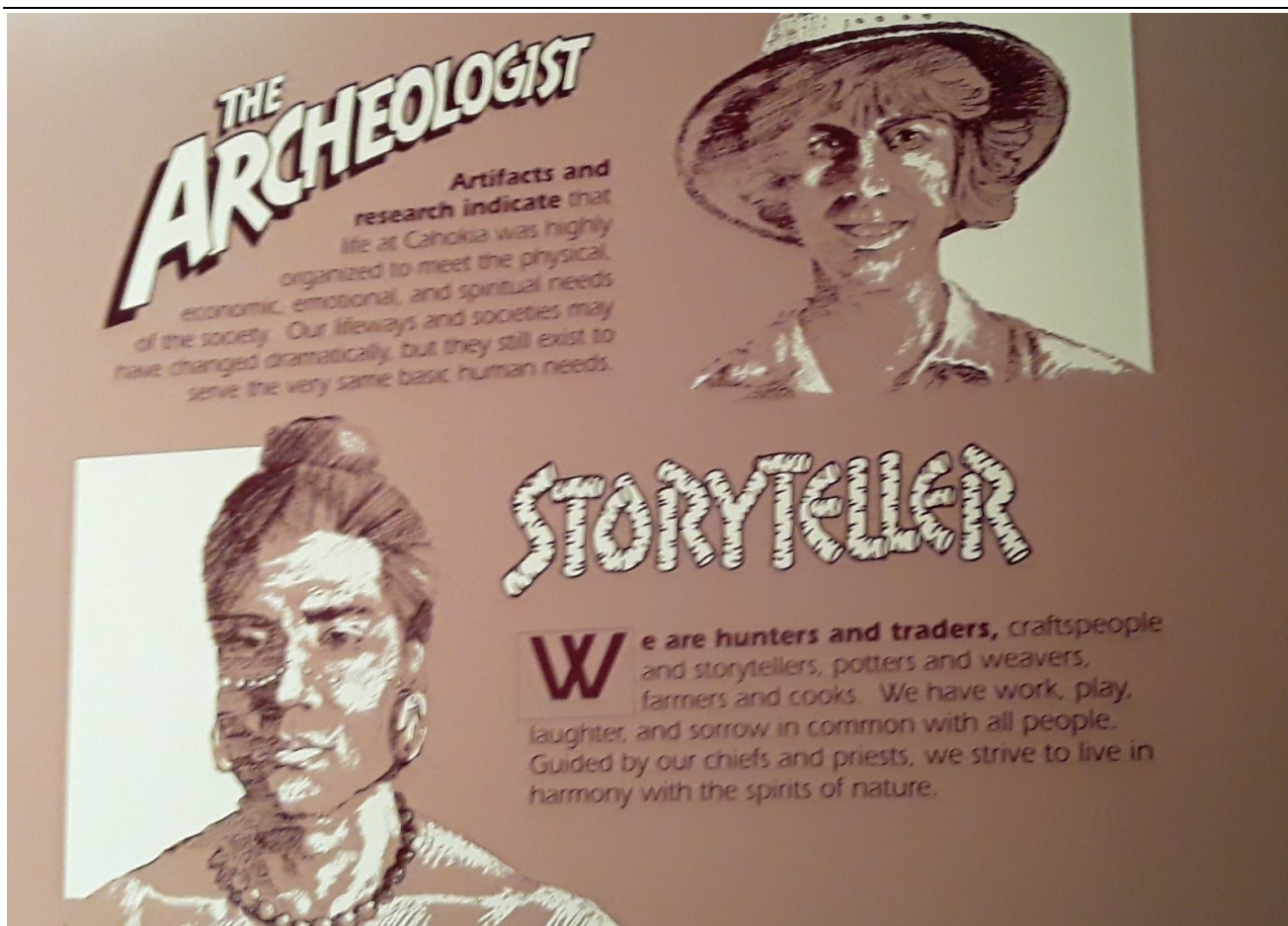
**See painting of Cahokia.** Stokstad wrote about Mississippian mound builders, Adena and Hopewell civilizations - we know from burial excavations, there was copper jewelry and other signs of trade networks. Question: Should these objects be repatriated, and to whom? "The 18th century settlers began to dig around in the mounds - sometimes to satiate curiosity, sometimes to seek treasure, sometimes simply to plant their crops." 19th century observers theorized Native Americans could not possibly have built such sophisticated structures as Cahokia and other mounds, and it must have been Aztec or some long lost race, canaanites - one of the lost tribes of Israel, or even survivors from the lost Atlantis.

Gardner wrote: "Elaborate earthworks exemplify the universal practice of creating visually monumental settings for ceremonial activities." The Serpent mound was not for burial, rather it was a fertility effigy in animal form, or perhaps created in reverence to Halley's comet.



Painting by William Iseminger. This rendering helps us imagine the great site of Cahokia when it was inhabited by tens of thousands of people many centuries ago. The large plazas were filled with people wearing rich garments and accessories during ritual ceremonies. At other times people went about their daily lives. Early Spanish and French explorers described rectangular houses with thatched roofs depicted here.

## Cahokia Mounds Historic Site Interpretation Center



Archaeologists use the criteria highlighted below to judge whether or not a site was a city. What do you think? Decide if prehistoric Cahokia was a city in its time as St. Louis is today. Does Cahokia score high enough on the archaeologists' ten point scale?



- Art
- Population density
- Specialization of labor
- Surplus capital
- Long-distance trade
- Social stratification
- Organized government
- Monumental public works
- True science
- Writing



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