# BLOODY SAVAGES/WHITE INVADERS:

# IMAGES OF THE OTHER IN NON-NATIVE AND NATIVE ART

By

Matthew Sean Ellis

A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment
of
the Requirements of the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN ART HISTORY

University of Wisconsin - Superior

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As members of the Thesis Committee, we certify that we have read the thesis prepared by Matthew Sean Ellis and hereby approve it as fulfilling the thesis requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in Art History.

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Abstract:
Europeans, from the time of their first arrival in the Americas, documented the New World inhabitants and their "strange" customs via drawings, etchings, and paintings. These invariably inaccurate and stereotypical images of Native Americans as the *'Other'* are, even today, the basis for most people's beliefs about Indians. After European contact many Native Americans began to reinvent their traditional art forms by incorporating new materials brought from Europe, such as glass and ceramic beads, metal woodworking tools, and paint. And, like the Europeans, Native Americans began to document in their art the strange lifestyles of the Europeans who were taking over their homelands. This thesis examines the history and meaning of culturally biased European misrepresentations of Native Americans, the early Native American portrayals of Europeans, and an analysis of the art of two contemporary Native American artists, who address in their work the issue of the stereotyping and misrepresentation of the American Indians.

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# CHAPTER 1

## *I Meet Some Indians. I Talk to an Ojibwe Teacher about Art*

In 1995 I moved to Hayward, Wisconsin. And in 2003 I enrolled in classes at the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Community College, which is located on the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe reservation. This college is one of the thirty-four tribal colleges in the United States, and most of the students who attend the college are Ojibwe, with a few Natives from other tribes attending as well (Ho-Chunk, Lakota, etc). And not just the Indians, the college welcomes any student, so there are non-Natives enrolled as well. Classes are generally of 75 – 80 percent Native Americans, and 20 – 25 percent non-Natives. [1]

It didn't take very long before I came to realize that none of the Indians I met at the Lac Courte Oreilles College and at the Ojibwe community were anything like the preconceived notions and beliefs I had about the Native Americans. Some of them were dark skinned, long haired and dark eyed. But many, who I'd assumed were white, turned out to be Indians. Some of the Ojibwe I met were culturally traditional, that is, they continued as much as possible to engage in hunting and gathering; harvesting wild rice in the fall, making maple syrup and maple sugar in the spring, spear fishing, and hunting and trapping. Some also participated in the traditional Ojibwe spiritual practices, such as the *Big Drum* and the *Midewiiwin Lodge.* Others were politically active in Native American and local tribal issues. But there were also in the community, some Ojibwe who seemed to be clueless about local tribal politics as well as their own history, never engaged in any of the traditional Ojibwe activities, and were practicing Christians.

[1] Ray Burns, Dean of Student Services, Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Community College

I am speaking in broad generalities now, but invariably the Indians I met in the Lac Courte Oreilles community were warm, generous, and funny. They accepted and befriended me, even though I was a pale-skinned white man. I was invited to parties, sweat-lodges, naming ceremonies, and often just to hang out, sometimes at local bars. My experiences with actual Native Americans led me to realize I was carrying, deep in my consciousness, stereotypical and non-realistic expectations of how Native Americans were supposed to look, think, and act; which led to some serious self-examination on my part: on what information had I been basing my ideas of "Indianness"? What beliefs had I stored in my consciousness that led me to such a wildly inaccurate idea of what a Native American was? What visual images of Indians were embedded in my consciousness, and where had these images come from?

An exercise in one the classes I took, *Anishinaabe Bimaadiziwin: Introduction to Tribal Culture*, taught by David Bisonette, provided some answers to these questions. Dave asked the students one at a time (there were about twenty-five students - two-third of them Native Americans), to mention an Indian name, any Indian. The names (the students) mentioned were Geronimo, Pocahontas, Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, Cochise, Iron-Eyes Cody, Jim Thorpe, Black Elk and Sacajawea. The instructor asked the class to write a response paper answering why everyone in the class, Indian and white alike, responded with the names we did, which were almost exclusively either dead Indians from long ago, or Plains Indians.

According to the 2010 government census the U.S. population is approximately 309 million people. Of this number, less than 1% is Native American.[2] This means that the vast majority of Americans will rarely, if ever, have any day-to-day interactions with American Indians. Also, because many "official" Indians (enrolled members of a federally recognized tribe) no longer "look" Indian, Americans may be encountering Indians without being aware that the person they are interacting with is in fact an Indian.

Virtually every American, and in fact probably most people on the planet, of any age group, if asked to describe what an Indian looks like, will have an answer, because they will have embedded in their consciousness (as was embedded in mine) several very concrete definitions of what Indians look like and how Indians act.[3] Invariably, the ideas of "Indian-ness" that non-Natives hold in their minds will be a variation of: Indians have dark skin, long dark hair and dark eyes, often wear war bonnets with eagle feathers, and ride horses. Many also believe that Indians live in teepees.[4] These embedded preconceptions of Native Americans have become a collective misrepresentation. The question remains: where did these misconceptions and images come from? As I discovered in writing my response paper to the class exercise described above, it didn't take much deep thinking to reveal the answer: popular culture.[5]

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[2] http://2010.census.gov/2010census

[3] I conducted no research to establish this claim, but I believe it is an accurate general assessment.

[4] Although beyond the scope of this paper, also often included in the responses will be social and cultural stereotypes: Indians are spiritual and have visions, Indians love and respect Mother Earth, Indians are often drunk, and Indians are lazy because they get everything for free from the government/their casinos. A very small minority of people, mostly those who have some understanding of U.S. history, might also express regret/shame at the "raw deal" the Indians received.

[5] Cinema, from the early1900s on, has played a significant role in creating Indian stereotypes. However, this paper will examine only the two and three-dimensional arts, so there will be no discussion of film's role in the creation of Native stereotypes.

*I Talk to an Ojibwe Teacher about Art:*

In a personal conversation with Tom Antell, who is the Division Head of Native American Studies and an instructor at the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Community College, Professor Antell explained:

> In the old days, and even today for traditional Native Americans, everyday life was strongly connected to the spiritual world. There was no separation between the natural world and the supernatural world, sometimes called the Spirit world. In the U.S. there exists a separation between church and state, but for Indians that separation would have been unthinkable and incomprehensible. A village was governed with prayers to and assistance from spirit beings. [6]

Antell also explained further that: any items that Westerners consider 'objects' are considered by the Ojibwe to have spirits and are considered to be alive. This is reflected in the Ojibwe language. Things are either animate or inanimate, they are alive or not alive, or do or do not have a Spirit. A drum is considered to be alive. In Ojibwe you wouldn't say about a drum, 'Hand *it* to me.' You would say, 'Hand *him* to me.' In the same way, Indians didn't have a separate category for art. There is no word for art, as such, in the Ojibwe language, and in many Native languages it's the same. This doesn't mean that Indians didn't have an understanding of aesthetics, because you can look at an Ojibwe carving or beadwork and see incredible beauty and design. Indians didn't compartmentalize everything the way westerners do, so art and Spirit can't really be separated either. The Native worldview is about wholeness and integration, not separation, so when you see a beautifully decorated and painted *dewe'igan*, a drum, all of the hard labor and the artistry that went into creating and decorating that *dewe'igan* was intended honor the drum, because it is a living being. It is alive, and must be tended to and cared for and honored. The same thing applies for *opwaaganag*, pipes, which were,

[6] Conversation with Tom Antell, March 25, 2011

and still are, beautifully carved and decorated, both the stem and the bowl (Illustration 1). The pipe and the drum are both used in ceremonies that directly connect the Ojibwe to the spirit world. The Ojibwe used to carry their plates and utensils around with them when they travelled. A carved wooden bowl or spoon might have a small animal or a drawing carved into it, and this animal or drawing represented and honored either an animal spirit or maybe a guardian spirit or was the person's clan symbol, so this incredible carved spoon or bowl had multiple purposes. It was functional, it was beautiful in an artistic way, and it was spiritual, all at the same time. That is why for the Ojibwe, and for most Indians I think, you can't make those types of separate categories and insist that everything be in the proper box, the kind of thinking that white society seems to depend on.[7]

[7] Conversation with Tom Antell, March 25, 2011

# CHAPTER 2

## *European-American Representation of Native Americans*

In 1492, when Columbus sailed the oceans blue, and "discovered" America, he recorded his experiences in journals and letters, as did many of the many explorers who set sail after Columbus returned safely to Europe. The writings of these explorers, when published in Europe, were accompanied by images. Regarding one of these images (Illustration 2), Berkhofer writes:

> This woodcut is usually claimed to be the first picture showing Native Americans in some ethnographic detail. Since the artist depicts Indian life according to the widely circulated description of Vespucci, he emphasizes cannibalism, open love-making, and their scanty feather dress. Not having seen his subjects, he erroneously gives them beards.[8]

The first known visual depictions of Native Americans firmly set in place the idea of the Indian as a Bloody Savage (Illustration 3), and generally included as well, images that portrayed Indians, especially Indian women, as lustful and wanton. These images became the forerunners for the sort of inaccurate stereotypes that will continue for the next five-hundred (500) years, and which still exist today, although usually in a somewhat more benign, yet equally stereotypical and damaging form (Illustration 4).

The first Europeans that inhabited America held firm beliefs about the Indians they encountered: Native Americans were savage and primitive. These beliefs "established images of Indians that endured for centuries."[9] Because the earliest depictions of Native Americans were based on written accounts of the New World, these initial images were

[8] Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian,* 138-139.
[9] Calloway, *First Peoples*, 77.

somewhat unusual, in that they were created by artists who had never *seen* an actual Indian.

These initial images and ideas of Indians that were seen and read in Europe were not always negative. Some have described the Natives as generous, handsome, brave, dignified, etc, which helped to create the stereotype of the Noble Savage.[10] But paired with the Noble Savage were always the Bloody Savage; the Indian who was treacherous, scheming; lazy; violent, and blood-thirsty (Illustration 5).[11] As Berkhofer explains:

> White hopes for the exploitation of Indians and their lands certainly shaped their perceptions of Native Americans from the very beginning of contact…If the primitivistic version of Indian goodness promised easy fulfillment of European desires, the image of the bad Indian proved the absolute necessity, if difficulty, of forcing Native Americans from 'savage' to European ways through the exploitation of their physical bodies, spiritual souls, or tribal lands…In fact, the whole debate…over the nature of the Indian can be viewed as a dispute among colonists, clergy, and crown officials about the proper method of exploiting the native, for the consequences of the arguments benefitted some groups at the expense of others.[12]

The early settlers saw Indians as obstacles to the colonization of the New World, due to the unfortunate fact that the Indians had legitimate claims to the one thing the colonists most needed: land. Thus, the image of the 'savage' and 'godless' Indian became a necessity when it became apparent to the colonists that war must be waged in order to dispose the Indians of their land. Genocidal practices that led to the extermination of a people are less guilt-inducing when the people being exterminated are viewed as less than human. The Puritan's belief that they were God's chosen people justified their right to take the land from the heathen Indians. The Indians were devil worshippers in America's

[10] Calloway, *First Peoples*, 77-79.
[11] This dichotomy still exists today. The contemporary Noble Savage is the Indian who is "in touch" with Mother Earth, nature, and animals (usually eagles, wolves, and bears), has profound visions and a deep spirituality, and lives a life of purity compared to Western societies. The contemporary Bloody Savage is the drunken welfare Indian who lives off government handouts and/or casino profits.
[12] Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 119.

"Promised Land." The results of Puritan theology were horrific for the local Indians, whether or not they were 'Noble or Bloody Savages'. The Puritans believed it was their divinely inspired duty to convert these "Canaanites" to Christianity. Feigning that it was biblically acceptable to slaughter Indians in the name of Christ, in 1637, the Puritans waged a massacre against the Pequot Indians, surrounded a Pequot village and set it on fire. Colonist William Bradford describes the massacre:

> Those that escaped the fire were slaine with the sword; some hewed to peeces, others rune throw with their rapiers, so as they were quickly dispatchte, and very few escaped…they thus destroyed about 400…It was a fearfull sight to see them thus frying in the fryer, and the streams of blood quenching the same, and horrible was the stinck & sent ether of; but the victory seemed a sweete sacrifice, and they gave the prays thereof to God, who had wrought so wonderfully for them, thus to inclose their enimise in their hands, and give them so speedy a victory over so proud & insulting an enimie.[13] [Please Note: the present writer left all the spelling/grammatical errors unedited].

Of this massacre, Captain John Mason declared, "God laughed his Enemies and the Enemies of his People to Scorn, making them as a fiery Oven…Thus did the Lord Judge among the Heathen, filling the Place with dead Bodies." Captain John Underhill also wrote of the Pequot slaughter: "Sometimes the Scripture declareth women and children must perish with their parents...We have sufficient light from the Word of God for our proceedings."[14]

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[13] Wish, ed., *William Bradford: Of Plymouth Plantation*, 184.

[14] Segal, *Puritans, Indians, and Manifest Destiny*, pp. 111-112, 134-135.

The anti-Indian attitudes and policies of the early Colonists continued to prevail as the settlement of North America continued. After the American Revolution, the settlers need for Indian land became the most important factor in determining Government policy in dealing with the Indians. The Founding Fathers, keenly aware that the eyes of the world were watching the growth and development of their new democratic Republic, wanted to appear to be advocating proper Christian behavior and humane legal policies when removing Indians from their Homelands. A large amount of Indian land was obtained through the use of treaties, which appeared to fulfill the necessary legal and moral obligations when acquiring Indian lands. However, every single treaty was broken, often almost before the ink was dry, and every single treaty was in some way nothing more than legal land theft. Furthermore, the settlers flooded onto Indian land more often than not, completely disregarded these legal policies, and simply eradicated the Indians living on the land they wished to acquire.

The wars against the Indians to steal their lands continued from the earliest days of the Colonies until the late 1890s, when there was no more land to acquire, and the Indians had all been forced onto reservations.

This propagandistic device, portraying the images of Indians as 'Bloody Savages', helped ease the guilty consciences of those who were "unsettling" the Indians from their lands via extermination and theft. The depictions of Indians as merciless savages continued throughout the "settling" of North America. John Vanderlyn, in 1804, painted *The Death of Jane McCrea*, which portrays an innocent and virtuous white woman being

attacked and killed by brutal, savage Indians (Illustration 6). Drinnon's view about this painting is unequivocal:

> "Vanderlyn's painting helped set the pattern for an endless series of pictorial indictments of Jefferson's 'merciless Indian Savages.' Always the epic contrast was between dusky evil and fair innocence, between maddened red cruelty and helpless white virtue."[15]

Until fairly recently, traditional Native American art have been judged by non-Natives as lacking the essential qualities of high aesthetics that a work of art must embody in order to be considered 'art'. The dismissal of Natives art as 'art' can be traced back to the aesthetic theories of Immanuel Kant, who formulated the idea that if an object was 'functional', as is a carved pipe, a painted buffalo robe, or an elaborately beaded bandolier bag, its utilitarian usefulness automatically relegated that object to the category of 'craft'.[16] Fortunately, these beliefs about Native American art are no longer held, and traditional Natives arts are now judged by, and recognized for their remarkably aesthetic qualities.

Most traditional Natives art objects were (and still are) functional. Each object also served (and still serves) a purpose. Elaborately beaded moccasins were used daily until they wore out, as were beaded or quill-work bags. Native Americans valued beauty and artistic skill and almost every object used in daily life was adorned in some aesthetically pleasing way. Most (but not all) Native Americans, because they were either nomadic or semi-nomadic, had to consider the size and mobility prospect of everything they owned. For the Plains Indians, lugging around a large painting or sculpture made no sense, but a

[15] Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire Building,* 101.
[16] Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 15.

painted tipi or a beautifully painted parfleche bag is both portable and functional art (Illustration 7).

## CHAPTER 3

*Edward S. Curtis Photographs Some Indians (and Creates Lasting Stereotypes)*

For several centuries after arriving in the Americas, the Europeans have continued their explorations of the New World. Some expeditions were Government funded, and these were often accompanied by European artists, such as Karl Bodmer and Peter Rindisbacher, who both were hired as visual documentarians.

The artists George Catlin, Frederic Remington, Edward S. Curtis, and others, documented Native Americans because of their personal interest in Indian culture. Each of these men shared the belief that "pure" Indian life would soon vanish under the onslaught of the rapidly encroaching white man. Catlin also believed fervently that his mission was to undo centuries of negative imagery of Indians. In his vivid analysis of Catlin's correcting the white man's centuries of stereotyping the Native Americans, Hausdoerrfer writes:

> Catlin sincerely desired to break stereotypes that Indians were violent drunks and brutish, cultureless beasts. He set out, in part, to show that 'a wild man may be endowed by his Maker with all the humane and noble traits that inhabit the heart of a tame man… Catlin felt that when Americans saw drunk and violent Indians along the frontier, they saw the results of the corruptions of civilization, not the primary character of Indians as 'endowed by their 'Maker.' He hoped that his paintings and writings about tribes far beyond the frontier would reveal the inaccuracy of American prejudices toward Indians.[17]

And according to Haberly, Catlin has also made the following positive comment about Native Americans, "The history and customs of such a people are themes worthy of the

[17] Hausdoerrfer, *Catlin's Lament:Indians, Manifest Destiny, and the Ethics of Nature,* 83.

lifetime of one man, and nothing short of the loss of my life shall prevent me from visiting their country and becoming their historian."[18]

To fully understand the visual portrayals of Indians by non-Naïve (white) artists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it is necessary to elaborate on the works of Frederic Remington and Edward S. Curtis, which helped to not only perpetuate, but set firmly in place, the stereotypical images and ideas about Indians. While Remington in his drawings, paintings, and sculptures of the Old West and frontier life was firmly in the camp of the Indian as savage; Curtis' photographs, on the other hand, proclaimed that those Indians still remaining in America were noble souls, gentle children of the deserts and the forests.

There already exists a fairly sizeable and well-known body of work that critiques and addresses the issue of authenticity and stereotype in the photographs of Curtis. But as this thesis is primarily about those very issues, and because Curtis almost single-handedly created many of the most persistent stereotypes of Indians, he will be further discussed in this section of the thesis.

Curtis was born in rural Wisconsin in 1868. In 1900, after a visit to the Crow Indian Reservation in Montana, He made the decision to devote himself full time to preserving through photography, the "vanishing race", the Native Americans and their lifestyles he believed were rapidly disappearing due to the endless encroachment of white civilization and culture. Curtis believed that the disappearance of Indians and their vibrant culture was inevitable. He viewed Indians as incapable of adapting to, or fitting in with white culture, which was ever more rapidly surrounding Indian homelands. In his

[18] Haberly, *Pursuit of the Horizon: A Life of George Catlin, Painter and Recorder of the American Indian,* 195

photographs, Curtis blatantly disregarded or edited out evidence that some Indians were, in fact, successfully adapting to the white man's presence while maintaining much of their own cultural traditions.

Curtis spent the next thirty years of his life creating a multivolume work, *The North American Indian,* a set of twenty illustrated text volumes and twenty large-format portfolios published between 1907 and 1930. Curtis produced tens of thousands of photographs, 2,223 of them are in *The North American Indian.*[19] These photographs, which were used as illustrations in numerous books about Indians, also appear in articles, films, and documentaries about Native Americans; as well as in advertisements, posters, calendars, stationary, among others. Curtis' Indian photographs, more than any other artwork, are responsible for firmly planting in most people's minds the idea of what "an Indian is". Unfortunately, Curtis' photographs do not present an accurate historical portrayal of how the Indians were living at the time he photographed them. Rather, they represent Curtis' romanticized and mythical beliefs of how Indians once were.

Because photographs are frozen moments in time, photography is often considered "truthful" and "scientific" because it "never lies", and is therefore less likely to contain the ideas and opinions that other artists can't help but incorporate into their paintings and sculptures. Curtis seemed to have believed in photography's impartiality, while at the same time altering the truthfulness of his photographs by retouching them, as well as altering his Indian subjects by costuming and staging them to fit his ideas of how Indians were supposed to look, think, and act.

[19] Kenedy, *The Plains Indian Photographs of Edward S. Curtis,* 13.

Curtis' and his contemporaries' believe about the Indians have also been corroborated by Lyman, when he writes:

> Roughly stated, Curtis's generation believed that Indians were only real Indians when they behaved as they were imagined to have behaved prior to contact with Whites. Scientists of his generation therefore studied Indians largely in those terms. These general beliefs led to the creation and perpetuation of stereotypes of 'Indianness' still prevalent in American culture.[20]

Lyman later writes that, "In keeping with traditions in White thought, Curtis was so affected by his perceptions of Indian 'otherness' that he often overlooked the extreme diversity of the cultures he confronted and described Indians in terms of an imagined racial unity as 'the Indian.'"[21]

One of Curtis's most iconic photographs is *The Vanishing Race – Navajo* (Illustration 8). This photograph can be considered a distillation of all of Curtis' endeavors and beliefs about Indians. His own caption for the photograph reads:

> The thought which this picture is meant to convey, is that the Indians as a race, already shorn of their tribal strength and stripped of their primitive dress, are passing into the darkness of an unknown future. Feeling that the picture expresses so much the thought that inspired the entire work, the author has chosen it as the first of the series.[22]

Lyman, in explaining this photograph, notes its overt romanticism and discusses its allusion to manifest destiny, which held that the spread of Christian civilization across the American continent was divinely inspired and inevitable, and under which Indians would disappear. "A line of Indians crosses a murky foreground (metaphorically, the present) toward a threatening wall of darkness (the future). Above the darkness is an aura of light (Curtis's hope for 'improvement' of Indians through assimilation into White culture). *The*

[20] Lyman, *The Vanishing Race and Other Illusions,* 19-20.
[21] Lyman, *The Vanishing Race and Other Illusions,* 62.
[22] Kennedy, *The Plains Indian Photographs of Edward S. Curtis,* 14.

*Vanishing Race – Navajo* also foreshadows Curtis's 'entire work' in another way: it is heavily retouched."[23]

An examination of the photograph *In a Piegan lodge*, (Illustrations 9 & 10) shows the steps Curtis was willing to take in order to create an image of "real" Indians. It can be seen that a clock in the original photograph has been replaced with a woven basket, because the "real" Indians that Curtis was inventing would never have used such a civilized and Western object, a clock. Curtis was also known to have removed from his photographs anything that gave evidence that Native Americans were in fact not only touched by, but often times willing participants in White culture. Curtis removed in his Indian photos, suspenders, automobiles, and umbrellas, among others. And he even went so far as to putting wigs on Indians who wore their hair short.

Curtis sometimes paid his (Indian) subjects so that they would dress in inaccurate clothing and enact tribal ceremonies that were not a part of their traditions. For instance, one of his doctored photographs entitled *Oglala War Party,* shows a group of Sioux warriors posed for battle. Whereas in 1907, the year the photograph was taken, the Plains Indian's days as warriors were long over; they were restricted to reservations! As Kennedy states, Curtis "intentionally omits any acknowledgement that the old ancestral way of life had already become extinct. This and similarly pictorial compositions evoke the Plains Indians' past freedom within the vastness of nature, yet they belie the very limited range of movement permitted these people."[24]

During the period when Curtis was photographing Indians (from 1900 to1930), Native Americans were faced with dire problems stemming from U.S. Government

[23] Lyman, *The Vanishing Race*, 80.
[24] Kennedy, *The Plains Indian Photographs of Edward S. Curtis,* 10.

policies that were aimed at the eradication of Indian cultures. Native Americans also faced continued land-loss, crippling poverty, and widespread disease. Had Curtis actually documented Indians as they really were, rather than how he wished them to be, he might have become a strong voice advocating for the humane treatment of Native Americans and a powerful documentarian of the injustices under which Indians were suffering. Unfortunately, his photographs of "the vanishing race" only perpetuated firmly held stereotypes, and strengthened the collective American belief that Indians were doomed to disappear from the face of the earth.

Some might forgive Curtis for his photographic manipulations, justifying his actions because his "intentions were good", but the impact of his stereotypical photographs has been too great on the popular imagination, and his photographs are still ever present. Many people, when asked to think of a "real" Indian, probably have in their consciousness an idea of "Indianness" partially based on the falsely mythic images of Edward S. Curtis.

Corroborating and hammering on the limitation(s) of Curtis' Indian photo-journal, Vine Deloria, Jr. did state the following:

> The Curtis Indians have come to occupy a particular place in the pantheon of cherished symbols that inform us about our American identity. As such they relate less to the reality of Indians than we would like and testify to less precise aspects of the American experience – the history we would have liked to have possessed. In this sense they will no doubt always be popular and represent in the public's mind a West and a people that subsequent yearning for certainty has created…if they come to represent an Indian that never was, and color our appraisal of things Indian with romantic shibboleths that shield us from present-day realities, then our use of them is a delusion and a perversion of both Indians and the artful expressions of Curtis.

# CHAPTER 4

## *"Good Work, Soldiers!!" Proclaimed Frederic Remington, when told of the Massacre of the Sioux at Wounded Knee*

Frederic Remington was born in Canton, New York in 1861 and died in 1909 at the age of 48 in Ridgefield, Connecticut. Remington studied art at Yale University, but dropped out before obtaining a degree. He made his first excursion to the "wild" west in 1881, at the age of 19, when he went to Montana. There he saw some of the last military confrontations against Indians, as well as the vast prairies dotted with dwindling herds of buffalo. Remington's first commercial sale, a drawing published by *Harper's Weekly*, was based on this trip. Remington tried and failed at several businesses, including a sheep ranch, a mining operation, a hardware store, and a saloon. However, because he was able to sell several of his paintings to local residents, Remington decided to focus on art as a career. He moved to Brooklyn and studied at the Art Students League of New York. At the age of 25 *Harper's Weekly* published a full-page cover drawn by Remington, who had already began to falsely adopt a cowboy demeanor to impress eastern publishers.

In 1886 Remington was sent by *Harper's Weekly* to cover the U.S. Government's war against Geronimo. He failed to even catch a glimpse of Geronimo, but with this experience his role as a documentarian of Indians and of the "wild west" was firmly set in place. For the first time Remington was also doing reasonably well financially, earning in his first year as an illustrator $1,200.00, which at the time was triple the average salary of a teacher. Remington took an extended trip to Canada in 1887, and produced illustrations of the Blackfoot and Crow Indians, as well as the Canadian Mounted Police.

Remington's growing fame brought him to the attention of Theodore Roosevelt, who commissioned him to produce eighty-three drawings for Roosevelt's book *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail,* which established a lifelong friendship between Remington and the future President. Roosevelt's anti-Indian beliefs were similar to Remington's. In 1886 Roosevelt stated, "I suppose I should be ashamed to say that I take the Western view of the Indian. I don't go so far as to think that the only good Indians are dead Indians, but I believe nine out of every ten are, and I shouldn't like to inquire to closely into the case of the tenth." [25]

In 1890 Remington had his first one man show, which was a success, and which established him into East Coast "society." He was embraced in part because of the false biography he was inventing for himself, in which he suggested that he was a "bona fide" cowboy, sometime Indian scout, and true "wild westerner." He even adopted "pseudo-cowboy" manners of speech.

Remington became the favorite artist of the Army officers who were fighting the last battles against the Plains Indians. General Nelson Miles, an Indian fighter who had Presidential ambitions, commissioned Remington to create portraits of the officers and the western battles. For the public who read the articles and saw the illustrations, Remington was now "The Soldier Artist" in addition to already being "The Cowboy Artist."

Remington was one of the founders of western and cowboy art. Others included Charles Russell and the less well-known Charles Schreyvogel. What Remington and other western artists created was a fantasy history of the "settling" of the American West,

[25] Hagedom, *Roosevelt in the Badlands*, 355.

which chose to ignore the historical reality of the genocide of Indians, land theft, broken treaties, assimilation, and other injustices against Native Americans.

As J. Gray Sweeny writes in his essay *Racism, Nationalism, and Nostalgia in Cowboy Art:*

> The cultural values exposed here are racism, nationalism and nostalgia…It is an art form implicitly endorsing the suppression of Native Americans who are condemned as 'savages', for resisting white expansion into the West, or patronized for their lack of 'culture'. The cowboy hero – a macho Illustration of the imagination who has been enshrined in the consciousness of the world as an archetypal protagonist of American history – is the mythic persona fostered in this historical vision of a past as a national morality play.[26]

Remington is often praised for his historical authenticity, even though his portrayal of Indians invariably shows them as hordes of faceless savages, often appearing in the background of the paintings, in pursuit of heroic, brave cowboys (or soldiers), who are clearly delineated in the foreground of the painting. "Although it has never been mentioned in the extensive literature on his painting, Remington's formulation of his visual narrative conveniently omits any indication of what these cowboy buckaroos may have done to provoke the Native Americans."[27]

Claims for Remington's "authenticity" are derived from his attention to detail—his saddles, guns, clothing, horses, etc. are accurately detailed. Yet in the "big picture", the historical accuracy when portraying Indians, Remington chooses to forego historical accuracy in favor of the mythology of American progress, the supremacy of white Christian civilization and capitalism, the inevitability of the "vanishing" of the Indians that God and justice were on the side of whites, and, above all, the implicit endorsement of manifest destiny.

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[26] Sweeney, *Racism, Nationalism, and Nostalgia in Cowboy Art*, 67.
[27] Ibid, 69.

That Remington's paintings are even now considered accurate history reveals how persistent are the images created by the first Europeans when they began to portray Indians as bloody savages. In Remington's version of history, it is the Indians who are the marauders, when in fact the real plunderers were the whites who were stealing Indian land. As Baigell states:

> Without compensatory images and literary texts depicting white cowboys and soldiers attacking, raping, and mutilating Native Americans, such paintings as those of Stanley, Remington, and Schreyvogel helped to further desensitize Americans to the destruction of Native American lives, not to mention cultures.[28]

Remington's along with his generation's dominant racist attitudes has long been known to scholars of his work, although it has been, until very recently, withheld from the public. For instance, Baigell has unveiled the following from Remington's private letters, which illustrate this attitude that so powerfully informs his art found vengeful expression: "Never will be able to sell a picture to a Jew again," he wrote a friend, "(I) 'did sell one once. You can't glorify Jew – coin loving puds – nasty humans." He continued: "I've got some Winchester's, and when the massacre begins…I can get my share of 'em and what's more I will. Jews – Injuns – Chinamen – Italians – Huns, the rubbish of the earth I hate."[29]

[28] Baigell, *Territory, Race, Religion: Images of Manifest Destiny,* 6.
[29] Sweeney, *Racism, Nationalism, and Nostalgia in Cowboy Art,* 69-70.

# CHAPTER 5

## *The Indians Document White Culture*

Imagery created by Native Americans that date from the time of their Tribe's first contact with Europeans is rare. There are some examples, however, and they provide evidence as to how Native Americans viewed the Europeans they encountered. In *Spaniards on Horseback* (Illustration 11), it can be seen that the arrival of the well-armed Spanish on horseback made a strong enough impression on the Native people that the encounter was preserved in pictographs on a difficult to access rock wall. The pictographs are almost photographic, not in their style, but in their ability to record without comment a moment in time: the arrival of a group of people who must have seemed frighteningly strange to the Indians.

Europeans did not begin to inhabit the Northwest Coast of America in any significant numbers until the middle of the 1700s, but their arrival led to same outcomes for the local Northwest Coast Tribes as had happened elsewhere: disease, land-loss, forced acculturation, and extermination. A Haida carving circa 1850 depicts a man dressed in European style clothing aiming a large pistol at a native woman whom he has grabbed by the hair and is forcing to the ground. This carving can be interpreted as a graphic metaphor of cultural collision and forced assimilation, but it is much more likely that it documents an actual act of violence against a Haida woman (Illustration 12).

The Plains Indians created forms of art unlike that of any other Native American Tribes in that it was both realistic and representational. The Plains Indians were perhaps the only people in North America whose art included historical narrative, which had for

hundreds of years been a part of their artistic tradition. The Lakota, Cheyenne, Kiowa, and other Plains men had for centuries depicted their battle exploits, acts of bravery, visions and personal histories in paintings on buffalo hide.[30]

These art forms existed in two primary categories: the winter count and biographical drawings. In their earliest forms these images were petroglyphs carved or chipped into stone, which over time gave way to the painting and drawing of highly representational images that reveal a deep interest in history, time-keeping, and cosmological matters. For hundreds of centuries Plains Indians drew and painted on hide (and later on cloth and paper) detailed portrayals of their everyday lives, their cultural practices, the natural world, the supernatural world, and their own personal histories – their autobiographies. This information has been corroborated by Christina Burke:

> Plains Indians created two basic types of pictographs: the calendric winter counts and biographical drawings that recorded the brave deeds of men, including war honors, successful hunts, and interactions with the spirits experienced during visions. Such images were painted on tipis, tipi liners, clothing (robes, shirts, leggings), paper, and in ledger books (thus giving the genre its name). Like the winter counts, during the 19th century these images were created by men; unlike winter counts, they recorded the activities of individual men.[31]

Plains Indian art is remarkable in that it documents, over a long period of history, the arrival of the white man and the effect forced assimilation and westward expansion had on traditional Plains culture and lifestyle. It makes sense that the Plains Indians, who had already been documenting their histories for centuries, would automatically begin to record their encounters with white men and the changes this meeting of two very different cultures brought about.

[30] Berlo, *Native North American Art,* 215
[31] Greene, *The Year the Stars Fell,* 3.

Plains Indian depictions of white people and white culture are generally straightforward representations of events or scenes, remarkably free from judgment or bias; they are almost photographic in their depiction of events. If read on a psychological level however, the point of view of the Plains Indian in documenting white culture becomes clear. For instance, when documenting their own homelands and environment, their own culture and ceremonies, or their own battles, Plains Indians often include in the painting or drawing abundant signs of the natural world, of nature, and very often depictions of the super-natural world as well. In the drawings or paintings can be seen animals, blue skies, green hills, the super-natural spirits, and so on. However, when representing the white world, very often all traces of nature have disappeared from the paintings or drawings, often depicting a bleak world stripped of color (Illustration 13)

*Waniyetu wowapi – The Winter Count*

The name winter count is a loose translation of the Lakota Sioux word for the winter calendars, *waniyetu wowapi,* which means, more or less, waniyetu: one years time– from first snow to first snow, and wowapi: anything that is marked and can be read, such as a book, or anything with two-dimensional markings.[32]

A winter counts is a calendar which records historical events. On a winter count calendar, each image represents a single year, and the image representing the year, and the arrangement of the series of images chosen by the creator of the calendar, usually after reaching consensus with the tribal community. Winter counts are sometimes considered to be memory aids for tribal history, and sometimes were kept for several generations. In some winter counts, the images are arranged in a spiral, in others they are

[32] Greene, *The Year the Stars Fell,* 2.

in rows. The image chosen to document the year represents something particularly unusual or remarkable that occurred during the year being represented. A meteor shower, for instance, shows up in many winter counts, as do outbreaks of smallpox.

Some of the more heart-breaking examples of the imagery chosen to represent an entire year for a winter count can be seen in Illustrations 16 and 17. The caption for the detail of a winter count by the Ogala Sioux American Horse reads: "A young man who was afflicted with the small-pox, and was in his tipi, off by himself, sang his death-song and shot himself. Suicide is more common among Indians than is generally suspected, and even boys sometimes take their own lives…It is not known whether he shot himself because of pain or some feeling of shame."[33] In drawing this image to represent the span of time from 1784-1785 American Horse documents not only a smallpox epidemic, but the psychological devastation that accompanied outbreaks of the disease.

The caption for Illustration 17 reads: "This winter count records the history of the Upper Yanktonai Sioux from the years 1823 to 1911. The entry for 1833 shows a circle filled with cross-shaped stars, which documents the Leonid meteor shower of November 1833. (Illustration 15) This event was of such significance that it appears in almost every winter count. The entries of 1837 and 1838 both show the same image, torsos covered with smallpox. But the truly heart-breaking images begin in 1877, the year the Yanktonai were forced to be confined to a small parcel of land at the Devil's Lake Agency. From that year on, every single year is documented by the same identical image, a western style log cabin, which symbolizes the Yanktonai's life on the reservation. When you realize that the entire Yanktonai community collectively chose this image to represent each year,

[33] Greene, *The Year the Stars Fell,* 106.

the tragedy of the forced assimilation of the Sioux and the horrible outcome it had on their lives becomes all too vividly and graphically apparent.

*Ledger Art*

Ledger art resulted from the forced removal of the Plains Indians from their wide-ranging land base onto government reservations, roughly between 1860 and 1890. At the same time that the Plains Indians were being forced off of their homelands, the government was engaged in the almost complete annihilation of the buffalo, having come to understand that by destroying the animal that was absolutely essential to the Plains Indians survival, the Indians would be forced to comply with the governments increasing demands. No longer able to easily obtain buffalo hides on which to paint their historical narratives, the Plains Indians began to paint their art on paper, canvas, muslin, and sometimes on commercially produced cow and buffalo hides.

The change from painting or drawing on a very large buffalo hide to a small sheet of paper, as well as the use of new materials, such as paint, paintbrushes, colored pencils, and crayons created a new, richly detailed form of Plains art that fully incorporated the older traditions used when the Plains Indians had painted their narratives on buffalo hide.

Plains Indian men, beginning in the early 1860s, began to adapt their representational/historical art onto paper. The most available type of paper at that time came in the form of the ledger books used by military accountants, hence the name *ledger art.*

As the Plains Indians were forced onto reservations, their traditional way of life was ended. They no longer were able to hunt buffalo, or engage in battle with their

traditional enemies. The change in the lifestyle of the Plains Indians is fully documented in the ledger art. As their forced assimilation into the white world increased, the traditional depiction of heroic battles and acts of personal heroism correspondingly decreased. Finally, the ledger book art of the Plains Indians most often depicted, as did the Plains Indian *winter counts*, the sad evidence of their culturally reduced daily life on the reservation.

Silver Horn, a Kiowa, produced a wry commentary on his desired outcome for the white men who were invading his home lands. Silver Horn titled his pencil and crayon ledger book drawing, circa 1887, *Great Medicine Man Who Controls the Thunder and Lightning Experiment's a Little on a White Man's House.* (Illustration 14)[34] With a remarkable level of irony and subtlety Silver Horn expresses his desire that a Kiowa medicine man, by calling upon powerful Kiowa spirit deities, help destroy the white men that had eradicated the traditional lifestyle of the Kiowa.

[34] Donnelley, *Transforming Images: The Art of Silver Horn and his Successors,* 69.

# CHAPTER 6

## *Two Contemporary Native American Artists*

The issue of stereotypical and misrepresentative portrayals of Indians by non-Natives is a common theme in the work of many contemporary Indian artists; in fact, I doubt that there are many contemporary Native artists who haven't created at least one artwork that deals with this issue. Among them are Charlene Teters, Jaune Quick-To-See Smith, Susan Folwell, Dorothy Grandbois, Gerald Tailfeathers, Fritz Scholder, Jimmie Durham and James Luna, and many others. This final section of this thesis examines the work of two contemporary Indian artists who address the issue of stereotype in powerful and thought-provoking ways: James Luna and Jimmie Durham.

### *James Luna, Trickster Artist*

James Luna is the preeminent (and most widely known) Native American performance artist. Luna, almost single-handedly in his performances, engages the audience with art that investigates and confronts, with humor and deep insight, stereotypical and false representations of Indians. Luna refers to himself as a contemporary traditionalist artist, and he states that "Native Tribal people are the least known and most incorrectly portrayed people in history, media and the arts."[35]

Luna was born in 1950 and was raised in Orange County, California. He is a member of the Luiseno Tribe and has lived on the La Jolla Indian Reservation in North County, San Diego, California since 1975. He studied art at the University of California, Irvine, where he earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. He also holds a Master of

[35] Rushing, *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century,*123.

Science degree in counseling from San Diego State University. Luna was initially a painter, but for the past thirty years his work has centered on performance and installation.[36]

James Earle Fraser's sculpture *End of the Trail*, and the literally thousands of paintings and drawings based on it, is one of the most iconic and instantly recognizable portrayals of a Native American. James Luna's photographic tableau *End of the Frail* (Illustration 18) is a witty, politically charged response to *End of the Trail*. The message is simple: The "ill-fated" Indian, portrayed by Fraser as defeated, is not dead. Indians are very much alive and a part of contemporary culture, although generally invisible to white society. The contemporary Indian still fights battles and enemies, but the wars are now fought against racism, poverty, alcoholism, and issues of Native identity. In his recreation of *End of the Trail*, Luna mimics the same beaten-down pose, but instead of sitting slumped on a horse, Luna slumps on a wooden sawhorse, and the warrior's spear has been replaced by a bottle of liquor. The contemporary Indian is exhausted by the despair of everyday life, not wars fought against the westward expansion of manifest destiny.

*End of the Frail* reflects several of the issues that Luna addresses in his art. It plays directly on art-historical reference, parodying an American masterpiece. The humor is conceptually based, an art-referential parody that has become typical of much recent art. Speaking about his work, Luna states:

> My appeal for humor in my work comes from Indian culture where humor can be a form of knowledge, critical thought and perhaps used to just ease the pain. I think we Indians live in worlds filled with irony and I want to relate that in my works…I think that what keeps me rooted is that I try to think of my audience as being all Indians. That doesn't mean that I do all of my work for approval by the

[36] Wikipedia – accessed April 7, 2011

> Indian people, but the biggest thing is that they'll get it; whether they like it or not, they'll get it. Being simple is much harder than being complex.[37]

When discussing the issue of Indian authenticity, Luna went further:

> Aren't we allowed to progress? Yah, things are handed down, but things change. People die, things are forgotten and you just carry on as best you can…And there's the issue of what's an Indian? Who's an Indian? If you're part Indian, what's the other part? How does that influence you? Does it make you less, does it make you more? I don't have an answer for that but that's part of my work, questioning that.[38]

And later in the interview, Luna discusses the issues of stereotypes and Native Americans:

> Then there's this whole group of people out there who want to be Indians that want to be the 'good' part of the culture. But for me being an Indian from a reservation is more than that. And it really bothers me that there's all these people wanting to *take.* And what pisses me off is that they only want the best. You can't have just the best. That's why I dislike the movie *Dances With Wolves*. It did nothing but glorify all the good stuff. It didn't show any Indians mad, or any Indians upset. It didn't show any Indians cry. It didn't show any Indians fucking up. We're still beautiful, stoic, and pretty. You see the movie and you go out and see a fat, overweight, acne-covered, poor, uneducated person – is that the real Indian you want to see? Not that we're all either one of those. But it isn't just one way.[39]

In his performance piece *Relocation Stories* Luna stands in front of a large projected photograph by Edward S. Curtis. In this piece Luna attacks western anthropological notions of authenticity that believe a culture can only be assessed by its material artifacts, rituals, and traditions. Like the stereotype, the "authentic Indian" is a fixed anthropological entity whose real identity and living reality is ignored. Luna believes that there *is* no authenticity that can claim to accurately represent the Indian people, just as no representation or stereotype of any race can be accurate. Luna declares

[37] Birringer, *Performance on the Edge: Transformations of Culture,* 179.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Durland, *Call me in '93: An Interview with James Luna,* 34-39.

that "only the 'unity of pain' is shared – struggles against alcohol and drug abuse, unemployment, poverty – and the hardiness of a culture that has learned to adapt in order to survive."[40]

For the Whitney Biennial in 1991, Luna performed a piece entitled *Take a Picture with a Real Indian.* Museum goers were allowed to choose which life-size, cardboard cut-out of the artist they wished to be photographed standing next to. Both were of Luna, but in one he was dressed in traditional Indian regalia, including loincloth, and in the other he was dressed as a contemporary Indian, wearing his everyday street clothes. This piece, with great humor, brilliantly forced museum goers to confront the built-in attitudes and stereotypical beliefs about American Indians that exist (thanks in part to people such as Edward Curtis and Frederic Remington) deep in their consciousness.

In one of his best known works of art, *Artifact Piece* (Illustration 19), Luna displayed himself as a dead cultural object. He lay dressed in a loincloth in a glass exhibition case at the Museum of Man in San Diego. A glass exhibition case nearby contained some of Luna's personal items, such as his favorite books and records and other documents, and a third glass case held traditional ceremonial items from the Luiseno reservation. Luna kept the display for several days, exhibiting himself and his personal effects as living artifacts, in contrast to the "dead" anthropological Native American artifacts that filled the rest of the museum. Official museum-style labels inside the case in which Luna lay motionless identified him by name and also drew attention to the scars on his body, attributing them to "excessive drinking." Museum goers who thought they were looking at a replica of an Indian in a glass case were often startled when they realized they were looking at a living, breathing Indian, who was in fact not

[40] Sakamoto, *Indian Legends – 1*, 4.

only looking back at them, but listening to them as well. The artist became the viewer, which upends the traditional experience of the museum visitor, and changes the power relationship. Luna's unmoving, silent body, lying in its glass case, represents as well how Native people have always been perceived, as dead. In this piece Luna brilliantly addresses the issue of museum exhibits worldwide which portray Native Americans and Native American culture as remnants of history, or dead/extinct.

"*The Artifact Piece,* 1987, was a performance/installation that questioned American Indian presentation in museums, presentation that furthered stereotype, denied contemporary (Indian) society and one that did not enable an Indian viewpoint. The exhibit, through 'contemporary artifacts' of a Luiseno man, showed the similarities and differences in the cultures we live, and putting myself on view brought new meaning to 'artifact.'"[41]

### *Jimmie Durham*

Jimmie Durham, like James Luna, has used his art to address issues of Native identity and authenticity, racism, and stereotypical non-Native representations of Indians. Durham, perhaps taking these issues father than Luna, also discusses the resentment he feels when his art, and his identity, is only viewed through the lens of his "Indianness." He talks openly about the difficulty of making art for Native audiences. "…people say, what do Indians think of your work? And the answer is, Indians love my work, because they don't look at it (laughs), they have no use for it. They have use for me being successful, so they can say, 'oh, isn't that pretty or weird', or, 'look, Jimmie's in New York, he's getting a big art show'. But to function as an artist on an Indian reservation is

[41] Durland, *Call me in '93: An Interview with James Luna,* 34-39.

not a possibility at all. There is no discourse there; what would be my function there?"[42] These are contentious words, and I believe that many Indians would disagree with Durham on this, if only because he seems to be devaluing the traditional Indian arts still created by Indians on and off the reservations. With this statement Durham, a hardcore post-modernist and conceptual artist, could be accused of embracing a Kantian worldview that once again defines for Natives what is art, although in this case, it is not Indian art as craft that is being rejected, but Indian art as being incapable of engaging in contemporary art-world "discourse."

Jimmie Durham, of Cherokee descent, was born in 1940 in Washington, Arkansas. His first solo show was in 1965 in Austin, Texas. In 1968 he moved to Geneva, Switzerland to study at L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts, but in 1973 he moved back to the United States because of his desire to become a participant in the American Indian Movement. He became a political organizer for AIM, and was a member of its Central Council from 1973 to 1980, when AIM began to splinter. Durham, who was then living in New York City, decided to refocus his attention on making art. He had several one man shows in New York, and became the director of the Foundation for the Community of Artists in New York. Durham moved to Cuernavaca, Mexico, in 1987, where he remained until moving to Europe in 1994. His work has been shown in the Whitney Biennial, documenta IX, London's Institute of Contemporary Art, and the Museum of Modern Art. Although most of the work Durham has produced in Europe no longer deals with Native American issues or iconography, in 2005 Durham co-curated an exhibit at Compton Verney in the

[42] Mulvey, *Jimmie Durham*, 9.

United Kingdom called *The American West,* which was a critique of cowboy and Indian mythology.[43]

Durham caused controversy in his response to the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990, a law which was enacted to protect and promote Native American artists and to legally prevent non-Natives from producing and selling "authentic" Indian art. The law stipulated that Native artist exhibiting and selling their work had to be able to prove that they were legally enrolled members of a federally recognized tribe. Durham's response read, in part, "I've lived all my adult life in voluntary exile from my own people, yet that can also be considered a Cherokee tradition. It is not a refusal of us, but a refusal of a situation and of imposed-from-without limits."[44]

Durham was not the only one who resented the Indian Arts and Crafts Act. Many Native Americans viewed it as yet another attempt by the federal government to impose too much control over Indian life and culture, however well-intentioned the law might have been. The non-Natives in government were once again deciding not only who was or wasn't "legally" an Indian, but were also deciding which Indians could "legally" declare themselves Indian artists. Many saw this act as yet another attempt to assimilate Native Americans into white culture, or as a way to divide Indians against each other. In 1993 Durham caused even more controversy when he declared, "I am not Cherokee. I am not an American Indian. This is in concurrence with recent U.S. legislation, because I am not enrolled on any reservation or in any American Indian community."[45]

Durham's art of this time period makes strong statements about the loss of the Native American culture, as well as critiquing history, anthropology and the non-Native

[43] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jimmie_Durham
[44] Rushing, *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century,* 127.
[45]Rushing, *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century,* 127.

worldview that Indian people have been forced to adopt. In the work *Bedia's Stirring Wheel,* (Illustration20) Durham creates a fetishistic sculpture out of automobile parts, including a hubcap and steering wheel. The "joke" of this piece is that it is accompanied by a card written by anthropologists from a future time which explains the object's ceremonial use:

> From: Site B, quadrant 71, White Plains, New York – Joseph Bedia, the famous Cuban explorer/archaeologist, discovered this stirring wheel, sometimes referred to as the "Fifth" or "Big" wheel, during his second excavation of the ruins at White Plains in 3290 AD. 'He believes that the stirring wheel was a symbol of office for the Great White Father, often called, "The Man behind the Wheel." Bedia claims that the chief would stand behind the wheel to make pronouncements and stirring speeches.[46]

In *Pocahontas' Underwear* (Illustration 21) Durham again satirizes the idea that non-Native anthropologists can explain a people's culture by studying the material objects they leave behind. For this artwork Durham chose one of the most famous of all Native Americans, Pocahontas, who more than almost any other Native American has been completely misrepresented, both historically and in the imagery that accompanies the myths surrounding her. Pocahontas has become central to the mythic stories about the founding of America, stories that are still taught to school children to this day. In *Pocahontas' Underwear,* Pocahontas is represented only by a pair of eroticized lacy red panties that are displayed authoritatively and pristinely in a museum-style vitrine, panties that in real life Pocahontas would of course never have worn, even though they are made

[46] Mulvey, *Jimmie Durham,* 60-61.

to “look Indian” by the use of feathers and beads. This piece, which at first glance is merely funny, takes on an ironic bitterness that when the viewer realizes the piece is addressing the glorification and misunderstanding of relics from the past, and anthropologist’s need to examine even the most intimate and private details of the culture they are “studying.” Furthermore, this piece alludes to the lusty and wanton Indian woman, who has been a mainstay of Euro-American fantasies of scantily dressed Indian women.

Durham’s art and sculptures confront head-on the misrepresentations of Native Americans that exist in both image and text. Durham’s art pulls no punches in attacking the attempted annihilation of tribal people and their culture.

# CHAPTER 7

## *Conclusion*

This paper was written in an attempt to answer a question: What role does art play in the stereotypical and inaccurate beliefs that most non-Natives hold about Native Americans? My early thoughts about this question had led me to the conclusion that popular culture, in its many forms (film and television, novels and short stories, paintings and sculpture) was largely responsible for the stereotypical misrepresentations of Indians. Prior to researching this paper, I believed that the largest share of the blame for misrepresentations of Indians could be directed at movies and television; who hasn't watched, over and over, in movies and on television, cowboys and Indians fighting to the death, or stoic Indians wearing war bonnets grunting "ugh" or "how."

Researching this paper made me realize that it was inaccurate to focus so much of the blame on movies and television, for the simple reason that movies only came into existence in the early 1900s, and television was not widely available until the 1950s, whereas stereotypical and inaccurate portrayals of Indians had been in place for centuries.

As this paper has showed, misrepresentations of Indians in drawings and paintings began the very moment Europeans first made contact with the Indians of the New World, and these misrepresentations continue to the present day. And, as this paper also documents, there was (and still is) an agenda behind these misrepresentations of Native Americans. The European explorers, colonists, and settlers needed to believe that the Native Americans they were busy eradicating, the Native Americans whose land they were stealing, were in fact less than human. They needed to believe that the Native

Americans they were forcing onto reservations were simple-minded people who did not know what was best for them. Art, it turns out, was a perfect way to dehumanizing Indians, and at the same time legitimizing injustice.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration 1: Ojibwe Pipe, stone with shell inlay, circa 1845, attributed to Aubonwaishkum of Manitoulin Island. Penny, David W., in *North American Indian Art*. 2004: 75.

Illustration 2: *The People and Island Which Have Been Discovered,* woodcut, German, circa 1505. Berkhofer, Robert F., in *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present,* 1978, Plate 2.

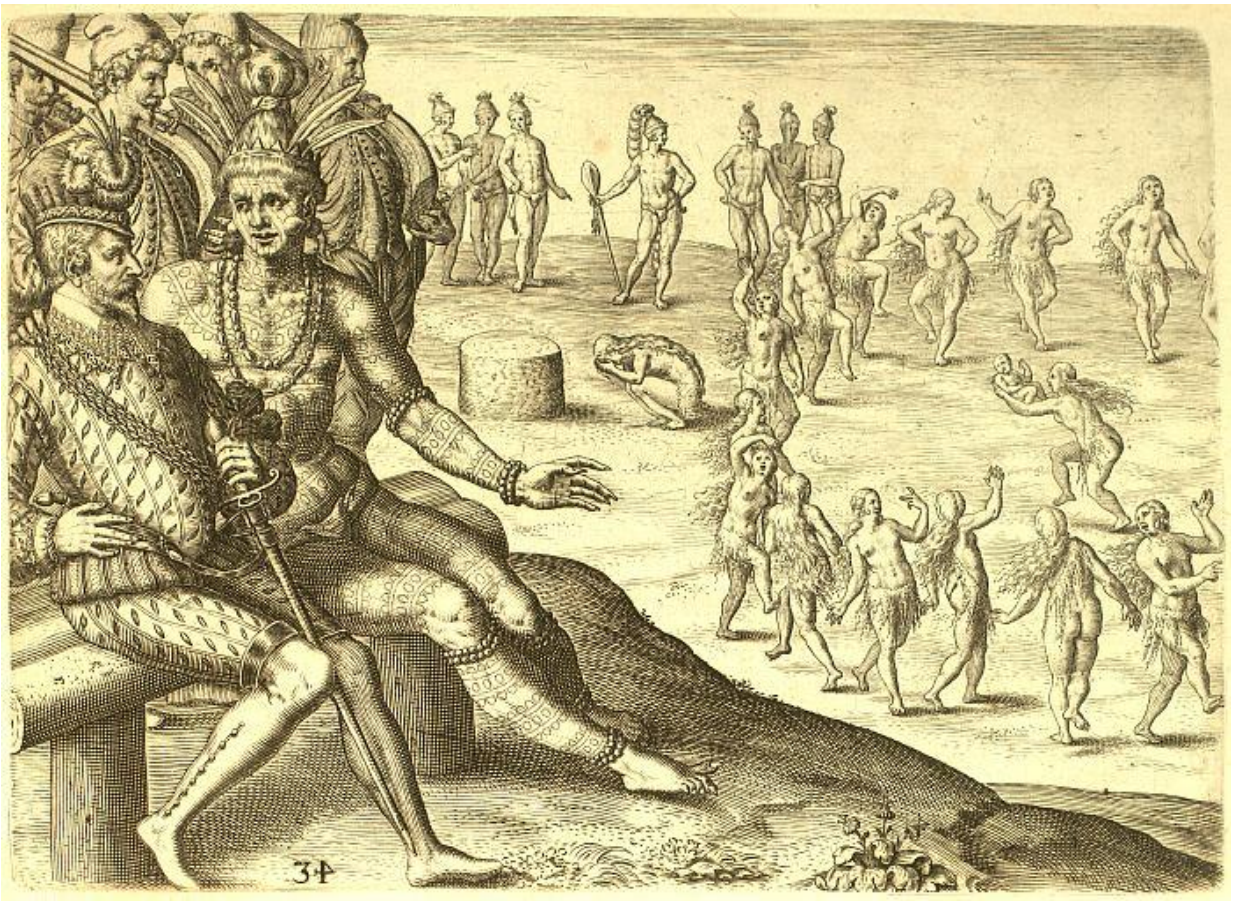

Illustration 3: *Indians sacrificing an infant,* Theodor de Bry engraving based on a drawing by Jacques le Moyne, 1560s. Hulton, Paul, in *The Work of Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues: A Huguenot Artist in France and Florida,* 2 vol., 1977: 119.


Illustration 4: The logo of the Cleveland Indians baseball team. Trexler, Phil, in *Cleveland Indians: Yesterday and Today*, 2009: 47.


Illustration 5: *War trophy body parts and cannibalism*, Theodor de Bry engraving based on a drawing by Jacques le Moyne, 1560s. Hulton, Paul, in *The Work of Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues: A Huguenot Artist in France and Florida*, 2 vol., 1977: 137.

Illustration 6: John Vanderlyn – The Death of Jane McCrea, 1804.
Calloway, Colin G., in *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History*, 2008: 209.

Illustration 7: Cheyenne parfleche, circa 1875, rawhide, pigment. Taylor, Colin F., in *Buckskin and Buffalo: The Artistry of the Plains Indians*, 1998: 87.

Illustration 8: Edward S. Curtis, *The Vanishing Race - Navajo, 1904*.
Lyman, Christopher M., in *The Vanishing Race and Other Illusions: Photographs of Indians by Edward S. Curtis*, 1982: 80.

Illustrations 9 & 10: Edward S. Curtis, *In a Piegan Lodge*, 1910. Lyman, Christopher M., in *The Vanishing Race and Other Illusions: Photographs of Indians by Edward S. Curtis*, 1982: 106-107.

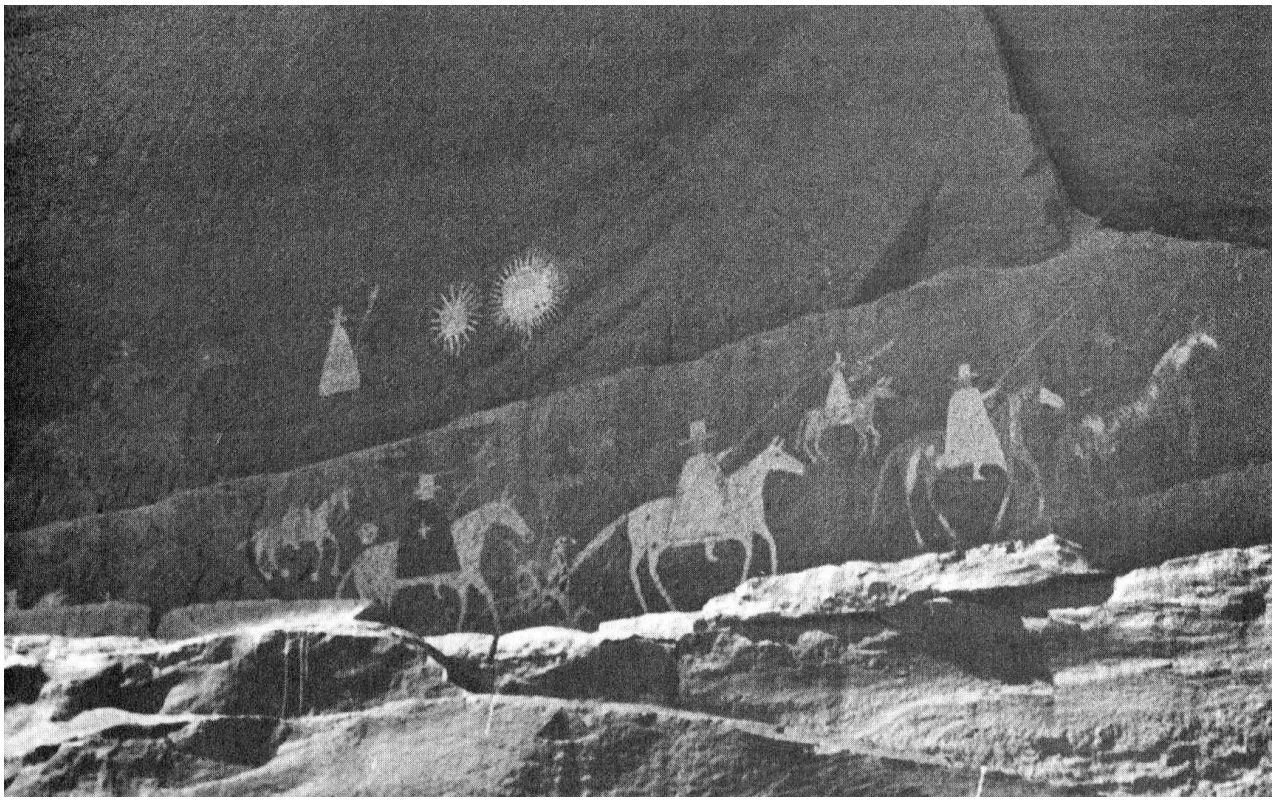

Illustration 11: Spaniards on horseback, Canon del Muerto, circa 1560.
Calloway, Colin G., in *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History*, 2008: 141.

Illustration 12: Haida argillite carving, circa 1850.
Calloway, Colin G., in *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History*, 2008: 144.

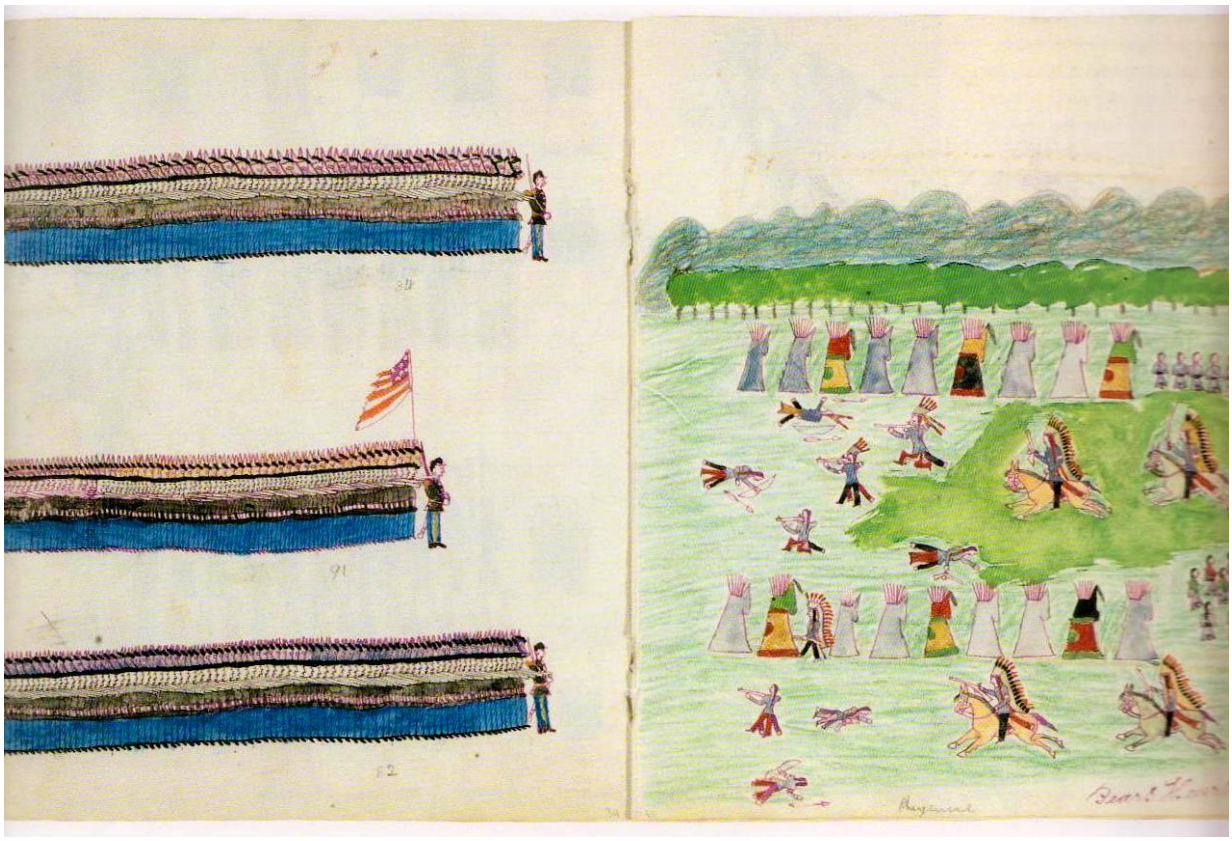

Illustration 13: Bear's Heart, Cheyenne, *Troops Amassed Against a Cheyenne Village,* 1876-77. Berlo, Janet, in *Plains Indian Drawings 1865 – 1935: Pages From a Visual History*, 1966: 67.

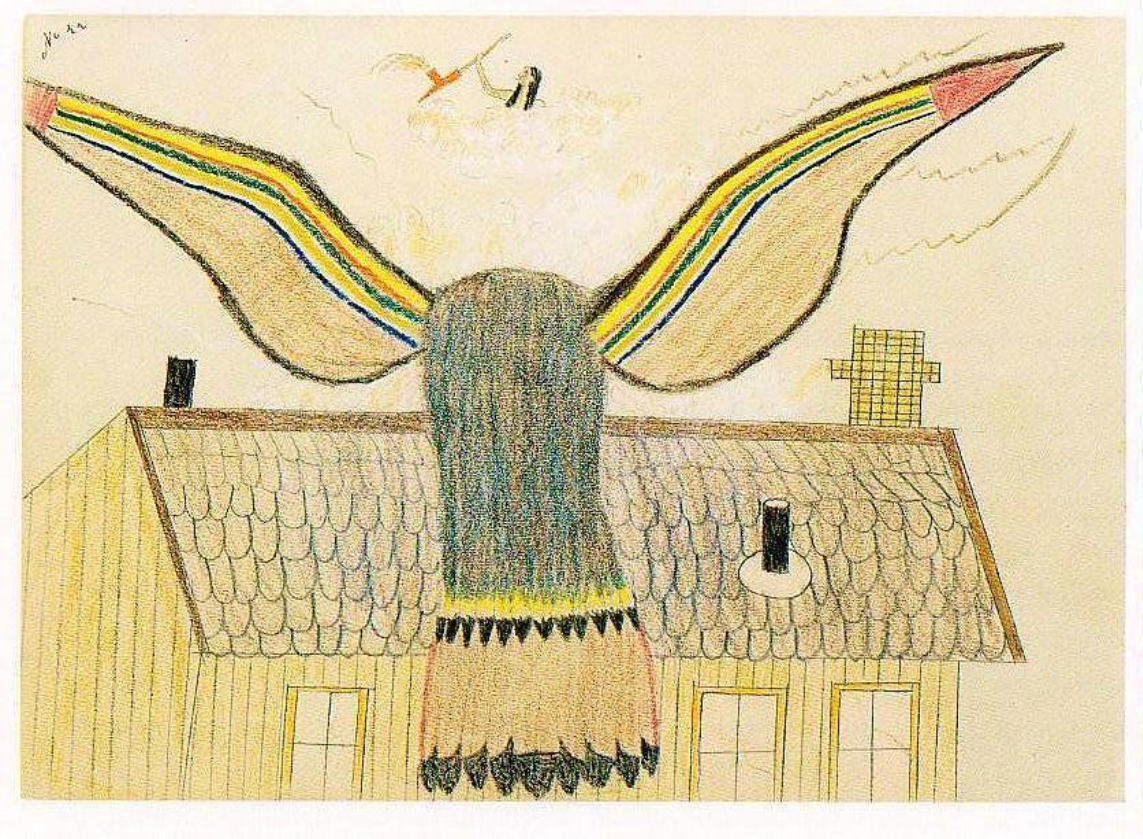

Illustration 14: Silver Horn, Kiowa, *Great Medicine Man Who Controls the Thunder and Lightning Experiments a Little on a White Man's House,* circa1887, pencil and crayon on paper. Donnelley, Robert G., in *Transforming Images: The Art of Silver Horn and his Successors,* 2000: 69.

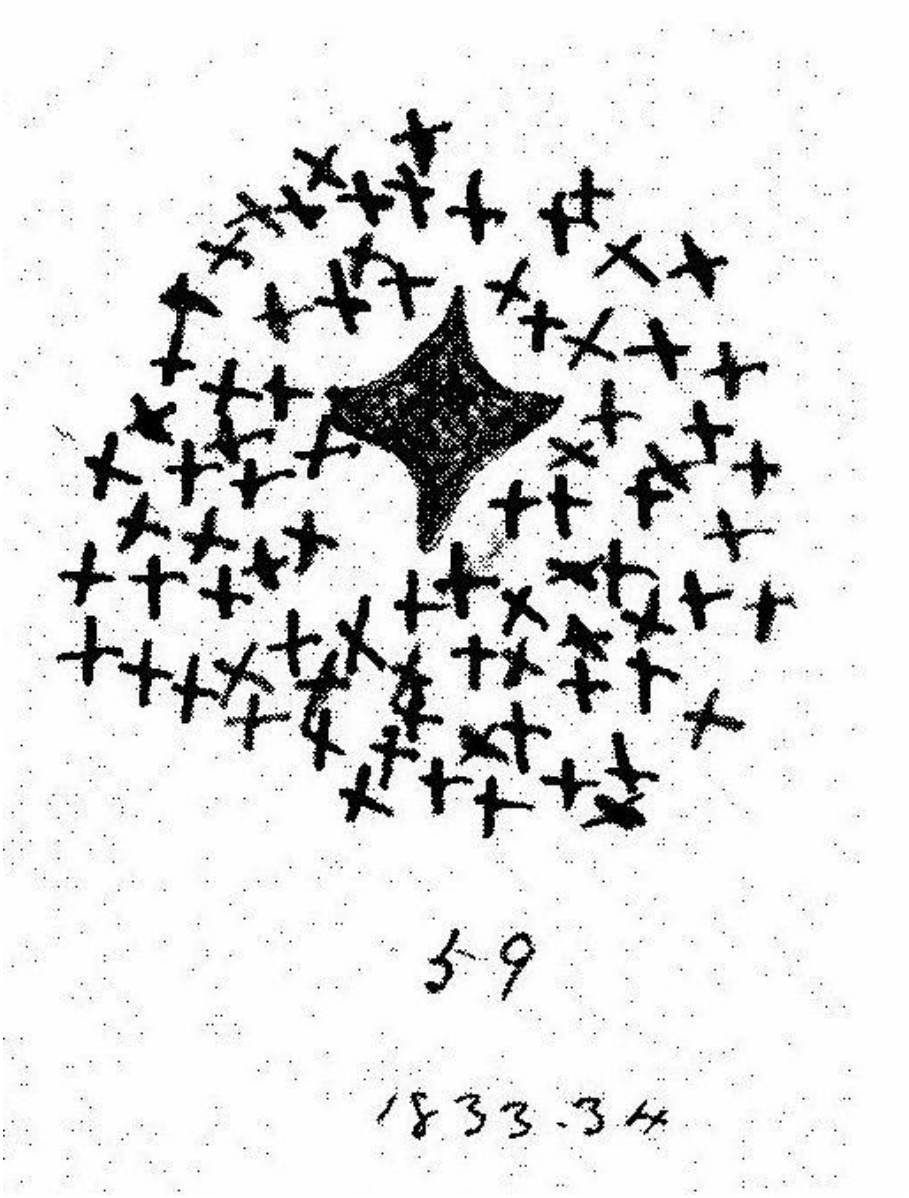


Illustration 15: American Horse, *The Stars Moved Around,* 1833 – 1834. Greene, Candace, in *The Year the Stars Fell: Lakota Winter Counts at the Smithsonian,* 2007: 194.

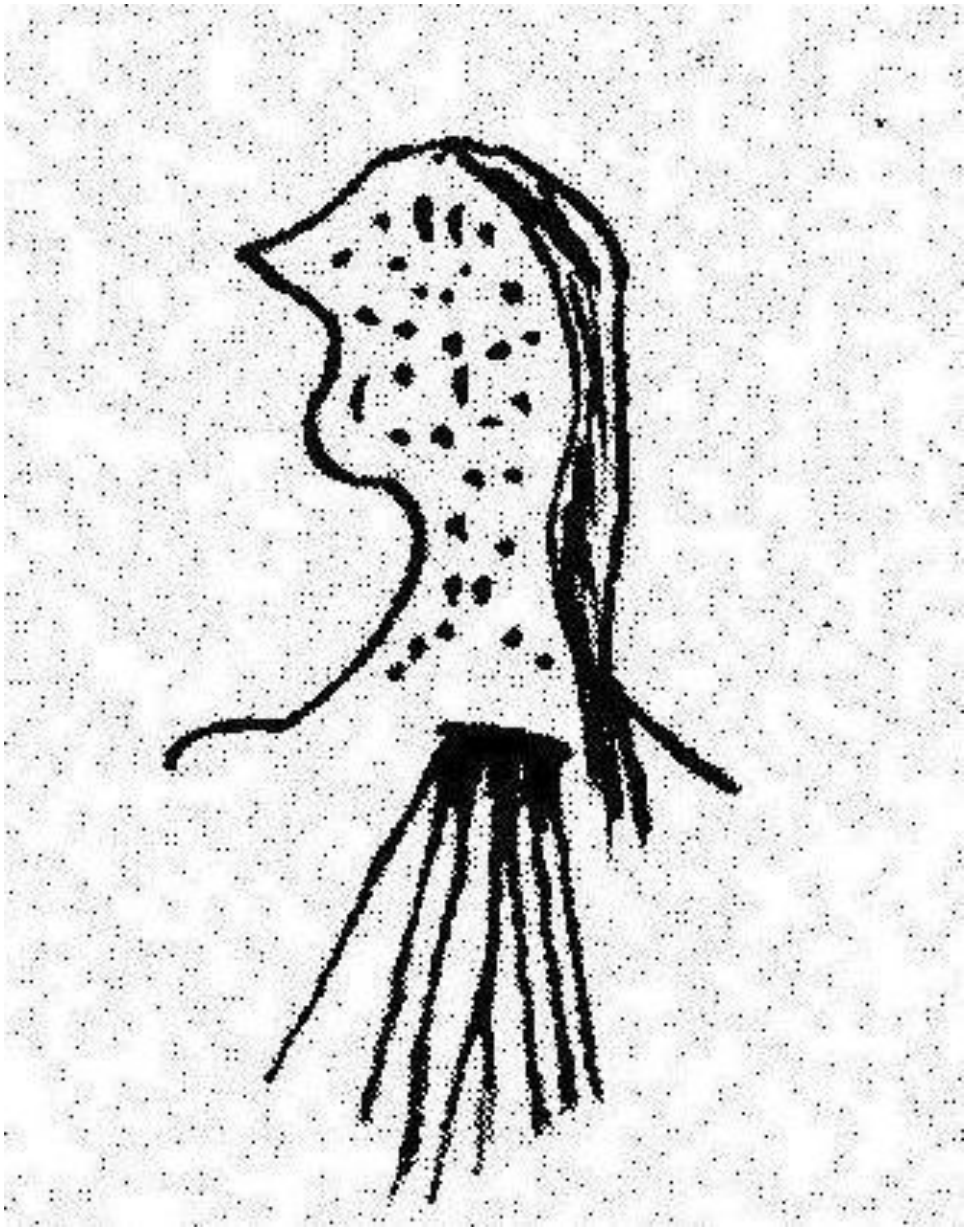

Illustration 16: American Horse, *Winter Count* detail, 1784-1785.
Greene, Candace, in *The Year the Stars Fell: Lakota Winter Counts at the Smithsonian*, 2007: 106.

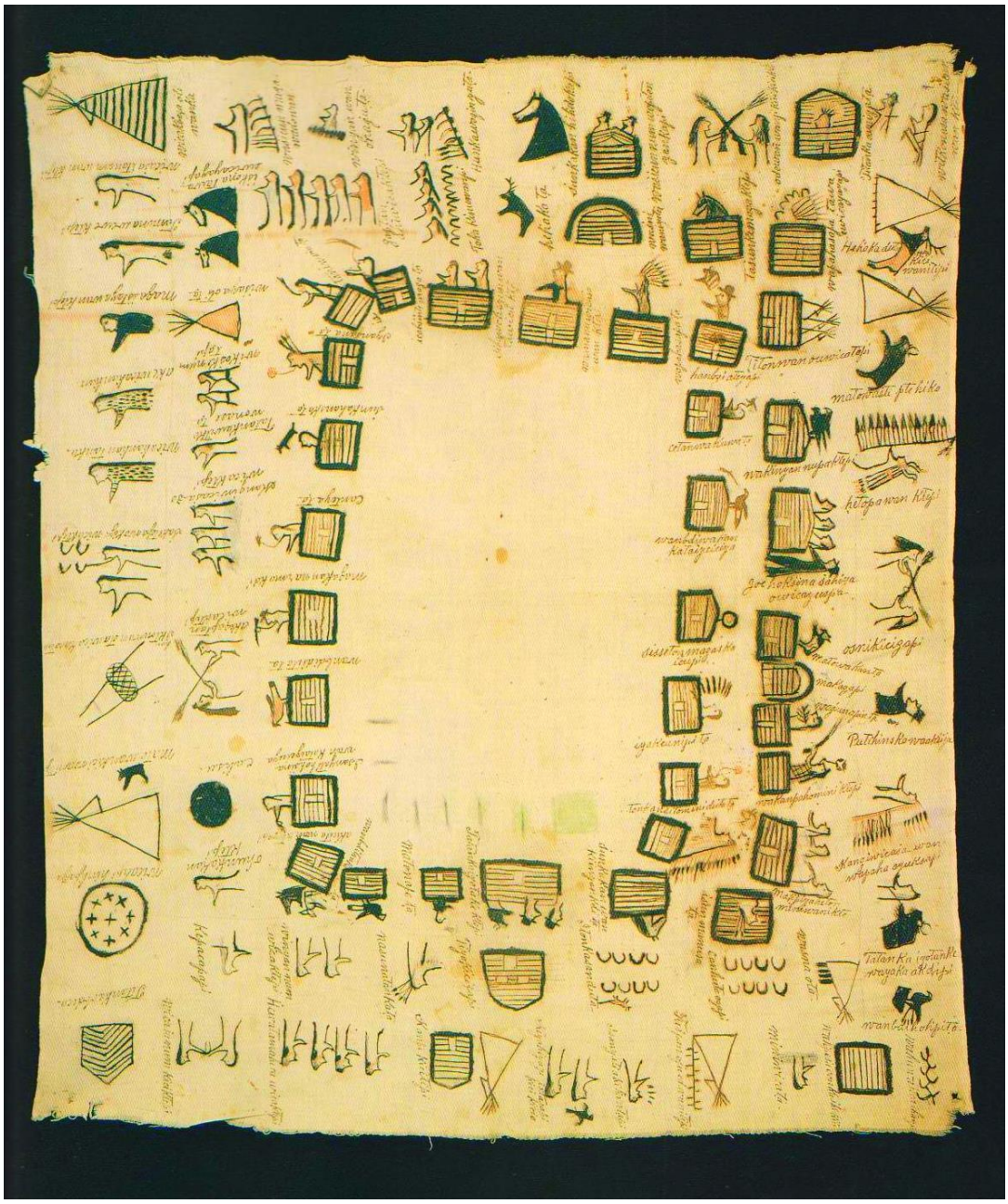

Illustration 17: Yankton Sioux Winter Count, Fort Totten Reservation, cotton cloth, ink, pigment. Greene, Candace, in *The Year the Stars Fell: Lakota Winter Counts at the Smithsonian*, 2007: 260.

Illustration 18: James Luna, *End of the Frail*, mixed-media performance, 1990.
Luna, James, in *Indian Legends – 1*, 1993: 11.

Illustration 19: James Luna, *Artifact Piece*, 1985 – 1987.
Luna, James, in *Indian Legends – 1*. Luna, James, 1993: 38.

Illustration 20: Jimmie Durham, *Bedia's Stirring Wheel,* 1985, aluminum, leather, fur, paint, feathers, skull, string, cloth, steering wheel.
Mulvey, Laura, in *Jimmie Durham*, 1995: 61.

Illustration 21: Jimmie Durham, *Pocahontas' Underwear,* 1985, feathers, beads, fabric, fasteners. Mulvey, Laura, in *Jimmie Durham*, 1995: 38.

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