



ART IN EMBASSIES EXHIBITION
GENEVA UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

C O F F I N

Snake Sun II, undated

Wood, acrylic paint, mixed media, 43 x 37 in. (109,2 x 94 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Abiquiú, New Mexico

ART IN EMBASSIES



Established in 1963, the U.S. Department of State's office of Art in Embassies (AIE) plays a vital role in our nation's public diplomacy through a culturally expansive mission, creating temporary and permanent exhibitions, artist programming, and publications. The Museum of Modern Art first envisioned this global visual arts program a decade earlier. In the early 1960s, President John F. Kennedy formalized it, naming the program's first director. Now with over 200 venues, AIE curates temporary and permanent exhibitions for the representational spaces of all U.S. chanceries, consulates, and embassy residences worldwide, selecting and commissioning contemporary art from the U.S. and the host countries. These exhibitions provide international audiences with a sense of the quality, scope, and diversity of both countries' art and culture, establishing AIE's presence in more countries than any other U.S. foundation or arts organization.

AIE's exhibitions allow foreign citizens, many of whom might never travel to the United States, to personally experience the depth and breadth of our artistic heritage and values, making what has been called a footprint that can be left where people have no opportunity to see American art.

"For fifty years, Art in Embassies has played an active diplomatic role by creating meaningful cultural exchange through the visual arts. The exhibitions, permanent collections and artist exchanges connect people from the farthest corners of an international community. Extending our reach, amplifying our voice, and demonstrating our inclusiveness are strategic imperatives for America. Art in Embassies cultivates relationships that transcend boundaries, building trust, mutual respect and understanding among peoples. It is a fulcrum of America's global leadership as we continue to work for freedom, human rights and peace around the world."

— John Forbes Kerry
U.S. Secretary of State

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is often referred to as one of the fundamental pillars of the United Nations. It is comprised of forty-seven member states that are responsible for promoting and protecting human rights around the world.

Art, too, has the power to shine a light on the human condition and serve as a catalyst for social and legal change. The Art in Embassies exhibition in the residence of the American Ambassador to the UNHRC celebrates artists who, through a spectrum of styles, media, and symbols, give voice to those outside the mainstream.

One of the Ambassador's priorities is the human rights issues of women, because he believes that when nations address these issues, they set the necessary preconditions for economic, social, and political success.

This art exhibition, which includes a number of objects made by female artists, as well as works about women, reflects the Ambassador's focus within the UNHRC.

In celebration of the Ambassador's and my own Caddo and Cherokee heritages, the exhibition heavily features the works of American Indian and indigenous artists. These works join together with those of other artists of color in the creation of a layered and lively conversation about community, human rights, and what it means to be human. We hope that you enjoy the exhibition and come away feeling inspired.

Shelby Settles Harper

Geneva, Switzerland
April 2015

MEQUITTA AHUJA (b o r n 1 9 7 6)

Mequitta Ahuja received her Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Illinois, Chicago, in 2003, mentored by Kerry James Marshall. Her work has been exhibited across the United States, as well as in Paris, Brussels, Berlin, India, and Dubai. Ahuja has had solo exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago's 12X12; Lawndale Art Center in Houston, Texas; BravinLee Programs in New York City; Galerie Nathalie Obadia in Paris, France; Thierry Goldberg Gallery in New York City; and a two person show at the Bakersfield Museum of Art in California. Group exhibitions include: *Global Feminisms* at the Brooklyn Museum, New York; *Houston Collects African American Art* at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Texas; *Poets and Painters* at the Ulrich Museum in Wichita, Kansas; *Undercover* at Spelman College Museum of Fine Art in Atlanta, Georgia; *Usable Pasts* at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; and *Portraiture Now* at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., among others. Ahuja's work has appeared in *Modern Painters* (March 2007) and *Art News* (February 2007). In February, 2010, Ahuja was profiled as an "Artist to Watch" in *ArtNews*.

Holland Cotter, art critic of the *New York Times*, in his "last chance" article on June 1, 2007, sighting Ahuja's New York debut exhibition *Encounters*, stated "Referring to the artist's African American and East Indian background, the pictures turn marginality into a regal condition." Ahuja received a 2011 Tiffany Foundation Award, a 2009 Joan Mitchell Award, and a 2008 Houston Artadia Prize. Public collections holding her work include the Ulrich Museum in Wichita, Kansas; the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Texas; The Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minnesota; and the offices at the U.S. State Department in Mumbai, India. Ahuja was a 2009-2010 artist in residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; the 2011-2012 Stewart McMillan artist in residence at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) in Baltimore; and a 2014 Project Fellow at the Siena Art Institute in Siena, Italy.

www.automythography.com



A H U J A

Dream Sequence: Q, 2011

Enamel, glitter, and acrylic on hand colored paper, 51 ½ x 24 in. (130,8 x 61 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Baltimore, Maryland

HOWARD D. BEACH (1867 - 1954)

Howard Dwight Beach was a painter, photographer, inventor, photo-pictorialist, poet, sculptor, and elocutionist. Growing up he went to traditional schools in New Britain, Connecticut, and in 1884 he moved to Buffalo, New York, to apprentice with photographer Andrew Simson (German-American, 1922). Simson was Buffalo's oldest photographer and the accredited photographer for the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo (1901), who partnered with Howard D. Beach in 1896 to form Simson & Beach. Beach furthered his studies at the Buffalo Art School and at the University of Buffalo (courses in chemistry and photography).

In 1900 Beach purchased the remainder of Mr. Simson's interest in Simson & Beach to open his own photographic studio at the same location. In 1908 he purchased the Eleck F. Hall Photographic Studio in

Buffalo, and moved his entire photographic business there. Hall continued to operate there with Beach as Hall's Photographic Studios until 1913. Beach's studio was also known for photographing the Native American Indians who had participated in the Indian Congress at the 1901 Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, New York.

Beach exhibited and won several prizes with the Buffalo Society of Artists, and also exhibited with the Professional Photographers of America (PPA). Memberships included: the Buffalo Society of Artists (from 1881); the Royal Photographic Society, England; the Professional Photographers Society of New York State (PPSNYS, President 1914, Secretary 1909 & 1910); the Professional Photographers of America (President 1921); the Buffalo Camera Club (1905-38, twice president); and the Buffalo Photographic Society.



B E A C H Native American Woman from the Plains Region, c. 1901

Photograph, 20 x 17 in. (50,8 x 43,2 cm)

Courtesy of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC USZ62 115744

T . C . C A N N O N (1 9 4 6 - 1 9 7 8)

Tommy Wayne Cannon was an important Native American artist of the twentieth century. An enrolled member of the Kiowa Tribe and of Caddo, French, and Choctaw descent, he was popularly known as T.C. Cannon. Cannon grew up in Zodalton and Gracemont, Oklahoma, and was raised in the Kiowa culture of his father, Walter Cannon, and the Caddo traditions of his mother, Minnie Ahdunko Cannon. His Kiowa name, Pai dOUNg a day, means "One Who Stands in the Sun." He was exposed to the art of the Kiowa Five, a group of Native American painters who achieved international reputations in the fine art world and who helped develop the Southern Plains style of painting.

T.C. Cannon joined the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) of Santa Fe in 1964, where he studied under Fritz Scholder. After graduation from IAIA, he enrolled in the San Francisco Art Institute but left after two months and enlisted in the Army. As a paratrooper in the 101st Airborne Division, Cannon was sent to Vietnam from 1967 to 1968. During the Tet Offensive, he earned two Bronze Star medals. He was also inducted into the Black Leggings Society, the traditional Kiowa warriors' society. While still stationed in Vietnam,

Cannon had a breakthrough in his art career. Rosemary Ellison, curator of the Southern Plains Indian Museum in Anadarko, Oklahoma, included him in a major traveling exhibition, *Contemporary Southern Plains Indian Art*.

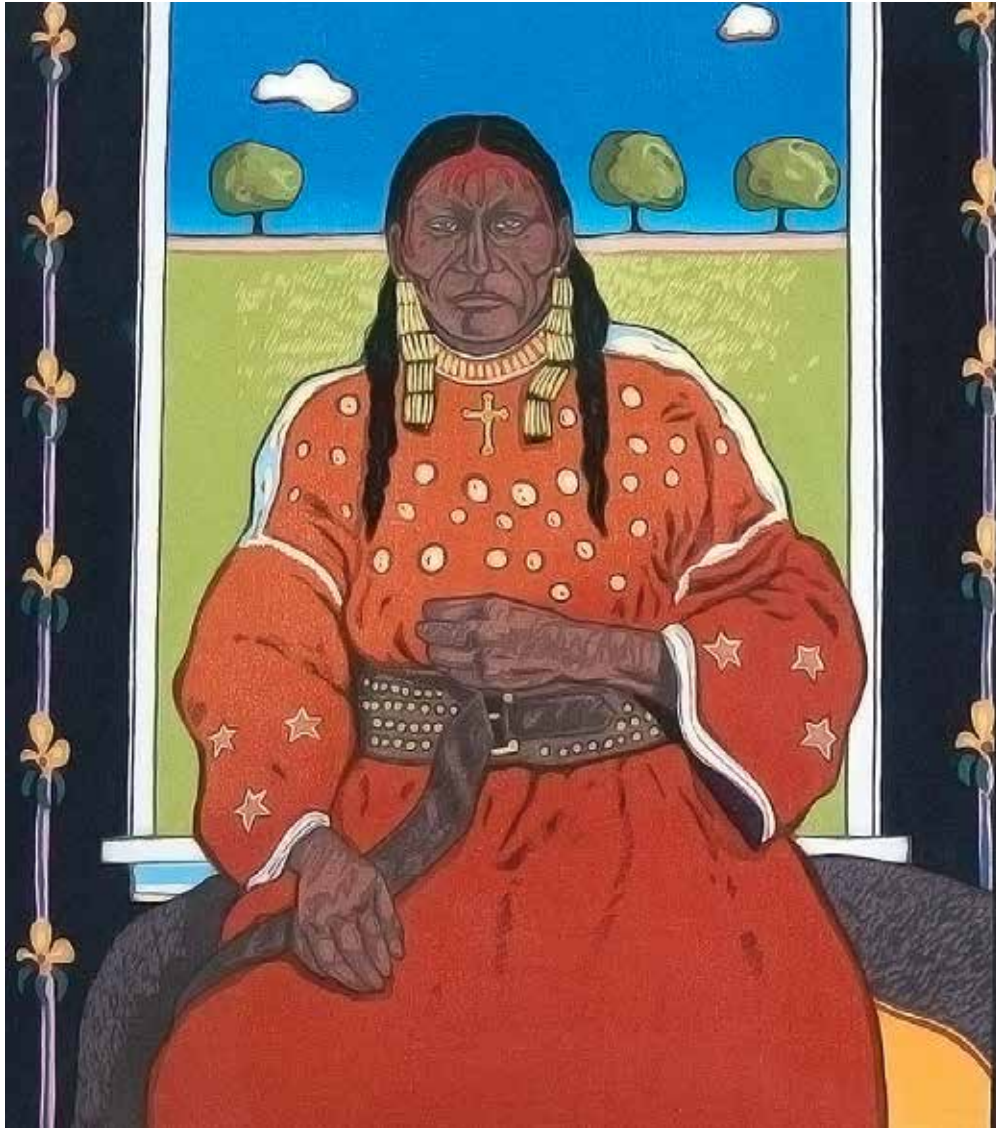
In 1972 Cannon and Fritz Scholder staged a joint exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution's National Collection of Fine Arts, titled *Two American Painters*. Cannon produced a large body of work over the next six years, in preparation for his first one man show, scheduled to open at the Aberbach Gallery in New York City in October 1978. On May 8 of that year, however, he died in an automobile accident, and after a delay, the show opened on December 10, 1979 as *T.C. Cannon: A Memorial Exhibition*. Featuring fifty works by Cannon, it subsequently became a traveling exhibition and went on display at locations such as the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona; the New Mexico Museum of Art in Santa Fe; and the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming.

www.wikipedia.com



CANNON Self Portrait in Studio, undated

Woodcut, 25 x 19 ½ in. (63,5 x 49,5 cm). Courtesy of the estate of the artist, La Mirada, California



CANNON **Woman in Window**, undated
Woodcut, 17 x 15 in. (43,2 x 38,1 cm)
Courtesy of the estate of the artist, La Mirada, California

DOUGLAS COFFIN (born 1946)

Sculptor, painter, and mixed media artist Doug Coffin, a Potawatomi and Creek Indian, was raised in Haskell, Kansas, but for the last eighteen years has lived and worked in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He attended the University of Kansas in Lawrence, earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. After serving in the United States Marine Corps, Coffin returned to the study of art, earning a Master of Fine Arts degree in metalworking at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, in 1975. The same year, he received a national teaching fellowship from the Fort Wright College in Spokane, Washington. He has since been an instructor at the College of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe.

Coffin is best known for his monumental, brightly painted steel and mixed media sculptures. In both his sculptures and paintings, the artist has developed a style that suggests a fusion of the ancient totemic forms used by many Native cultures with the abstraction and geometric forms of the modernist. Coffin says, "I have always been fascinated with the medicine and war shields that were often painted from visions. The heart of my work continues to reflect their spiritual significance." His work has been exhibited widely around the world, including at such venues as the Grand Palais in Paris and the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

www.dreamactive.com

COFFIN

Snake Sun II, undated

Wood, acrylic paint, mixed media, 43 x 37 in. (109,2 x 94 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Abiquiú, New Mexico



EDWARD S. CURTIS (1868 - 1952)

Edward Curtis, later called by some Native American tribes “Shadow Catcher,” was born in 1868 near Whitewater, Wisconsin. In 1874 the Curtis family moved to La Sueur County, Minnesota. Curtis built his first camera at the age of twelve and taught himself to expose and develop film and to make photographic prints. By age seventeen, he was working as an apprentice photographer in St. Paul, Minnesota. His later photographs would have a profound impact on the imagination of all America.

12 Requiring for its completion more than thirty years, one and a half million dollars, and the assistance of a vast array of patrons, researchers, scientists, editors, master craftsmen, interpreters, sympathetic creditors, tribal elders, and medicine men, Curtis published *The North American Indian* between 1907 and 1930. Comprised of twenty volumes, with more than two-hundred photogravures, the book created a photographic and ethnographic record of more than

eighty of North America’s native nations. In the field, Curtis instituted his own methodology, “the twenty-five cardinal points,” to amass information on all areas of Indian life and lore, including vocabulary; political and social organization; religious customs; dwellings; food gathering and preparation; geography; games; music and dance; dress; weights and measures; and birth, marriage, and death customs.

Part photographic essay, part ethnographic survey, and part work of art, Curtis’ *North American Indian Project* represented an attempt to capture images of American Indians as they lived before contact with Anglo cultures. The photogravure prints in *The North American Indian* reveal peoples whose traditional ways of life were changing as the U.S. frontier began to fade.

[www.sil.si.edu/Exhibitions/curtis/
curtis-navigation.htm](http://www.sil.si.edu/Exhibitions/curtis/curtis-navigation.htm)

CURTIS

Mosa, Mohave. c.1903

Contemporary digital photograph of platinum print, 22 ¾ x 18 ¾ in. (57,8 x 47,6 cm)

Courtesy of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., Edward S. Curtis Collection; LC-USZC4-8920





CURTIS

Iron Breast, Piegan, c.1900
Contemporary digital photograph
of platinum print
22 3/4 x 18 3/4 in. (57,8 x 47,6 cm)
Courtesy of Art in Embassies,
Washington, D.C.; Library of
Congress Prints and Photographs
Division, Washington, D.C.,
Edward S. Curtis Collection;
LC-USZC4-8930

DAVID BETHUEL JAMIESON (1963 - 1992)

David Jamieson was born October 9, 1963, at St. Elizabeths Hospital in Washington, D.C., a psychiatric hospital where both of his parents had been committed. He spent the majority of his childhood in different foster and group homes, and attended Stanton Elementary School and Lincoln Junior High School. A painter and printmaker, Jamieson first produced wood engravings while a student at The Barlow School in Amenia, New York. He went on to study under Frank Hewitt, Ed Owre, and Alvin Loving at the University of Vermont, working as a studio assistant for Alvin Loving.

During his brief lifetime, Jamieson maintained studios in Burlington, Vermont; Provincetown, Massachusetts; and Washington, D.C. He chose his middle name, Bethuel, in 1985 while living in Provincetown. Works by the artist are in several public and private collections, including those of The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; The Carter G. Woodson Institute for African and African American Studies at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville; The Robert Hull Fleming Museum at the University of Vermont, Burlington; and the Provincetown Art Association and Museum in Massachusetts. On July 30, 1992, David Bethuel Jamieson died of AIDS related complications in New York City.



JAMIESON **Untitled (self portrait)**, 1988

Mixed media on canvas, 48 x 36 in. (121,9 x 91,4 cm). Courtesy of Peter John Stebbins, Washington, D.C.

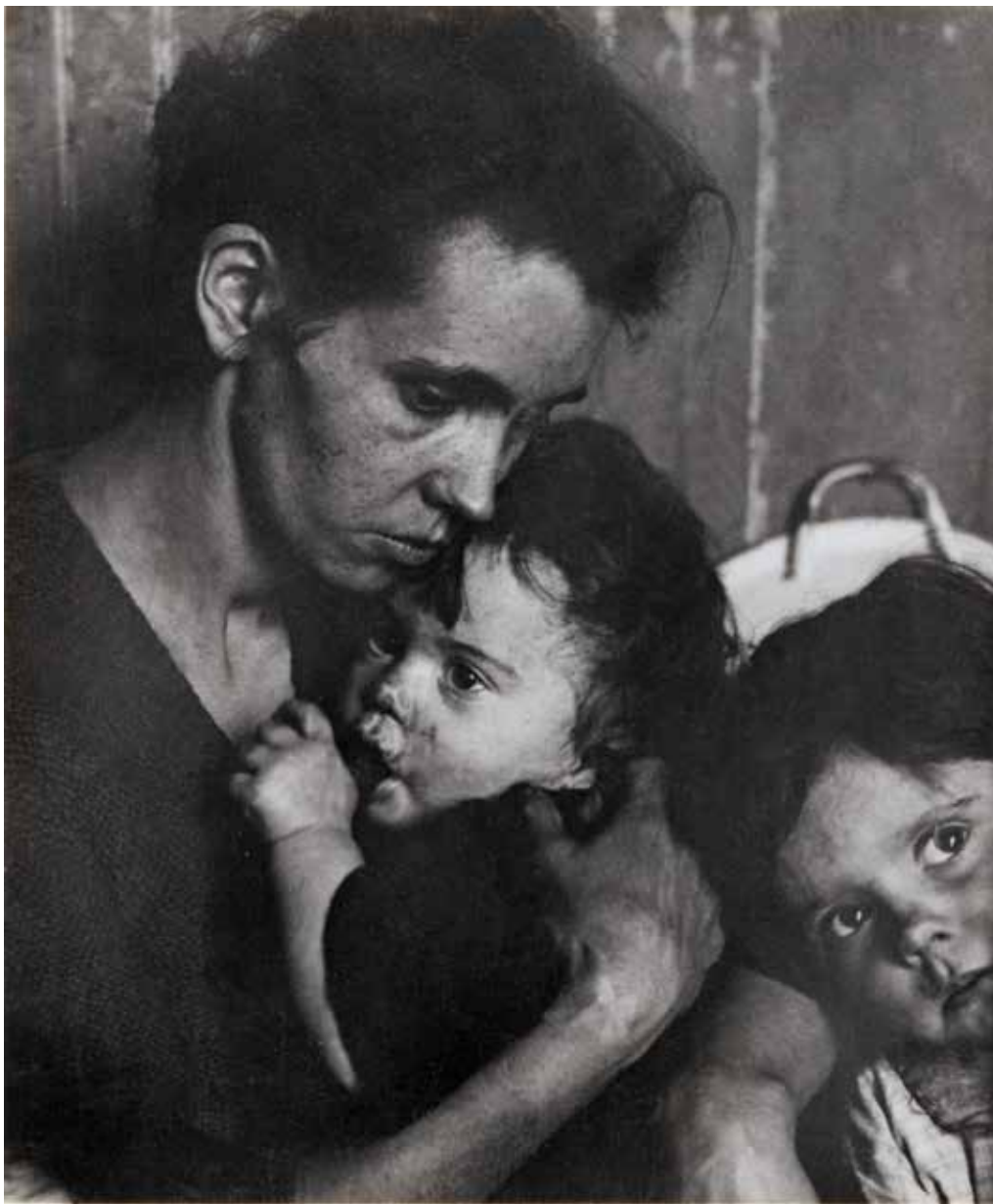
CONSUELO KANAGA (1 8 9 4 - 1 9 7 8)

Consuelo Kanaga has been called “one of America’s most transcendent yet, surprisingly, least known photographers.” She had a wide range of visual interests, from pictorialism to photojournalism to portraiture to cityscape to still life. It’s been said that the dominant theme in her work is an “abiding interest in, and engagement with, the American scene.”

In discussing her work, Kanaga said: “I could have done lots more, put in much more work and developed more pictures, but I had also a desire to say what I felt about life. Simple things like a little picture in the window or the corner of the studio or an old stove in the kitchen have always been fascinating to me. They

are very much alive, these flowers and grasses with the dew on them. Stieglitz always said, ‘What have you got to say?’ I think in a few small cases I’ve said a few things, expressed how I felt, trying to show the horror of poverty or the beauty of black people. I think that in photography what you’ve done is what you’ve had to say. In everything this has been the message of my life. A simple supper, being with someone you love, seeing a deer come around to eat or drink at the barn – I like things like that. If I could make one true, quiet photograph, I would much prefer it to having a lot of answers.”

www.wikipedia.org



KANAGA **Untitled (Mother with Children, New York)**, 1922-1924

Archival black and white copy print, 23 ¹³/₁₆ x 20 ⁵/₁₆ in. (60,5 x 51,6 cm)

Brooklyn Museum 82.65.413; Gift of Wallace B. Putnam from the Estate of Consuelo Kanaga; Courtesy of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.

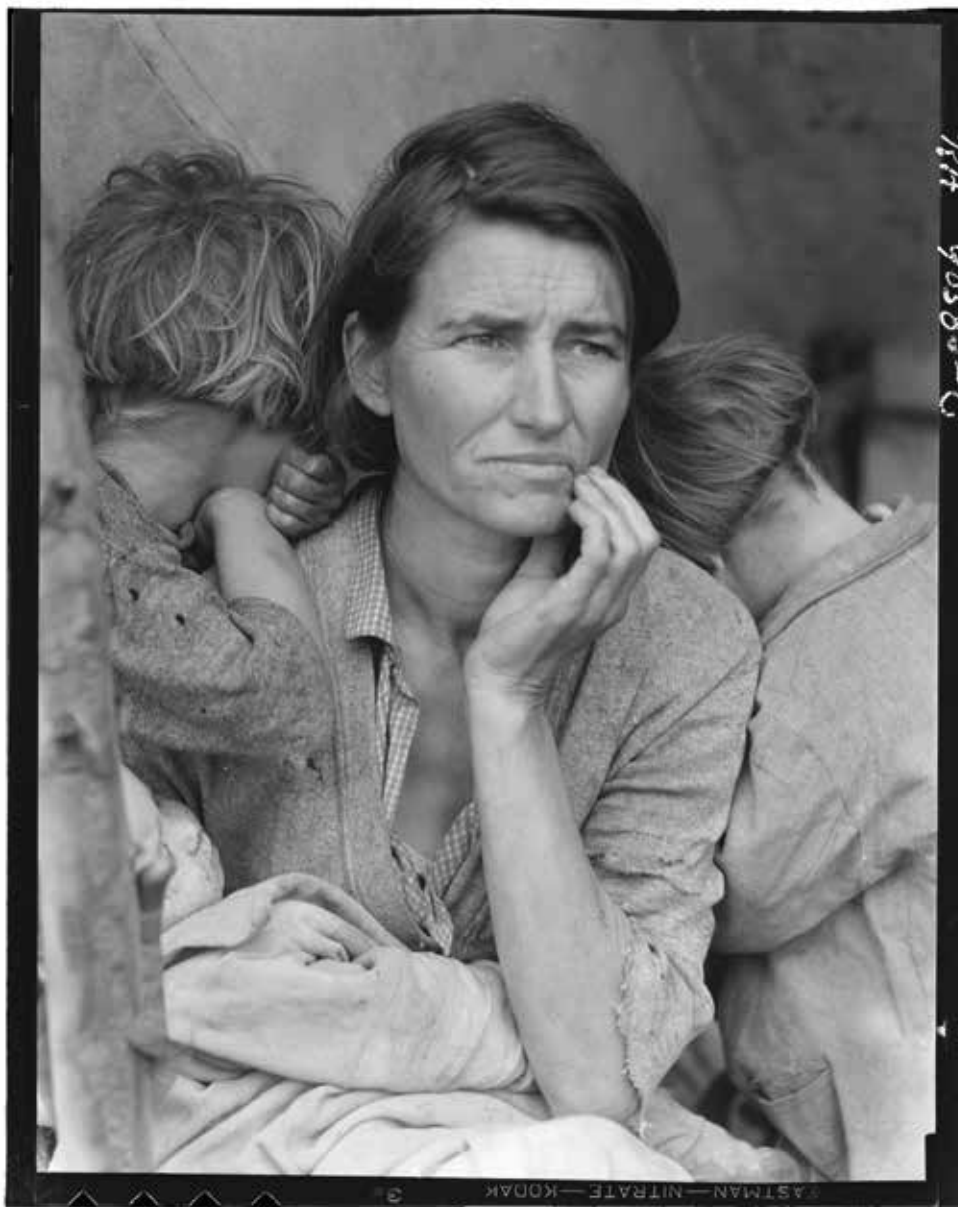
D O R O T H E A L A N G E (1 8 9 5 - 1 9 6 5)

The photograph that has become known as *Migrant Mother* is one of a series of photographs that Dorothea Lange made of Florence Owens Thompson and her children in February or March of 1936 in Nipomo, California. Lange was concluding a month's trip photographing migratory farm labor around the state for what was then the Resettlement Administration. In 1960 Lange gave this account of the experience:

“I saw and approached the hungry and desperate mother, as if drawn by a magnet. I do not remember how I explained my presence or my camera to her, but I do remember she asked me no questions. I made five exposures, working closer and closer from the same direction. I did not ask her name or her history. She

told me her age, that she was thirty-two. She said that they had been living on frozen vegetables from the surrounding fields, and birds that the children killed. She had just sold the tires from her car to buy food. There she sat in that lean-to tent with her children huddled around her, and seemed to know that my pictures might help her, and so she helped me. There was a sort of equality about it.”

Excerpt from: *Popular Photography*, February 1960



L A N G E Migrant Mother, 1936

Photograph, 20 x 17 ¼ in. (50,8 x 43,8 cm). Courtesy of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C. Library of Congress; Prints and Photographs Division, Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Photograph Collection, LC-DIG-fsa-8b29516; Library of Congress modern print

LARRY MCNEIL (b o r n 1 9 5 5)

“I love the idea of making art that was designed to act so specifically as an ambassador for our people. I was thinking of who we really are as Americans, both Indigenous and the proverbial ‘melting pot’ that forms our collective identity. I was thinking of early cowboy and Indian films that formed the world’s perception of who we are, especially as a mythical place.

I wanted a heroic Raven pictograph for the background because he is from our own creation story and frequently amuses himself with the often subliminal nature of a quasi educator, a poetic rascal. Something is a bit amiss though; the bottom of the pictograph is pixilated. The image of the Indians riding their horses into the sunrise has them taking a fleeting look at a weathered ‘Rez car.’ A Rez [tribal reservation] car is often old and beat up, sometimes barely running, sometimes trying to blend back into the earth. Rez cars have become part of our identity. This image is a revised mythological view of Indians because it includes a Rez car and is not the romanticized view of Indians as being a vanishing race.

The sepia tone is important because it references a stereotype that is updated for the 21st Century. A lot of the photographs of Indians (made by non Indians) in the 19th and 20th centuries are romanticized sepia views whose implied message has us as being from the past and certainly not the present. By using this sepia toned photograph I am playing with the perception that Indians are only in the past and bringing them right into the present, and doing it with a bit of a sly joke that we can chuckle about. If we can take outdated stereotypical ideas and laugh about them, we acknowledge that they were indeed a bit absurd and we can move on in a good way.”

— Larry McNeil



MCNEIL

First Light, Winter Solstice, 2007

Six color lithograph printed on white Somerset satin paper, 31 ½ x 39 in. (80 x 99 cm)
Courtesy of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.

G O R D O N P A R K S (1 9 1 2 - 2 0 0 6)

Gordon Parks was born in Fort Scott, Kansas, in 1912. While working as a waiter on the Northern Pacific Railroad, he read, wrote music, and through reading the magazines, discovered pictures made by such contemporary social documentary photographers as Ben Shahn, Jack Delano, Carl Mydans, Dorothea Lange, John Vachon, and Walker Evans. Parks' first big break in professional photography came when he convinced Frank Murphy's women's clothing store in Saint Paul, Minnesota, to let him try his hand at fashion photographs. These pictures led him to other fashion assignments in Chicago, Illinois. By 1941, with recognition for his art growing, Parks became the first photographer to receive a fellowship from the Julius Rosenwald Fund. In 1942 he chose to work at the Farm Services Administration (FSA), a government agency designed to call attention to the plight of the needy during the Depression and to create an historical record of social and cultural conditions across the country.

In 1944 Parks photographed fashion for *Vogue* magazine, and in 1948 he became the first black photographer at *Life* magazine. In 1950 he moved to Paris as a European correspondent, photographing for several years in France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal. By the 1960s, Parks enjoyed status as one of the country's most influential photojournalists. Along with many other projects, such as directing Hollywood films, publishing his autobiographical novel *The Learning Tree*, and several volumes of poetry combined with his photographs, he continued his work documenting the civil rights movement in the United States. His musical compositions include classical, blues, and popular music.

Excerpted from the exhibit brochure *A Retrospective Half Past Autumn: The Art of Gordon Parks*; The Museum of the City of New York, July 1 November 1, 1998.



PARKS

**Daytona Beach, Florida;
Bethune-Cookman College;
Girl Welder in the NYA School,**
January, 1943

Photographic print,
25 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 20 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (65,4 x 52,7 cm)
Courtesy of Art in Embassies,
Washington, D.C.; Library
of Congress; Prints and
Photographs Division, Farm
Security Administration/Office
of War; Information Photograph
Collection, LC-USW3-014865-C

P A R K S

**Mrs. Ella Watson, a
Government Charwoman, 1942**

Digital print from black
and white photograph,
20 x 16 in. (50,8 x 40,6 cm)
Courtesy of Art in Embassies,
Washington, D.C.; Library
of Congress: Prints and
Photographs Division, Farm
Security Administration/Office
of War Information Photograph
Collection, LC-DIG-fsa-8b14845



GEORGE RIVERA (b o r n 1 9 6 4)

George Rivera, governor of the Pueblo of Pojoaque in northern New Mexico, is a man of many talents. He has served his pueblo since 1992 as lieutenant governor and was appointed and soon elected governor upon the passing of former longtime governor Jacob Viarrial. Rivera is also a Native American artist and has been sculpting and teaching art for over twenty years. His work centers primarily on monumental stone and bronze sculpture, painting, and architectural design. The driving force behind all of his creations is the Native American pueblo culture. Rivera's artwork reflects the symbolism and realism of both the past and present day life of the pueblo people. Many of his subjects focus on pueblo dancers. One of his recent pieces, on permanent display in the Pueblo of Pojoaque, is a twelve-ton, monumental sculpture of a buffalo, carved from Virginia soapstone. For Rivera, the buffalo is a symbol of stability for his tribe, both culturally and economically. His newest monumental creations, on display at the Buffalo Thunder Resort and Casino in Santa Fe, New Mexico, include a bronze Buffalo Dancer, Deer Dancer, and Butterfly Dancer. Rivera is responsible for the resort's architectural style and aesthetics.

In addition to being an art instructor, Rivera has been a teacher and cultural preservationist for his family and extended pueblo community. He has served on the board of directors of the Southwest Association of Indian Arts (SWAIA), has been a panelist for the New Mexico

Arts Division, a guest lecturer at several colleges, and a participant in the 1995 U.S./China Arts Exchange in Kunming, China. Rivera is a graduate of the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, California (now the California College of the Arts); the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe; and the Lacoste School of Arts in Lacoste, France. At the latter, Rivera held a teaching assistant position in sculpture and was an apprentice to a Japanese master sculptor during his three year stay in France.

Rivera returned to New Mexico from France with a vision to revitalize traditional pueblo arts and culture, not only for his own pueblo, but for an extended Indian family as well. The result of this vision is the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum in Santa Fe, an educational and museum facility with working art studios and the permanent exhibit *Nah Poeh Meng*, meaning "the continuous path," which portrays pueblo history within the pueblo world view. Today, traditional arts, language, and culture are returning to Native American pueblo life after having been at risk of extinction in the today's world. Rivera's art is held by many international collections, and he works and shows at the pueblo where he resides with his wife, Felicia, and his children: PaaWee, Poqueen, Valentino, and Iris Paloma.

www.groegeriverastudio.com



RIVERA

Buffalo Dancer, undated
Bronze, 24 in. (61 cm) high
Courtesy of the artist,
Santa Fe, New Mexico

MINNIE WABANIMKEE (b o r n 1 9 5 2)

*“Each cone (365 total) represents each day of the year...
This dress is seen as a healing dress and it is greatly respected ...”*

— Elizabeth Osawamick (Ojibwa)

28 Minnie Wabanimkee (Odawa) is a freelance photojournalist. Born in northern Michigan, she has received numerous awards, including the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award for Excellence in Photojournalism. She has worked for the Associated Press, the Michigan State University Museum, the Nokomis Learning Center, and several tribes within the state. Her most recent work is included in the Michigan State University Museum exhibit and publication *Anishnaabek: Artists of Little Traverse Bay*.

Photographs and text are from *Contemporary Great Lakes Pow Wow Regalia: Nda Maamawigaami (Together We Dance)*, edited by Marsha MacDowell; photographs by Minnie Wabanimkee. Michigan State University Museum, East Lansing, Michigan, 1997.

W A B A N I M K E E

Jingle Dress Dancer Briana Johnson of the Tuscarora Nation of Ontario, 1996

Color photograph, 30 ¾ x 30 ¾ in. (78.1 x 78.1 cm)

Courtesy of Michigan State University Museum, Michigan Traditional Arts Program



JOHN WILSON (born 1973)

“I believe that every piece of art that I produce is part of me. I put my heart and my soul into everything I create, which is why art is so important to me. I take it very seriously and will continue to do so. Art is a very important step I took in my life and will always have respect for it because it has guided me to the right path in life.”

30 Moon controls the tides and illuminates the dark night. Moon is also associated with transformation and is widely regarded as an important protector and guardian spirit. Because of the powers of Moon, shamans sometimes call upon it as a spirit guide. In Alaska, Moon man is master of animals. The Nuuchahnulth (of Vancouver Island’s west coast), whose year features thirteen Moons, honor Moon, and his wife Sun, as the most powerful of beings, the bestowers of good luck and plentiful food. This is one of the instances in which Moon is male and Sun is female. Among other groups, personifications suggest that Moon is a female entity: she often wears a disk shaped lip labret of the type worn by high ranking Haida women. Moon’s facial expression is more delicate and serene than Sun.

— John Wilson

John Wilson was born in 1973 in Kitimat, British Columbia, and comes from the Haisla nation. His crest is Killerwhale. His family moved to Terrace, British Columbia, in 1980, and he has lived there ever since. Wilson says he has always been an artist at heart but didn’t learn how to carve until his late twenties. He was taught primarily by Tsimshian artist Heber Reece, but he’s also completed courses at the Freda Diesing School of Northwest Coast Art in design and carving. Wilson remembers being amazed by paintings and regalia at a very young age. His artistic influences are the works of Robert Davidson, Dempsey Bob, Don Yeomans, Tom Eneas, and Klatle Bhi, and many more. While Wilson’s favorite medium is wood, he also does acrylic paintings and prints, and plans to try out other media like jewelry in the future. The artist’s commissions include the Spirit of the Kitlope Dance Group from the Haisla nation, for which he created an Eagle mask, Killer Whale mask, two Beaver masks, and two Raven masks.



WILSON

Moon Mask, undated

Wood and mixed media, 24 x 18 in. (61 x 45,7 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Hill's Native Arts, Vancouver, British Columbia

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