

POINTS WEST

JOURNAL OF THE BUFFALO BILL HISTORICAL CENTER ■ CODY, WY ■ SUMMER 2004



23RD ANNUAL PLAINS INDIAN MUSEUM

POWOW

JUNE 19 – 20, 2004

Robbie Powwow Garden

Grand Entry
at 12 noon & 6 pm
Saturday, June 19

Grand Entry
at 12 noon
Sunday, June 20

Join us for the most beautiful dance contest in the American West. Come in to the Learning Tipi. Explore Powwow songs, dances, and other traditions.

While you are here for Powwow, see the five museums of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center!



Adam Tsosie Nordwall, Shoshone-Chippewa-Navajo dancer from Fallon, Nevada
Plains Indian Museum Powwow, 2003. Photo by Sean Campbell.



BUFFALO BILL HISTORICAL CENTER

Robbie Powwow Garden • Cody, Wyoming • 307.587.4771 • www.bbhc.org



- 4 What Do We Call Art (*Which Happens to be Indian*)?
by Rebecca West
- 10 The Art of Beadwork — An Old But New Tradition
by Emma I. Hansen
- 17 T.C. Cannon: Challenging the Parameters
by Julie Tachick
- 24 The Star Quilt: "A Thing of Beauty"
by Anne Marie Shriver
- 29 Paukeigope: An Artist of the Southern Plains
by Emma I. Hansen

POINTS WEST

© 2004 Buffalo Bill Historical Center. Written permission is required to copy, reprint, or distribute *Points West* materials in any medium or format. All photographs in *Points West* are Buffalo Bill Historical Center photos unless otherwise noted. Address correspondence to Editor, *Points West*, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 720 Sheridan Avenue, Cody, Wyoming 82414 or thomh@bbhc.org.

Managing Editor:
Editor:
Designer:
Photography Staff:

Thom Huge
Mark Bagne
Jan Woods-Krier/PRODESIGN
Chris Gimmeson
Sean Campbell

Points West is published quarterly as a benefit of membership in the Buffalo Bill Historical Center. For membership information contact:

Kathy McLane, Director of Membership
Buffalo Bill Historical Center
720 Sheridan Avenue, Cody, WY 82414
kathym@bbhc.org 307.578.4032

The Buffalo Bill Historical Center is a private, non-profit, educational institution dedicated to preserving and interpreting the natural and cultural history of the American West. Founded in 1917, the Historical Center is home to the Buffalo Bill Museum, Whitney Gallery of Western Art, Plains Indian Museum, Cody Firearms Museum, Draper Museum of Natural History, and McCracken Research Library.

www.bbhc.org



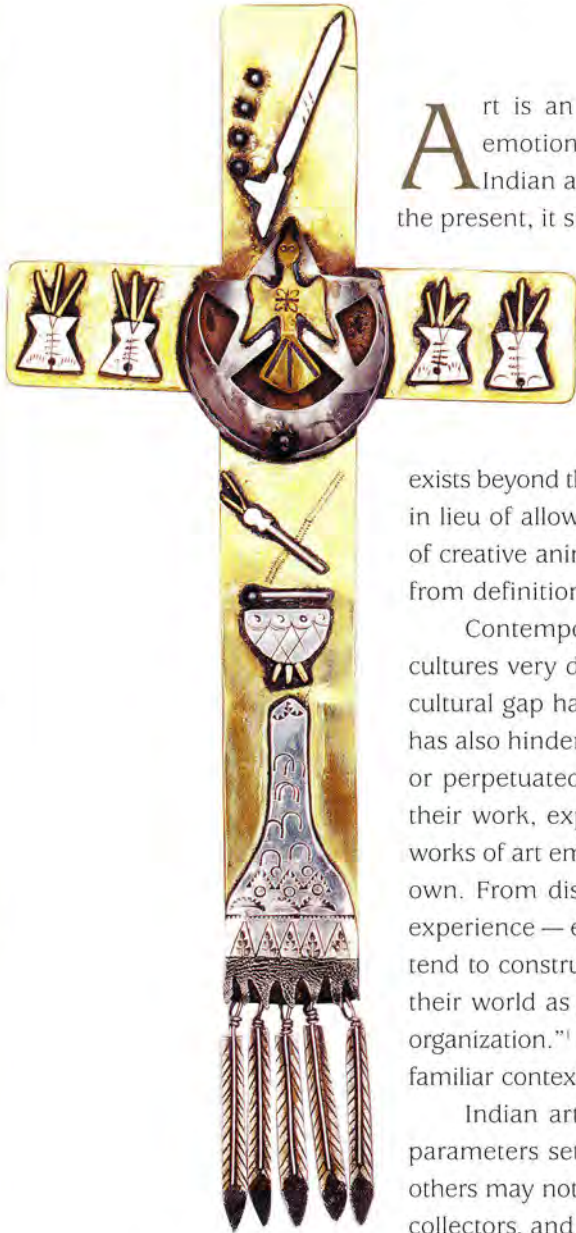
Cover: Vest, Debra Lee Stone Jay, Shoshone Bannock, Fort Hall, Idaho, 2002. Tanned and smoked hide, glass beads. Plains Indian Museum Acquisitions Fund Purchase. NA.202.1008



Man's Shirt, Austin Box, Southern Ute, Security, Colorado. Tanned deer hide, pre-1880 glass beads, seam binding, ermine, dyed porcupine quills, commercial dyes, nylon thread, 1989. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William D. Weiss. NA.202.1007

What Do We Call Art (Which Happens to be Indian)?

by Rebecca West
Curatorial Assistant, Plains Indian Museum



Native American Church
Cross, Mitchell Zephier,
Lower Brule Lakota.
German silver and brass,
ca. 1979. NA.502.48

Art is an extremely personal means of expression, saturated with intense emotion and rich personal and cultural histories. Indian art is no exception. Indian art has always existed amid the chaos of this nation's history. Even in the present, it struggles to be recognized outside of very narrow categorizations. The question "What is art?" is difficult enough to answer in general terms. Contemporary Indian art must answer to this question and a multitude of others. It has been processed, analyzed and separated as an occurrence that hasn't been given, until more recently, the title of an art movement as opposed to a division. Examining such categories, as well as contemporary Indian art that exists beyond the categories, is a step toward ending the over-processing of information in lieu of allowing the art and artists to speak. Indian art exists in a constant state of creative animation as it surges ahead toward its deserved status as art—liberated from definitions and boundaries—but with inherent cultural differences.

Contemporary Indian art is formed from the past and present experiences of cultures very different from the Euro-American cultures that seek to define it. This cultural gap has kept Indian art from being held to the same status as other art. It has also hindered an understanding of the forces behind Indian art and encouraged or perpetuated categorization. Although Indian artists are the best interpreters of their work, explanation is often left up to intermediaries who attempt to decipher works of art emerging from cultural contexts and artistic traditions diverse from their own. From discordance such as this arises the human need to explain, or order, experience—especially in terms of things (such as art) that are unfamiliar: "Humans tend to construct, accept, and share with others systems that explain and organize their world as perceived and known, and feel uneasy without such explanation and organization."¹ Hence the need to explain, label, and place Indian art in a controllable, familiar context.

Indian art has been an anomaly of the art world, clashing against the strict parameters set by Euro-American art traditions. Rather than dismiss what they or others may not understand, non-Indian art scholars, gallery owners, critics, educators, collectors, and curators have historically placed, and still place, Indian art in its own definition. Art made by Indian peoples, regardless of the style, medium, or purpose, has not appeared in the art historical timeline of this nation. This is despite the presence of the Santa Fe Indian School (which became the Institute for American Indian Arts in 1962), a major force in the education of Indian artists.

When Indian art is discussed, it is often referred to as one large category without recognition of the multiple artistic and cultural traditions of diverse groups of Indian people.² Indian “artifacts” are discussed within anthropological or ethnographical contexts. Additionally, meaning or motivation for creation is bypassed for lack of knowledge of Indian cultures. The art is often romanticized, oversimplified, and taken out of cultural context to be judged and categorized with arbitrary concepts such as “beauty” and other purely aesthetic qualities.

The categories may be dangerous and limiting, but it is important to understand the motivation behind them. The placement of Indian art in various categories, as well as the failure to acknowledge Indian art at all, stems from conflict between cultures — specifically, conflict in terms of economic, ideological, and aesthetic goals.³ Conflict and subordination existed throughout the history of Indian and non-Indian relations, and they continue to exist. Artists, dealers, and collectors can potentially profit from the strong demand for art that visually fits into the mold of Indian art, but not without complication and sacrifice:



American Indians who make fine art have found themselves in a real dilemma. Both anthropologists and art historians look for easy references to Indianness — Indian designs, pictographs, or feathers — and dismiss the work for not being Indian enough. On the other hand, fine art critics will look for easy references — Indian designs, pictographs, or feathers — and negate the work for being too Indian.⁴

Often the definition “Indian art” is confining enough, but in fact this art has been further diminished through forced classifications such as “folk art,” “craft,” “primitive art,” or “ethnic art.” Unfortunately, there are still examples of the use of these antiquated and erroneous terms in galleries, museums, and numerous books and articles.⁵

The origin of the terms “primitive art” or “ethnic art” with reference to Indian art began in the nineteenth century with mass collecting by ethnographers who believed they were collecting from vanishing races. By the turn of the century, the art and its makers, branded as “primitive” or “ethnic,” were unwilling providers of provocation to the ethnocentric argument that Euro-American society had progressed to a higher level. Art and artifacts from Plains Indian cultures continued as objects of fascination after the turn of the century, appearing most often in natural history museums: “these objects signified the rude beginnings of humankind, before history and letters began, when humans lived in nature, without civilization.”⁶ The word “primitive” in this instance implies the superiority of one culture over another; that Euro-Americans judged themselves as intellectually, technologically, and artistically more advanced than Indian cultures. Yet the peoples burdened with this misnomer were, and still are, very adeptly surviving and creating art during their own times, places, and cultures.



Top: Women's Jingle Dress and Women's Traditional Dancers at the 2003 Plains Indian Museum Powwow. Below: Beaded Belt Buckle, Becky Harris O'Brien, Eastern Shoshone, Kinnear, Wyoming. Glass beads, tanned hide, brass, 2003. Plains Indian Museum Acquisitions Fund Purchase. NA.203.1279

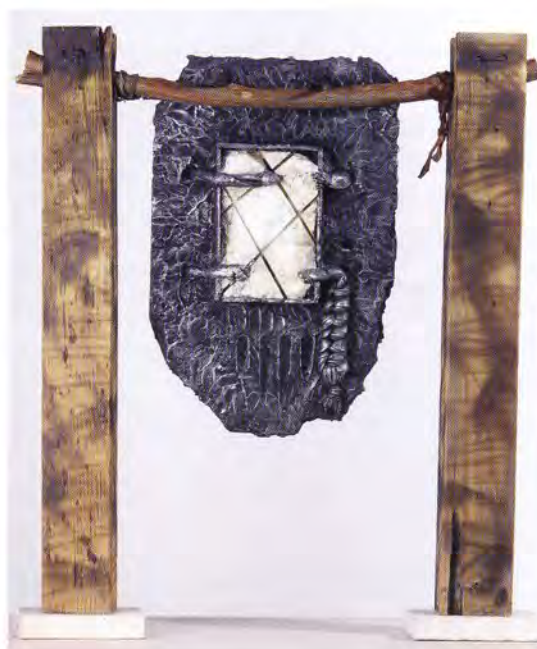
Beliefs associated with these terms became deeply engrained well through the twentieth century, effectively placing contemporary Indian art in the stronghold of categorizations and stereotypes.

Although “folk art” and “crafts” are also used to classify contemporary Indian art, neither accurately defines the vast array of essentially indefinable artwork being created by Indian artists. One of many problems with the term “folk art” when applied to Indian art lies within the term’s birth: “The idea of a folk and a national heritage became increasingly important in the United States in the course of the nineteenth century, but as ideas they were quite divorced from Amerindians.”⁷ From this idea of national heritage emerged a very strong and continuous artistic movement known as “Folk Art.” Its definitions vary but include this one: “In simplest terms, American folk art consists of painting, sculpture and decorations of various kinds, characterized by an artistic innocence that distinguishes them from works of so-called fine art . . . the unpretentious art of ‘the folks.’”⁸ Whose version of artistic innocence should be used in determining if art is “folk art,” or “Indian art,” or “craft”? Is it at all reasonable to deposit Indians into the category of “the folk” when their continual artistic presence demonstrates a refusal to abandon artistic and cultural traditions despite efforts of assimilation? Northern Cheyenne artist Bently Spang comments on the term “folk art” as applied to Indian art:

The term folk art (not to denigrate it), for me implies an unschooled, almost naive form of art . . . It also suggests that Native art emerges from a sub culture and is reflective of only regional concerns. In fact, my people, the Northern Cheyenne, are very complex and intellectual, truly a complete culture. The art forms that have emerged over thousands of years tell the story of a highly intellectual culture that moved over a wide area of this continent. Those art forms, now a part of numerous museum collections, had multiple functions dealing with everything from political concerns to spiritual and personal issues. The work of Cheyenne artists today is often-times tied directly to our past and is a natural outgrowth of that past.⁹

FUND HELPS ACQUIRE CONTEMPORARY ART

The Plains Indian Museum actively seeks to acquire and exhibit artwork by contemporary Plains Indian artists as a way of emphasizing the continuity and innovation of artistic traditions in this and other regions. The Plains Indian Museum Acquisitions Fund was established to facilitate the purchase of Plains Indian artwork—both historic and contemporary. Contributions to this fund and new acquisitions in this area help to educate the public about Plains Indian art, including the new generations of Plains Indian artists, and maintain the diversity of the Plains Indian Museum collections.



Pevah, Bently Spang, Northern Cheyenne, Billings, Montana. Cast aluminum, travertine, marble, redwood, cedar, buckskin, 1991. Stanley N. Landgren Bequest Purchase Fund. 4.97



Horse After Leonardo, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Salish-Cree-Shoshone. Charcoal, watercolor and acrylic on paper, 2001. Designated Purchase through Meadowlark Fund and William E. Weiss Fund. 1.01

A critical analysis of the categories “folk art” and “crafts” renders them useless in the effort to define Indian art from any era. Such an analysis, and the questions and comments it raises, further illustrates that these categories are destructive to the definition of what it means to be an artist, Indian or not.

Much emphasis has been placed on whether Indian art is “traditional” or “non-traditional” based solely upon how it looks. Implied with the mark of “traditional” is the notion of a static art form. Many examples of contemporary Indian art are based on traditional styles and techniques of beadwork, quillwork, hide painting, and other mediums. These traditions are changing, however, with each generation, artist, and personal expression. A man’s shirt by Ute artist Austin Box looks similar to historic examples, but is a contemporary piece made in 1989. The shirt is well out of the boundaries set by Euro-American art, but without apology. The artist’s skill and

traditional knowledge speaks to his talent and ingenuity as well as to generations of Ute artists before him.

Box was motivated to make the shirt after living apart from the Ute Reservation during twenty-one years of military service. Wanting to make a war shirt to wear at powwows, he learned how to construct every detail of the shirt from the quillwork to the beadwork of pre-1880 glass seed beads.¹⁰ If the standard definitions are ignored, this artist and his work can express the cultural and artistic traditions within. Box has created a piece of art that can be used in a literal sense when it is worn and also as a re-connection to artistic and cultural traditions. The shirt is an exciting step beyond a static piece both literally — as the shirt moves and changes with its wearer — and historically as a vehicle of expression for a changing tradition.

Indian artists have the opportunity to create multiple links between sources of inspiration as they move beyond predetermined artistic boundaries. Salish-Cree-Shoshone artist Jaune Quick-to-See Smith fuses traditional imagery with personal artistic styles and techniques that change independently of external expectations. Quick-to-See Smith has been described as an artist who uses pictographic images of animals and landscapes in abstract compositions. *Horse After Leonardo* is an obvious reference to Italian Renaissance artist Leonardo da Vinci and is a stylistic and thematic change for the artist. This is not a pictographic image, nor is it a slavish reproduction of da Vinci’s work. A number of theories might be suggested to answer the question “why the change?” One of the most satisfying answers is because the artist *can*. Quick-to-See Smith has the skill, the versatility, and the freedom to create as she wishes. Biographies list her art as falling into the “Modernist Indian figure-genre.”¹¹ A jargonized definition says little about the artist, her tribal affiliation, traditions, and inspirations, but essentially compartmentalizes an artistic career in four words. Existing and creating far beyond trite artistic definitions, Quick-to-See Smith relies on forces within, such as her own life experiences and cultural ties, to guide her artistic journey.

Indian artists can express cultural ties in unique formats through non-traditional means. Doing so does not lessen indelible cultural influences emerging from their artwork. Northern Cheyenne artist Bently Spang explains his mixed media sculptures as a recognition of his dual existence: "The materials I choose act as a metaphor for the two worlds I am from, and so illustrate how they are inseparably bound together in me. There exists an inherent tension between man-made and natural materials, modern versus indigenous — one always wants to consume the other."¹²

Within the sculpture *Pevah*, Spang binds aluminum, marble, cedar, redwood, travertine, marble, and buckskin as a tangible expression of his beliefs and personal history. The traditional materials combine but never quite merge with the non-organic, just as his culture is an influence that is not secondary to his role as a contemporary artist. Spang actively educates the public about the need for Indian artists to be the voice that speaks for their work. He has participated as an artist-in-residence at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center and recently led a workshop for Cody High School and Middle School students called "The Artist's Voice: Mentoring with Masters."

It is very difficult, if not impossible, for Indian artists to clear the minds of those who are experiencing their creations. Audiences arrive with preconceived notions of what Indian art is, and strong expectations of what they will likely see. While it is unrealistic to expect that individuals will have the same reaction to any piece of art, it is crucial that Indian art is presented with an understanding of its past, its present, and its future to provide the tool of knowledge to everyone who wishes to use it in their interaction with Indian art. An even more important aspect of this knowledge base is the artist's voice, which should be presented through any means possible — a label, an audio component, or, best of all, in person along with his or her work of art. To permit a momentary lapse in artistic memory in order to allow the art and the artist to tell all is the greatest justice to Indian art. Theorizing can only go so far in defining an art force whose momentum increases with each artist, each creation, and each generation. ■



Northern Cheyenne Artist Bently Spang at "The Artists Voice: Mentoring with Masters" workshop at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, March 5, 2004.

¹ Ellen Dissanayake proposes that art is a basic human need as well as a behavior in *What is Art For?* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1998), 197.

² See Mike Leslie's chapter in *Powerful Images: Portrayals of Native America* (Seattle and London: Museums West in Association with the University of Washington Press, 1998), 114.

³ Essay by Charlotte Townsend, "Let X = Audience," Gerald McMaster, ed. *Reservation X: The Power of Place in Aboriginal Contemporary Art* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, and Quebec: The Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1998), 41.

⁴ From an interview with Salish-Cree-Shoshone artist Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith. Lawrence Abbot, ed. *I Stand in the Center of the Good* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 223.

⁵ "A 1986 display case in Chicago's Field Museum helpfully educated the public by defining (primitive) ART, DECORATIVE ART, and (miserable thing) NON-ART." There is also general discussion of the MoMA's 1984 exhibition "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art." Shelly Errington. *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 63.

⁶ *Ibid.* 5.

⁷ Dissanayake, 179.

⁸ Jean Lipman and Alice Winchester, *American Folk Art 1776-1876* (New York: The Viking Press in cooperation with the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1974), 9.

⁹ Correspondence with Bently Spang, March 15, 2004.

¹⁰ From an interview with Austin Box, March 14, 2004.

¹¹ This information was listed under the "most known for" category for Jaune Quick-to-See Smith's biography on www.AskArt.com (<http://askart.com/biography>).

¹² Sarah Boehme et al. *Powerful Images: Portrayals of Native America* (Seattle and London: Museums West in Association with the University of Washington Press, 1998), 115.

The Art of Beadwork —

*By Emma I. Hansen
Curator, Plains Indian Museum*

Visitors to the Plains Indian Museum are often fascinated by the skill, creativity, and diversity of beadwork artists represented in the galleries. They are also interested in learning about the historical development of beadwork traditions among Plains Indian people — traditions that for many people are symbolic of all American Indian art forms. While appreciating the array of beadwork from the nineteenth and early twentieth century, as they are introduced to the museum's growing

collection of contemporary beadwork, visitors should also be reassured that the beadworking tradition is not only alive but is continually changing and being reinterpreted through the efforts of American Indian artists.

Although the use of glass beads by Native beadwork artists became prevalent as an art form about 150 years ago, manufacturing of beads from natural materials is an age-old tradition in North America and is evidenced by small stone and bone beads found in archaeological sites dating back more than 10,000 years. Prior to the arrival of trade beads, a variety of natural materials were used to make beads in Native North America, including shells, stones, teeth, ivory, wood, and seeds. Columbus and other early explorers to the Americas brought bead — lightweight, popular, and profitable trade items — as did Lewis and Clark and other Euro-American trade and diplomatic expeditions that traveled through the Plains, Plateau, and other regions. European-manufactured beads were exchanged for hides, surplus foods, and other materials through long-established Native trading networks and at centers of trade such as the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara villages along the Upper Missouri River.

By 1850, Native people of the Plains and Plateau were eager to acquire glass beads and began incorporating them into their artistic works through experimentation with novel techniques and designs made possible by the new medium. Initially sewn with deer and other animal sinew and later with cotton thread, beads were used to decorate clothing, tipi bags and other furnishings, and horse blankets and other equipment. In some cases, beads replaced natural materials such as porcupine quills or painted pigments. In other cases, more elaborate designs were created as beads were used in combination with older materials.

During the early reservation period of 1880 to 1920, beadwork arts flourished as culturally distinctive designs were developed among Plains and Plateau peoples. Besides being an artistic outlet



Vivian Swallow (left) and Wilma Jean McAdams-Swallow demonstrating beadwork in the Plains Indian Museum during the American Indian Heritage Program, November 2000.

An Old But New Tradition

and means of expression for women, the creation of beaded items for sale to museums, collectors, and tourists traveling through their reservations brought in much needed income for the family. The creation of beaded items for personal and family use at ceremonies, parades, powwows, and other celebrations helped to maintain tribal cultural identities and brought individual recognition for their artistry.

Contemporary beadwork artists continue to create for family and personal use for powwows and other celebrations as well as for income. Although most beadwork artists are women, men are also working in this medium more frequently. Traditionally, beadwork skills and designs have been learned within family settings, although this art form is now more formally taught through tribal and cultural programs on reservations and in urban areas and in art programs in high schools and tribal colleges.

Three beadwork artists represented in the Plains Indian Museum collection are Wilma Jean McAdams-Swallow, Vivian Swallow, and Sandra Swallow-Hunter. These Eastern Shoshone tribal members from the Wind River Reservation excel in the creation of traditional Shoshone dance clothing. Descendants of Sacagawea's family and Chief Washakie's youngest son, Charles, who served on the Shoshone Business Council for many years, the women state that their family is dedicated to preserving Eastern Shoshone art forms and traditions.

Vivian Swallow and Sandra Swallow-Hunter learned beadwork from their mother, Wilma Jean McAdams-Swallow, who has beaded for more than thirty years.



Vest, Debra Lee Stone Jay, Shoshone Bannock, Fort Hall, Idaho, 2002. Tanned and smoked hide, glass beads. Plains Indian Museum Acquisitions Fund Purchase. NA.202.1008



Dress, Wilma Jean McAdams-Swallow, Vivian Swallow, and Sandra Swallow-Hunter, Eastern Shoshone, Fort Washakie, Wyoming, 2000. Tanned elk hide, glass beads. Gift of Mr. And Mrs. Harold R. Tate. NA.202.1139

A retired rancher from the area of Crowheart, Wyoming, Wilma Jean McAdams-Swallow is a Golden Age traditional dancer at local powwows. She was active in promoting the arts of the Wind River Reservation in the 1970s through the Shoshone and Arapaho Artists Association and is known for making Shoshone-style moccasins, belts, and dresses.

Vivian Swallow remembers that she began working with beads as a small child by stringing together beads of mixed colors remaining from her mother's work. By her late teens, she began working on her own projects. According to Sandra Swallow-Hunter, the three women began designing dresses when her mother and sister decided to return to powwow dancing. They found that it was difficult to find an Eastern Shoshone tribal member who actively designed and made hide dresses for powwows and other celebrations.

Most tribal members have one or two buckskin dresses that have been handed down from one generation to another. According to Sandra Swallow-Hunter, "We realized that the art of buckskin dress making, like saddle making, is nearly gone. We decided that we would make our dresses in order to inspire the many talented Eastern Shoshone artists to revive the art. We work on each dress as a team; each of us has our own strengths and contributions to lend to each dress we make."¹

Like the dress and woman's moccasins in the Plains Indian Museum collection, much of the clothing and accouterments made by this family of beadwork artists features the distinctive Shoshone rose design. Since World War II, the rose has become one of the dominant and most recognizable patterns used by Shoshone artists. Vivian Swallow affirms that at powwows one can often distinguish Shoshone tribal members by the roses on their dance



Woman's Moccasins, Wilma Jean McAdams-Swallow, Vivian Swallow, and Sandra Swallow-Hunter, Eastern Shoshone, Fort Washakie, Wyoming 2000. Tanned elk hide, glass beads. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harold R. Tate. NA.202.1138

clothing. Although Crow bead artists also have rose patterns, the beading technique is different from that of the Shoshone and tends to follow straight lines rather than the shape of the rose petals and leaves. Vivian Swallow describes the Shoshone preference for the rose and other natural designs in the following way: "The Shoshone, like other Native Americans, use elements that surround us, like the mountains seen as geometric designs on our moccasins. Roses are something beautiful in nature, which surrounds us. Originally, we used the wild rose, but after the Shoshone were exposed to embroidery through the boarding schools, we began making more elaborate designs."²



Man's Vest (front and back), Marcus Dewey, Northern Arapaho, Fort Collins, Colorado, 2003. Tanned hide, glass beads, and cotton cloth. Plains Indian Museum Acquisitions Fund Purchase. NA.202.1276

In addition to Shoshone style dresses featuring the rose design, Sandra Swallow-Hunter also makes fully beaded dresses, similar to those worn by Shoshone Bannock women, for family and other tribal members who compete in major powwow dance contests. She has noted that a dancer without a fully beaded dress often would not be noticed in such large powwow arenas.³ She also makes traditional trade cloth dresses, jingle dresses, and other accessories.

Sandra Swallow-Hunter, her sister, and mother remain active in many reservation activities and programs — such as the One Shot Antelope Hunt — and tribal organizations. Sandra Swallow-Hunter works as the Tribal Funds Manager at the Bureau of Indian Affairs office in Billings, Montana; and Vivian Swallow works for the Indian Health Service on the Wind River Reservation, while serving on the Eastern Shoshone Housing Board and the Veterans War Memorial Committee. Both women are currently pursuing Masters of Public Administration degrees. They have taught beadwork classes to Eastern Shoshone tribal members and demonstrated their art in public venues such as the Plains Indian Museum. In a particularly interesting project a few years ago when Vivian Swallow worked as the Eastern Shoshone Child Welfare Specialist, the two women taught a class on parenting that featured cradle making. More recently, Sandra Swallow-Hunter made a Shoshone style cradle for her own daughter born in November 2003.

The vest in the Museum's collection created by Shoshone Bannock artist Debra Lee Stone Jay shows a different approach to the use of the Shoshone rose design. The vest is made of smoked tanned hide, which provides a soft brown color as background for the beadwork and features a combination of Shoshone geometric designs and the rose pattern.

Debra Lee Stone Jay comes from the Shoshone Bannock Reservation at Fort Hall, Idaho, where she still lives. She is a Shoshone Bannock tribal member, also of Paiute descent, whose family has great respect for tribal traditions. "Our family was raised in the traditional manner with all the language, customs, and traditions of the tribe. Our grandmother was known as a master in the art of hide tanning and beadwork specializing in intricate floral and geometric designs of the Intermountain tribes. Our grandfather also helped us by telling us about the colors of the sky and the animals, explaining to us about the markings and the movements of certain wildlife. Our grandparents were very great people to our family."⁴

Debra Lee Stone Jay creates fully and partially beaded dresses, vests, moccasins, cradles, purses, and other accessories featuring distinctive floral, geometric, and animal designs as well as portraits of Shoshone Bannock people. In addition to crediting her grandparents for their encouragement regarding her beadwork, she also recognizes the influence of Shoshone Bannock artist Clyde Hall, whom she considers her mentor.

Another contemporary beadwork artist represented in the Plains Indian Museum collection is Marcus Dewey of the Northern Arapaho Tribe of the Wind River Reservation. Marcus Dewey is known by Native American art specialists and collectors for his distinctive beaded saddles. He uses McClellan military saddles—standard issue saddles from the time of the Indian Wars



Beaded Saddle, Marcus Dewey, Northern Arapaho, Thermopolis, Wyoming, 1997. Tanned hide, glass beads, wool cloth, brass tacks, and McClellan saddle. Museum purchase with funds provided by the Pilot Foundation. NA.403.203

until World War I — as the foundation for his beadwork designs featuring traditional Arapaho colors of white, blue, red, and yellow. The saddle in the Plains Indian Museum collections combines pictographic images of a young buffalo and its mother on each side with symbolic representations of buffalo tracks. The beadwork on the saddle is accented with blue and red wool cloth and brass tacks.

The vest made by Marcus Dewey in the Museum's collection is reminiscent of the fully beaded Northern Plains men's vests of the early reservation period. During this period, women began to illustrate men's deeds through pictographic beadwork designs on clothing, pipe bags, and other objects. Men's vests — with pictorial designs of warriors, horses, buffalo, deer, elk, cowboys, and often the American flag — were worn by Northern Plains men for powwows, parades, and other celebrations or sold to non-Indians. The vest pictured on these pages features tipi and thunderbird designs with two facing warriors on horseback on the front and back. The warriors wear eagle feather bonnets with long trailers and variously hold shields, coup sticks, a tomahawk, and lance.

Marcus Dewey does historical research and consults with older family members as he develops his designs, but he states that many of his designs come to him when he is sleeping. In addition to the saddles and vests, he makes fully beaded Arapaho-style cradles.

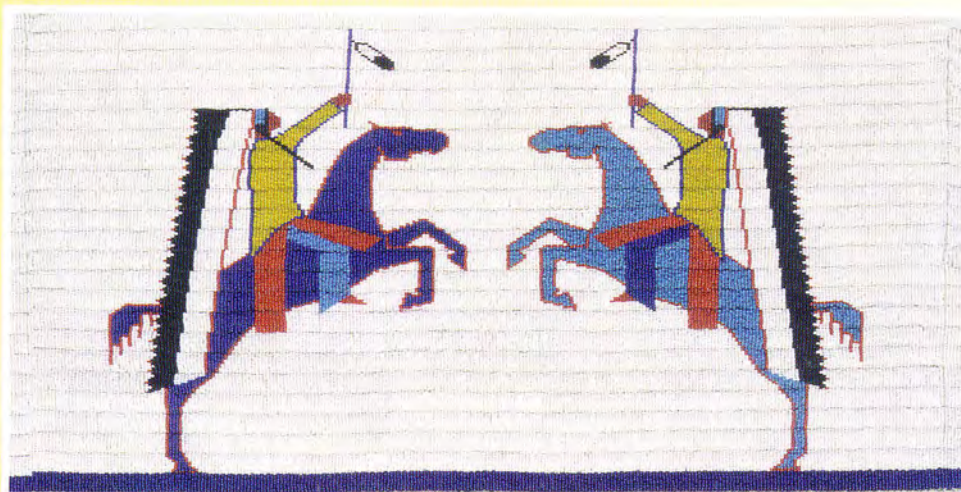
For Northern Arapaho, Eastern Shoshone, and Shoshone Bannock people, beadwork is a long-standing tradition that did not end when major museum collections were assembled at the beginning of the twentieth century. The contemporary beadworkers represented in the Plains Indian Museum collections, like Native artists elsewhere, look to their antecedents for inspiration while continually experimenting and incorporating their new ideas and experiences into tribal designs and traditions. ■

¹ Sandra Swallow-Hunter, correspondence, November 22, 1999.

² Vivian Swallow, phone interview, March 15, 2004.

³ Sandra Swallow-Hunter, November 22, 1999.

⁴ Debra Stone Jay, correspondence, February 11, 2003.



Man's Vest (detail, back), Marcus Dewey, Northern Arapaho, Fort Collins, Colorado, 2003. Tanned hide, glass beads, and cotton cloth. Plains Indian Museum Acquisitions Fund Purchase. NA.202.1276

T.C. CANNON:

Challenging the Parameters

By Julie Tachick

Curatorial Assistant, Whitney Gallery of Western Art

T.C. Cannon (Kiowa/Caddo), regarded as one of the most eloquent, innovative, and influential American Indian artists of the 1970s, played a pivotal role in helping change the direction of traditional Indian painting. Integrating bold colors and aspects of modernism with Indian themes and traditions, he offered his audiences a new way of seeing the American Indian experience.

Cannon's time and place in the history of American Indian art assisted in nurturing his philosophy and creative character. Born Tommy Wayne Cannon in Lawton, Oklahoma, on September 27, 1946,¹ Cannon came into the world on the cusp of early rumblings by Indian artists who wanted to change the boundaries and confines characteristic of American Indian art.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the two-dimensional and highly stylized southwestern or Studio style had quickly become a cliché in American Indian painting.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the flat, two-dimensional, and highly stylized southwestern or Studio style had quickly become a cliché in American Indian painting. This style not only reflected what non-Indian patrons and collectors thought Indian art should embody but also defined what was, at the time, considered "pure and acceptable" Native art.² By the 1950s, feeling confined by the limitations that had been imposed upon Indian painting, artists such as Oscar Howe (Yanktonai Sioux), Joe Herrera (Cochiti), Patrick DesJarlait (Ojibwe), and George Morrison (Ojibwe) began merging modernist movements such as Cubism and Abstract Expressionism with tradition in order to intertwine mainstream artistic innovations with aspects of Native culture.

As a new ideology of American Indian art emerged, Cannon became a vital part of its early awareness and formation. In 1964 he enrolled in the Institute of American Indian Art (IAIA). Established in 1962 by the Indian Arts and Crafts Board and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, IAIA materialized as a result of an intense national debate about, and restructuring of, what constituted American Indian art. Widely credited with revolutionizing and revitalizing modern Indian painting, IAIA was significant to the direction Indian art took because the Institute's objectives empowered and encouraged a new generation of Native artists to approach art in any manner they imagined.³

Under the direction of Lloyd Kiva New (Cherokee), students at IAIA during this era were exposed to a plethora of educational experiences and encouraged to experiment with new methods and techniques. The school's curriculum embraced tribal identities and cultural traditions and supported individual creativity. As a result, the students' visual vocabulary was strongly bicultural, and their works were characterized by innovation in technique, style, and subject.⁴ In addition to Cannon, several other Indian artists who studied at the Institute from 1964 to 1967, dubbed the "golden years," have become well-known and successful in the contemporary genre: Kevin Red Star, Earl Biss, Doug Hyde, Linda Lomahaftewa, Karita Coffey, and Sherman Chaddlesone, among others.



T.C. Cannon: A Memorial Retrospective. Exhibition installation photograph. Buffalo Bill Historical Center. March 1–April 26, 1981. Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming. While at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, the T.C. Cannon memorial exhibition was on display in the space that is now the Orientation Gallery and Kriendler Gallery of Contemporary Western Art.

Fritz Scholder (Luiseno), who has developed a respected painting career of his own, was also present at IAIA during this period. As an instructor at the Institute, Scholder worked alongside his students, where concepts of action painting, expressionist thoughts, and social commentary were explored in a natural process of exchange between teacher and students. He also offered a course on the history of art that introduced students to artists and art movements from both cultures. His approach provided the students with a strong and relevant foundation from which they could base their own artistic developments.

Armed with this background, and hailing from what was, at the time, considered to be the cutting-edge environment of the contemporary Indian art scene, Cannon excelled. In 1972, at the young age of 24, he was given a major show with Scholder at the Smithsonian Institution's National Collection of Fine Arts that subsequently traveled to several prestigious museums throughout Europe. The exhibition, titled *Two American Painters*, launched him to fame. Audiences in and outside of the United States embraced his style and approach with an enthusiastic response. In the following six years, he produced a large body of serious work, including commissions for the Seattle Arts Commission and the Santa Fe Opera.

Shortly after the exhibition at the Smithsonian, Cannon met New York art dealer Jean Aberbach, who soon began representing the artist on an exclusive basis. In 1978, the pair was planning Cannon's first one-man show, a major exhibition to be held at the Aberbach Gallery in October.

Unfortunately, their plans changed. On May 8, 1978, five months before the opening, Cannon was tragically killed in an automobile accident at the young age of thirty-one.

On December 10, 1979, Aberbach opened *T.C. Cannon: A Memorial Exhibition* in New York City. The important and monumental show was a huge success, drawing collectors from around the world. From New York, the exhibition traveled around the United States, appearing in notable museums such as the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona; the Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe; and the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming.

Featuring fifty major works by Cannon, the memorial exhibition was on display for the public in the Historical Center's central lobby space from March 1, 1981, to April 26, 1981. The show presented a wide range of works, including oil paintings, watercolors, Japanese woodcuts, and notebook sketches. Cannon's *Self Portrait* appeared on the cover of the Patrons Preview invitation to the exhibition. By celebrating Cannon as the featured artist for the 1981 season and placing the show adjacent to the Whitney Gallery of Western Art's permanent exhibition of master works by earlier artists such as Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Moran, Frederic Remington, Charles Russell, and Joseph Henry Sharp, the Historical Center exerted its confidence as a cutting-edge institution as well as its commitment to recognizing inspiring and talented contemporary artists. In the words of the Historical Center's then director, Peter Hassrick:

T.C. Cannon was very much a man of the West. It is our feeling that the museum has an obligation to spread a cross section of artistic and historic perceptions of the West rather than labor entirely in the traditional and figurative world of Remington and Russell.⁵



T.C. Cannon: A Memorial Retrospective. Exhibition installation photograph (detail). Buffalo Bill Historical Center. March 1–April 26, 1981. Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming.



T.C. Cannon (1946–1978). *Buffalo Medicine Keeper*, ca. 1974. Acrylic and oil on canvas. Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming. William E. Weiss Purchase Fund. 8.02

In 2002, twenty-one years after the memorial exhibition, the Buffalo Bill Historical Center had the extraordinary opportunity to acquire a painting by Cannon for its collections. There are a limited number of original works by the artist available due to his premature and unexpected death. *Buffalo Medicine Keeper*, ca. 1974, generously secured through the William E. Weiss Purchase Fund, is currently on view in the Historical Center's Orientation Gallery and is a strong and striking example of Cannon's trademark painting style.

Here the artist uses bold, contrasting colors that vibrate against one another, creating the illusion of motion and rhythm. His brushstrokes are quick, yet controlled, and hints of underpainting emerge. Tradition provided a firm foundation from which Cannon gathered knowledge and inspiration for his paintings.

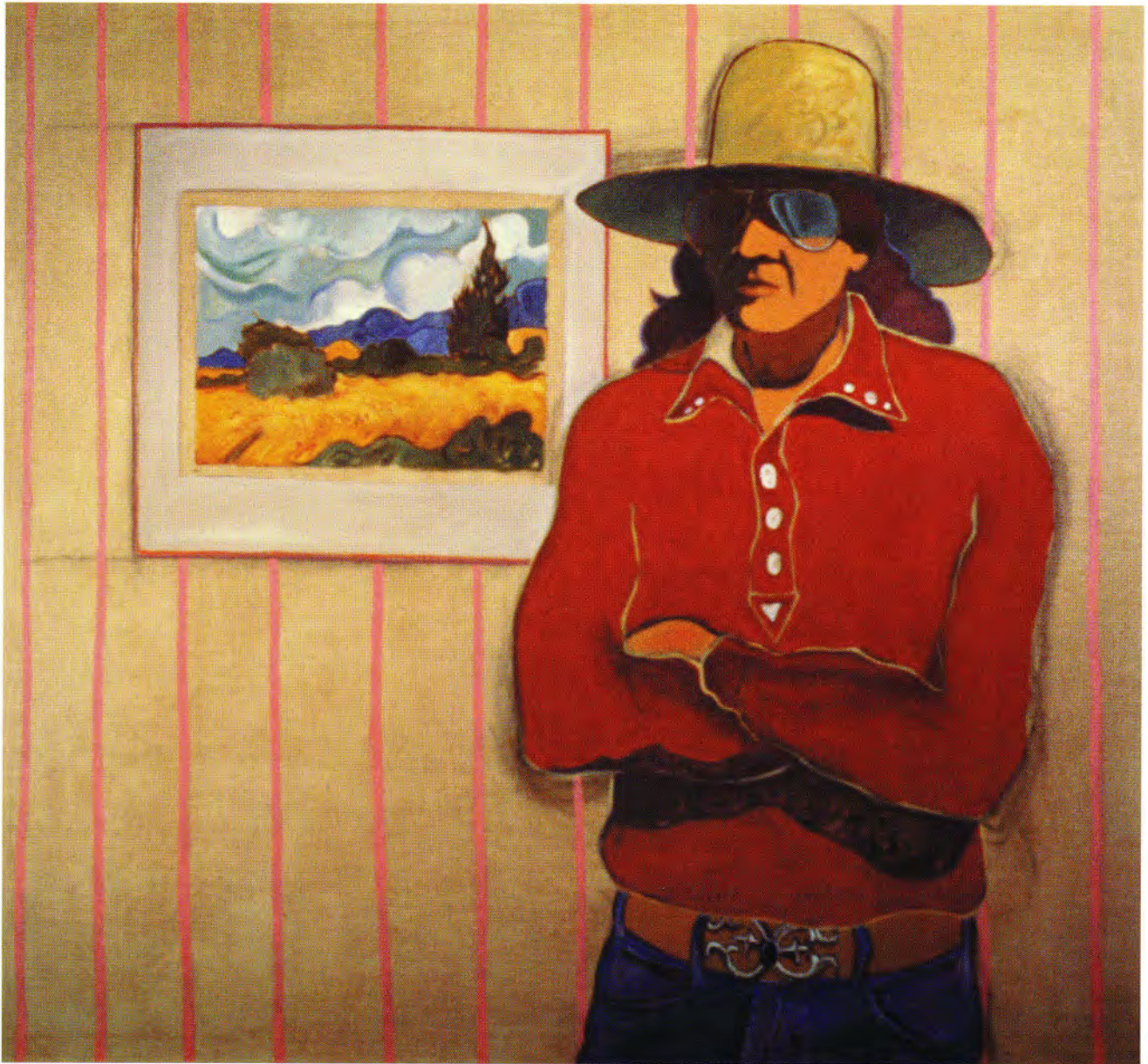
It also served as a point of departure for further artistic gains that were defined by his individual creativity. The flat areas of color, underpainting, and outlining employed in his paintings are reminiscent of traditional Indian painting, yet his intensity of color, paint application, and flat, decorative style recall influences from early twentieth century European painters such as Henri Matisse and Vincent van Gogh.

Beyond his new and unusual style of painting, Cannon was admired for his ability to capture and comment on the past and present world. He often used bold portraiture of a solitary Native person as his vehicle of choice, integrating decorative patterns and vibrant color schemes to enhance the work. Although his imagery and subject matter concentrated on Indian themes and traditions, he incorporated modern elements from American culture, as well as other world cultures, into his paintings.

In *Buffalo Medicine Keeper*, the man wears a combination of objects from both the traditional Indian way of life and the modern American culture. Among Plains Indian men, there is a long tradition of wearing buffalo horn bonnets, which provided warriors protection in battle and ensured long, healthy lives. The man wears a hair pipe breastplate, slightly visible between the fashionable striped shirt and vest. The title and subject matter of the painting are references to the Sun Dance, one of the most sacred ceremonies among Native peoples of the Plains. One of the purposes of the Sun Dance is to honor the Buffalo Spirit. A painted buffalo skull, such as the man holds, is placed at the back of the Sun Dance Lodge as a sacred altar, facing east toward the rising sun. The decorative dot pattern enhances the overall image, but the dots also symbolize an aspect of the Sun Dance ceremony in which participants stare at the sun until spots appear before their eyes. The dots refer to this visual experience. Framed in darkness and then enclosed within a bright circle, as if in the spotlight, the subject, and his experience and existence, are the focus of the work.



T.C. Cannon: *A Memorial Retrospective*. Exhibition installation photograph (detail). Buffalo Bill Historical Center. March 1–April 26, 1981. Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming.



T.C. Cannon (1946–1978). *Collector #2*, 1970. Acrylic. Courtesy of the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, Indianapolis, Indiana. Gift of Harrison Eiteljorg. 1994.11.1

Cannon was fond of self-portraits, producing several during his life. In *Collector #2*, he is shown wearing a few of his familiar personal items: sunglasses, cowboy hat and decorative belt buckle.

Placing a traditional image in a modern setting illustrated Cannon's belief that Indian people are modern people who maintain their ancient heritage in contemporary times.⁶ It was not uncommon for Cannon to position himself in this role. In *Collector #2*, a self-portrait, the artist is dressed in modern attire. Wearing sunglasses and with arms folded across his chest, he appears guarded but confident. He's a contemporary artist, aware and proud of his heritage, but also familiar with the masters of European art, as indicated by the small van Gogh landscape painting hanging on the wall. In creating his own works, he draws his strength and knowledge from both.

Although Cannon stated that an Indian painting was any painting that was done by an Indian, he believed there really was no such thing as an Indian painting; instead, there was Indian sensibility, the idea of a collective history that began with birth and continually developed throughout one's upbringing and life experiences.⁷ Artists of all nationalities were working in a multitude of modes and styles. To Cannon, it seemed unnecessary to define a work based on an artist's heritage. "After all, Picasso spent most of his life in France anyway. Does that make him a Spanish painter or a French painter? I say it makes him Picasso."⁸ Likewise, Cannon argued that contemporary American Indian art should be viewed within the broader context of modern society. It deserved to be critiqued, evaluated, and appreciated under the same terms and circumstances as modern mainstream art movements.

Cannon played an important role in the metamorphosis and development of contemporary American Indian art during the mid-1960s through the 1970s. Following his convictions, armed with a passion for the culture of his people and a knowledge of, and sensitivity for, artistic design and aesthetics, he challenged the popular concepts of what constituted "Indian art." As a result, Cannon not only contributed to the redefinition of its parameters, initiating an advancement toward a model truer to his own experiences as an American Indian in the modern world, but also helped clear the way for future generations of Native artists to pursue their own distinct and uniquely American artistic interpretations. ■

¹ The artist is known professionally as T.C., short for Tommy Cannon or Tee Cee, as he sometimes signed his letters. Joan Frederick, *T.C. Cannon: He Stood in the Sun* (Flagstaff, Arizona: Northland Publishing Company, 1995), 20.

² For an extensive discussion on this topic, see J.J. Brody, *Indian Painters and White Patrons* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971).

³ Margaret Archuleta and Rennard Strickland, *Shared Visions: Native American Painters and Sculptors in the Twentieth Century* (New York: The New Press and Phoenix, Arizona: The Heard Museum, 1991), 22.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Peter H. Hassrick. Letter dated March 6, 1981. Exhibition Archives, McCracken Research Library, Buffalo Bill Historical Center.

⁶ Elizabeth Dear in *T.C. Cannon: He Stood in the Sun*, 166.

⁷ See Jamake Highwater. *Song From the Earth: American Indian Painting* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1976), 177.

⁸ *Ibid.*

THE STAR QUILT

"A Thing of Beauty"

by Anne Marie Shriver

These are notes to lightning in my bedroom.
A star forged from linen thread and patches.
Purple, yellow, red like diamond suckers, children

of the star gleam on sweaty nights. The quilt unfolds
against my sheets, moving, warm clouds of Chinook.
It covers my cuts, my red birch clusters under pine.

—From the poem *Star Quilt* by Roberta Hill Whiteman, Oneida, 1984.¹

As if lying against a night sky, the center star explodes from its background in a dynamic burst of pattern and color. Flawless in its execution, the eight-pointed star in the center of the quilt reflects the care and skill of its maker. The projecting design recalls the circles of eagle feather bonnets, the rays of the sun, and the morning star — all of which are found on painted buffalo robes from the past. The star quilt is an ironic example of the transformation of an adopted art form.

The star quilt, adapted from the Star of Bethlehem design found in Pennsylvania, seems to have become a reflection of Lakota society, both historically and in modern times. Like the painted buffalo robes made by women to be worn by men, star quilts are used today for momentous occasions or exchanged as gifts of honor. These quilts have become integrated into every aspect of Lakota life and are used whenever people hold celebrations perceived as traditional, including naming ceremonies, weddings, births, and basketball tournaments. It is also common to drape the coffin with a star quilt during a wake.

Lakota women spend the whole year making star quilts for the traditional giveaways held by their people. A giveaway is a public way of honoring others, particularly relatives.²

Though introduced to the Lakota people from outside of their traditions, quilting has become thoroughly embedded in Lakota life. Quilts, and especially those in the star pattern, are one of the definitive cultural symbols of the Lakota people.³ The star quilt, made from raw materials initially traded for and now purchased from non-Indians, has become the singular piece of artwork that is a symbol of being Lakota in the modern world. Thus the traditional role of women as artists and craftsmen is still very important, as all Lakota people require an abundance of star quilts during their lifetimes.⁴

In the early part of the nineteenth century, military people, pioneers, gold seekers, and missionaries began to settle the domain of the Lakota people — what is now North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana. With the loss of their land and disappearance of their food supply — the once vast herds of bison — Native people were placed on reservations and expected to forget their cultural, domestic, and religious traditions. It was the government's desire to have the once nomadic, hunting Lakota of the Plains become farmers on designated plots of land.

As part of the United States government's attempt to assimilate American Indian children into mainstream American life, boys and girls were sent to missionary or government-run boarding schools—far from the reservation and their families. The older children divided their days into academic and vocational classes. Girls concentrated on gaining skills in the domestic arts, such as laundry, food preparation, and sewing—including quiltmaking. Boys learned about animal husbandry, farming, and other vocational skills.

As the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth on the reservations, government programs were teaching Native men and women farming and domestic skills, similar to what their children were being taught at the boarding schools. The Field Matron Program, established by the Office of Indian Affairs, promoted assimilation through intensive domestic work with women in reservation communities. Field matrons, including a few Native American women, spent much of their time working with tribal women on cooking, housekeeping, and sewing skills. These three subjects were thought to be the most useful and afforded the field matrons their best chance for successful cultural transmission.⁵

Oglala Lakota artist, educator, and historian Arthur Amiotte asserts that the young women from boarding schools returned to the reservation with homemaking skills commensurate with

those being taught in the communities, albeit with more detail and sophistication. The institutional settings allowed for more precision with the sewing machines, and the materials were more in line with non-Indian homemaking conventions and fashions. Literacy offered further options for the educated Native American homemaker, as she could now order a variety of materials from mail order businesses such as Montgomery Ward and Sears, Roebuck and Company.

According to Amiotte, it was about this time that the patchwork or crazy quilt emerged as an alternative to expensive purchased blankets.

The recycling of cloth was important, and these early quilts were made from old clothing, muslin, flour and salt sacks, and filled with coarse burlap feed and potato sacks. Used clothing sent to denominational missions by Eastern benefactors found their way into colorful quilts. Particularly functional were those made of fine broad-cloth, serge and flannel wool. The female tradition of designing in straight edged geometric seems to have made this a natural transition, as the early quilts were predominantly geometric blocks reminiscent of the designs found in parfleches, quillwork and beadwork.⁶



Star Quilt. Freda Goodsell, Oglala Lakota. Northern Plains, 2000. Cotton cloth and thread, polyester batting. Museum purchase with funds provided by the Pilot Foundation. NA.302.144

Amiotte emphasizes that the radiating star quilt design, which is also favored by numerous American Indian tribes, did not gain its popularity and ascribed tribal significance until the 1950s. Other scholars, such as Beatrice Medicine and Patricia Albers, believe that Lakota women have been influential in adapting a rather new art form of quilting to an old traditional art form — hide painting. They affirm the star quilt pattern is descended from ceremonial hide robes bearing the morning star design.⁷ However, as maintained by Amiotte, the cultural motif associated with the morning star was of a certain generation; women producing this pattern today were not exposed to this during their childhood.

At the tribal fairs and giveaways in the first two decades of the 1900s, Amiotte's study has found, the quilts made for giving away were only the newly made quilt tops. Recipients then took these home and recovered existing quilts as fillers. It is not unusual in disassembling heirloom quilts to find several layers of beautifully blocked and sewn quilt tops. It was customary every year to remove the top and backing of these tied quilts, launder them, and reassemble them for use, sometimes using a newly sewn quilt top to replace the previous one. The sewing machine, available at the mercantile on or near the reservation, greatly augmented the production of quilts, which, in some cases, became a medium of exchange in some bartering transactions.⁸

The collections of the Plains Indian Museum include a number of beautiful quilts, including a star quilt, featured with this article, by Freda Mesteth Goodsell, Oglala Lakota artist. An interview with Mrs. Goodsell and her nephew, Arthur Amiotte, gives insight into the creation of these artworks. Mrs. Goodsell was born to Christina Standing Bear Mesteth and George Mesteth in a log house on White Horse Creek, south of Manderson, South Dakota. Built in 1919 by her grandparents, Standing Bear and Louise Renwick Standing Bear, a re-creation of the house is featured in the *Adversity and Renewal* gallery in the Plains Indian Museum.

Quilting has become embedded in Lakota life, and typically the art is learned at home, usually from an elder. Mrs. Goodsell states, "My mother was a quiltmaker, so I grew up with it." Interestingly, she did not take up quilting until she was in her thirties. "I saw these beautiful quilts and was wishing for one, and I thought, I'm going to go home and make one. I taught myself."

When asked for an approximation of quilts she has produced, Mrs. Goodsell was not able to give a number. Since beginning in her thirties, Mrs. Goodsell has most likely made thousands of quilts. She makes quilts for ceremonies, sometimes forty or fifty at a time, and for family and friends. She also donates quilts for fundraising purposes, such as when neighbors need help covering medical expenses or when her



Blowing quilts at a memorial giveaway for Max Mesteth, brother of Freda Goodsell, Manderson, South Dakota. Quilts by Freda Goodsell. August 24, 2000.

granddaughter's volleyball team was raising money to go to Australia for a tournament. "It is a status symbol to receive a well-made star quilt, because of the craftsmanship and beauty. It is also a tribute to the maker," says Arthur Amiotte.

After using a sewing machine to piece the body of the star, Mrs. Goodsell sews the remainder of the quilt by hand. Her intuitive sense of design and color is visible in all of her quilts. Asked about the inspiration for her quilts' color palette, Mrs. Goodsell says, "I make quilts like how I dress." Her nephew interjects, "Well coordinated!" The sewing room, converted from a bedroom by her husband, contains neatly organized shelves that are all color coordinated, "like a color chart." Amiotte emphasizes that "looking at the stacks of fabric is like looking at a rainbow. There are hundreds of tones in each hue." Mrs. Goodsell emphasizes, "There are lots of colors, and you would not believe the number of whites available."

Mrs. Goodsell is now also making applique quilts, and she has recently created a quilt for members of the Korczak Ziolkowski family at the Crazy Horse Memorial in South Dakota. She had fun making an outline of the ten members of the family "using little pieces of their own garments, and I made a scene where they look like gingerbread men." She also creates applique quilts with eagles and bison.

In addition to being a master quilter, Mrs. Goodsell started making traditional dolls "about twenty years ago." Some of these wonderful pieces are also in the Plains Indian Museum collection.

"My mother taught us beadwork, and my mother made us dolls." According to Amiotte, these "piece dolls" were made from leftover pieces of quilts and stuffed with cotton from mattresses. They did not have faces — so children could use their imagination as to what the doll might look like."

Although quilting is a rather recent phenomenon in Lakota society, the star quilt has become an essential part of Lakota cultural and artistic traditions. Freda Goodsell says she is personally inspired to make star quilts because they are "a thing of beauty." In the hands of this artist, they are indeed. ■



Freda Goodsell. The moccasins Mrs. Goodsell is wearing are her mother's, Christina Standing Bear Mesteth. Photo by John Moler, 1998.

¹Roberta Hill Whiteman, "Star Quilt," in *Native American Literature: A Brief Introduction and Anthology*, ed. Gerald Vizenor (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1995), 268-269.

²Emil Her Many Horses, "Rosebud Quilts: Building a Museum Collection, Creating an Exhibition," in *To Honor and Comfort: Native Quilting Traditions*, eds. Marsha L. MacDowell and C. Kurt Dewhurst (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1997), 165.

³Laurie N. Anderson, "Learning the Threads: Sioux Quiltmaking in South Dakota," in *To Honor and Comfort: Native Quilting Traditions*, eds. Marsha L. MacDowell and C. Kurt Dewhurst (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1997), 101.

⁴Marla N. Powers, *Oglala Women: Myth, Ritual, and Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 139.

⁵L.E. Emmerich, "'Right in the Midst of My Own People': Native American Women and the Field Matron Program," *American Indian Quarterly*, 15, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 201-217.

⁶Arthur Amiotte, "Lakota People in the Early Reservation Era: 1850-1930," unpublished manuscript, Plains Indian Museum, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 2004.

⁷Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine, "The Role of Sioux Women in the Production of Ceremonial Objects: The Case of the Star Quilt," in *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1983), 124.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Personal interview with Freda Goodsell and Arthur Amiotte, February 12, 2004.

Paukeigope:

By Emma I. Hansen

Curator, Plains Indian Museum



Vanessa Paukeigope Jennings at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 1996. Photograph by Lucille Warters.

I first met Vanessa Paukeigope Jennings over twenty years ago while working at the University of Oklahoma on a project to develop an exhibition on the Plains Apache (also known as Kiowa Apache) people of Oklahoma — *From Generation To Generation: The Plains Apache Way*. The development of this groundbreaking exhibition pioneered a new approach in the museum field that has since become the model for many exhibitions focusing on the arts, histories, and cultures of Native American people. Under this project completed in cooperation with the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, tribal artists, traditionalists, leaders, scholars, and other community members for the first time were not only the subjects of the exhibition but were actively involved in providing their own perspectives, directions, and inspirations from which exhibition content and design were developed. Most of the works included in the exhibition were actually created by contemporary Plains Apache artists.

A University colleague and I had traveled to Anadarko—a small town in southwestern Oklahoma and the central community for Kiowa, Apache, Caddo, and Wichita people—to locate an artist to make a child's buckskin dress for the exhibition. After asking tribal elders to recommend artists of traditional clothing, we were directed to the home of Vanessa Morgan (Jennings), a young woman whose grandmother had been a renowned beadworker and a well-respected Plains Apache woman. We were instructed by one elder, "Be sure to tell Vanessa that I sent you."

The young woman was surprised to see two strangers appear at her door, but she welcomed us into her home, where we spent the afternoon learning about her work in beadwork and other arts, her heritage as a traditional woman learned from her Kiowa and Plains Apache grandparents, and the legacy she hoped to pass on to her own children. She brought out a large trunk that contained a dress made of soft tanned deer hide with simple but elegant beadwork that had been made by her grandmother, Jeanette Berry Mopope; and, she talked about her childhood spent with her grandparents and filled with traditional teachings, stories, songs, ceremonies, and powwows. By the end of the visit, she had agreed to make the dress for the exhibition.

Paukeigope has since acknowledged that the making of that child's dress—her first work of art made for a museum—was the beginning of her career as a traditional Southern Plains artist. Since that time she has received numerous national and international awards and recognitions of her artistry;

An Artist of the Southern Plains

exhibited her hide clothing, beaded cradles, and other creations in major North American museums; and sold many examples of her work to discriminating collectors of Native American art. Ironically, like many American Indian artists, Paukeigope did not support herself through sales of her artwork, and, for most of her life, she earned her living as an employee of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Vanessa Santos (Morgan) Jennings was born on October 5, 1952, in Tempe, Arizona, the daughter of Laquinta Mopope Santos and Clifford Santos. Her father was from the Gila River Pima Reservation and her mother was a young Kiowa and Apache nurse from Oklahoma working for the Indian Health Service in Arizona. Paukeigope was the oldest grandchild of renowned Kiowa painter Stephen Mopope and Plains Apache traditional artist Jeanette Berry Mopope. She credits her grandparents, who brought her from Arizona to live with them on their Oklahoma allotment when she was a year old, for teaching her traditional Kiowa and Apache philosophies, manners, and arts that have guided her throughout her life.

Stephen Mopope was a member of the Kiowa Five, an internationally acclaimed group of artists working at the University of Oklahoma in 1927-1929, and is considered to be one of the most influential Indian artists of the twentieth century. Paukeigope, however, remembers him as a traditional man with a wonderful sense of humor and recalls the warmth of the home provided by her grandparents. "I had two really wonderful people in my life and those were my grandparents. My grandfather, up until the end, was a very traditional man. He painted, he was a singer, he played the flute, he did wonderful things with his life. My grandmother was an accomplished singer, she was a beadworker, she was an extraordinary person. And, they were willing to share what they had. I am the product of that compassion and that kindness."¹

Paukeigope acknowledges not only her grandparents but also the generations who went before them for her place in life as an accomplished artist and traditional Kiowa and Apache woman. She is named for her maternal great grandmother Paukeigope (Etta Mopope). She and her mother Keintaddle were well-known Kiowa beadwork artists, singers, storytellers, and makers of cradles. Another great grandmother (the mother of Jeanette Berry Mopope) was Anna E. Jones Berry, who was also a beadworker and cradle maker. Paukeigope describes her life as a part of an ancient continuum built upon the accumulated knowledge and experiences of her familial ancestors that carries into her children's and grandchildren's generations. For this reason, she feels an obligation to pass on to her children and grandchildren the Kiowa and Apache traditions, philosophies, and arts that she learned from her grandparents.



Jeanette Berry Mopope with daughter Vanetta Mopope, Kiowa. Medicine Lodge Treaty reenactment. Horace Poolaw, ca. 1928. National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution.

Before beginning to do beadwork in earnest at the age of eleven, Paukeigope sorted beads for her grandmother as she created cradles, dresses, moccasins, leggings, and purses. She said that her grandmother always made wonderful dresses, moccasins, and leggings for her and her younger sister Stevette for the round of powwows and ceremonies the family attended. Her grandmother also made powwow clothing for Kiowa, Apache, and members of other Oklahoma tribes. Paukeigope recalls that her grandmother had very strict beliefs with regard to colors and designs. She taught her to have respect for family designs and to use only designs that belonged to their family. To copy another family's design would be disrespectful and dishonest because each design has a life and history of its own. The only time she should use another family's designs is if they were given to her by a family member — such as an elderly beadworker with no daughters or granddaughters — who wanted to ensure that a design would be preserved for posterity.²

Another important influence in Paukeigope's life is her participation in the O-Ho-Mah Lodge Society, a Kiowa war dance society with roots deep in tribal history. The long time involvement of her family in O-Ho-Mah Lodge is reflected in the songs of her grandfather Stephen Mopope and his father George Mopope, who continued to support the society during the early reservation period despite threats from Indian agency officials. Their songs are performed at ceremonies each year. Both of her sons, Gabriel and Seth, also have their own songs as active members of O-Ho-Mah Lodge.

Paukeigope's traditional artwork includes dresses, leggings, cradles, lances, horse equipment, shirts and jackets, dolls, and other objects. She has taught beadworking within her own tribal community and traveled nationally and internationally for presentations on her work. In 1989, she was awarded a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in recognition of her mastery of Kiowa traditional arts. Other honors include the President Award from the Red Earth Festival and First Place Awards at the Santa Fe Indian Market. In 1996, she and her work were honored at the Historical Center's Plains Indian Seminar entitled *Powerful Expressions: Art of Plains Indian Women* with the keynote address delivered by Dr. JoAllyn Archambault of the National Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Institution. In this presentation, Dr. Archambault noted "the way Vanessa lives epitomizes the best kinds of values and virtues of Plains Indian women."³ In June 2004, she will be recognized at the Oklahoma City Red Earth Festival as the Honored One — the highest award of this annual celebration of Native arts.

In recent years, Paukeigope has concentrated on making distinctive and highly decorated cradles, many of which are now in private collections and museums, including the Plains Indian Museum. In 2003, she received the highest award in the category of diverse art forms at the Santa Fe Indian Market for a cradle she named "Rez Baby." The cradle was decorated entirely in pony beads in recognition of the earliest style of Kiowa beadwork. She describes her enjoyment in creating cradles in the following way: "The color, design, and artistry of cradleboards impress me as a celebration of life. These cradleboards are symbols of humanity, honoring our unnamed sisters and grandmothers who rose up against overwhelming odds of war, cultural genocide, death, and other monumental events to celebrate a newborn's life as only women can; to represent the promise of hope for the future."⁴



Cradle. Vanessa Paukeigope Jennings, Kiowa and Apache, Fort Cobb Oklahoma, 1996. Tanned deerskin, rawhide glass beads, wood, cotton cloth, metal, and pigments. Museum purchase with funds provided by the Pilot Foundation and Arthur Amiotte. NA.111.59

The design of the cradle in the Plains Indian Museum collection is based on a photograph of her grandfather Stephen Mopope as a baby carried in a cradle on the back of his mother Etta Mopope. The cradle, long gone from the family's possession, had been made by Etta Mopope and her mother Keintaddle. Using the black and white photograph as her guide, Paukeigope decided to make a cradle in the same design in honor of her grandfather. To her surprise the original cradle was identified in the collection of the Taylor Museum, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, and she found that the black and white photograph had reversed the values of the light and dark colors. She learned from this experience and noted, "However, the final effect in my finished cradleboard is one that I hope would have made Keintaddle and Jeanette Mopope proud."⁵

The pink beads in the cradle were given to Paukeigope by Occitan-speaking people of the Provence region of southern France. She met this group of people, united by a desire to maintain their distinctive dialect, on a trip to France in the summer of 1992. Since that trip, strong friendships have developed, and she has made three additional visits to this region. For her next visit, she will be taking a cradle with a beaded design featuring words of the Occitan dialect to be given as a gift. According to Paukeigope, the pink color of the beads reminds her of the subtle pink and purple hues of prairie grasses in Oklahoma as they are moved by the wind.⁶

For many years, Paukeigope has lived on her grandparents' land where she grew up in an area known as Red Stone near Fort Cobb, Oklahoma. In her home she is surrounded by her grandparents' belongings — her grandfather's paintings, his eagle feather bonnet, and his dance clothing, and her grandmother's dresses, leggings, moccasins, and cradles she had made. In a recent telephone conversation, she reminded me of our first meeting and told me that at the time she felt obligated to make the dress for the exhibition out of respect for the Apache elder who said, "Be sure to tell Vanessa that I sent you." Every day she is cognizant of her gratitude to her elders and is actively involved in teaching what she learned from her grandparents to the next generations — her children and grandchildren — in keeping with the instructions of her grandmother: "No one lives forever. Pay attention because you are the one who will take my place. You tell your grandchildren that it's done this way because that's how my grandmother showed me."⁷ ■



Jacket. Vanessa Paukeigope Jennings, Kiowa and Apache, Fort Cobb, Oklahoma, early 1980s. Tanned deerskin, ribbons, glass beads, horn. Loan from B. Byron Price; L.36.1997. This jacket featuring colorful ribbon work and soft tanned deerskin is an example of the simple elegance characteristic of Southern Plains clothing styles.

¹ Vanessa Paukeigope Jennings in a presentation at the Plains Indian Seminar, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, September 1996.

² *Ibid.*

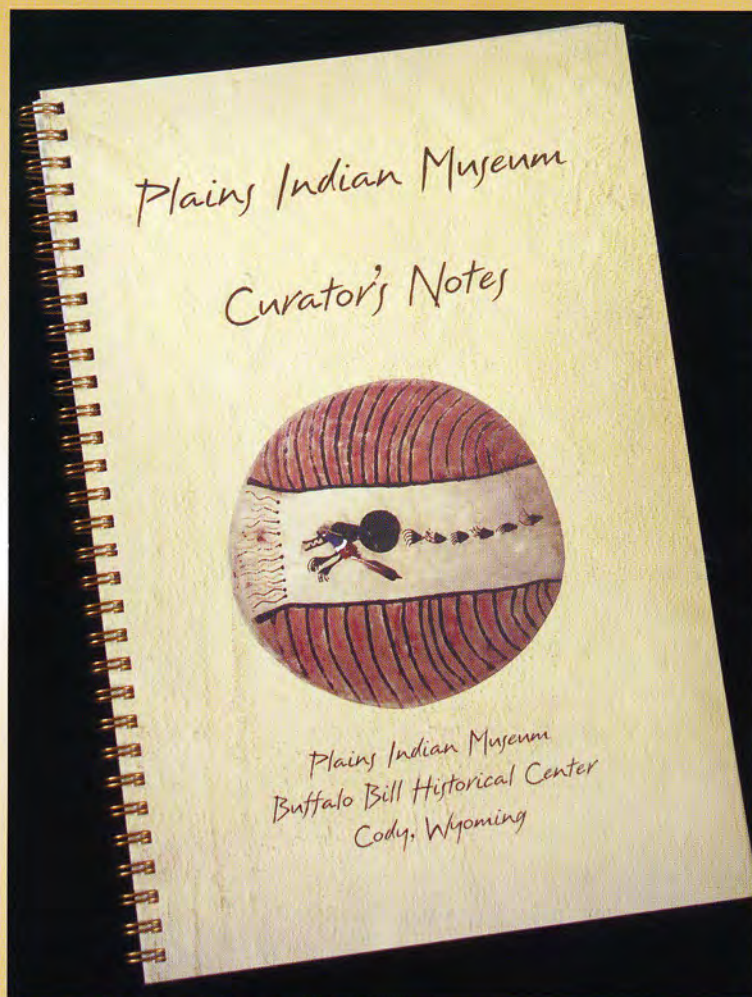
³ JoAllyn Archambault in *Kiowa Generations*, Plains Indian Seminar, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, September 1996.

⁴ Vanessa Paukeigope Jennings, "Why I Make Cradleboards," in *Gifts of Pride and Love: Kiowa and Comanche Cradles*, ed. Barbara A. Hail (Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Brown University, 2000), 96.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁶ Vanessa Paukeigope Jennings, phone interview, March 11, 2004.

⁷ Jennings, 2000, p. 95.



A very popular feature in the Plains Indian Museum, Curator's Notes are information-packed notebooks found in each gallery. Due to popular demand, they have been compiled into one great book edited by Plains Indian Museum Curator Emma I. Hansen. *Plains Indian Museum Curator's Notes* include detailed information on objects, materials, artistic techniques, origin of tribal designs, and much, much more. This is a must-have reference on Plains Indian cultures, lifeways, and traditions. Spiral bound for ease of use, including "Notes" pages for personal comments. Soft cover with 154 pages including color and black/white historic images.

Regularly priced at \$19.95.

Available to patrons for only \$16.00.



Call Museum Selections at 1.800.533.3838 or send a written request with payment to: Museum Selections • 720 Sheridan Avenue • Cody, Wyoming 82414

307.587.3243 ■ www.bbhcstore.com

DINNER & AUCTION

FRIDAY, JUNE 25, 2004
Buffalo Bill Historical Center
Cody, Wyoming
Viewing, Cocktails, and Dinner:
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Auction: 8:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

Tickets per person \$35
Seating Limited
Respond before June 1, 2004

RSVP Jill Osiecki Gleich
307.578.4025 • jillo@bbhc.org

Auction items included in
Cody Old West Show & Auction Catalog
To receive your copy, contact
(307) 587-9014 or go to
www.codyoldwest.com

Selected items will be auctioned to
benefit the educational programs
of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center



The Rest of the Best!

Brian Lebel's
Cody Old West Auction
joins the
Buffalo Bill Historical Center
for a special
western evening!

