

**UCLA**

**American Indian Culture and Research Journal**

**Title**

Native American Art at Philbrook. Catalog of Exhibition, August 17-September 21, 1980

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0319g0g3>

**Journal**

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 7(1)

**ISSN**

0161-6463

**Author**

Horse Capture, George P.

**Publication Date**

1983

**DOI**

10.17953

**Copyright Information**

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

of the studies which focus on differential access to economic power by men and women. However, it would seem that one trades quality of data for time when studying the Micmac; the data presented here is simply too scanty to substantiate, or to refute, her contentions.

While Gonzalez very nicely places the Micmac economy in the milieu of European-derived economies for each of the periods with which she deals (except for the period of most extensive warfare), the data is just not adequate to make unambiguous conclusions regarding the division of economic power. For no period can one take the four criteria of economic power and specify the degree to which each sex participates based on the evidence presented here. I think the only period for which it might be possible is the contemporary one and this would require detailed community surveys.

The strength of the monograph, then, rests in its chronicling the diversity of economic activity of Micmac men and women, especially in the 19th century, and in the observations of the integration of Micmac economy with mercantile, colonial, national and international economies. For that, it is an important contribution to the ethnology of the Micmac.

Harold Franklin McGee, Jr.  
Saint Mary's University

**Native American Art at Philbrook.** Catalog of Exhibition, August 17-September 21, 1980. Tulsa, Oklahoma: Philbrook Art Center, 1980. 98 pp. N. P. Paper.

This enlightening book offers but a tantalizing glimpse of a major U.S. art museum and leaves us wanting more. The 98 page, sepia-tone catalog of a 1980 Philbrook Native art material exhibition lists only 600 of the 8,000 total items that comprise their diverse collections.

The catalog can be divided into three major sections: Introduction, The Changing World of Indian Painting, and the Catalogue of the Exhibition.

The Introduction will be the most interesting to one who is not intimately familiar with this fine museum. The Director, Mr. Jesse G. Wright, Jr., introduces this work, and the Chief Curator, Mr. John A. Mahoney, presents the colorful history and philosophy of the museum.

Opening in 1939 as a general museum, they received their first Indian art objects a year later. Soon other collections formed the basic strength and direction of their permanent Native American collection, and by 1942 the Philbrook was primarily a museum of Indian art and history.

As the museum grew so did their collections. Italian, European and American paintings, Chinese art, Southeast Asian art and African sculpture replaced some of the Native American art pieces; until today the Philbrook is well respected as an expanded general museum.

This growth emphasized new and exotic topics while the older, more traditional ones received less attention. Being located in the heart of what was once known as Indian Territory, and among the fine Indian and Western art collections in Tulsa, Mr. Mahoney shows great sensitivity when he writes, "A consequence of such development, however, is that a new generation has grown to adulthood without an appreciation of the richness and extent of Native American art at Philbrook. This is one reason why <sic> we have organized the present exhibition and published this catalogue."

Clearly the most significant contribution to the world, as seen by others and themselves, is their involvement with contemporary art. This achievement is explained in the second section. Too many museums prefer the easy association with only the past, carefully steering clear of the complexities that come with dealing with living, creative people. Rather than unjustly comparing the Philbrook with the larger museums that house massive collections and do little else, we must appreciate their self-imposed duty of working with contemporary Indian art and artists and realizing the lasting value and dedication that this contribution provides.

In this comfortable, second division, Mr. Rennard Strickland details the long association between contemporary Indian artists and the Philbrook. Since the beginning of this mutually beneficial relationship in 1946, the Art Center has sponsored an annual "American Indian fine arts painting competition over the years. Over the years familiar names, such as Woody Crumbo, Dick West, Blackbear Bosin, Cecil Dick, Oscar Howe, Allan Houser, Acee Blue Eagle, and all the rest have participated, with many of them winning the top prize. From Crumbo's early mural "Burning of the Cedar" to the recent "Shawnee Playing Dice" by Ruth Blalocke Jones, guided by the historical text, one can travel a colorful journey through contemporary Indian art to the artist themselves. An enlightening section.

The final division is the Catalogue of the Exhibition. Even though the art of the Plains, Northwest Coast, Woodlands and all the rest are included and grouped by types of items, this segment is the most limited.

The often used, inaccurate tribal location map, the sepia-tone format, and aspects of the catalog section restrict the benefits and accolades that this publication should receive.

Whenever a catalog of Indian art does not use color, the quality and effectiveness is severely limited. The sepia confines close study of the art pieces in the tiny photographs and the accompanying description is so minute that learning from what could have been the most exciting part of the publication is all but lost.

I do recommend this glimpse of Philbrook to anyone who appreciates fine museums and Indian art, particularly Contemporary Indian art. Despite some minor inconsistencies with tribal names, and using a couple of incorrect terms for the pieces, this book is worth owning.

Keep up the good work, Philbrook; you are doing a good job.

George P. Horse Capture  
Plains Indian Museum  
Buffalo Bill Historical Center