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This Song Remembers. Self Portraits of Native Americans in the Arts.  
Jane B. Katz, Ed.

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### Author

Theisz, R. D.

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If the above are flaws, however, they do not detract in large measure from the significance of the work. With over 200 references and at least an equivalent number of footnotes, no hard-core academic can fault Philip Reno on his scholarship. Further, the book is well-organized and exceptionally readable.

*David Stea*  
*University of California, Los Angeles*

**This Song Remembers. Self Portraits of Native Americans in the Arts.** Jane B. Katz, Ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980. 207 pp. \$8.95 cloth

The story of American Indian art has undergone many examinations, in general, paralleling the telling epics of Native North American people. We have read and heard judgments and observations which ignored or denigrated its artistic worth; have seen its classifications as mere ethnographic artifacts; and have shared, at times, the urgent concern over the purity of "real" Indian art vs. "reckless" experimentation in the manner of 20th century mainstream art.

That Indian art has finally "arrived" is certainly a commonplace by now. The museum shows, gallery exhibits and shelves, university syllabi, library holdings, school inclusions of Indian arts, the market place with its investment mentality, and ultimately the kitsch/trinket shops lend clear evidence to the entry of Indian art into American awareness. The permanence of such visibility is uncertain, to be sure.

Among the issues to attract the attention of those seriously concerned with Indian aesthetics, we find questions of art vs. crafts, sexual division in media and design, anonymity of the artists, design composition and diffusion, the place of ritual and prayer in the creation of tribal art objects, continuity and innovation, caucasian influence on tribal traditions, and many others regarding the content, form, social function and market value of traditional and contemporary Native American art.

One of these pervasive themes in Indian art—and it applies to the culture in general—is the drift from imagining the Native artist as an anonymous, faceless artisan to seeing him emerge as a distinctly individual creative person. It is in this regard that

Katz's *This Song Remembers* has contributed a further valuable resource to our field. She provides us with "self-portraits" of twenty-one Native American artists: thirteen in the visual arts, three in the performing arts, and five from literature. Their tribal affiliations are quite representative. The short foreword by Dee Brown is followed by Katz's five-page introduction commenting on Native creativity and the development of her project.

Katz admits that the choice of individuals selected for inclusion in her work of 207 pages was purely subjective although guided by each artist's "contribution in a particular field" and by his or her "ability to articulate influences and aspirations." Most of the artists thus included are widely known to even the generalist—George Morrison, Alan Houser, Louis Ballard, Leslie Silko; others—Pearl Sunrise, a Navajo weaver and basket maker, and Amos Owen, a Dakota pipecarver—are less familiar. As the focus of the interviews with these artists moves from one culture area to the other, Katz supplies some brief, general information on the region and its people. Moreover, as she leads us from one artist to the next, she presents some biographical information, seemingly to complement and highlight the artists' own remarks which follow. Interspersed throughout the work are short songs, poems, and prose quotes from a variety of Indian sources. Typically, each artist's photograph and one or two works for the visual artists are also included.

All but three of the self-portraits are listed as original interviews taped by Katz in 1978 and 1979. Katz's only reference to the preparation of each is to be found in the introduction where she lists "an individual's early life, artistic development, and personal philosophy, and the passing along of a tribe's values and traditions" as comprising the focus for the interviews. She then "rearranged the material and edited when necessary to insure clarity and logical flow of ideas" while seeking to maintain the spontaneity of the taped conversations. Interviewees then corrected and approved the edited versions.

The result of this process provides the reader with a significant and representative set of insights into the breadth and the too often underestimated complexity and sophistication of Indian art. Some of the artists confirm being nourished and inspired by their tribal traditions, feeling within them little desire to break out or explore radically new directions. The desire to conserve, to live, at least partially, in the old ways, the need to observe

ritual during the creation of art not just through the finished product, the humble admission of serving as a medium for the supernatural—these are the compelling values for these more conservative of the twenty-one artists.

More than just a few, however, are driven in a rather Faustian manner. They think of themselves as guided, but not limited by their heritage. They wish to make universal statements, glean from modern artistic traditions and movements, and are compelled to make purely personal statements through their art. Neither their audience nor their clientele are primarily the members of their own cultural group. Neither is their identity tied strongly to their Indianness. "I kick the sides of boxes out. I will not be pinned down. I am flying home in words and myths," proclaims the Anishinabe writer Gerald Vizenor who exemplifies this more experimental direction.

Nevertheless, it is clear that all the artists in *This Song Remembers*, whatever their position on the above continuum, know their origins to be Indian. Their artistic expression then leads them on journeys—some close to home, some far away.

This cross section of Indian creative choice takes us just a little further than previous efforts of this kind. John Milton in *The American Indian Speaks* (Vermillion: Dakota Press, 1969) presented self-portraits though these were limited to the Northern Plains and not only to artists. Guy and Doris Monthon's *Art and Indian Individualists* (Flagstaff, Ariz.: Northland Press, 1975) presents the biographies of seventeen Southwestern artists, with several color photos of their works. More recently, Jamake Highwater's *The Sweet Grass Lives on: Fifty Contemporary North American Indian Artists* (New York: Lippincott and Crowell, 1980) is more biographical than Katz's book and stresses the works of the artists through more color photos. Similar efforts are undertaken in *American Indian Art*, *Arizona Highways*, and other journals. (See, for example, "Beads, Boots, and Jaguars: The Artists as They See Themselves," *Arizona Highways*, Vol. 55, No. 4, April 1979, pp. 31-48)

Some regret must be expressed that Katz's photos are black-and-white which limits our experience of the depicted work. Also, more photos might have been included to do justice to the frequently multifaceted interests and media of the artists. Greater care ought to be evident as well in the manner of depicting how the interviewees were prompted and prepared, how questions were put, memories jogged and the like. Perhaps only

purists would raise this concern, but over centuries of depiction and study, too many liberties have been taken with original narrations. The suspicion also rears its head that "white man's Indian artists" were selected. Those artists who create only for their own people and for communities with long-standing artistic traditions seem neglected. Commercial, outside success may have been an implicit criterion for inclusion.

Future research in the mode of the self-portrait is clearly warranted. The extension of Katz's effort as well as some in-depth, single-artist treatments with ample photographic support would increase the trend to recognize Indian artists, like others, as individuals with imagination and creativity who draw on group traditions.

While these issues can be raised, and although other attempts are more visually compelling, Katz's self-portrait gallery is a laudible addition to those seeking to revise the view of the anonymous, simplistic, anachronistic panorama of Indian arts. Respect for individualization—the awareness that the adherence to the traditional fabric of Indian life permits contemporary artists a variety of ways to express themselves creatively, in a personal way—is vital for a correct perspective.

R. D. Theisz  
Black Hills State College

**The Dark Wind.** By Tony Hillerman. New York: Harper & Row, 1982. 214 pp. \$12.50. paper.

*The Dark Wind* is a novel of mystery, danger, intrigue, witchcraft, murder, and revenge. It is about a cop who is drawn into a diabolical scheme to import \$15,000,000 worth of cocaine from Mexico. The scheme is foiled, however, by a mysterious person who causes the airplane delivering the precious cargo to crash in a late-night desert landing. In the fast-moving aftermath of the crash the cocaine disappears, but murdered body after murdered body appears. The cop, who soon finds himself a suspect in the case of the missing cocaine, tries to piece together the puzzle of greed, corruption, and vengeance. *The Dark Wind* is an exciting, if not particularly believable, novel, and it will undoubtedly enhance the reputation of Tony Hillerman among those who like such fare.