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WORKING
WITH
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American Tribal Art

The Most Trusted Name in Learning



SCHOLASTIC



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SCHOLASTIC

ART

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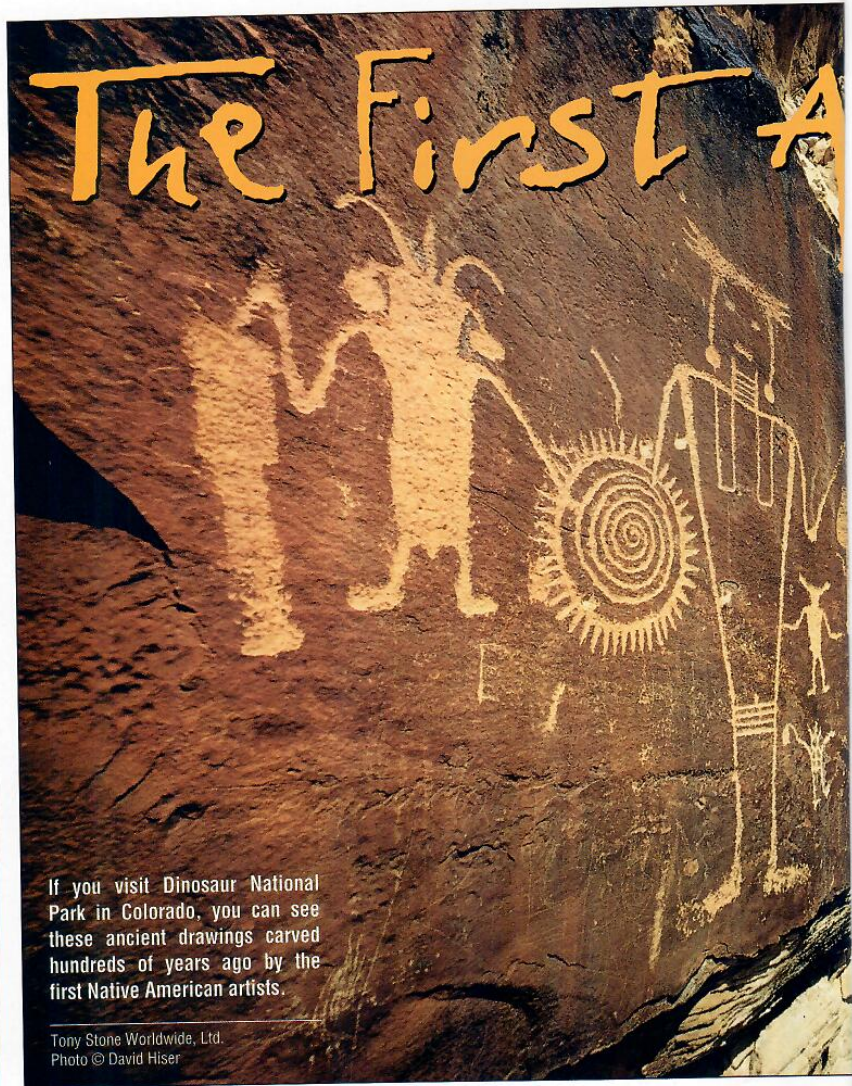
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If you visit Dinosaur National Park in Colorado, you can see these ancient drawings carved hundreds of years ago by the first Native American artists.

Tony Stone Worldwide, Ltd.
 Photo © David Hiser

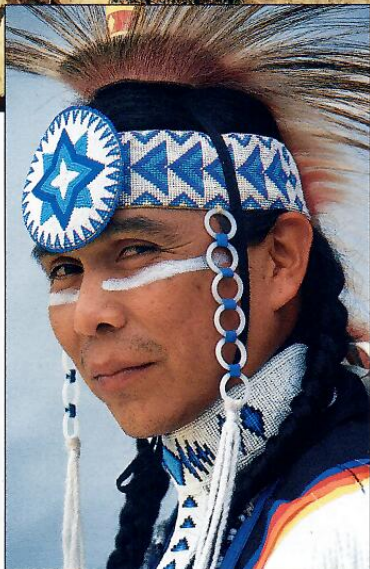
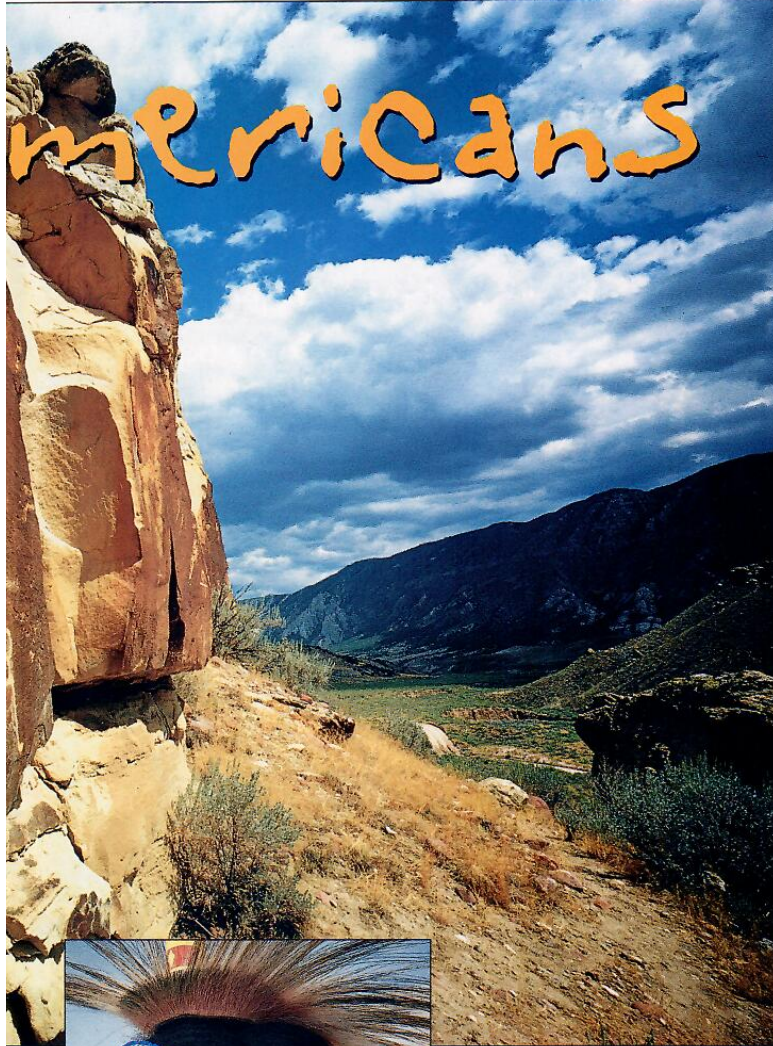
As I stand in this special place, I feel the spirit of my ancestors. I hear their voices in the wind reminding me to respect the earth and all its creatures.

—Arapaho song



Plains tribes whose food, clothing, and shelter depended on the vast buffalo herds, lived in portable tents called *tipis*, a Lakota Sioux word that means "a place for living."

George Catlin (1796-1872). *A Little Sioux Village*, 1861-69.
 © 1995 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Paul Mellon Collection.



Almost all tribal art was functional, like this beaded headband (left) with its traditional geometric design.

Photograph © 1989, John Running.

THE SHOSHONE (Show-SHOW-nee) warrior on the cover wearing animal skins, war paint, and brightly decorated leather garments was photographed recently. But he doesn't look very different from the way his ancestors might have looked hundreds of years ago when they were the only people living in the land now called the United States.

When Europeans first arrived in what they called "the new world" at the beginning of the 17th century, they discovered it was already inhabited. Hundreds of groups of people—all with different cultures, languages, and ways of life—had been living in the Americas for thousands of years. Of all the North American tribes, those living on the great Central Plains are probably the best known, both in legend and reality. Native American braves in feathered head-dresses and war paint, carrying bows and arrows, and dressed in buckskin have ridden across movie and TV screens for years. Only recently have Native American traditions—especially their desire to live in harmony with nature—and art been given the attention and respect they deserve.

One of the earliest Native American civilizations began in the western part of the United States. Working in deep canyons over a thousand years ago, early tribal artists scratched images like these (above, left) into the rock walls. No one knows what these ancient symbols mean. Today we think of them as art, but they were probably created to communicate with the mysterious, magical forces of nature. Native Americans sought a sacred relationship with all living things—from the vast oceans and the sun, to a tiny blade of grass. They valued all life, recognizing no differences between humans and animals. Before hunting, a Native American warrior would explain his need, apologize, and use every part of the animal he killed, wasting nothing. Native Americans felt that what was taken from the earth had to be returned in another form, so as not to anger the spirits.

Almost all Native American art had a practical purpose or was created during religious ceremonies that called on natural powers. To Native Americans, religion, art, and daily life were the same. Making the art was, in many cases, more important than the results. Some works were destroyed once their purpose was carried out; others were meant to be seen only by the creator and the spirits with whom he communicated.



Totems by

Welcome Ancient Ones.
You have come again
and I pray you hear me
Before you return once more
to the place where you
always disappear.
Give me your blessing during
the brief time you are here
—Kwakiutl chant

Northwest tribes created tall totem poles filled with stylized creatures which told a family's history.

Tony Stone Worldwide, Ltd.
Photo © Andreas Dance

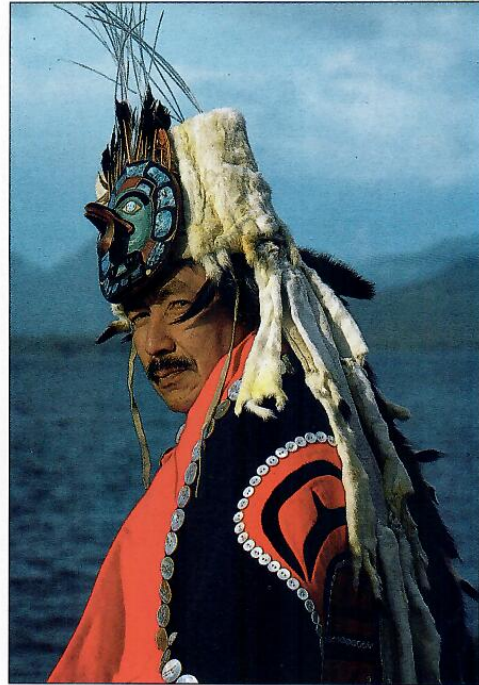
The Sea

The tribes that lived on the vast central plains—Cheyenne, Arapaho, Comanche, Kiowa, Cree, Sioux—spent most of their time following their only source of food, the enormous herds of buffalo. As a result, most of the art of the Great Plains people was limited to clothing, blankets, and small, useful objects. But the tribes living on the Pacific coast had a mild climate, an endless supply of food from the sea, and were surrounded by vast forests. So the Northwestern people had the time and the resources to create large, complex works of art.

The Northwest tribes—unlike most Native American people—put a high value on wealth and possessions. They constructed huge, elaborately decorated wooden buildings (below, right) which housed several related families. Each dwelling was a symbol of the tribe's way of life. The fireplace in the middle was the center of the family, the cornerposts represented the natural world of earth and sky, the passage of smoke through the chimney symbolized the passage between this world and the heavens above. Attached to the front of the building was a tall central post carved from a tree trunk. The oval hole cut in the bottom of this "totem" pole was part of its design and served as the house's front door. A series of animals representing natural spirits that were im-

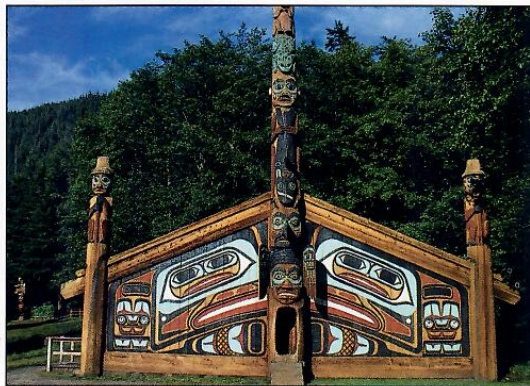
portant to the family were carved into the totem. Totems also identified each family. When arriving in a strange village, a traveler could look at the totems and recognize the families related to his.

The huge totem poles you see left and below (some are three stories high) are made up of simplified natural images. To make a totem, the artist would select a tree that had the characteristics he wanted. He would ask the tree for part of its power, then cut away as little as possible so as not to damage the tree spirit. The head of the household's guardian spirit would always be placed on top. The animals and mythical beings were usually very stylized. The lines, shapes, and colors of the figures tended to blend together into one visual rhythm. The birds and animals can be identified by their most outstanding feature. Can you find the beak of a raven or an eagle; the giant eyes of an owl; the large teeth of a beaver; the black fin of a killer whale?



This man from the Chilkat tribe wears a raven mask. His hand-woven blanket is decorated with buttons made of shells.

Photo by Maximilian Bruggmann from *Indians of the Northwest Coast* © 1987 by U. Bar Verlag, Zurich.



The artist who created the "Weeping Totem" (left, center) used repetition to tell a visual story.

Tony Stone Worldwide, Ltd. Photo © John Warden

Many Northwest long houses (left) were the size of modern apartment buildings; this one is over 500 feet long; it held several hundred people.

Superstock. Photo © John W. Warden

Cities

Soon I shall vanish
and be no more,
But the earth on
which I now roam
Shall remain
And change not.
— Omaha Tribe

Can you find patterns in this
Pueblo pottery that look like
natural objects such as leaves,
flowers, birds, waves?

Photograph © Jerry Jacka. All rights reserved.



in The Sky

Preview



The tribes living in the hot, dry Southwest used natural materials—from the rocks in the cliffs above to the sand under their feet—to create everything they wore, ate, and lived in. They used stones and mud to build entire cities, called *pueblos* (Po-EB-los), high up in canyon walls.

The same clay used for the pueblos was rolled into coils and made into a special kind of pottery (left), decorated with stylized patterns. These designs were based on lines, shapes and textures found in plants and animals. Can you find shapes and colors in the Navajo rug (right) that remind you of the rocks, cacti, and lightning typical of a Southwestern desert?

The Hopi held ceremonies to maintain a relationship with the spirits of nature who gave them rain, food, and protection. In these ceremonies, *Kachinas* (catch-EE-nas)—godlike spirits—were represented by dancers in large masks. Small Kachina “dolls” (below)—made from tree roots—were given to Hopi children,

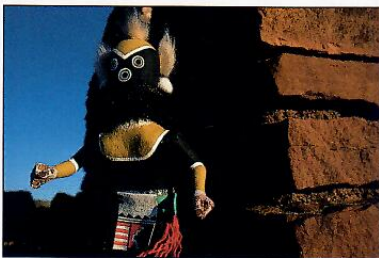
not as toys, but to teach them about nature.

Another Southwestern tribe, the Navajo, communicated with nature by creating images of sand. After days of ceremonies, which included preparing the sand, the first painting would be done. Working from inside to outside, the painter would trickle brightly colored sand over an area as large as 18 feet across. The sand would then slowly begin to absorb the forces of evil and illness. The painting would be destroyed at the end of the day so the sand, which had soaked up all the negative forces, could be returned to nature.

Today, artists use tribal imagery to create decorative sand paintings. *Storm Pattern* (pages 8-9) refers to a Navajo myth about the creation of the days. The black Night sky with moons and stars (left), leads into white Dawn (top), blue-green Day (right), and ends with yellow Sunset (bottom). Corn and bean plants represent Earth. Rainbows and crescent moons connect the times of day.

In the photo at the top of the page, can you spot the ancient structures carved into the rock walls of the Grand Canyon, high above the Colorado River?

Both photos © Jerry Jacka. All rights reserved.



Much Native American art, such as the Kachina doll and sand painting (left), were created during religious ceremonies, to mark special events, or to cure illness.

Kachina © John Running. Sandpainter © Jerry Jacka.

MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH #2

Storm Pattern



Joe Ben Jr. *Storm Pattern*. Sand painting, 1987. 26 1/2" x 26 1/2". Photograph © 1987 Jerry Jacka. All rights reserved.

A NAVAJO SAND PAINTING

SCHOLASTIC
ART

SCHOLASTIC ART 8-9

Updating Native Traditions

Three Native American artists who have created powerful visual statements.

Transforming Ancient Images

American sculptor Richard Danay had an uncle—a construction worker—who told him he didn't understand his art. So the artist took one of his uncle's hard hats (below) and painted this scene on it. This work, *Mohawk Headdress*, refers to the profession—structural high steelworker—of many Native Americans. The falling figure shows the dangerous nature of this work.

"People forget that something of the old is always in whatever is created new." — Richard Danay

Richard Glazer Danay, b. 1942. *Mohawk Headdress*, 1982. Acrylic. Seneca-Iroquois National Museum, Salamanca, N.Y..



Danay—a former construction worker of Mohawk descent—creates works that are jokes built on jokes. He makes inventive sculptures attacking Indian stereotypes.

The artist has used contemporary devices—comic-book figures, bright colors, and the hard hat's shape—to create this very modern work. His use of ancient tribal images makes it even more effective. The face on the front is adapted from a traditional Iroquois mask; the crest on top represents a stereotypical "Mohawk" haircut. The garish colors refer to Coney Island in New York City, where the artist grew up.

American painter Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith calls her paintings, such as the one on the right, "Landscapes of the mind."

Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith b. 1940. *Tree of Life*, 1994. Mixed Media. 60" x 100" Jan Cicero Gallery, Chicago.

Between Two Cultures

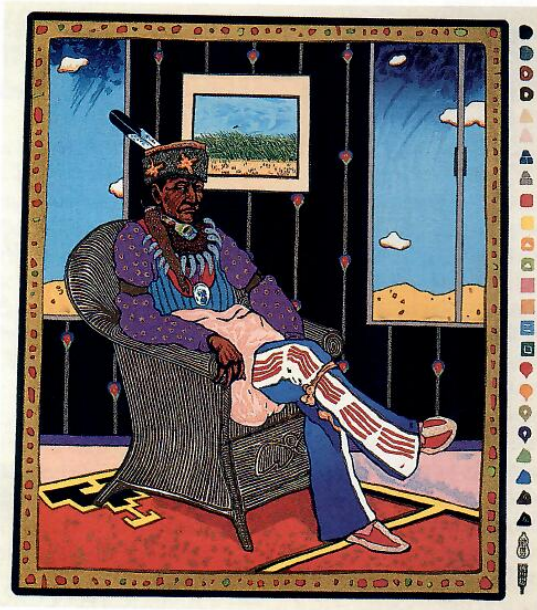
"I am a bridgemaker," says contemporary American painter Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith, who did the painting above right. In her work the artist, who is of Cree/Shoshone descent, deals with the fact that she is living in two cultures. Compare *Tree of Life* with the symbols cut into the rocks (page 2) and the sandpainting (pages 8-9). Do any of these images look similar?

Western perspective and realistic rendering are not important in Jaune Quick-To-See-Smith's art. She "piles her markings" on the canvas just as ancient artists arranged the marks that made up their pictograms, cave drawings, and painted skin robes. She also combines these tribal images with elements from European art and the culture of today.



Born on a reservation in Montana, Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith spent much of her childhood traveling around the West with her father, who was a horse trader. "Watching my father run his hands over a horse to read its history, braid lariats, build corrals—some of the best sculptures I've ever seen—share his collection of beadwork—all this taught me to see and feel. That was my beginning in art."

In *Tree of Life*, the artist incorporates modern "pictograms"—newspaper articles about powwows, old photos of Indian chiefs, woodcuts, beads, jewelry, animal symbols. She ties it all together by slashing a wide, blood-red line across the bottom of the painting.



The Best of Both Worlds

T. C. Cannon, a member of the Caddo-Kiowa tribe, used humor to comment on his status as a Native American artist. Cannon never wanted his background to limit the way people looked at his art. As he put it, "I have something to say that comes out of being an Indian, but it is also a lot bigger than just my race."

"An Indian painting is a painting done by an Indian. People don't call a work by Picasso a 'Spanish painting,' they call it a Picasso."
—T. C. Cannon

T. C. Cannon, (1946-1978). *Collector #5 or Osage with Van Gogh*, Woodblock print. The Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, OK.

In the print on the left, *The Collector*, a traditionally dressed Osage elder sits in an armchair on a Navajo rug, proudly showing off his latest purchase—the Vincent Van Gogh landscape hanging behind him. Van Gogh's paintings usually sell for record prices. In other words, this art collector owns not only a priceless Native American rug to put on his floor, he can afford the most expensive European art to hang on his wall. Through the image of the confident, smiling Osage, the artist may be saying that the modern Native American draws from both worlds to make his own culture and his own art.



Winners:

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Three Scholastic Art Award winners talk about creating from nature.

Seventy-five years ago this fall, The Scholastic Publishing Company was begun by a young man in his mid 20s named Maurice R. Robinson. In traveling around to hundreds of high schools all over the country, M. R. Robinson was struck by the number of honors and prizes awarded to athletes. But he saw very little, if any, recognition given to students interested in writing and art. And so, in 1923, the Scholastic Art and Writing

Awards Program was born.

For over 70 years, this program has given recognition and encouragement to generations of young artists across the country. And for the past three decades, *Art & Man* magazine (now *Scholastic Art*), has featured the work of hundreds of young visual artists just beginning a career in the arts. Here are three of them—one from the 70s, one from the 80s, and the third from the 1990s.



Photo by Richard Hutchings

1976—Tamar Taylor: *Painting Nature*

One of the first Scholastic Art Award-winning students to be featured in *Art & Man* magazine was 1976 winner 16-year-old Tamar Taylor from Taft High School in Norwich, Connecticut.

Tamar's family lives on 250 acres of wooded property and, as she told *Art & Man*, she spent most of her

childhood outside in the woods and fields. "It's amazing what you can see in one square foot in the woods; the plants, the insects, and the designs they make. Humans are such a small part of what is out there."

However, the watercolor that won Tamar her Scholastic Art Award was not painted directly from nature, but from her own imagination. The artist said,

"When I try to paint from life, I get involved in everything I see and I make the mistake of trying to put it all down. One of the things people like best about my landscapes is all the white space I leave. When I stay in the studio, I don't get so carried away and I'm able to be more selective. I guess my paintings are more about how I feel about nature than how it actually looks."

"I like to paint landscapes, but it's funny—most of the places I paint I don't think I've ever seen before."

— TAMAR TAYLOR



"Clay is great because I can make mistakes. If I don't like something, I have time to change it before it dries."

— MARLON WELLS

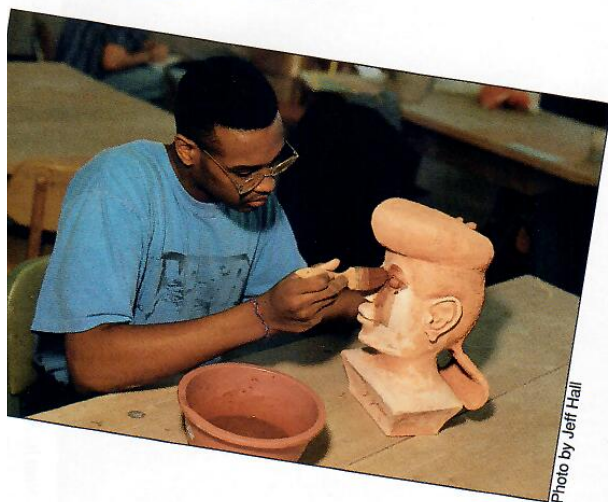


Photo by Jeff Hall

1991—Marlon Wells: Creating in Clay

Marlon Wells was 17 and in his senior year at Chamberlain High School in Twinsburg, Ohio, when he did his 1991 Scholastic Art Award-winning ceramic piece. Clay is Marlon's favorite medium because "clay isn't permanent. If I don't like something, I can change it before it dries. I can take chances, and create something without feeling pressure to be satisfied the first time."

To create his winning piece, Marlon used the ancient clay technique mentioned on pages 6-7.

But the process wasn't as smooth as it could have been. "I wanted a base to go around my piece, but the clay was too heavy and the pot collapsed," the artist said. "But then I liked the flat bottom better. When I fired the pot, the top broke off. I glued it back on, but realized I couldn't fire the glaze because the pot would fall apart. So I painted it and glued designs on it."

"With art, there's a lot of potential for mistakes. My mistakes made me see things differently and come up with new ideas. I really don't think this project would have turned out as successfully if everything had gone right."

1985—David Pike: Sculpting With Natural Objects

Fifteen-year-old David Pike felt that his fierce-looking 1985 Scholastic Art Award-winning mask (below) expressed another aspect of his own personality. David constructed this unusual sculpture in his 9th-grade art class at McLane Junior High in Brandon, Florida.

David told *Art & Man*, "The assignment was to make any kind of mask we wanted; it had to incorporate eyes, an open mouth, mirrors, and one natural object. Well, I think your

work becomes a lot more believable if you put real objects into it. The eyes are replicas of shark's eyes I got from a taxidermist, and the set of teeth is a dentist's mold used to make real teeth. I wanted a birdlike creature, so I drilled holes and glued feathers in them.

"When I look at the mask face to face, I can see my features in the mirrors. It's as if the mask is a reflection of the me that's underneath. It makes me think of the old story of Jekyll and Hyde. You have Dr. Jekyll inside and Mr. Hyde, the monster, outside. And the outer mask is kind of like the beast within all of us."

"I find that my art lets people know how I'm feeling." — DAVID PIKE



Photo by Janet Soderberg

WEAVING TRIBAL PATTERNS

Navajo rug designs serve as the inspiration for this weaving workshop.



Prepared by Ned J. Nesti Jr., Art Instructor, Morrison (IL) High School. Photos by Larry Gregory.

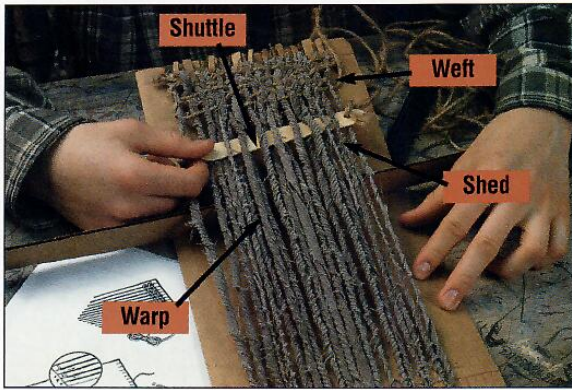
As you can tell from the example on page 7, the Navajo are famous for the colorful and complex designs they weave into their rugs. But if you look at the Navajo “Chief’s Blankets” (right), created in the 1800s, you’ll see that early designs were based on very basic linear patterns. Later, as you can see in the blanket on the far right, with the introduction of zigzag lines and additional shapes, Navajo weavings became more complex.

In this workshop, you’ll start by constructing a simple loom. Then, using only horizontal and vertical lines and basic weaving techniques, you’ll begin weaving your own version of the famous Navajo “Chief’s Blanket.”

14 SCHOLASTIC ART

Materials

- Heavy cardboard (to construct loom)
- Assorted yarn, cord, string, twine, ribbon, raffia, thin colored wire.
- Pieces of colorful scrap fabric or old clothes
- Wooden tongue depressor (1/2") to use as a shuttle (for thicker cord)
- Blunt tapestry needles or crochet hook (for thinner cord)
- Scissors
- Cardboard strip used to form the shed.
- School pencil
- Colored pencils
- Graph paper
- 18" ruler



Starting Out

1. About two weeks before beginning this project, start collecting various kinds of yarn, cord, twine, ribbon, plastic, even long strips of fabric (each should be at least several yards long). To make the loom you'll use for weaving your design, cut a piece of *very heavy* cardboard, approximately 10" x 16". Draw a line along the top and bottom 1/4" to 1/2" (depending on the fiber's thickness) from the edge. Cut 1/4" slits 1/4" apart at top and bottom (see diagram, right). Drill hole and thread fiber through one end of a tongue depressor to use as a **shuttle**. Cut a cardboard strip to raise the warp and create the weaving space under it called the **shed** (see photo above).



Step 2

Using the "Chief's Blanket" as a starting point, develop a design using only **straight lines**. See how many variations you can create, remembering you have to be able to weave your design. Will your pattern be **horizontal** or **vertical**? How many colors will you use; will they be **bright, dull, light, dark, warm, cool** or a combination? Will your lines be **wide, narrow, or patterns of both**? Will you use **plain cord, multicolored yarn, or patterned fabric**? Will your textures be **rough, smooth, fine, coarse, hairy, shiny, or a mixture**? You can incorporate **natural objects** or leave spaces in the weave.



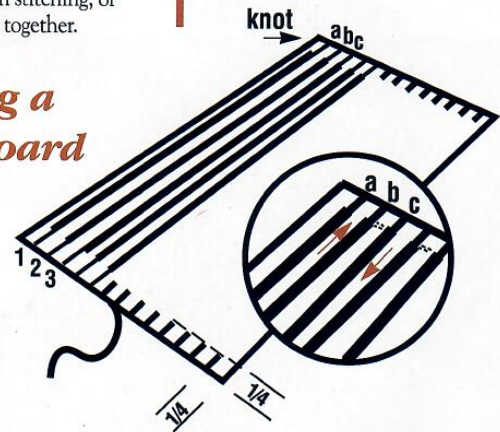
These early Navajo "Chief's Blankets" were all made up of patterns based on straight lines.

First Phase style blanket (left), 1850-70. Second Phase blanket (above), 1860s. Third Phase blanket (right), 1880s.

Step 3

Select your **warp** fiber. To make sure there's enough, measure the piece's length, multiply it by the number of slits on the loom, and double that number. Knot the end of the fiber, then slip it into the furthest slit on the left (knot should be in back). Bring fiber down through first bottom slit, then up to the right top, right bottom, and so on until you reach the last slit at the right. Tie fiber in back. Try to keep tension even. Place cardboard strip behind warp fibers to create space for weaving (the **shed**). Roll **weft** fiber to avoid tangling. Thread shuttle and begin weaving **weft** fibers *over* and *under* warp fibers; reverse direction and weave *under* and *over* the warp. Push fibers together for a tight weave. Pack the last four rows in tightly, then carefully lift off loom. Finish edge by knotting, chain stitching, or weaving edges together.

Making a Cardboard Loom



Slits at top and bottom



Vocabulary

Warp: Fibers that run the long way in woven fabric.

Weft: The cross fibers in woven fabric.

Shuttle: Used to bring weft fibers back and forth between warp fibers.

Shed: Space between warp fibers and loom in which weft fibers are woven.

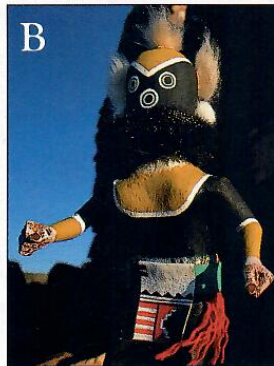
CRITICS CORNER

TRIBAL ART

Do you recognize any of these images?

As you've learned in this issue, for Native Americans daily life, religion, and art were the same thing. Nearly all of the pieces they made had a practical purpose or were created as part of a religious ceremony.

In the spaces below, can you identify each piece of tribal art shown on this page? If you begin with the **form** (for example, a rock carving, or a tipi, or a totem), then it will be easier to tell in which **region of the country** it was created (such as the Great Plains, the Southeast, the Northwest). What **natural material** did the artist use (clay, wool, wood)? And, what **practical purpose** was each of these works of art created to serve (shelter, teaching tool, medicine)?



FORM OF ART	REGION	MATERIAL	PURPOSE
A. _____	_____	_____	_____
B. _____	_____	_____	_____
C. _____	_____	_____	_____
D. _____	_____	_____	_____

Can you name **three characteristics** all these works have in common?

Fill in the letter of the work that the following art term could describe: (for example: **two-dimensional** [flat]—D; **three-dimensional** [round]—A,B,C.)

- **Symmetrical design** (both sides are the same) _____.
- **Asymmetrical design** (both sides different, visually balanced) _____.
- **Organic shapes** (curved) _____.
- **Geometric shapes** (straight) _____.
- **Repeated shapes** _____.
- **Exaggerated, distorted shapes** _____.
- **Warm colors** (reds, oranges, yellows) _____.
- **Monochrome** (basically one color) _____.
- **Grainy texture** _____.
- **Soft texture** _____.

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