

# art & man<sup>®</sup>

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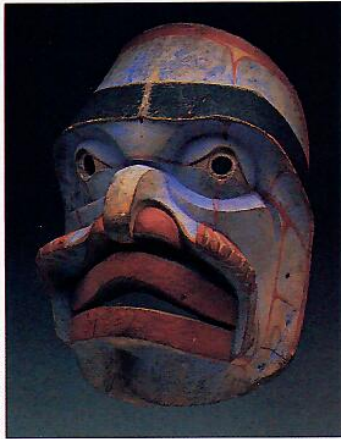
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## *Native American Art*

 SCHOLASTIC



COVER: Bella Coola mask representing Komokoa, chief of the undersea world. American Museum of Natural History, N.Y.

**art &  
man**

Maurice R. Robinson, founder of Scholastic, Inc., 1895-1982

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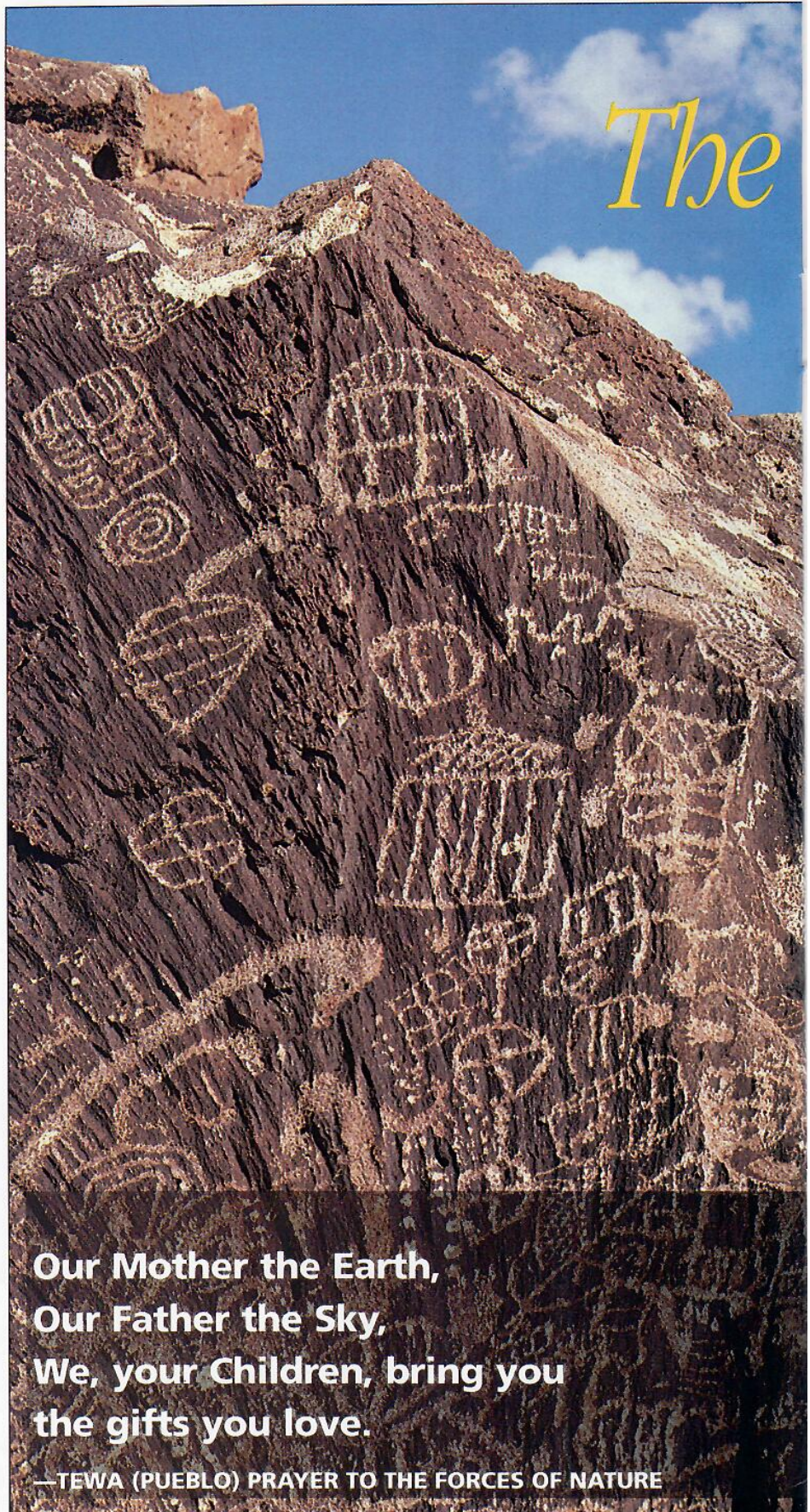
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**Our Mother the Earth,  
Our Father the Sky,  
We, your Children, bring you  
the gifts you love.**

—TEWA (PUEBLO) PRAYER TO THE FORCES OF NATURE

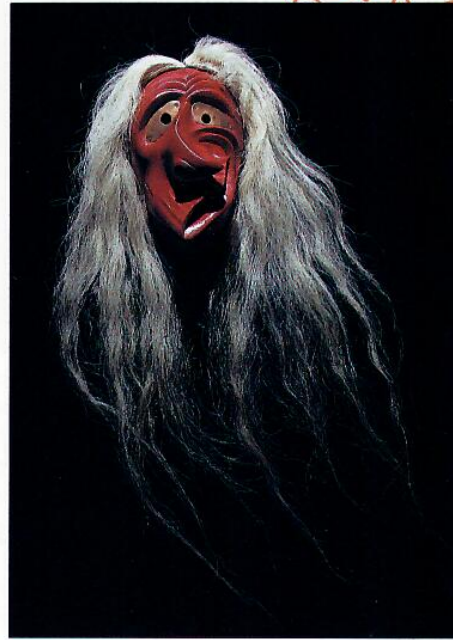
# First Americans

Next year, in 1992, this country will be celebrating an important event. Does the year 1492 sound familiar? Nearly 500 years ago on October 12, Christopher Columbus landed on an island near the coast of what is now Florida. He had come across the Atlantic to find a shorter route to the East Indies. Instead, he had “discovered” a New World. But, this “New World” had been home to many civilizations for 20 centuries before Columbus arrived.

Most scientists believe that the first Americans came from Asia more than 20,000 years ago, when Alaska and Siberia were joined by land. Over many thousands of years, these *Native Americans* spread out through North and South America and developed hundreds of different cultures, languages, and ways of life. Some tribes lived in large cities, some in small towns, while others kept moving all year long, hunting animals and gathering wild plants. One of the earliest Native American cultures was located in what is now the southwestern United States. If you go to this part of the country—around Utah and New Mexico—you can still find traces of figures and symbols (left) painted and engraved 900 years ago on the surfaces of canyon walls.

Although there were a great variety of native American cultures, several qualities seemed to be shared by all of them. Every culture acknowledged the power of *nature* and both feared and tried to communicate with its mysterious, magical forces. Almost all Native American art had a *practical purpose* or was created to be used in a *religious ceremony*. Each piece was made out of *natural materials*.

The vital connection between Native American art and nature can be seen clearly in the two wooden masks shown on these pages. Artists carved these masks, but they weren't created merely to be decorative. The masks were used primarily in religious ceremonies. The Northwest coast mask on the cover was worn by a dancer who was tem-



This face was probably created to cure a sick person.

Onondaga mask. New York. Cranbrook Institute of Science, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

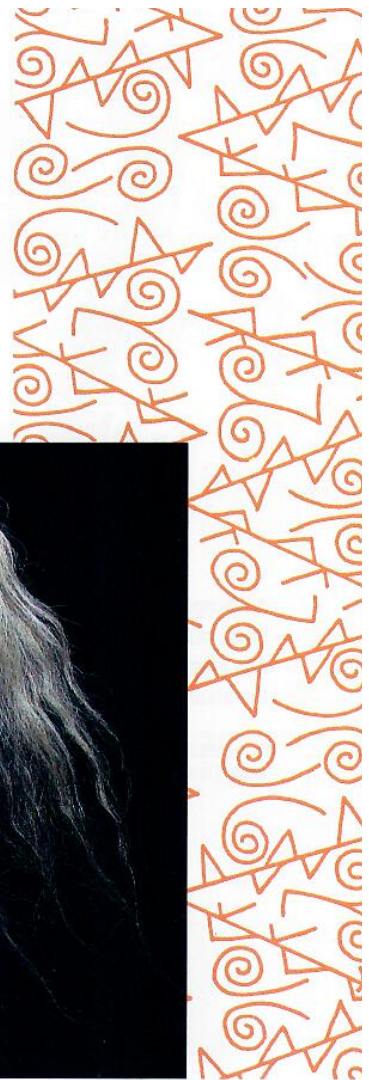
porarily transformed into the chief of the undersea world—at least for the length of the dance. The frightening and expressive face mask shown above is from the Onondaga (Owe-non-DAY-ga: a Northeast coast tribe). It represents a vision that the maker saw in a dream and was created as part of a religious ceremony. Carved into the trunk of a living tree, the mask was separated from the tree only after the artist completed carving, so that it would retain the tree's spirit. Masks like this were used by *shamans* (priests) to cure people.

Can you see the original **organic** or rounded shape of the tree in the face above? The features are **stylized**, or simplified, and **distorted**. The **texture** repeats the circles of the tree's wood grain. The bright **unnatural color** and the twisted **diagonals** of the features effectively capture the quality of illness.



Early Native American artists drew these symbols on rock walls nearly 500 years before Columbus came to the “New World.”

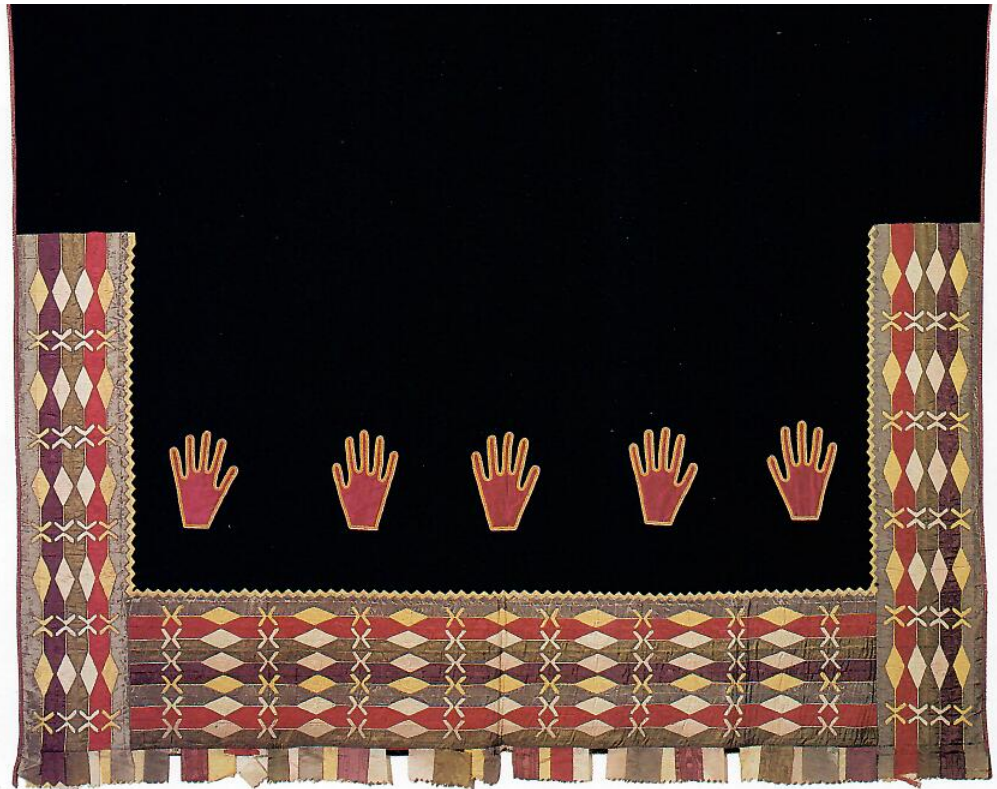
Petroglyphs, 11th-12th centuries, Chidago Canyon, California. Photo by Mark E. Gibson.





An Osage artist used European materials—fabrics and glass beads—to make the blanket on the right.

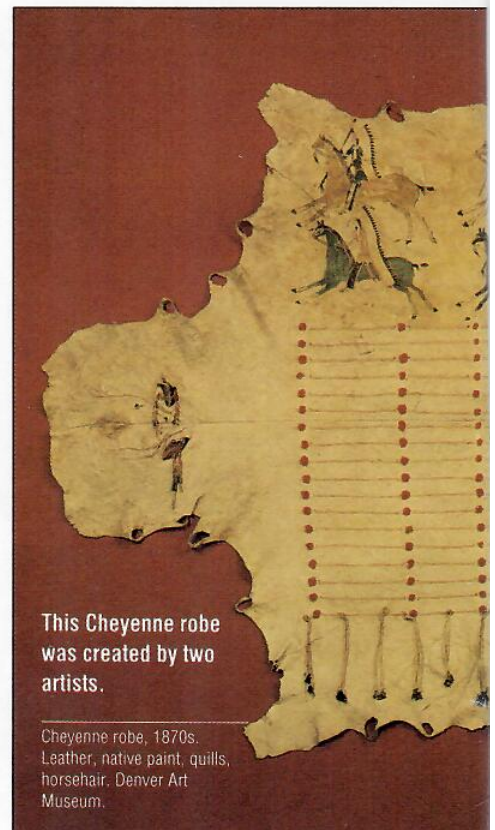
Osage blanket. 1930s. Cloth, ribbons, beads. Denver Art Museum.



# People of the *P*lains

**"Friend, in polite life  
the customs are many.  
Friend, those are not  
my interest."**

**—LAKOTA (SIOUX) WAR SONG.**



This Cheyenne robe was created by two artists.

Cheyenne robe, 1870s. Leather, native paint, quills, horsehair. Denver Art Museum.

The words of the Lakota song below reflect the art of the Native Americans who lived in the region stretching from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains,

from Canada to Mexico. As the Plains people moved from region to region following the buffalo herds, every object they made had to be functional, light, and easy to carry.

Before Europeans came to the Great Plains in the 18th century, the original Plains tribes lived in villages along the rivers, where the land was good for growing crops. During the summer they made occasional trips out onto the grasslands to hunt buffalo. When the Europeans came, they brought horses and guns with them. This changed the life-style of the Plains people. Now that they were able to keep up with the herds, their daily life centered around the buffalo—for food, clothing, shelter, and incidentally, their art.

Plains artists utilized nearly all the natural materials they found around them. They used leather, fur, feathers, horn, claws and bark. But their main natural material was the buffalo.

Tepee coverings, clothing, blankets, weapons, shields—all came from the buffalo.

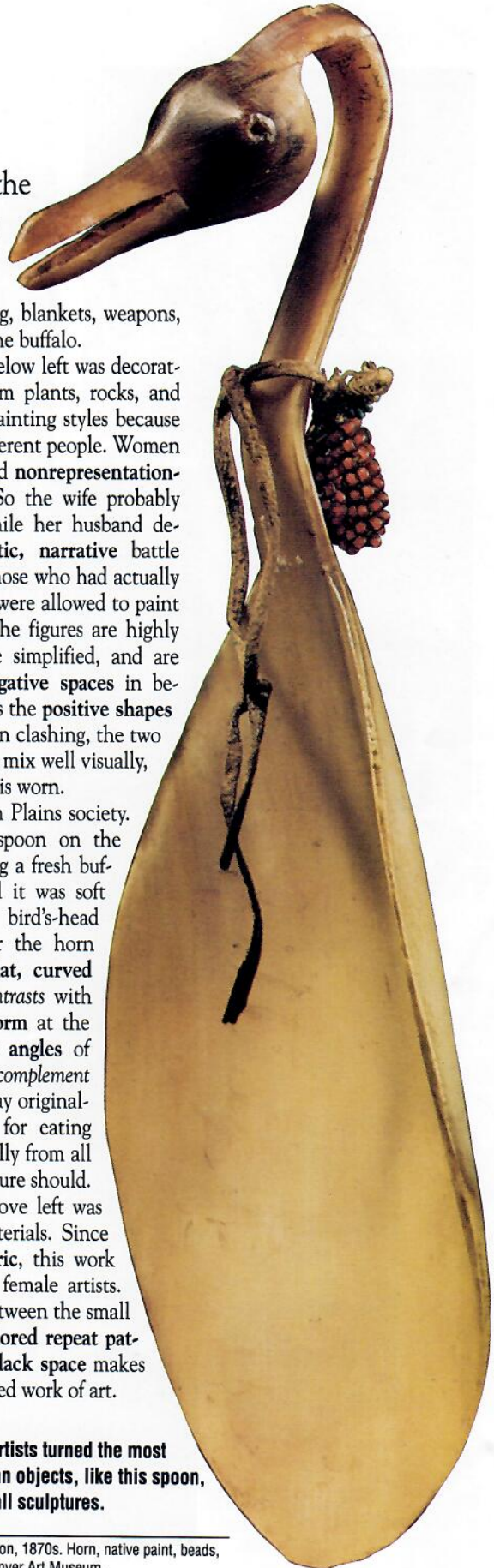
The Cheyenne robe below left was decorated with paint made from plants, rocks, and berries. There are two painting styles because it was created by two different people. Women in most Plains tribes used **nonrepresentational, geometric designs**. So the wife probably painted the bottom, while her husband depicted the more **realistic, narrative** battle scene at the top. Only those who had actually been in battles or hunts were allowed to paint these kinds of scenes. The figures are highly **stylized**. The horses are simplified, and are seen in profile. The **negative spaces** in between are as important as the **positive shapes** of the figures. Rather than clashing, the two styles of painting seem to mix well visually, especially when the robe is worn.

Nothing was wasted in Plains society. The ingenious Lakota spoon on the right was made by boiling a fresh buffalo horn in water until it was soft enough to bend. The bird's-head handle was carved after the horn had dried. The **large, flat, curved shape** at the bottom *contrasts* with the **long, thin, linear form** at the top, while the different **angles** of the handle and bowl *complement* each other. This piece may originally have been designed for eating food, but it “works” visually from all angles, as any good sculpture should.

The Osage blanket above left was done with European materials. Since the patterns are **geometric**, this work was probably created by female artists. The dramatic **contrast** between the small area of **busy, brightly colored repeat patterns** and the large flat black space makes this blanket a well-designed work of art.

**Plains artists turned the most utilitarian objects, like this spoon, into small sculptures.**

Lakota spoon, 1870s. Horn, native paint, beads, leather. Denver Art Museum.



# Land of the Sun

**The white bean and  
the great corn plant  
Are tied with the  
white lightning.  
Listen! Rain  
approaches!**

**—NAVAJO SONG**

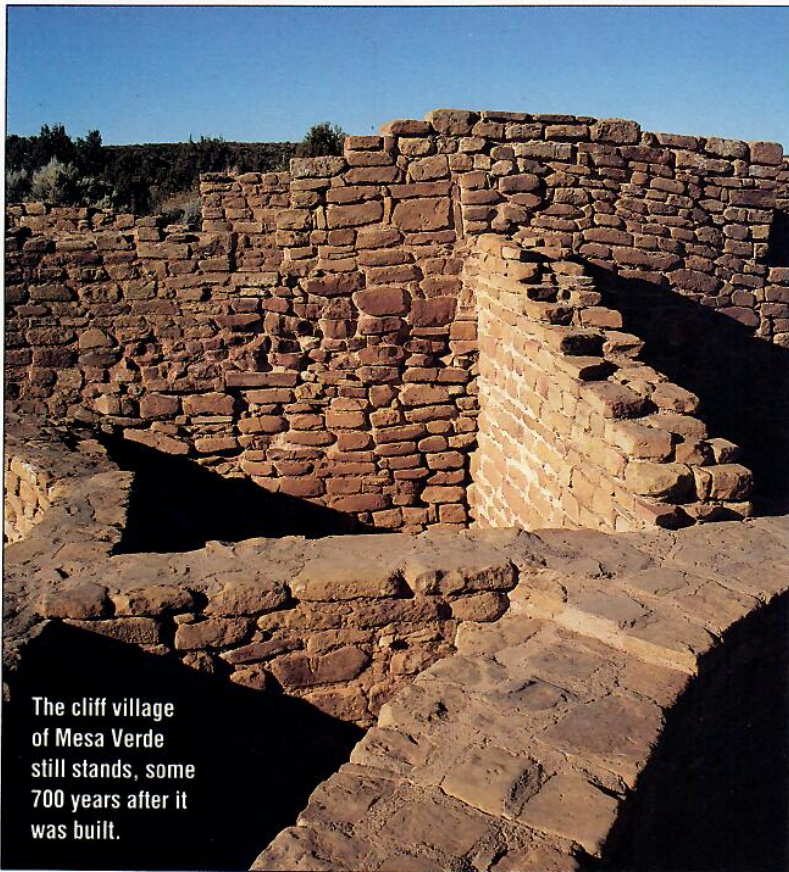
The Native Americans living in the Southwest also made creative use of natural materials, from the scraps of wood they found between rocks to the sand blowing on the hot desert. The Cliff Dwellers used stone plastered with mud to construct elaborate cities built into the overhanging canyon walls. One of the most famous of these towns, built around 1200 A.D., is *Mesa Verde* (MAY-suh-VUR-dee, which means green table in Spanish). It is located in what is now the state of Colorado. As you can see, above right, these *pueblos* (Poo-EB-los, Spanish for town) were like large modern apartment houses. They were often several stories high, and many contained an entire village. Some pueblos had up to 200 rooms, which the dwellers could enter through the roof by climbing a wooden ladder. These ladders could be removed quickly in case of enemy attack.

In a dry area where farming was difficult, the people of the Southwest still depended on agriculture for their food. Most of their religious ceremonies centered around rainmaking and crop fertility. The Navajos (Nav-a-hos) tried to influence the forces of nature through *sand paintings* created by sprinkling powders made from colored rocks on a flat sand bed. Originally these designs were done as part of a religious ceremony during which many artists worked under the direction of a medicine man. The painting took hours to complete and had to be destroyed



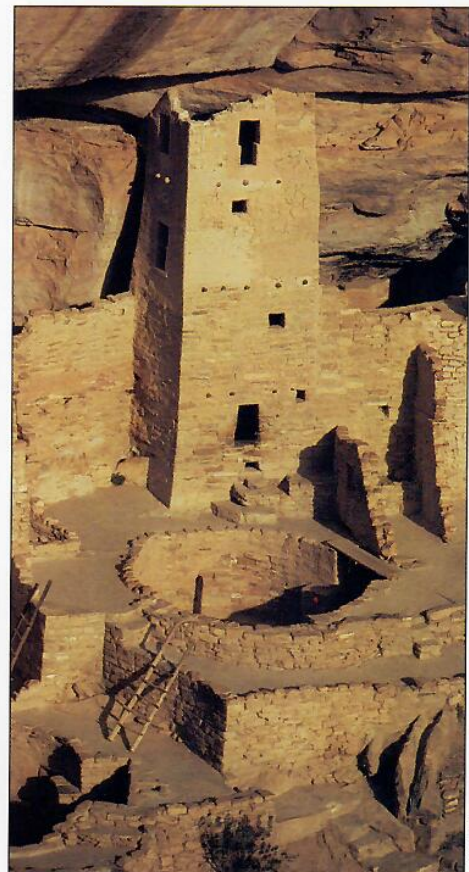
**This small sculpture  
was originally meant  
to be a child's doll.**

Pueblo (Hopi) Kachina Doll.  
Photo by Lee Boltin.



The cliff village of Mesa Verde still stands, some 700 years after it was built.

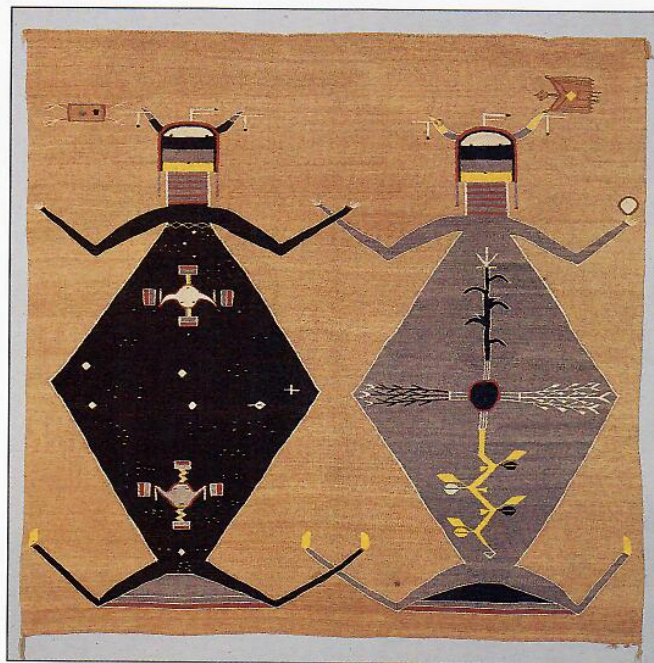
MARK E. GIBSON



LEE BOLTIN

before sundown. Originally, the designs could not be seen by anyone except the artist and the medicine man, but now they sometimes serve as the basis for handwoven rugs, like the one on the right. Father Sky, the male figure on the left, is symbolized by stars in the night sky. The female figure on the right, Mother Earth, serves as a guardian of the sacred crops—corn, beans, squash. The stylized, diamond-shaped figures contrast with each other and the negative spaces formed by the background.

The Hopi (one of the Pueblo tribes) had many ceremonies to maintain harmony with the natural world. *Kachinas* (catch-EE-nas), or godlike spirits, were represented by dancers wearing huge, elaborate masks. During the ceremony, the dancers were believed to be temporarily transformed into the spirits themselves. There were more than 300 of these spirits, so the colors, symbols, and shapes of the masks were important in identifying them. Small Kachina dolls were given to the children at the end of each ceremony to teach them about the spirits. The doll on the left may represent a corn spirit; corn was such an important food that some Pueblo tribes even worshiped it. The curved, organic shape of the corn is echoed and repeated in the headdress as well as in the bracelets. The earth colors—reds, tans, purples of the canyons and the blue of the sky are also reflected in this work.



This modern Navajo rug was based on an ancient design created with ordinary sand.

Sand painting rug. Navaho. Early 20th century. 66" x 64" Denver Art Museum.



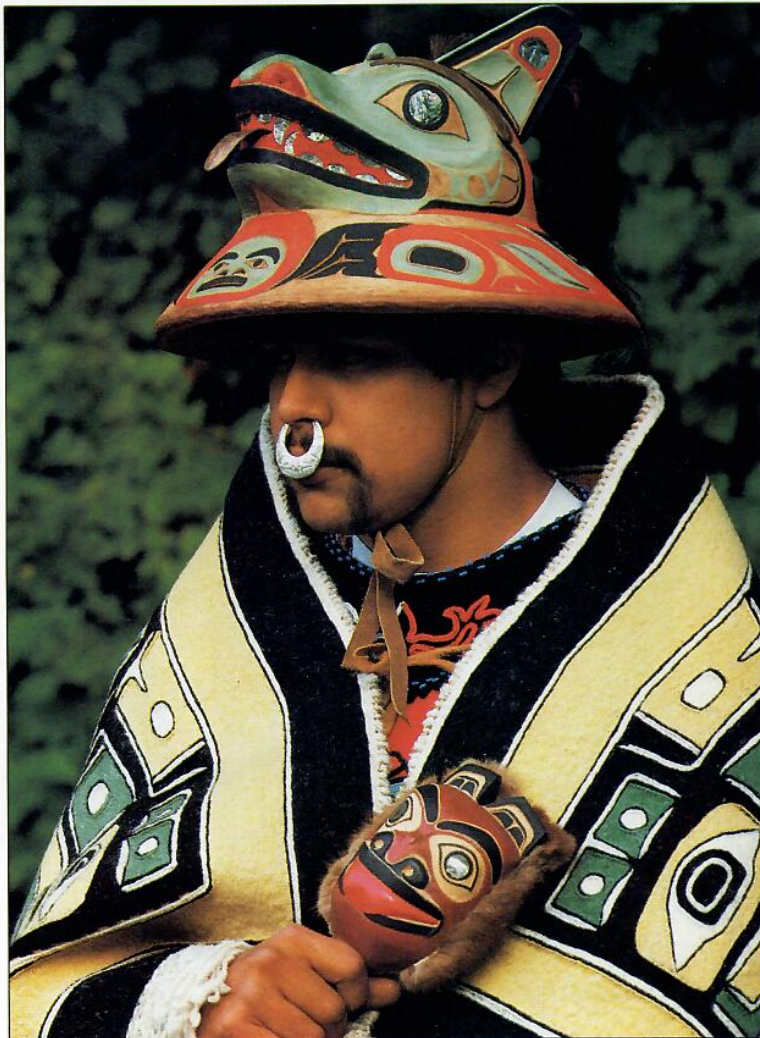
# Tribes of the Totem



What images come into your mind when you think of Native American art? You may think of beadwork, or tepee or blanket designs. But you might also think of totem poles. This unique art form was created by the tribes living along the Pacific Ocean in the Northwest. Because of the relatively mild climate and wealth of food from the sea, the people living here had leisure time in which to create art objects. And, owing to the dense forests of hemlock, fir, and giant cedars, they had plenty of wood to work with. They made great houses

of cedar logs, and large seagoing canoes, bowls, and utensils of spruce. They even wore wide-brimmed wooden hats (below, left) to keep off the frequent rains.

Unlike most other groups of Native Americans, many of these tribes put a high value on wealth and possessions. Some of the leading families hired professional artists to enhance their position in the community. Large totem poles, carved from tree trunks, stood in front of most houses. These totems showed the titles of the head of the household or represented spirits important to the family. When looking at a totem, strangers could immediately recognize which families were connected with their own, and know where to find food and shelter. In the totem on the right, an eagle or hawk is on top, meaning that the head of the household's guardian spirit was some type of bird. The bird is very stylized, and the animals and mythical beings below it shift and blend into one another to form a powerful, rhythmical overall pattern. The whole bird or animal was sometimes symbolized by its most outstanding feature—beaver teeth; owl eyes; bear claws. Since Northwestern artists were interested only in positive shapes, they tended to fill up every negative space, creating elaborate textures and repeating lines and shapes over and over. Eyelike elements were used at joints, and faces or whole animals were put into blank areas. Even representations of internal organs were put into these “empty” spaces.



This Chilkat man wears a “thunderbird” blanket, a silver nose ring, a wooden wolf hat. He holds a wolf rattle.

Photo by Maximilien Bruggmann from *Indians of the Northwest Coast* (c) 1987 by U. Bar Verlag, Zurich.

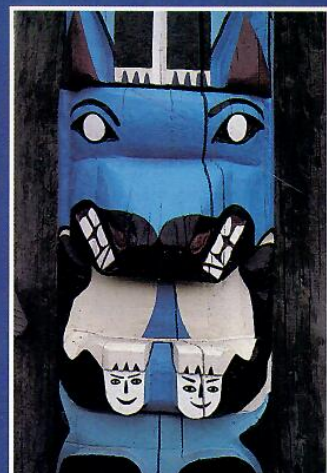
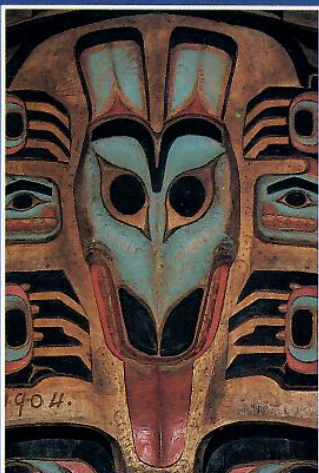
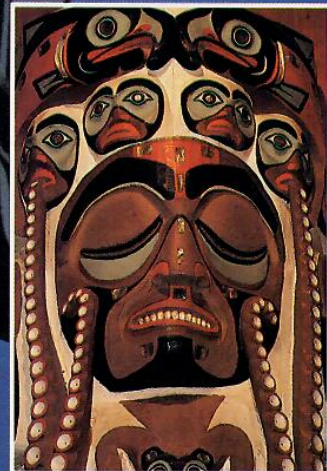
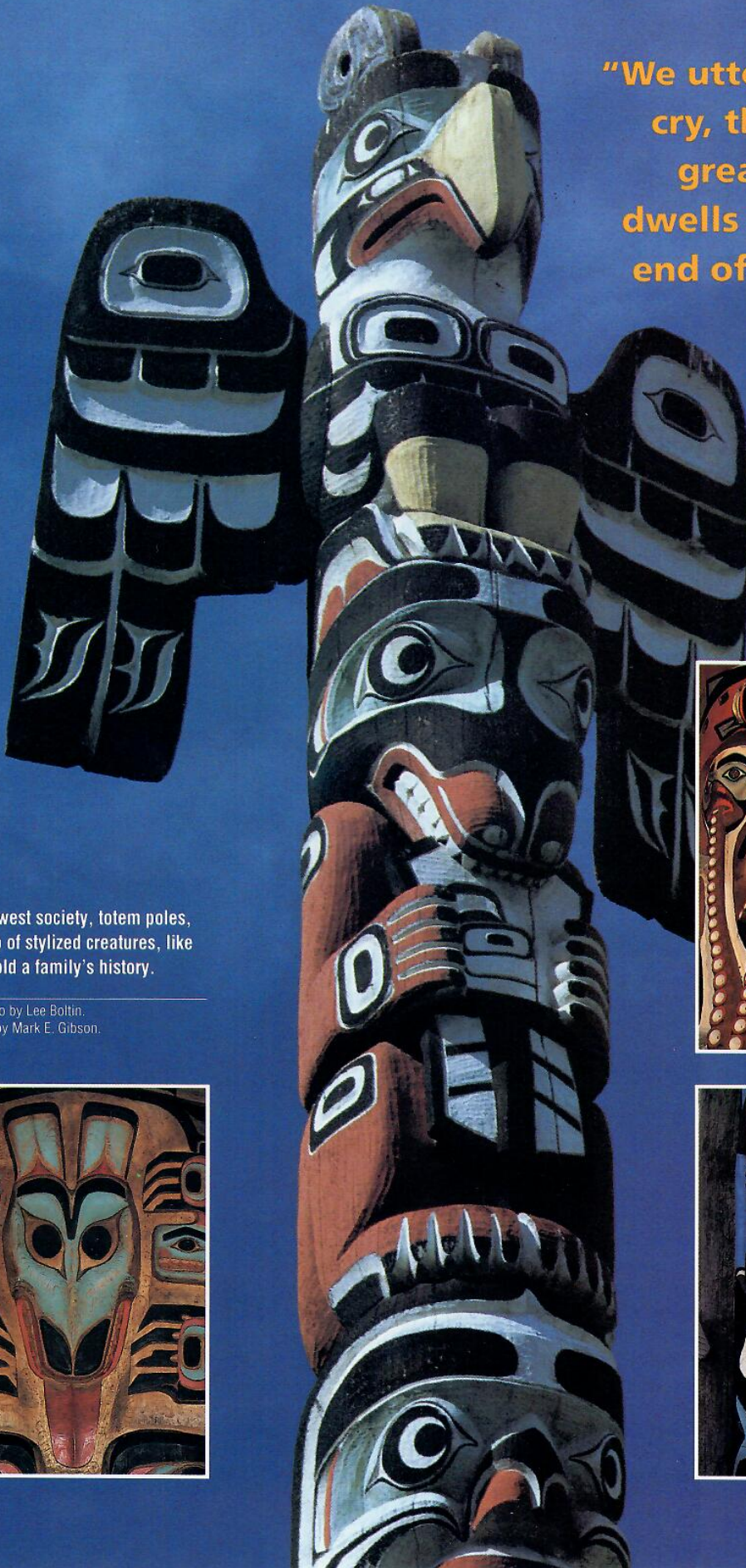


"We utter the Raven  
cry, the cry of the  
great spirit who  
dwells at the north  
end of the world."

—KWAKIUTL  
HAMATSA DANCE.

In Northwest society, totem poles,  
made up of stylized creatures, like  
these, told a family's history.

Large photo by Lee Boltin.  
All others by Mark E. Gibson.



## Artists of Today: What kind of works are today's Native American artists creating?



### Visual Links

Contemporary American artist Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, who did the painting above, thinks of herself as a “bridgemaker.” The artist, who is of Cree/Shoshone descent, has a master’s degree in art. Her work combines elements of European painting with early *pictographs* (see carved picturelike symbols on page 2). Compare the painting above with the rock wall shown on page 2. Can you find

any similarities between the two works? How has Jaune Quick-to-See Smith developed new symbols, creating her own modern pictographs? The artist uses colors and shapes in a very **abstract** (based on reality, but not realistic) way. The blue, red, and yellow **shapes** serve as **flat background areas** that **link the linear symbols**. The title of this work is *Cerrillos* (Sir-EE-yos), which is the name of a village

outside Santa Fe. Jaune Quick-to-See Smith usually includes horses in her paintings. As a child she traveled around the west with her father, who was a horse trader. In this painting can you also spot a house, a branch, a hand, a telephone? What kind of story do you think Jaune might be telling? What does the artist mean when she refers to her paintings as “landscapes of the mind?”

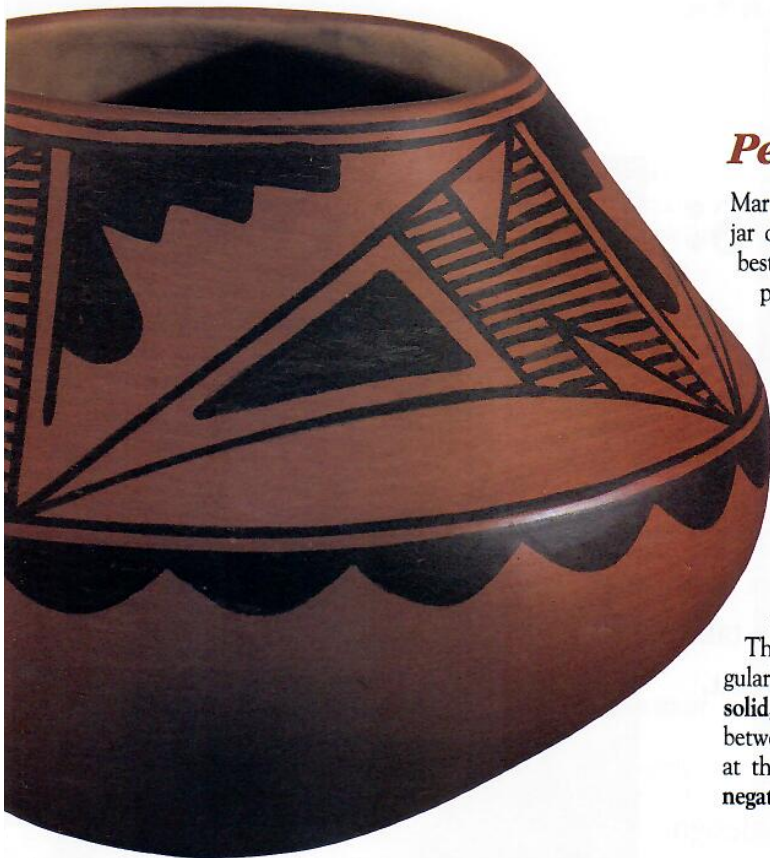


**This bowl is an updated version of an ancient design.**

Maria Martinez (1886-1980), San Ildefonso Pueblo. Jar. c. 1928. Black on red pottery. 9 1/2" in diameter. Oklahoma Historical Society, State Museum of History.

**The work above is a combination of European and Native American painting styles.**

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith. *Cerrillos*, 1989. 64"x80" Marilyn Butler Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ.



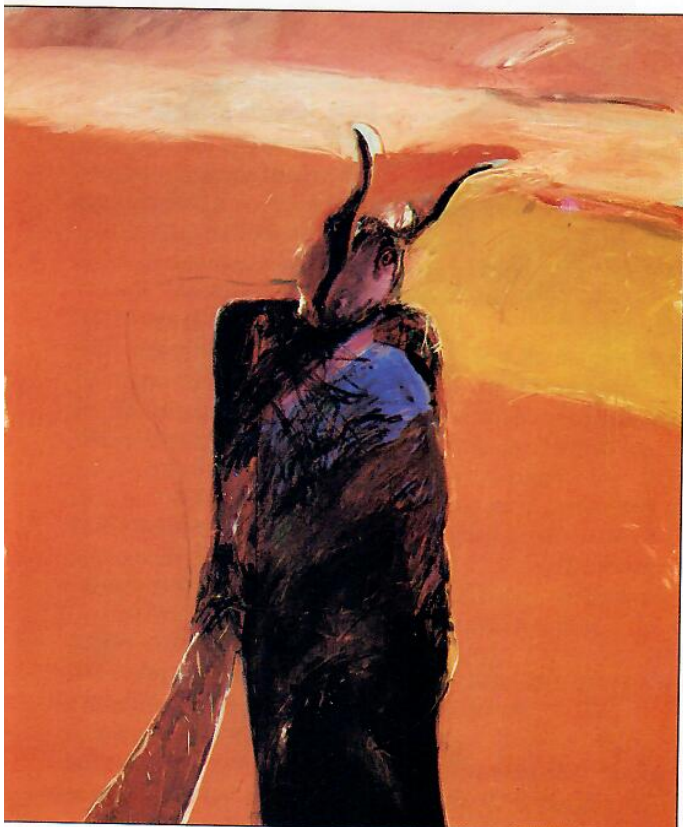
## Perfecting Tradition

Maria Martinez, who did the jar on the left, was one of the best-known Native American potters who has worked in the southwestern United States. During the 1920s and 1930s, she developed elegant designs based on pottery originally produced by the ancient people who lived in her Pueblo. The design on this pot is a “streamlined” version of an ancient “feather” motif.

The **geometric** (straight, angular) shapes *contrast* with the **solid, organic** (curved) shapes between them. When you look at this work, which shapes are **negative** (background) and

which are **positive** (foreground)? The **diagonal shapes**, the **repeated curves**, and the simplicity of the design of this pot show the influence of **Art Deco** (a European art movement popular during the 1920s).

Maria Martinez was not only known for her pottery. She was one of the first Native American artists to establish her own individuality by signing her pottery. When her neighbors left their pots unfinished, Maria bought and completed them. In order to make more pots, she hired relatives and developed a mass-production system. Her husband and son worked with Maria, making *Martinez* pottery even more famous.



## Ironic Images

“Irony” is when what is stated means just the opposite. How does the work on the left by American painter Fritz Scholder seem “ironic?” A dark figure stands in the middle of a bright orange canvas. The surrounding color is so powerful, it seems to overwhelm the figure. Its small animal head is tilted and it appears to wear a puzzled expression. What might the title, *Magic Portrait* mean?

Fritz Scholder, a painter who is also a Mission Indian, is probably the most famous Native

American artist working today. He doesn’t use traditional Native American materials but works mainly with oil on canvas. He uses **bright colors** and **loose expressive brush strokes** to comment on the condition of many Native Americans today. He has shown Indians dressed as cowboys, Indians posing for tourists, or Indians wrapped in American flags.

In the work on the left, Scholder creates a feeling of *tension* by **contrasting** the **positive shape** of the figure with the **negative space** of the background. He also sets up a sense of mystery—is this a person or an animal? Is it holding a weapon; is it sinister or afraid, threatening or threatened? Is this a shaman (priest) who has lost his or her power or is this figure confidently calling on the spirits of nature to carry out its commands?

**Does the painting on the left resemble any other Native American works found in this issue?**

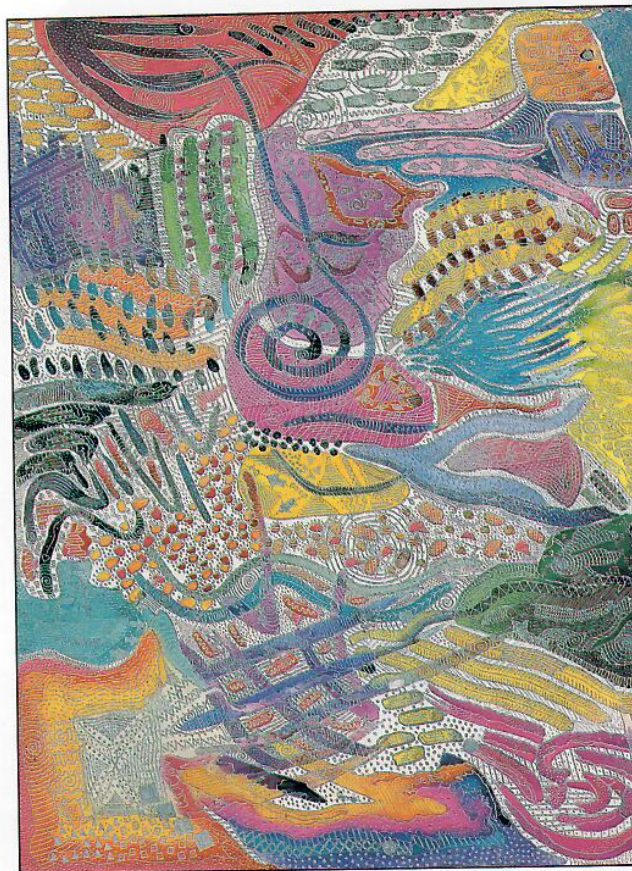
Fritz Scholder B. 1937.  
*Magic Portrait*, 1981. Oil, 80” x 68”  
Collection of the artist.

# Andrea Andrews: WORKING WITH PATTERN

“**A**rt is what you make it,” says Andrea Andrews. “You can take any art material that you want, and just go with it.” This is exactly what she did while painting the mixed-media design on the right.

Andrea did this Scholastic Art Award-winning painting while she was a senior at Spaulding High School in Rochester, New Hampshire. She used contemporary materials to create an *abstract overall pattern*, something like the ancient symbols you saw on page 2. The work on the right was done very *spontaneously* like Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith’s painting on page 10.

Andrea is currently working while she takes evening courses in design at The University of New Hampshire. She is an artist who also enjoys sports. In high school, she was varsity captain of the track team and shot put and discus state champion.



## How did you get interested in art?

When I was about ten, my parents bought me a beginners’ art kit. My first picture was of a covered bridge in the woods. That’s when I realized I liked to draw. I took my first real art class in my sophomore year. We went from basic drawing to painting with tempera and acrylic. In my senior year, I was in an honors art class.

## How did you happen to do this design?

It was an assignment from my art teacher. She wanted us to learn about watercolor—how to apply the paint, how to use water to lighten it, using different-size brushes. She encouraged us to let the brush flow over the paper so the colors would “dance and come alive.” I

remembered her words later when I started blending the colors. I also thought of the ocean. I love the ocean and I've been swimming in it since I was a baby. So I guess some of that feeling is in the painting.

#### **How did you begin?**

I started with the pink and blue swirl in the middle. Then I moved directly down the page to make the design that looks like something growing on the ocean floor. Next, I went over to the lower right-hand corner and worked my way up to the top left-hand corner (to where the big spot of pink is). Then I went across the top to the yellow and down through the picture again. I started painting before I knew what kind of designs I would make. I just wanted to see what would happen.

#### **Was improvising like this difficult?**

Yes. At one point I began copying designs I'd already done. So I had to overcome that. I tried not to repeat a design too much because I wanted the painting to look fresh and natural.

#### **Did you enjoy working this way?**

Yes. I don't like the idea of sitting down and doing one thing. I like to expand and explore, and see what happens with the medium I have in my hand. It's basically a process of discovery. I was surprised by the way the painting came out.

#### **What happened next?**

I took it in to my teacher the next day, and she couldn't believe it. The colors, I think, were what got her. But as we kept on talking, we decided it

wasn't defined enough yet. That's when I started working with the silver metallic marker. I used that to do the details.

#### **How did you know where to put the silver?**

I outlined all the shapes with it. Then I tried to expand the painting by filling in where there were no shapes. I did stippling to give the designs a feeling of depth. I wanted the picture to be as detailed as possible so the designs would really stand out. I think detail is one of the most important art elements.

#### **Why did you use a silver pen?**

I had worked in an art supply store during the summer, and had seen someone using one. I was fascinated by it and I wondered how it would look combined with other colors.

#### **How long did the painting take?**

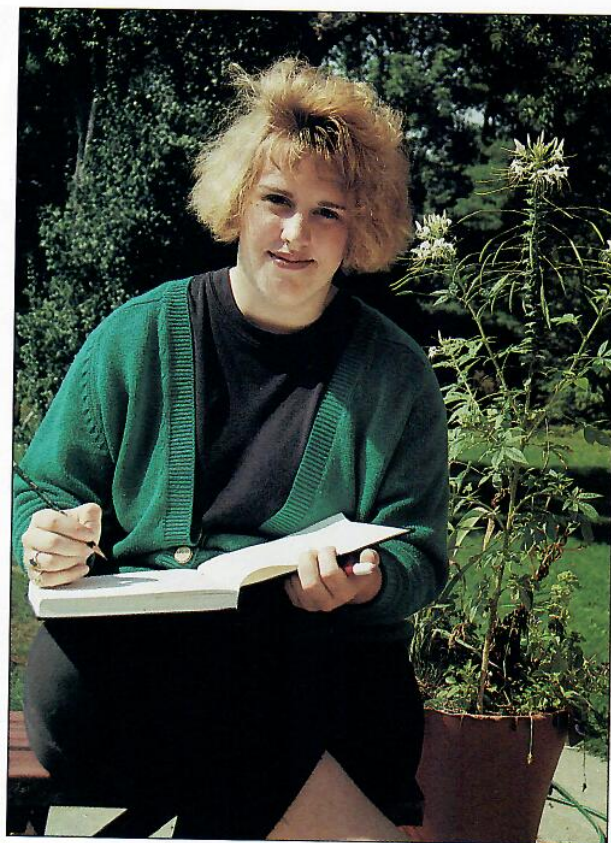
The first design took about three hours. Adding the silver took a week. Then I began to run out of ideas, so I had to put it away for a while. When I brought it back out, my teacher helped by going through some books with me.

#### **Why did you do a design instead of a figure?**

"Realistic" painting makes me feel confined. I didn't want to do something within lines. Most of my classmates were drawing pictures. I like to do my own thing. I just felt like seeing what would happen, so I took my brush and let it flow.

#### **What does this painting mean?**

It doesn't have any real meaning. The colors and the shapes and the silver pen give it meaning—as well as motion.



MIKE WHALEY

*I started painting before I knew what kind of designs I would make. I just wanted to see what would happen.*

#### **How did you know when you were finished?**

When I had put in enough details. I spent four to five hours a night on the painting for a week. Sometimes I worked on it between classes. I was totally obsessed by it. People, like my art teacher, were telling me that this was going to turn out to be a really nice project. It just made me want to do a better and better job.

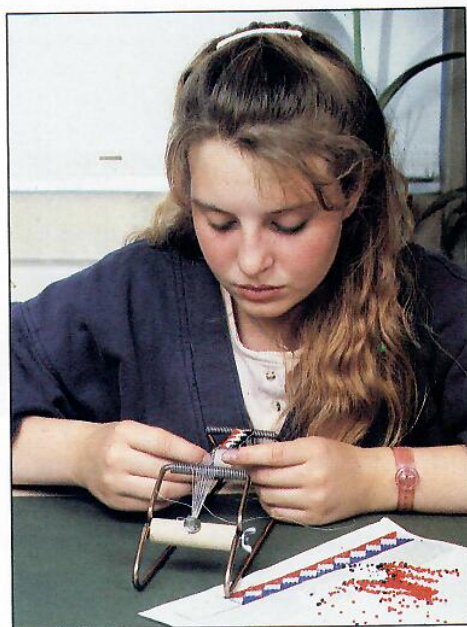
#### **What advice can you give about art?**

I feel you have to be motivated to do it. It has to come from the heart. You use it as a way of expressing your thoughts. But you have to practice if you want to be the best. I want to be the best in my field, so I'm always practicing.

**We select our Artist of the Month only from among students who have previously won medals in the current Scholastic Art Awards Program. To enter, ask your teacher to write to the Scholastic Art Awards, 730 Broadway, New York, NY 10003 for entry deadlines and rules book.**

# CREATING PATTERNS YOU CAN WEAR

*Create a bracelet, a headband or a belt of your own design.*



Early Native American artists used the materials they found around them—quills, claws, feathers, leather—to decorate their clothes, shields, cradles, and blankets. The colors of these materials and of the paints the artists mixed from berries and ground rocks were harmonious but not bright. When European traders came to the Great Plains, they brought brightly colored glass beads with them. These beads were quickly incorporated into traditional Plains designs. They were used either as *accents*, which stood out against the tan leather, or to create *overall patterns*.

In this workshop you'll create your own design, working with a modern version of the glass beads that were used so effectively by Native American artists.

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

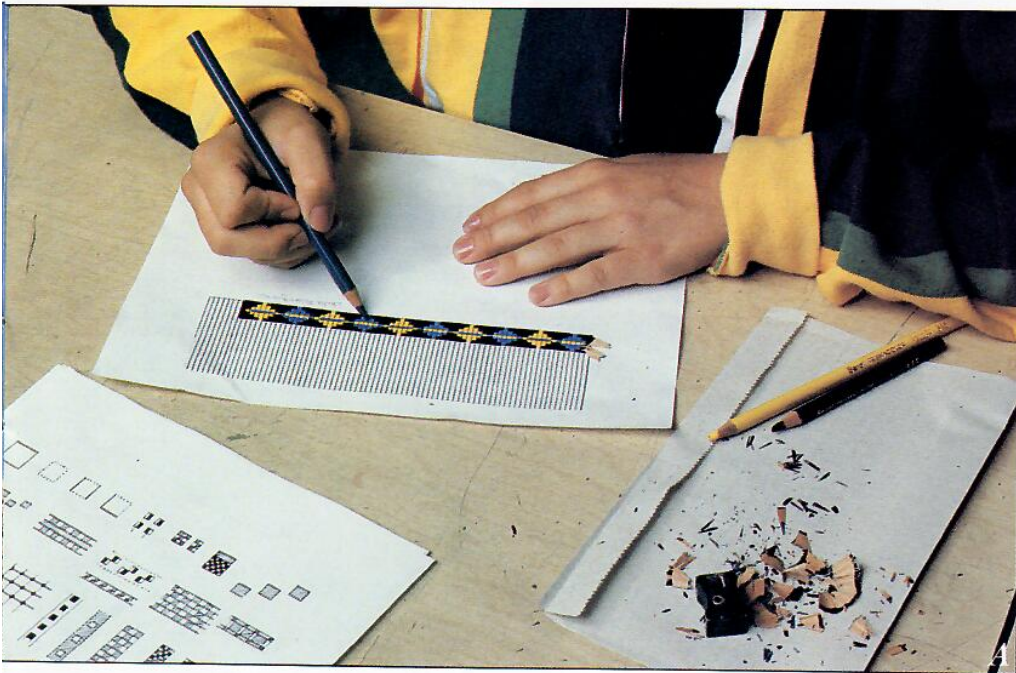
## Materials

- 9" x 12" graph paper
- School pencil
- 12" ruler
- Eraser
- Colored pencils
- Handmade or commercial bead loom
- Strong bead or quilting thread
- Thin seed-bead needles
- Medium-size seed beads



Each bead is held in place by two beading threads through the bead and two loom threads on each side.

(1) A. Johnson (2) S. Pruis  
(3) M. Bram (4) G. Bottum  
(5) J. Velazquez



### Starting Out

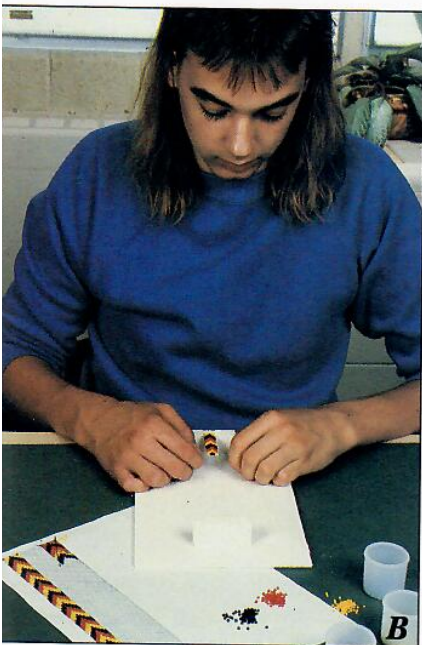
Step 1: Using graph paper, develop a simple geometric pattern. Use Native American woven basket or bead patterns as a starting point. Select colored pencil which corresponds to bead color. **Bold, patterns and contrasting colors** work best. (Bracelet size is about 1/2" x 7" for girls, 1/2" x 9" for boys.)

### Step 2.

On handmade or simple commercial loom, measure thread for wrist size (10" for girls; 12" for boys). Allow 1 1/2" on each end to tie off bracelet. Attach these *loom threads* (9-12 at most) to each end of the loom (see photo C). Make sure space between each thread is wide enough for one bead. Thread needle and tie end of *beading thread* to outside loom thread.

### Step 3.

String beads for first row keeping beads and needle *below* the loom threads. (Pick beads up with point of needle. String only one row of beads at a time.) Hold the row of beads against the loom threads with a finger. Now put the needle back through the bead holes *above* the loom threads (photo C). Tighten row and straighten by pushing with straight edge. Continue rows, following original graph design. When bracelet is done, braid, tie off loose ends.



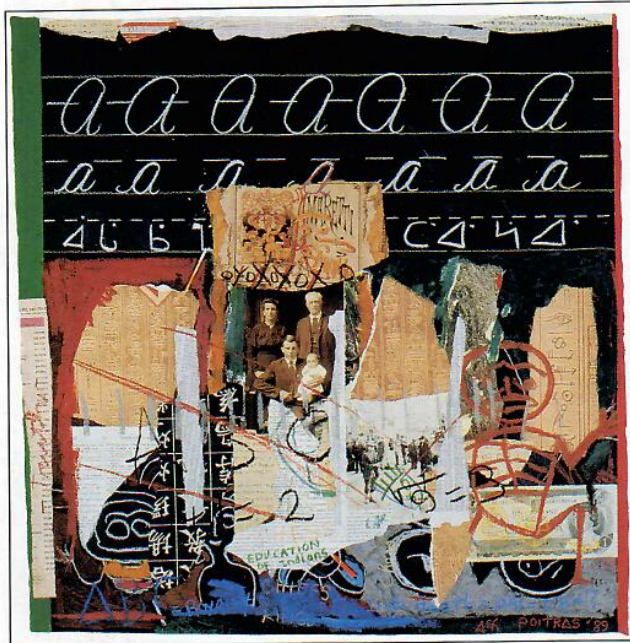
### Some Solutions

Which color combinations will you use? Since **contrasting colors** work best for a bracelet, will your colors be **light/dark; pale/bright;** or warm (like red, orange, yellow)/cool (like green, blue, purple)? Will your design be made up of **lines—horizontal, vertical, diagonal, or zigzag**

**lines?** If your design is made up of shapes, will they be **diamonds, squares, crosses, or X's?** Which areas will be **positive, which negative?** Will each area be **large or small?** Will you create a **repeat pattern, or an overall design** in which no two shapes are the same?

**Hold each row of strung beads against loom threads from below. Put needle back through beads above loom threads.**

## Two contemporary Native American artists draw inspiration from the past



### Searching for the Past

By looking at her work above, can you tell that Canadian Native artist Jane Ash Poitras considers *writing* to be an important form of communication? Poitras created the collage—*Family Blackboard*—after learning about her Cree (a Native American people of Canada) heritage. The focal point is a family wearing European-American clothing. On the blackboard behind the photo are English letters and Cree characters. Poitras has included examples of written communication: phonebook pages, plane tickets, a Cree dictionary, Egyptian characters. The Native American elements seem “buried” throughout the composition. The viewer must search for them, as Poitras had to search for her own past.

**How many different kinds of writing can you find in the work above? Can you easily spot the references to Native American culture?**

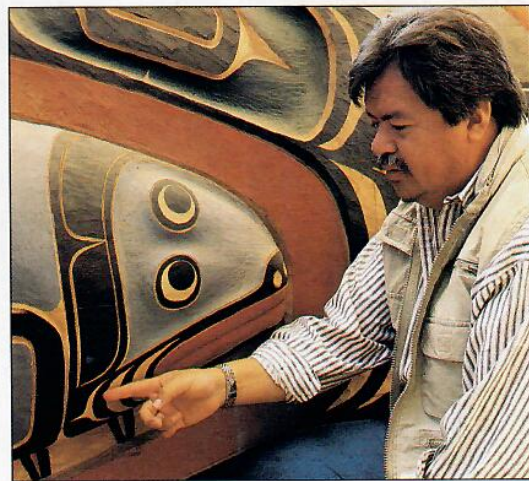
Jane Ash Poitras. *Family Blackboard*, 1989. Mixed media collage. 23" x 23"  
Private Collection.

### Preserving Tradition

Canadian-born artist Tony Hunt has dedicated himself to preserving Kwakiutl culture and traditions. [Kwah-key-OO-tul: a group of Native Americans who live on the Pacific Northwest coast.] In addition to woodcarving, Hunt also participates in Kwakiutl dances and *potlaches* [ceremonial feasts]. He learned the arts of ceremonial dance and woodcarving from his grandfather, Mungo Martin, a famous Kwakiutl chief.

Hunt has carved many of totem poles which are exhibited all over the world. In memory of his grandfather, Hunt and his father carved a totem pole over 33 feet high.

In the photo shown below, Hunt explains a detail on one of his totem poles. The figure he points to is based on a certain kind of fish. The artist has used simplified, stylized shapes to portray the fish, and he has emphasized the creature's large, bulging eyes.



**Contemporary artist Tony Hunt preserves traditions from the past**

Tony Hunt b. 1942. Photo by Maximilien Bruggmann from *Indians of the Northwest Coast* (c) 1987 by U. Bar Verlag, Zurich.

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