

## Contemporary Native American Art — Reflections After Lewis and Clark

The Montana Museum of Art and Culture is pleased to provide Native American artists with this opportunity to express their viewpoints on the Lewis and Clark expedition and the bicentennial. Certainly, no discussion of the legacy of Lewis and Clark would be complete without acknowledging Native Americans, whose enormous contributions to the Corps of Discovery Expedition ensured its success. Without Sacagawea's help as guide and interpreter, without the horses provided by the Shoshoni and Flathead, and without the food and shelter provided by the Nez Perce, the expedition might have vanished and become nothing more than a footnote in a very different history of the West.

Regardless of how historians assess the significance of the Corps of Discovery Expedition, undeniably it opened a vast area to settlement by non-Native peoples, an irreversible trend that has had a devastating effect on Native American lifestyles and cultures. The bicentennial of the Expedition offers the opportunity to reflect upon the recent history of the West from different perspectives, including the insights shared by the people who called this land home for thousands of years prior to the arrival of Lewis and Clark and all who followed them. These Native American artists have different approaches to "Lewis and Clark" and the Expedition's long-term consequences. Some of these artworks seem to look back to the past, although they also have a strong contemporary element. They employ a contemporary art language to suggest connections between a proud but oftentimes painful past and the present situation of American Indians.

### Sean Chandler



Sean Chandler, Indian Holocaust (Dependence Day), monoprint., 2001, 20" x 30", \$650

**Sean Chandler (A Ani nin (Gros Ventre))** Collections: Minneapolis Institute of Art, Museum of Natural History (Paris, France). Exhibitions: Heard Museum (Phoenix, AZ), Eiteljorg Museum (Indianapolis, IN), Holter Museum of Art (Helena, MT). First Place Award Printmaking, Northern Plains Tribal Arts (Sioux Falls, SD)

**Sean Chandler** uses his characteristic style of traditional A Ani nin (Gros-Ventre) symbols and his personal abstractions on a polychrome background to address the tragic and sensitive subject matter, "Indian Holocaust." Buffalo, horses and human figures are rendered in white contour lines. They appear as ghost-like images. When Lewis and Clark arrived on the plains, there were millions of buffalo. The irresponsible slaughter of the bison that followed the opening of the West made Native people dependent on government rations. The artist explains that the traditional symbols "are intended as a tribute to all my ancestors and to my father, who taught me these old ways (...)"

## Corwin Clairmont



Corwin Clairmont, *Footprints (Lewis & Clark Series)*, mixed media monoprint, 2001, NFS

**Corwin Clairmont (Salish-Kootenai)** MFA, Montana State University, Bozeman, 1971. Collections: Beall Park Art Center (Bozeman, MT), Hockaday Museum of Art (Kalispell, MT), Montana Museum of Art & Culture, Eiteljorg Museum (Indianapolis, IN). Several group and solo exhibits throughout the US and at the Westphalian State Museum of Natural History in Münster, Germany

**Corwin Clairmont's "Footprints" (Lewis and Clark Series)** deals with the environmental impact of the settlement of the frontier traversed by Lewis and Clark. In this monoprint/collage series footprints of wild animals symbolize the endangerment of these species through pollution and the extension of highways represented by a collage of photographs taken on the Flathead Reservation. Lewis and Clark themselves appear overwhelmed by this ecological chaos.

## Ivan Doney



Ivan Doney, *Free Spirits*, metal, 2003, 51" x 24" x 6", \$6,500

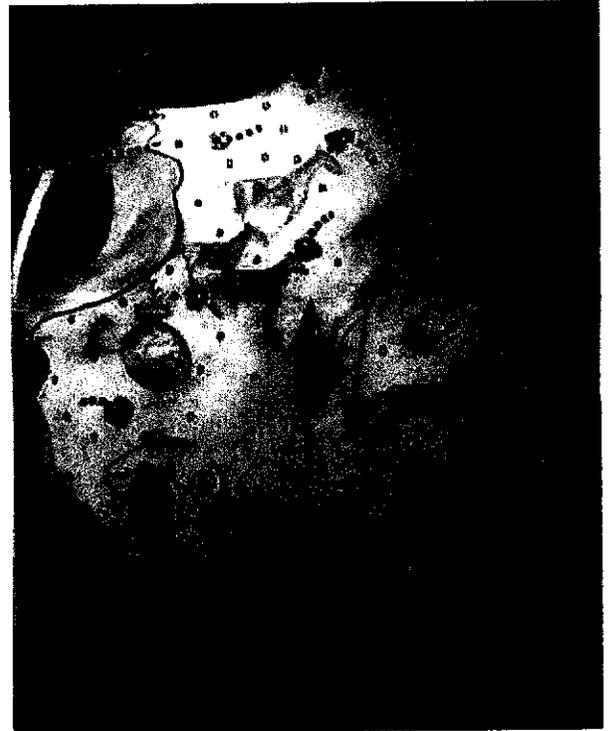
**Ivan Doney's** metal sculpture "Free Spirits" celebrate the beauty of these majestic animals that for centuries have played important roles in the life of many Native American cultures. "Free Spirits" is a powerful reminder of the indomitable spirit of Native Americans and the strength of Native American traditions. Special welding techniques have created interesting color effects on the surface of the animal sculptures.

**Ivan Doney (French Canadian/Chippewa)** Self-taught artist, studied welding and metallurgy for aeronautics. Working with various metals for over 40 years. Several awards, numerous private collections and exhibits throughout the nation. Featured in *Southwest Art* (December and January 2000).

## Joane Cardinal Schubert

**Joane Cardinal-Schubert (Blackfoot)** is a multi-media, visual and installation artist, writer, lecturer, curator and director of film & video. She received her BFA from the University of Calgary, Canada. Her work has been exhibited internationally in Sweden, Great Britain, Japan, Korea, France, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, North and South America. She was awarded the Commemorative Medal of Canada for her contributions to the Arts. Cardinal-Schubert is a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Art.

"Dreaming of Ghost Shirts" with its pictograph style images and images of bullet holes shot through the hide, makes reference to the Ghost Dance Shirts of the 1890s. This work reflects on the effects that the opening of the west to white settlement would have on Native people over the next decades. In the Ghost Dance ceremony Indigenous people danced for the return of their dead relatives and the buffalo. The shirts they wore were painted with power symbols and were supposed to protect the dancers from being shot.



Joane Cardinal-Schubert, *Dreaming of Ghost Shirts*, acrylic on canvas, 1997, 60 1/4" x 46", \$10,526

## Jim Denomie



Jim Denomie, *Manifold Destiny*, oil on canvas, 2000, 32" x 45", \$2,500

**Jim Denomie (Ojibwe)** received his BFA degree from the University of Minnesota, MN. He participated in group shows at the Duluth Art Institute, MN; Union Gallery at Iowa State University, IA; Westphalian State Museum of Natural History in Münster, Germany; the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse, WI; and the Eiteljorg Museum, Indianapolis, IN. His art is in the permanent collection of the Frederick Weisman Art Museum, University of Minnesota, MN; the Westphalian State Museum of Natural History in Münster Germany, and in private collections.

In his painting "Manifold Destiny" Jim Denomie plays with an inspired pun. The title makes a joke of the "Vanishing Indian Myth" and "Manifest Destiny". Denomie creates a world where Indian women on horseback hunt VW Buffaloes by painting horns on an old, green VW bug. The women hunt this mechanical beast in a lushly colored landscape where a railroad crossing sign, a buffalo skull, and telephone poles mark a world transformed. He chooses women as hunters to "...acknowledge that in today's society, women have adopted roles of leadership." But clearly these warriors must deal with a world out of balance.

## Gloria Emerson



Gloria Emerson, *Negotiating Our Future*, acrylic on canvas, 2003, 37" x 41", \$1,500

**Gloria Emerson (Diné)** BA, University of Denver, 1962; MA Education, Harvard, 1972; Institute of American Indian Arts, 1987-1990. Served with many non-profit arts and education organizations including IAIA. Appointed to New Mexico State Commission of Arts, 2003.

In "Negotiating Our Future" **Gloria Emerson** symbolically depicts "the new monsters who are after our resources - post-colonialism woes" in an abstract and expressionistic style that stresses the artist's concern about the destruction of sacred landscape.

## Jeneese Hilton



Jeneese Hilton, *Hooters and Polluters*, mixed media on canvas, 2004, 71" x 39", \$7,000

**Jeneese Hilton's** paintings draw upon the deep appreciation that Lewis and Clark had for the natural beauty of the West, begging the question, "What would Lewis and Clark think if they could see this devastation? Would they want a celebration or would they be compelled to do something about the destruction?" Her painting "Hooters and Polluters" depicts oil wells, factories, and the issue of irresponsible logging. The background shows a map of the United States. In the center of the right side there is a hexagram from the Chinese I-Ching philosophy. This hexagram is a symbol for "creative power." The magpie next to it stands for persistence. Both symbols make the viewer reflect on the possibility to act in support of restoration and change.

**Jeneese Hilton (Blackfeet)** MFA Painting, U of Colorado Boulder, 1990. Solo exhibits: Museum of the Plains Indian (Browning, MT), Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art (Great Falls, MT), Plains Art Museum (Fargo, ND), Montana Museum of Art & Culture. Numerous group exhibits throughout the West and at the Westphalian State Museum of Natural History (Münster, Germany).

## Carm Little Turtle



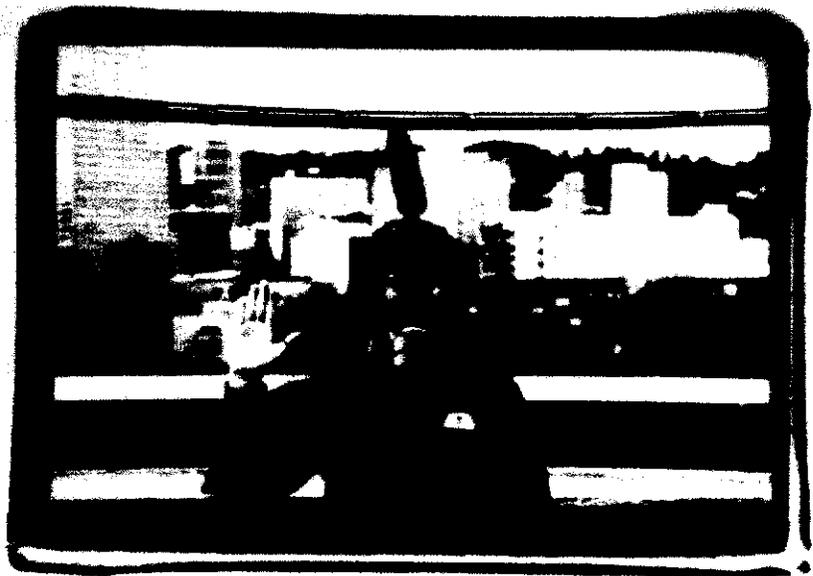
Carm Little Turtle, *Earth Man Getting Breathless*, black and white photo sepia toned with oil paint, 2003, 16 1/4" x 20", \$500

**Carm Little Turtle (Apache/Tarahumara/Mexican)** Born to artist parents, art was an early part of home life. Raised in a multi-cultural environment, as a child learned to integrate art into life. Exhibited nationwide. Included in "Seven Directions" group exhibition at the Montana Museum of Art & Culture.

The boundaries between photography and painting seem to merge in Carm Little Turtle's work. The iconography in her work ("the props and costumes"), she explains, "is a private symbolism rather than one that is imposed by the dominant [European-American] culture." In "Earth Man Getting Breathless" she comments on the influence of gambling and the loss of traditional lifeways on Native people. Earth Man is tempted by a woman, who holds a handful of cards. The symbols are not just the heart, club and diamond, she also gambles with a card for rain/water and a crescent moon. The Earth Man has become so excited that he literally pops off the ground and drops his wheelbarrow of corn, just as many Native people have abruptly abandoned traditional farming and diets to gamble and drink away their health, identity and water rights.

## Erica Lord

**Erica Lord** explores shifting self, home, and memory in her work. She writes about it: "I communicate in a tongue that is sewn together by a thousand cultures. (...) I am not denying the inevitable merging of histories. My own has tributaries stemming from a destiny manifested." Her self-portrait of her "How?" series shows the artist wearing a mask. Erica Lord explains: "Until we all take time to understand each other a little better, to uncover and de-mask each other, we will only know the masks we put forward." Themes such as the clash of different cultures, limitations and boundaries in life, and environmental issues come to mind when viewing her photographs.



Erica Lord, *How? Series*, C-print, 2003, 20" x 24", \$300

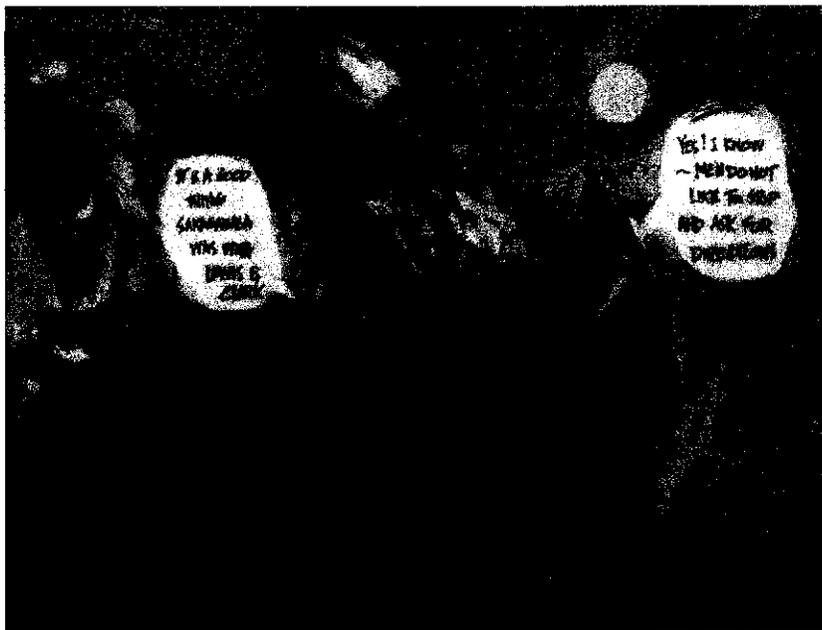
**Erica Lord (Athabaskan/Inupiaq)** BA, Carleton College (Northfield, MN); Institute of American Indian Arts (Santa Fe, NM). Exhibits: Institute of American Indian Arts Museum, Carl N. Gorman Museum (University of California—Davis). Member, Board of Directors, Indigenous Arts Action Alliance (IA3). Poetry and photography published in *Red Ink*.

## Robert Orduño



Robert Orduño, *Quanah Parker*, oil on linen, 2003, 30" x 30", \$4,500

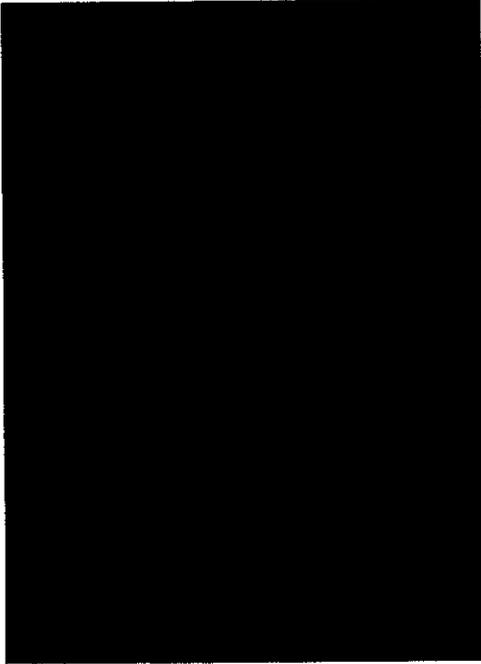
Robert Orduño's portrait "Quanah Parker" shows the chief of the Quahdi-Comanches with the American flag in the background. This flag alludes to Parker's conflicted relationship to American settlers as well as to his later life as statesman who negotiated rights for his tribe with the US government. The famous Indian leader is depicted in a vibrant and very expressionistic painting style that reflects these changes in Parker's life. Orduño's brushstroke shows bold rhythm and motion and his composition exhibits a mastery of color.



Robert Orduño, *Horse Sense*, oil on linen, 2003, 28" x 26", \$4,000

**Robert Orduño (Gabrielleño/ Tongva/ Spanish)**  
Listed in *Who's Who in American Art*. Collections: Heritage Center (Pine Ridge, SD), Great Falls International Airport (Great Falls, MT), Exhibits: National Native Indian Artists Symposium, C.M. Russell Museum (Great Falls, MT), Buffalo Bill Historical Center (Cody, WY). Recipient, Tony Begay Award, Profiled in *Southwest Art*, and *International Fine Art*.

## Ernie Pepion



Ernie Pepion, *For Christ Sake*, pastel on paper, 1991, ca. 8" x 12", NFS

**Ernie Pepion (Blackfeet)** received his Masters of Fine Arts degree from Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana. After he was paralyzed in a car accident, he began painting with the help of a special hand/forearm brace and with a custom-made motorized easel. Ernie Pepion has become a well known artist whose works have been exhibited nation wide.

**Ernie Pepion's** drawing "For Christ Sake" captures the irony of an American culture dominated both by Christianity and capitalist greed. The work deals with the sad turn of events done for "Christ's sake." Christianity, the religion forced upon Native Americans by early European missionaries, is based on charity and sacrifice, yet it was in Christ's name that generations of Native American children suffered unspeakable cruelty in religious based boarding schools.

## Lillian Pitt

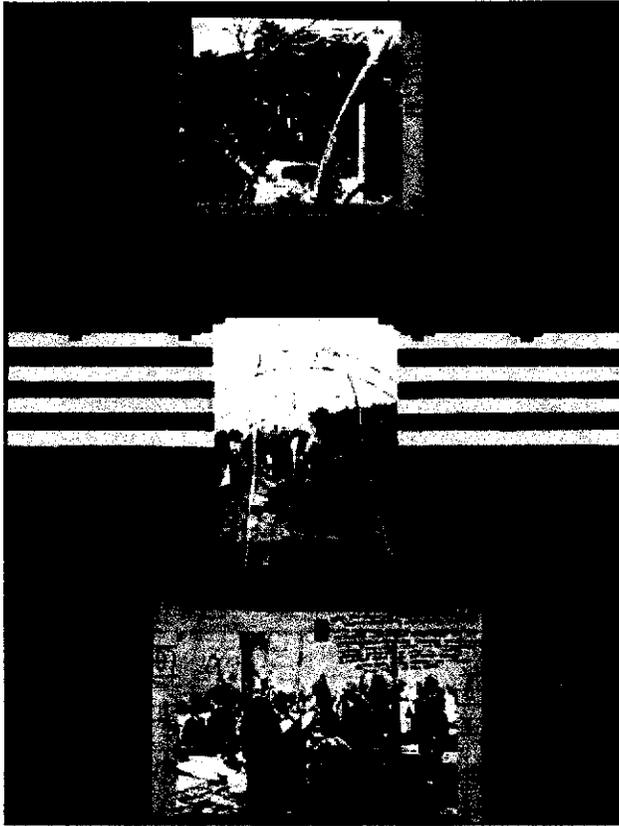
**Lillian Pitt (Warm Springs Confederated Tribes)** graduated from Mount Hood Community College, Oregon with an Associate of Arts Degree. Best known for her ceramic masks the artist has exhibited nationally and internationally. Lillian Pitt's works are in the permanent collection of the Portland Art Museum, OR; the Burk Museum, University of Washington in Seattle, WA; the Heard Museum, Phoenix, AZ; the Indian Arts & Crafts Board, Washington D.C.; the Westphalian State Museum of Natural History, Münster, Germany, and the city of Oguni, Japan.

**Lillian Pitt's** *Honoring our Ancestors* is homage to the spectacular sight that greeted the Lewis and Clark Expedition as they entered the territory of the Plateau communities. Canoeing along the Columbia River, they found the shores lined with numerous racks of drying salmon. Pitt's sculpture translates the life and experience of her people into contemporary form.



Lillian Pitt, *Honoring Our Ancestors* (Salmon Drying Rack), mixed media, 2004, 28" x 25" x 12", \$900

## Jane Ash Poitras



Jane Ash Poitras, *Midewiwin*, mixed media on canvas, n.d., 48"x36", \$12,000

**Jane Ash Poitras (Chipewayan/Cree)** graduated with a MFA degree from Columbia University in New York City. Her work has been exhibited in major galleries and museums around the world. Ash Poitras' art can be found in public, corporate and private collections including the Brooklyn Museum, NY; Columbia University, NY; Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull Quebec; The Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Vancouver Art Gallery; and the National Gallery Ottawa, Canada.

Central to Jane Ash Poitras' work is an exploration of the impact of colonialism, both past and present. She examines issues surrounding acculturation. The artist stresses the political and spiritual strength of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas in her works, which often feature important spiritual and political leaders.

**Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Neal Ambrose-Smith**



**6 • NATHANIEL**



**7 • GARM**



**8 • NEAL**



**9 • YAMEL**



**10 • FRED**



**16 • GELINA**



**17 • KEN**



**18 • MASAMI**



**19 • JORDAN**



**20 • MIRANDA**

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Neal Ambrose-Smith, *Who is American Indian?* (Detail), installation, 20 black + white photographs, 2003, 20" x 18" each, \$8,500

The black and white photo installation "Guess who is American Indian" by **Jaune Quick-to-See Smith** and **Neal Ambrose-Smith** forms one part of a five-part installation, "200 Years: Change/No Change," and was originally commissioned by the Palmer Museum of Art, Penn State, in conjunction with the conference *Lewis and Clark: The Unheard Voices*, Fall 2002. The installation was created to show how America has changed and stayed the same since the Corps of Discovery Expedition. Ambrose-Smith took pictures of people that Lewis and Clark would encounter if they launched their Expedition today. These photographs also address stereotypes of Native Americans and express Quick-to-See Smith's theory that "In Future We Will All Be Mixed Bloods" (to borrow the title of her 1995 lithograph/collage.) By asking "Who is American Indian?" the artists make a guessing game of the viewer's unspoken assumptions about race. Among those portrayed here are full-blood Native Americans, mixed bloods, Europeans, Asians. Humor is effectively used to gently disarm the viewer of racial stereotypes.

**Jaune Quick-to-See Smith** (*Flathead Salish*) PhD (Honorary), *Minneapolis College of Art and Design*, 1992; PhD (Honorary), *Pennsylvania Academy of the Arts*, 1998. Collections: *Museum of Modern Art* (New York, NY), *Museum of Women in The Arts* (Washington, DC), *Museum of Mankind* (Vienna, Austria), *Museum of Modern Art* (Quito, Ecuador). Over 75 solo exhibits. Reviewed in *New York Times*, *ArtNews*, *Art in America*, *Art Forum*, etc.

## Duane Slick

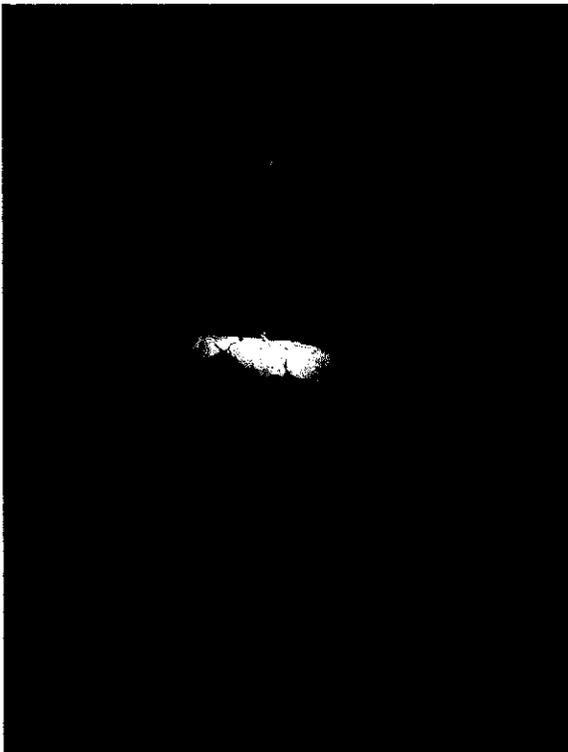


Duane Slick, *Diet Coke for The Day of the Dead*, acrylic on linen, 2003, 3 panels, 14" x 11" each, \$1,250

**Duane Slick** questions the influence of white culture on Native life in his white on white paintings. Created by overlaying and painting the shadows of divergent objects, the subtle variations of white reveal nuanced commentaries. In "Diet Coke for The Day of the Dead" the bright red and black brushstrokes are a momentary distraction from the layered white images beneath. Slick combined the shadow of a Day fo the Dead doll combined with the familiar Diet Coke logo, illustrating the disparity between traditional and contemporary cultural influences: reverence for ancestors and crass commercialism.

**Duane Slick (Meskwaki (Sauk and Fox Tribe))** MFA Painting, University of California, Davis, 1990. Collections: Spenser Museum of Art (University of Kansas, Lawrence), Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art (Great Falls, MT), Montclair Art Museum (Montclair, NJ), University of New Mexico Museum of Art (Albuquerque), Institute of American Indian Arts Museum (Santa Fe, NM). Exhibited nationwide, recipient of numerous awards. Currently teaches painting and printmaking at Rhode Island School of Design

## Maxx Stevens

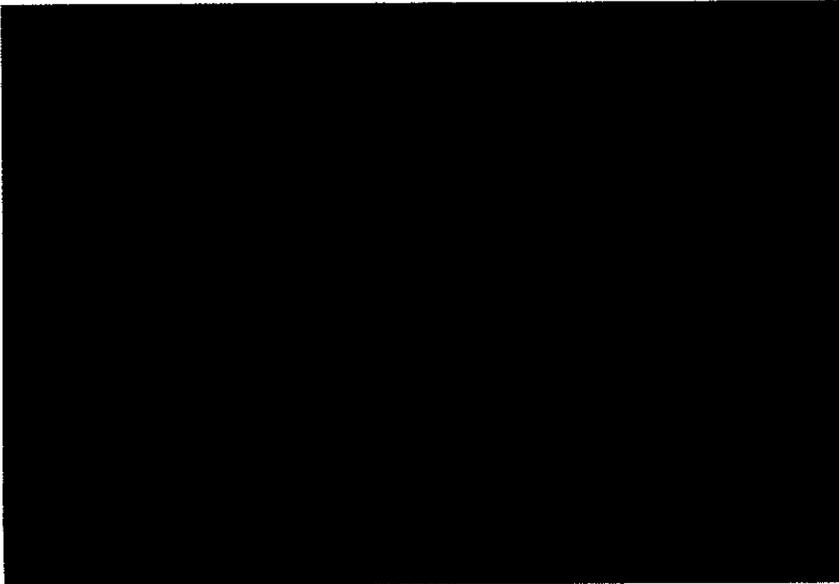


Maxx Stevens, *Four Directional House*, mixed media, 2003, ca. 36"x36"x10", \$600

**Maxx Stevens'** installation "Four Directional House" is a reflection of her experiences growing up in a large, Seminole family in Wichita, Kansas. Like many Native people she was confronted with the conflicting interests of Christianity and indigenous interpretations of the world. The cross-shape of her suspended dwelling refers to Native understandings of the four directions, but could also refer to Christianity. The experience of living in a small home with up to ten family members is evoked through the thin walls of the structure. Much like the shadow of an airplane moving across the landscape of her childhood, the cross-shaped shadow on the AstroTurf is impermanent. Stevens was a child of a generation of dislocated and relocated Native American families.

**Maxx Stevens (Seminole/Muskogee Nation of Oklahoma Region)** MFA, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1987. Several exhibits throughout the US and in Canada. Numerous awards. Has taught Sculpture and Foundation Arts at the Rhode Island School of Design, Indiana University, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and White Mountain Arts Academy. Currently Dean, Institute of American Indian Arts (Santa Fe, NM).

## Francis Wall

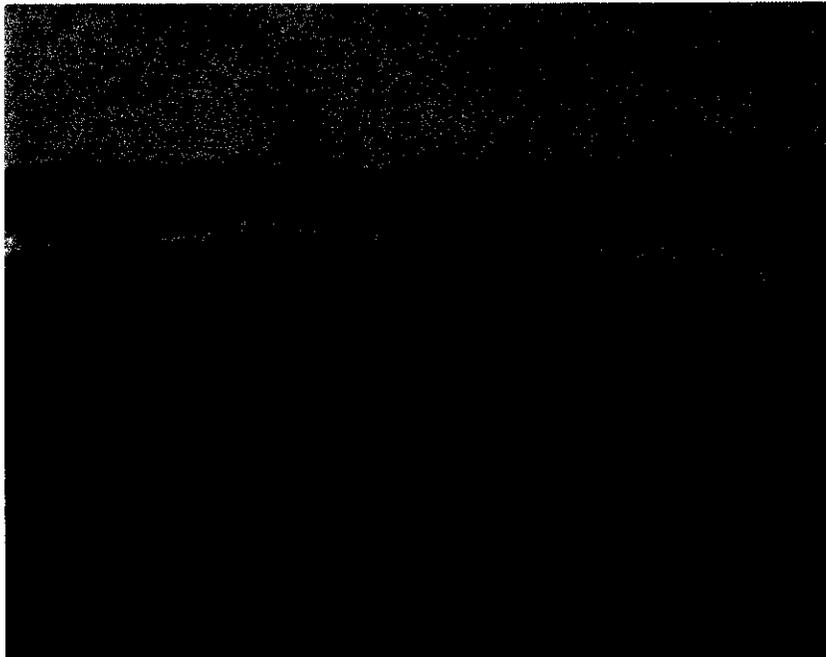


Francis Wall, *Blackfeet Country*, acrylic on canvas, 2003, 36" x 52", \$1,800

Francis Wall's painting "Blackfeet Country" combines traditional Blackfeet designs with contemporary abstract and geometric painting styles. The teepee symbolizes the home and the homeland of the Blackfeet. The vertical stripes across the painting stand for treaties with the US government that eventually placed the Blackfeet on a reservation that today comprises 4.7% of their traditional homeland. The red color of the background reinforces the artist's message about the loss of the tribe's land and the loss of the bison, an animal sacred to Plains Indians

**Francis Wall (Blackfeet)** Studied at the Institute of American Indian Arts. Solo exhibits in Montana museums and galleries since 1998. Collections: the Westphalian State Museum of Natural History (Münster, Germany).

## John Well-Off-Man



John Well-Off-Man, *Loma Buffalo*, oil on linen, 2001, 13" x 15", \$600

John Well-Off-Man's painting "Loma Buffalo" is at first view an idyllic landscape with a bison. On closer examination, the expressive, predominantly brown brushstrokes indicate that the land is overgrazed. Free-roaming herds of bison were extinct by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the animal depicted here is livestock on a ranch in Loma, Montana.

**John Well-Off-Man (Chippewa-Cree)** Studied at Ohio Visual Art Institute and Institute of American Indian Arts. Solo exhibits: Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art (Great Falls, MT), the Governor's Mansion (Helena, MT), and at the Montana Museum of Art & Culture. Collections: the Montana Museum of Art & Culture and the Westphalian State Museum of Natural History (Münster, Germany).