

"In drawing, design, and color, Harrison Begay has reached the deserved position of first place among the Navajo artists of today," says Jacobson. This painting, "Taking the Sheep Out," depicts a scene from the daily life of his people in color sensitivity. Begay combines the style of his ancestors with a touch of the modern to produce his striking productions. Tribal life is his main subject.

A Sooner Special

Up From the Kiowas

Through the interest and direction of Dr. Oscar B. Jacobson, the Indian artist began to speak again. And from the Southwest emerged works of art that pleased the eye and flattered the senses of art devotees the world over.

By John Wagoner, '51ba

If a native culture has both depth and breadth, as deeply embedded as in Mexico, it will defy the conquerer. It will, in the fullness of time, speak again, although not in the same idiom or pattern. But in the United States, where the few bedeviled and confused natives have been shunted into restricted pockets by a shouting, jostling,

cursing, laughing mob of a hundred million foreigners, the situation is quite different.

These are the words which begin the foreword to *American Indian Painters*, a portfolio of American Indian paintings. They are the words of Dr. Oscar Brousse Jacobson and Jeanne D'Ucel, an Oklahoma

man and wife team, who wrote the introduction and notes for the unusual collection and who brought the paintings to published form in 1950.

Jacobson and his collaborator, a French student-author who had spent a year and a half in the U. S. but who spoke no English when he married her, understand Indians.

They have a vital role in the renaissance of American Indian painting.

The renaissance of Indian art came about through a few understanding white men and women, mostly artists and poets of the Southwest. Without their efforts it is probable that the Indians would have continued to think of their art as something ugly in the eyes of others, something non-white and therefore something which would receive only ridicule.

The original Americans who inhabited the vast span of the continent were slowly pushed into areas not wanted by the invading white man; then when the invader found use for the new homes of the Indians, the natives were moved onto reservations and into closely defined areas. In 1949 the Indian population was not larger than the population of Tulsa and Oklahoma City.

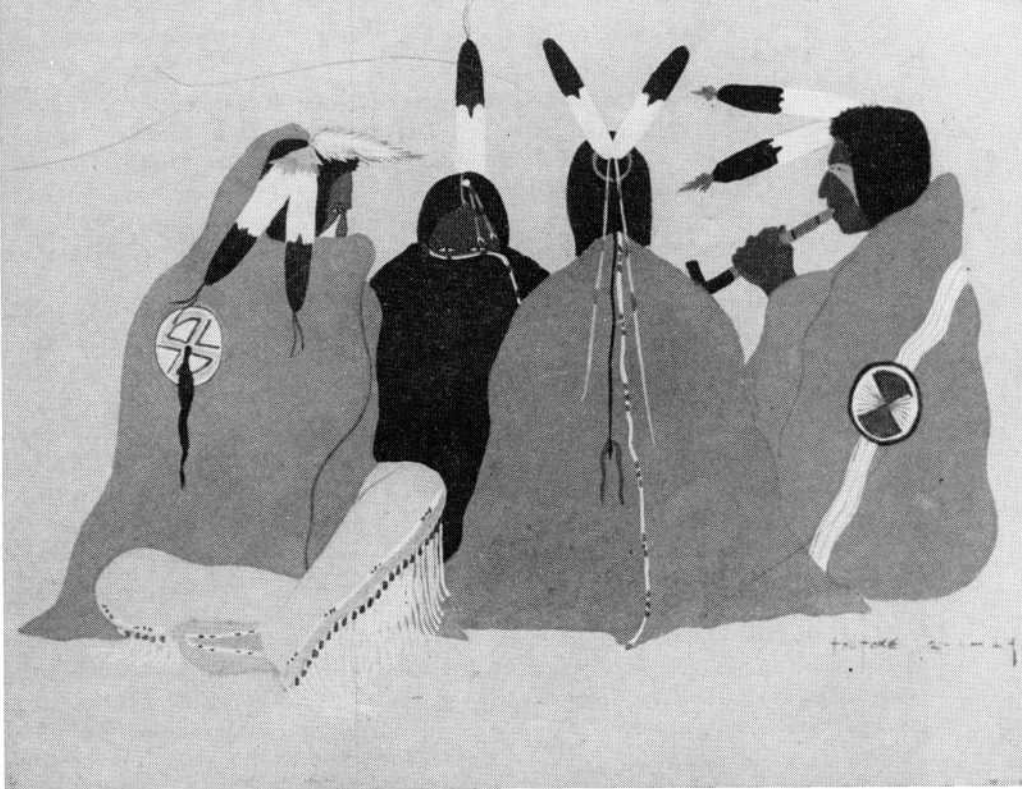
First pushed, then overtaken by his oppressors, the Indian changed. He began to accept the ways of the white man, leaving his own culture to conform to a thing which he could not conquer. The art which had been so intimately interwoven with his religion and primitive life began to die.

But the death rattle was quieted. Since the work of understanding whites began three decades ago, Indian art has surged to a new level, attaining recognition in both America and in Europe. But this is not a new art; it is something which was latent in a people grown afraid to express themselves.

Shyness and fear are barriers concealing much which remains to be learned about Indian art. The medicine men still exercise great influence in some areas, and the secrecy which shrouds the religious art in some tribes is yet to be overcome. There is suspicion of the people who brought tragedy.

The rebirth of Indian painting as a living art form came only when that fear was overcome by a few Indian artists who found that there were white men who were interested in their work, persons who could see something beautiful in the paintings indigenous to the Indian culture. Jacobson, born in Sweden and transplanted to Kansas at an early age, came to know the American Indians early in his life. His knowledge of the ways of Indians and his stubborn persuasive power helped him to rescue a dying art.

Rescue it he did. In 1923 he saw definite promise in the work of five young Kiowas. When he had finished giving them aid in the form of instruction and criticism, America had discovered Indian art, and crowds were flocking to an exhibit in Prague, Czechoslovakia, to see the first formal showing of American Indian paintings.



Readers of University of Oklahoma Press books have seen a portion of this painting by Monroe Tsatoke. It appears as a colophon in many of the volumes. A Kiowa, Tsatoke was born in Oklahoma near Saddle Mountain, where he was buried after an early death from tuberculosis. "This friendly get-together around the peace pipe represents Tsatoke's bold attack of a problem and his ability to reduce it to the bare essentials without fussing with many minor details," comments Dr. Jacobson.

Director of the University of Oklahoma school of art at the time, Jacobson sponsored the unknown Kiowa Indian boys from Anadarko and arranged for their entry into international art circles. At first he

helped financially by purchasing their works; later he obtained aid from Lew Wentz, late Ponca City oilman. Miss Edith Mahier, professor of art at the University, assisted with the training of the young In-

"Resting Cowboys" is by Allan Houser, one of the most important Indian Artists of his day. An Apache, he is the great-grandson of Geronimo, one of the best-known Indians in American history. About this painting Jacobson says: "The Resting Cowboys' are Apaches of today dressed in the conventional clothes of the modern cowboy but they wear their hair long and tied with the characteristic headbands of the Apaches." Colors are restricted to black, or a variety of browns and grays.



they did not have the academic background required for entrance. But this did not matter to Jacobson, because his plan was to encourage the Indians to produce paintings which were free from the influence of the white man. The students were restricted from classes in which white students were studying art. They were segregated so that they could produce their own 2-dimensional Indian paintings.

When the paintings were finished, Jacobson arranged exhibitions of their work in many of the distinguished museums in the United States and Hawaii. Sales were made, and the work received publicity even in Europe. A masterfully done portfolio of reproductions of the Kiowa's work was published in France by C. Szwedzicki. The Jacobsons authored the introduction and comment for the publication, the first of a series of Indian art portfolios which Szwedzicki is bringing to the public.

The original artists in the Kiowa group

were Monroe Tsa-to-ke, Spencer Asah, Steve Mopope, Jack Hakeeah, and Bougetah Smokey. The recognition which their work received broke loose a rich source of latent talent in other Indians, marking the beginning of an Indian art renaissance which is still flourishing.

From the depths of the depression in the Thirties came a new opportunity for Indian artists. Now recognized, now less inhibited, they added murals to their startling accomplishments in watercolors. Jacobson, through his position with the PWA art program, arranged for them to decorate several public buildings in Oklahoma. He discovered that the Indians were as capable of producing large-scale works as they were of rendering watercolors, their favorite medium.

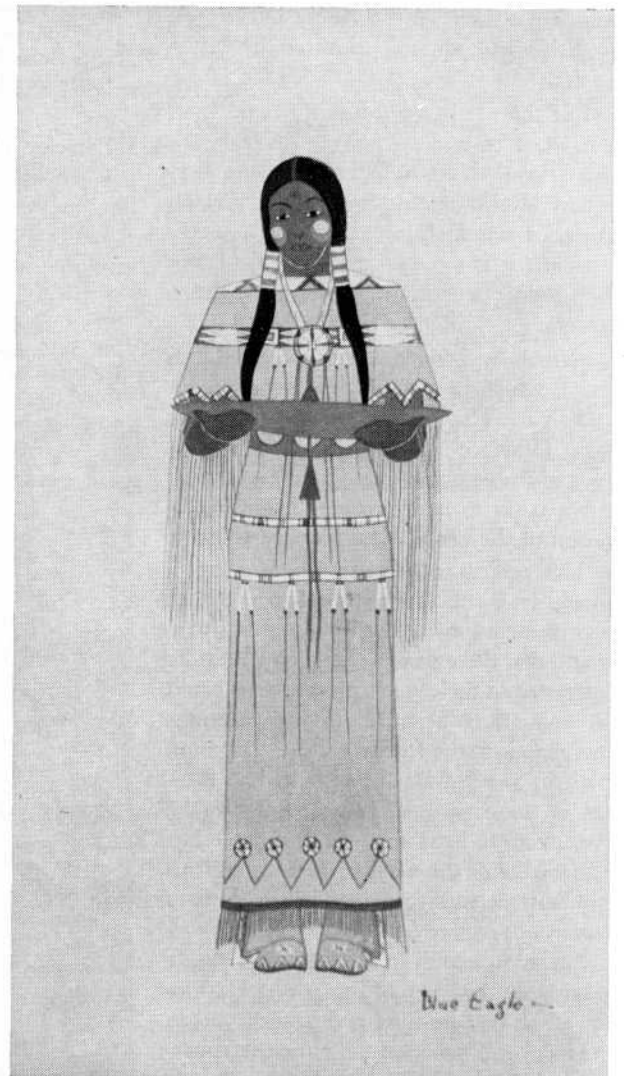
Interest in Indian art at the University expanded, and Jacobson inaugurated a course in the history of Indian art. Work by Indian artists was purchased for the Uni-

versity museum; Indian students continued to come for study in the art school. Among them: Acee Blue-Eagle, Frank Gritts, Dick West, Victor Pepion, Cecil Murdock, Jesse Davis, and Woodrow Crumbo.

It was with the Kiowa tribe, a group of plains Indians, that the modern phase of Indian art had its beginning. Their distinctive use of color and the development of subjects with individualistic expression marked them as artists who departed from the rigid forms of earlier Indian paintings. Jacobson has observed that the Kiowas have been imitated by nearly all Indians, and at the present time, are equalled or even surpassed by a few.

Indian paintings center on religious subjects and historical events, painted in the usual 2-dimensional manner which is characterized by a lack of perspective. The striking colors in these paintings have a significance of their own, each representing

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"The Newlyweds," by James Auchiah and "Indian Maiden," by Acee Blue Eagle show the traditional subject: the Indian figure and accessories. Auchiah is a Kiowa and the grandson of the famous Indian chief, Satanta. Blue Eagle is one of the many Indian artists developed at Oklahoma's School of Art under Jacobson's supervision. He is listed in the "Indian Hall of Fame."

Sharon Ferguson, '51bus, Oklahoma City, chose the name Christopher Vance for their son born March 12 in Mercy Hospital in Oklahoma City. Lt. Clement left recently for an overseas assignment in Korea.

Don Sarber, '51geol, and Mrs. Sarber, the former Pat Whitehead, '50ed, Bismarck, North Dakota, announced the birth of a son born February 12. The baby was named Guy Mitchell. Sarber is employed by Sinclair Oil Company.

THOMPSON-WHITE: Miss Camilla Ann Thompson became the bride of Rudy Jack White, '51bus, both of Ardmore, March 8 in the First Methodist Church in Ardmore. White was a member of Pi Kappa Alpha, social fraternity at the University. The couple is living in New Orleans, Louisiana, where Lt. White is stationed at Camp Leroy, Johnson.

Bob Lawhon, '51Law, Blackwell, former Kay county assistant attorney, died March 8 in a Washington, D. C., hospital, where he had been undergoing treatment for cancer. He is survived by his wife and parents of Blackwell.

Bob G. Whiteley, '51eng, is living in Hobbs, New Mexico, where he is employed as an engineer by Schlumberger.

Lt. Robert C. Anderson, '51bus, and Mrs. Anderson, Munich, Germany, chose the name Mark Wilson for their son born March 7. Lt. Anderson is stationed at the Nuremberg Airforce Base in Munich.

'52 LESTER-CONRAD: Miss Beverly Anne Lester and Lt. David Eugene Conrad, Jr., who completed his degree requirements in January, both of Norman, were married recently in the Presbyterian Manse in Fayetteville, Arkansas. At the University, Mrs. Conrad was a member of Alpha Gamma Delta social sorority, and Lt. Conrad was a member of Pi Kappa Alpha, social fraternity, and Letters Club. The couple is living in Lawton, where Lt. Conrad is stationed at Fort Sill.

CLARK-WINTERS: Miss Ruth Ann Clark, who completed her degree requirements in January, and Jacques Miller Winters, both of Houston, Texas, were married March 8 in St. Luke's Methodist Church in Houston. At the University, Mrs. Winters was a member of Delta Delta Delta, social sorority, Alpha Lambda Delta, honorary freshman sorority, and Sigma Delta Pi. The couple has established a home in Galveston, Texas.

Signs of the Times

Cadet Noble J. Davis, Jr., '47-'48, Oklahoma City, is stationed at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, where he is undergoing formation and instrument flying.

Col James E. Mills, '36eng, formerly of Norman, has been named assistant director of the U. S. Marine Corps public information, Washington, D. C. Col. and Mrs. Mills and their two daughters, Marqueritte, 10, and Dianne, 5, are living in Arlington, Virginia.

Lt. Col. Lawrence A. Trautman, '38eng, formerly of Norman, has been named the new executive officer of the 7848th Ordnance Maintenance Group in Germany. Prior to this assignment, Trautman was negotiating contracts in France and assisting military aid advisory group in Belgium.

Lt. Don V. Hester, '57eng, Blanchard, has been promoted to the rank of first lieutenant. Hester is serving with the 45th Infantry Division in Korea.

Covering Campus . . .

Queen Ernie turned up at the Union ballroom just in time for the coronation.

And what had happened to her? According to Dean MacMinn, who gathered most of the facts on the case, it was something like this:

On Thursday afternoon, the kidnappers slipped up on Ernie as she sat in the living room of the Kappa house. Quieting her with a hand over her mouth, she was blindfolded and whisked off to Oklahoma City.

Here she was kept 24 hours by a 'Mary Smith,' and treated well, according to Ernie.

When her five captors returned for her, she was prevented from identifying them by the green hoods and robes which they wore. She was then driven back to the campus and taken into the Union by the five men.

A group of engineering students saw them and gave chase. Queen Ernie was rescued and one of her captors was caught.

The captured kidnapper and his cohorts were brought before Dean MacMinn to explain their actions. A decision on their case is pending.

Though the kidnapping was at first blamed on the lawyers, it was proven definitely that the lawyers were innocent in this case. The story goes that the ones responsible are part of a newly organized secret society on the campus, and that they chose the kidnapping plot to bring the fact of their existence before the public. They certainly succeeded.

Indian Art . . .

a particular thing in the life of an Indian.

Unlike most painters, Indians do not use models; they capture the subject in their mind and work from what they have seen. Mrs. Jacobson once watched a young Kiowa painting a figure which she suddenly recognized to be an Indian who was at the moment many miles across the state. The artist was exercising the amazing sense of perception peculiar to primitive peoples who depend upon keen observation for livelihood and the preservation of life itself.

The Indian painter is always careful to

present accurate detail when painting religious subjects. The unusual form and symbols appearing in Indian paintings have meanings and are not abstractions in the modern sense. Originally, the paintings were not for the sake of beauty alone; they represented either religious or important events and therefore were rendered in true detail.

First interest of the public in Indian art was much a matter of curiosity. Subsequently an appreciation of the art itself created a market for the Indians who turned to the palette for an artistic expression and for livelihood.

When a person first encounters Indian paintings, he observes what appears to be a pronounced similarity between the works of all Indians. This is due to the traditional subjects: the Indian figure with accessories which are distinctly Indian. The Asiatic manner of the paintings, lack of perspective horizon and background, and the flat, two-dimensional rendering add to this similarity.

Jacobson and others who have carefully studied Indian art are able to detect a difference in the work of the individual painters. This difference exists among members of the same tribe, and one who knows Indian art can recognize the work of an artist even though the painting is not signed.

In *American Indian Painters* Jacobson comments:

"(The Indian's) great inborn sense of observation has another advantage. It lets the Indian artist retain of what he sees only the essential elements, so that the baffling business of elimination, which often worries the white artists, is not a problem to him. That is why his work is usually so direct and to the point. That same wisdom, that is his heritage, has also given him the elusive secret of motion. His flat paintings are alive with movement and rhythm. In them the dancers dance, the deer leap, the herds roar thunderously by. His sense of color is unerring; while it is brilliant it could rarely be called gaudy when it is in his own element. His color harmonies are often not only beautiful but truly subtle."

Indian art has been saved for the moment. People are still showing an interest, and the annual Indian exhibits held at the Philbrook art center in Tulsa in recent years continue with their drawing appeal.

Jacobson believes no one can predict what the future holds for the Indian artist and his art. "Responding gloriously to a little appreciation and sympathetic understanding, he has, in a few years, made a significant contribution to American culture."