

# Battling Americana: Taking the Indian Out of the Cupboard

Curated by Astrud Reed



## ***Battling Americana: Taking the Indian Out of the Cupboard***

The James T. Bialac Native American Art Collection

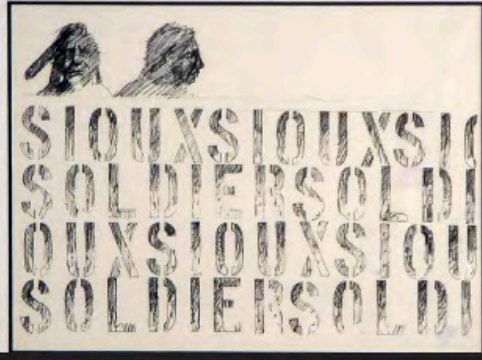
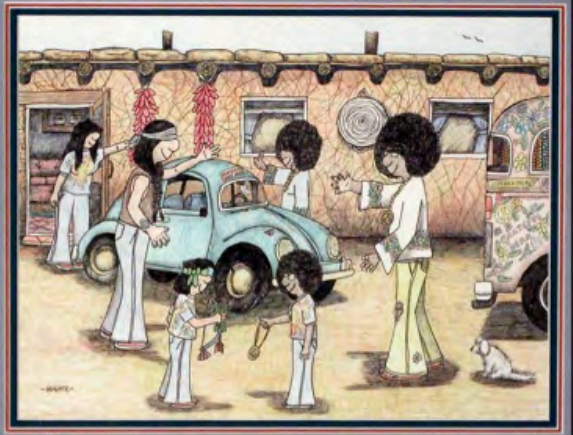
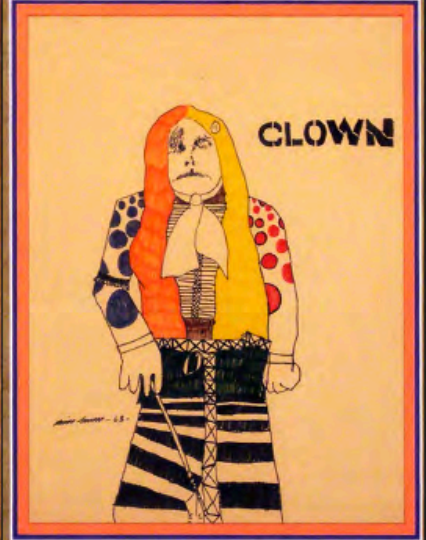
Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art

Exhibit Curator: Astrud Reed

Exhibit Dates: June – September 2014

In 1980, British author Lynn Reid Banks wrote the award winning children's book *The Indian in the Cupboard* to teach children about responsibility, while also commenting on tolerance, cultural stereotypes and hegemonic treatment of Native Americans. The story transformed the romanticized, Euro-American noble savage paradigm of a breechcloth-wearing indigenous person, untainted by civilization, from a trivial Indian trinket to a real person in a current time. This concept mirrored the social changes resulting from the civil rights movements in the 1960s in which minorities began to be seen as equals. Native American artists during this period promoted images of contemporary Native people possessing strong cultural and historical ties. By employing a wide range of techniques and modern influences, these artists were instrumental in merging Native identity with mainstream artistic styles and addressing important issues through their work. This exhibition examines the ability of art to deftly engage sensitive themes and bridge perceptual gaps in popular culture.

Battling Americana: Taking the Indian Out of the Cupboard



Fritz Scholder

U.S., English/French/German/Luiseño 1937-2005

***Indian at the Circus***

1970-1971

Lithograph

The James T. Bialac Native American Art Collection, 2010

The prolific artist, Fritz Scholder, often worked in thematic series. *Indian at the Circus* was part of his "Indians Forever" suite of prints that began in 1967. The dark, distorted individuals from the series were initially met with controversial reactions from viewers. Scholder justified these deformations as social criticism of the trivialization of Native culture. By defying "traditional" depictions of Native culture, Scholder challenged the oppressive restrictions that were placed on Native artists, marginalizing their art from the broader art history canon. In this piece, Scholder uses heavy, dark lines and bright, contrasting color fields to intensify his thematic portrayal of a Native American man in traditional clothing placed on display for the entertainment of an audience.



Tommy Wayne "T.C." Cannon

U.S., Kiowa/Caddo 1946-1978

***Sioux-Soldier-Sold***

1970s

Ink on paper

The James T. Bialac Native American Art Collection, 2010

T.C. Cannon's experience as a decorated Vietnam War paratrooper, coupled with his strong cultural ties, was the basis for *Sioux-Soldier-Sold* and many other images that addressed Cannon's torn views on the atrocities of war and tribal warrior status. He critiques American eagerness to use Native soldiers during times of war, after which the veterans are changed men and often sent back home to their reservation communities without support. These changes are shown in the transformed identity of the subject, before with braid and after without, and the interplay between the images and the text.



SIOUXS SIOUXS  
SSOULS SSOULS  
SOULS SOULS  
SOLDIERS SOLDIERS

Michael Kabotie (Lomawywesa)

U.S., Hopi 1942-2009

## ***Self-Portrait***

n.d.

Serigraph

The James T. Bialac Native American Art Collection, 2010

Michael Kabotie was raised on the Hopi Indian Reservation and trained by his father, esteemed artist Fred Kabotie, who understood the economic impact of promoting the arts. In 1973, Michael may have been pushing this concept further when he began exhibiting internationally as a founding member of the experimental group, Artist Hopid, whose mission was to advocate Hopi values and culture. In *Self-Portrait*, Kabotie depicts his philosophical ties to the desert landscape and Hopi culture. As a young man on the left, he is independent and the village sits on his shoulder as a strong influence. On the right, as an elder he has melded his likeness with the pueblo dwelling, likely referring to the intimacy elders cultivate with their environments.





## Billy Soza Warsoldier

U.S., Cahuilla/Apache 1949-2013

### ***Clown***

1968

Mixed media

The James T. Bialac Native American Art Collection, 2010

An artist and activist, Billy Soza Warsoldier became a prominent voice promoting Native art on a national stage after studying at the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) and participating as an influential member of the civil rights organization known as the American Indian Movement. Throughout his career, his artistic focus was primarily Native subject matter with an anti-government sentiment. *Clown* was created during Warsoldier's IAIA tenure. In many Native American cultures, the clown performs an important social role teaching traditional protocol and identifying inappropriate behavior. Warsoldier's distorted clown is depicted using nontraditional designs and heavy color saturation on the hair and sleeve spots, yet includes historically accurate details on the breastplate, neck scarf, and belt.

# CLOWN



*Miss Smith - 68 -*

R.C. Gorman

U.S., Navajo 1931-2005

***Self-Portrait***

1973

Lithograph

The James T. Bialac Native American Art Collection, 2010

In 1973, R.C. Gorman's *Self-Portrait* captured the emergence of modern American culture interwoven into the identity of Native Americans in the second half of the twentieth century. The traditional, colorful Navajo headband worn by Gorman is decorated with paisleys and flowers, popular American symbols of the period. One strand of his turquoise beads has broken, with loose beads falling, disappearing from the image. This, combined with the sunglasses and wide collar, may make a statement on the changing identity of Native Americans as they replace cultural traditions with modern fashions.



Tommy Wayne "T.C." Cannon

U.S., Kiowa/Caddo 1946-1978

***On Drinkin' Beer in Vietnam in  
1967***

1971

Lithograph

The James T. Bialac Native American Art Collection, 2010

*On Drinkin' Beer in Vietnam in 1967* is a lithograph of two uniformed soldiers with traditional Native hairstyles, wearing honor feathers, escaping the atrocities of war through the sanctuary of intoxication. T.C. Cannon captures the horrors that await them outside with a quickly sketched atomic mushroom cloud. The lack of color may symbolize the destruction of life and beauty derived from modern warfare. Unified by heritage, the men sit in close proximity, attempting to capture all that the act of drinking a beer with a buddy signifies.

On Drinking Beer in Vietnam in 1967



Canon-71

Joe Jaqua

U.S., Mission b. 1938

***This Is Tomorrow***

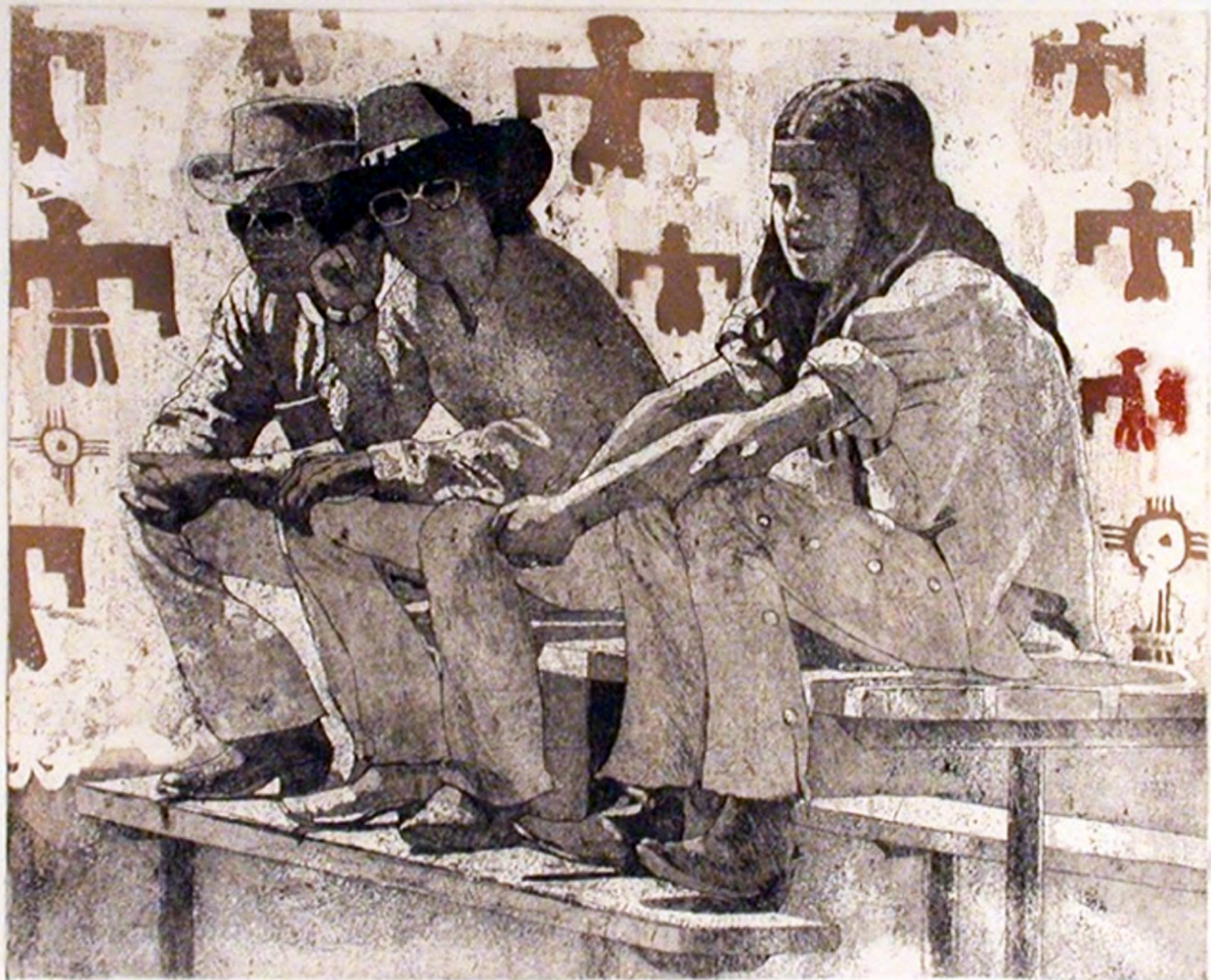
1974

Etching with aquatint

The James T. Bialac Native American Art Collection, 2010

*This Is Tomorrow* depicts a group of young Native men sitting on wooden bleachers at a rodeo against a backdrop of thunderbirds and Zia Puebloan sun symbols. The contrast of the traditional designs and the casual gathering encapsulates the continuity of tradition amidst the dramatic changes of the twentieth century. Joe Jaqua adds color to the cultural symbols, emphasizing the importance of the past, so they have equal weight with the black and white contemporary figures in the foreground.





Arthur D. Smith

Arthur D. Smith

Diane O'Leary

U.S., Comanche 1939-2013

## ***Epitaph***

n.d.

Acrylic

The James T. Bialac Native American Art Collection, 2010

In *Epitaph*, Diane O'Leary shows the back of a traditionally dressed Native American man wearing a beaded rosette holding an eagle feather in his hair, which is a sign of honor. The image symbolizes the artist's displeasure with the American Indian Movement (AIM) for creating rifts, not only within the organization but also against reservation communities and traditional ways. O'Leary and other supporters ended their association with the movement during this period. Her displeasure with AIM is expressed through the subject's turned back as he peers into a stark background outlined by dripping blood.



Fritz Scholder

U.S., English/French/German/Luiseño 1937-2005

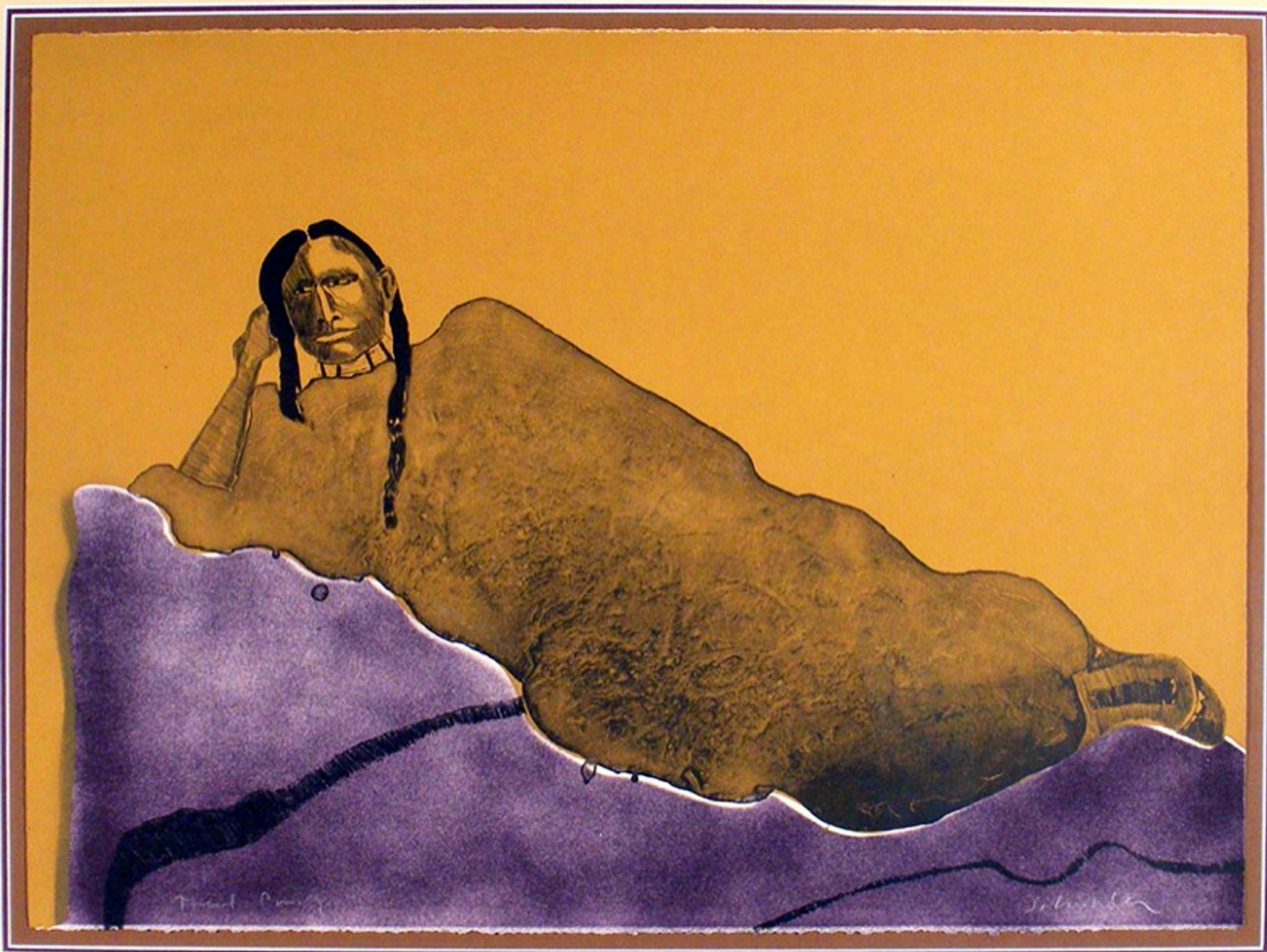
***Reclining Indian Woman***

1976

Lithograph

The James T. Bialac Native American Art Collection, 2010

Fritz Scholder's *Reclining Indian Woman* challenges the iconic figure of the scantily clad, curvaceous reclining woman often seen in European art by exhibiting a different view of beauty and sensuality. Scholder's version combines large color fields to organize the composition with a minimal palette. Borrowing from Pop Art, Scholder renders the figure very simplistically, almost cartoon-like. The woman wears a traditional bone bead choker and her hair is braided. While her moccasins peek out playfully from the end of the blanket, she is covered otherwise, with a wide, shapeless bodily form.



David C. ...

... ..

Diane O'Leary

U.S., Comanche 1939-2013

## ***Fritz Scholder***

n.d.

Watercolor on paper

The James T. Bialac Native American Art Collection, 2010

Diane O'Leary was an activist throughout her life with advanced degrees from Harvard and Stanford Universities. However, she never took a formal art class. She was inspired by Georgia O'Keeffe and associated with artist Emil Bisttram. O'Leary often painted stylized portraits of enigmatic Native American subjects against sparse backdrops. However, the painting of fellow artist, Fritz Scholder, lacks traditional symbols and dress while employing an emotional depth not normally seen in her works. O'Leary's fiery depiction of Scholder exhibits their shared personal connection. His flowing black hair and the deep lines and dark shadows in his furrowed brow and flared nostrils, in relation to the muted background, create a dynamic contrast in tone.



Beaten Yazz (Jimmy Toddy)

U.S., Navajo b. 1928

## ***Moonlight Riders***

n.d.

Watercolor on paper

The James T. Bialac Native American Art Collection, 2010

Beaten Yazz was raised on the Navajo Reservation in Wide Ruins, Arizona. His talent emerged early, and he became a prolific artist, who gained recognition for his drawings that documented his environment. *Moonlight Riders* illustrates an Arizona desert at night with young Navajo men wearing jeans and riding small tricycles. The entire scene is made more dramatic, yet also dreamlike, by using a monochromatic palette of blue and placing constellations not in the sky but instead on the dogs' coats.





Philip Hughte

U.S., Zuni Pueblo 1954-2009

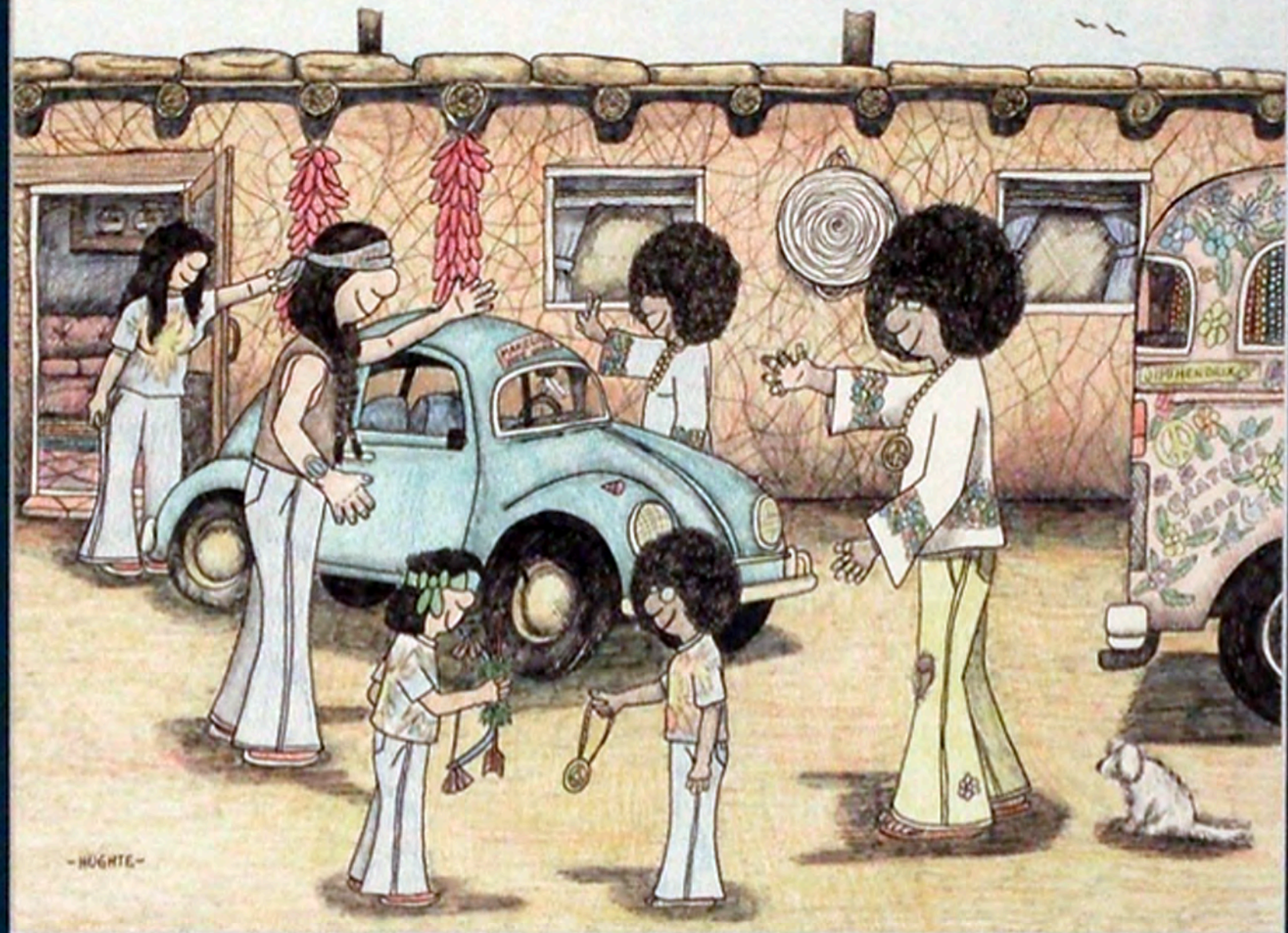
***Brothers and Sisters from the  
60's***

1993

Pencil and ink

The James T. Bialac Native American Art Collection, 2010

Cartoonist Phil Hughte is best known for his book *A Zuni Artist Looks at Frank Hamilton Cushing*, a study of 19<sup>th</sup> century anthropological involvement with indigenous tribes. In a similar manner, *Brothers and Sisters from the 60's* looks back at the recent history of intercultural exchange, employing popular American symbols, clothing, and hairstyles from the 1960s to show two American minorities, at a time of civil unrest for both groups, coming together in friendship to express unity for a common cause.



- HÜGTE -