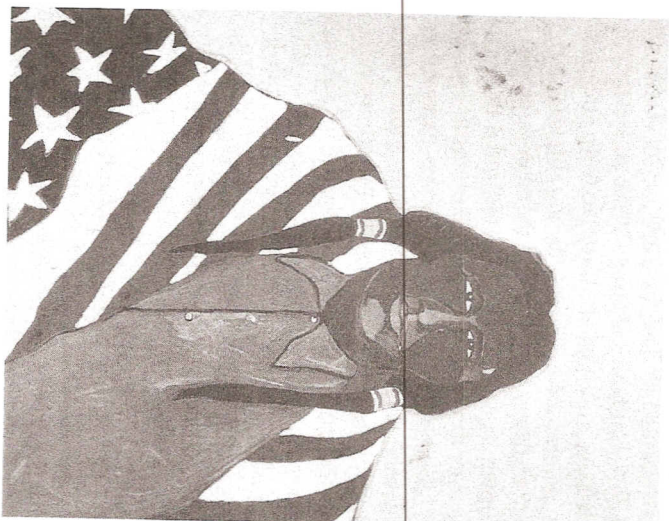


held during the summers of 1960–1962. The stated goal of the project was to help the Native American artist “develop an individual creative consciousness, and to develop to the fullest his talent in art without the loss of pride in himself as an Indian.” Indian artists participating in the project were introduced to major trends in modern art through seminars, workshops, lectures, and films. Project director Lloyd New, who encouraged participants to develop their own unique styles of expression, was convinced that the new generation of Indian artists must be freed from the “hopeless prospect of mere remanipulation of the past.”

The single most important event in the revitalization of Native American art was the establishment of the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in 1962. Founded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs on the grounds of the old Santa Fe Indian School, the institute was committed to dispelling all stereotypical expectations about the nature of Indian art. Its curriculum was strongly bicultural: Courses in traditional techniques taught students the use of sinew, hide, beads, and shells; while courses in art history introduced them to the latest examples of abstract expressionism and pop art. Students in studio classes were encouraged to convey only the “essence” of their Indianness in works that were innovative in style, technique, and media. A major touring exhibition of IAIA artists, in 1966 to 1968, included works that were invariably experimental yet suggestive of some traditional source. The exhibition drew large crowds on four continents, winning high praise at major art festivals in Berlin, Edinburgh, and Mexico City.

Teaching at the Institute of American Indian Arts were several of the most important Native American artists of the twentieth century, including Charles Loloma (Hopi), Fritz Scholder (Luiseno), and Allan Houser (Chiricahua Apache). Loloma was the acknowledged grand master of contemporary jewelry art, creating works that joined abstract modern forms with ancient Hopi myth. Typical of his creations is a sculpted bracelet made of loosely strung turquoise discs that fall gently upon one another when the bracelet is moved. The piece bears little resemblance to the Indian jewelry sought eagerly by tourists traveling through the Southwest, but it is deeply rooted in the traditional world of the Hopi. Loloma’s inspiration for the bracelet was the Hopi mystical concept of turquoise as water, thus the softly clinking stone discs are reminiscent of the waters of *Hurwing Wahi*, the Ancient Earth Mother. Like many other Indian innovators, Loloma’s work was



INDIAN (1976), AN ACRYLIC ON CANVAS BY LUISEÑO ARTIST FRITZ SCHOLDER. SCHOLDER BECAME AN INSTRUCTOR AT THE INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN INDIAN ART (IAIA) IN 1962 AND DIRECTED A NEW GENERATION OF NATIVE AMERICAN ARTISTS TOWARD GREATER EXPERIMENTATION IN THEIR WORK.

rejected at first as not being “legitimately Indian” because it did not conform to the accepted criteria of Indian art. But at the IAIA, Loloma found validation and acceptance. Reminiscing about the early days of the Institute, where he began teaching in 1962, he recalled with pleasure the shared outlook of the faculty: “The original idea was to use our backgrounds as stepping-stones to project beyond all Indianisms, to blend a traditional point of view with contemporary expression for talented young Indians. My ‘style’ fit right in.”

Mixed-blood artist Fritz Scholder joined the staff of the Institute of American Indian Arts in the early 1960s and soon became the most widely known contemporary Native American painter. Calling himself “a non-Indian Indian artist,” Scholder combined his own version of pop art and abstract expressionism to create what has been called “Native American postmodernism.” Typical of other postmodernists, Scholder’s goal was to deconstruct fixed images and accepted orthodoxies wherever he might find them. In such paintings as *Indian with a Beer Can* (1969) and *Indian* (1976), he took on the fixed identity

of the Indian in popular culture. "The subject of the American Indian is a visual cliché," Scholder explained. "For decades, this loaded subject has been romanticized and stylized by the non-Indian painter and Indian painter alike. Therefore, my aim is to create a new visual experience and to extend my viewer's frame of reference." His series of paintings known as *Super Indians* projected a powerful vision of a grotesque, distorted world—the world of contemporary Indian America. Early exhibitions of his paintings were picketed by those who found them offensive, but eventually Scholder gained widespread critical acclaim and his works were copied by other Indian artists. As Scholder acknowledged:

In a way, I am a paradox. I have changed the direction of so-called Indian painting but I don't consider myself an Indian painter. Although I am extremely proud of being one-quarter Luiseño Indian from Southern California, one cannot be any more or less than what he is.

Known as the "Patriarch of American Indian Sculptors," Allan Houser taught for fifteen years at the Institute of American Indian Arts. Houser's early works reflected his training at The Studio and often were based on the stories of his Apache ancestors that he had learned from his father. As he matured, Houser became increasingly experimental. His works moved toward greater abstraction, yet always remained tethered to traditional Indian sources. His *Offering the Pipe* (1978) consists of elongated planes of textured bronze surmounted by the head of a tribal elder lifting his pipe skyward. Images from the cosmology of the Native American Church also figure prominently in Houser's work. *Water Bird* (1980), a sleek bronze sculpture of a major peyote figure, illustrates his belief that "even if I use an abstract approach, the finished piece has a relation to the Indian." Likewise, his *Eagle Dancer* (1981), a stylized rendering in black marble, suggests another familiar, other-worldly aspect of traditional culture. Its soaring strength reaffirms Houser's creed: "Nothing will hold me back. I'm thinking of steel, I'm thinking of concrete. I'm reaching for the stars."

During the final quarter of the twentieth century, Native American art became increasingly diverse. By the 1970s, art critics generally referred to works produced in the Studio style as "traditional" Indian art, but even within this tradition there were signs of innovation. In 1973 several Hopi artists formed what they called the *Artists Hopi* to express their tribe's aesthetic values through (in the words of Patricia

Broder) "a synthesis of past and present, tradition and innovation." Hopi artists Mike Kaboté, Delbridge Honanie, and Neil David—all born in the 1940s—produced original works based on traditional Hopi myths, petroglyphs, and kiva murals. One of the most talented of the *Artists Hopi* group was Millard Dawa Lomakema, who described his work as "abstract design in traditional style." In his *Two Horn Priest with Maiden* (1978), fertility images form the background of a portrait of a priest and a young woman exchanging loaves of sacred blue *piki* bread. In this and his other works, Lomakema successfully conveys the spiritual and symbolic elements of Hopi tribal life.

Art historians Edwin L. Wade and Rennard Strickland, authors of *Magic Images: Contemporary Native American Art* (1981), have divided the works of "nontraditional" Native American artists into two broad categories: modernism and individualism. Modernist works are those that freely experiment with such mainstream contemporary styles as cubism, surrealism, and photorealism, yet remain visually identifiable as Native American art because they include Indian motifs and themes. Individualist works, on the other hand, are virtually "indistinguishable from mainstream contemporary art." They were created by Native artists but the works themselves have few or no identifying "Indian" characteristics. Wade and Strickland acknowledge that many contemporary artists produce works in various styles, thus their scheme of classification applies to objects, not artists.

Included in the modernist category are the works of R. C. Gorman (Navajo), the most commercially successful Indian artist of all time. Son of a World War II code talker, Gorman received a Navajo tribal scholarship to study art in Mexico City. There he was powerfully influenced by the works of the great Mexican muralists Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco. Gorman's own paintings and drawings often portray Native women in ways that convey the tranquility, solemnity, and timelessness of their lives. Yet Gorman carefully distinguished his works from those done in the traditional style of The Studio. Contemporary Indian artists, he maintained, must "leave traditional Indian painting to those who brought it to full bloom . . . today is another day and we have to learn to paint in terms of ourselves." Like Fritz Scholder, Gorman was reluctant to place too much emphasis on his own Indianness. "I don't think about being Indian or not being Indian. I'm an Indian and I paint and that's all there is to it. I'd rather be considered a painter who is Indian than an Indian who paints."