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# Painting Native America in Public: American Indian Artists and the New Deal

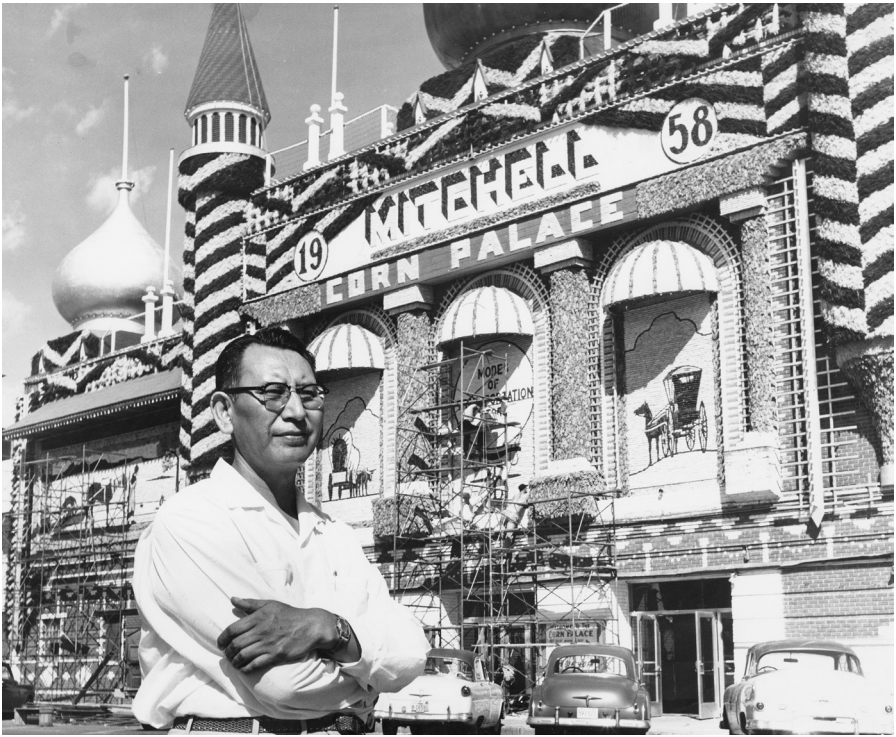
*Nicolas G. Rosenthal*

Thousands of people flocked to the small town of Mitchell, South Dakota, in September 1953 for the annual celebration of Corn Palace Week. The event had been building in popularity since its inception in 1892, when town boosters established an autumn harvest festival “to advertise the agricultural potential to the farmers of the country and to promote further development and settling of the state.” Seeking to build on its early success, in 1921 the town constructed a Moorish-inspired central building that it dubbed the “World’s Only Corn Palace” and decorated with South Dakota-grown corn, grains, and grasses. Over the years the festival grew to include other new features, such as a carnival midway down seven blocks of Main Street, a nightly program with popular entertainers, and dancing to orchestral music that ran far into the evening.<sup>1</sup>

Visitors in 1953 were treated to what was by then another annual highlight of Corn Palace Week: eleven newly constructed murals by the Yanktonai Dakota artist Oscar Howe. As designer of the Corn Palace murals from 1948 to 1971, each year Howe decided on a theme, painted the scenes in watercolors and cartooned them to scale, gave instructions for the construction of the murals onto wooden panels, and then had them mounted to the Corn Palace’s exterior. For the 1953 murals Howe chose the theme “Indian Everyday Living” and featured scenes of children at play, prayers to the Great Spirit, elders in counsel, wildlife, and his personal favorite, American Indian women washing their hair. Howe was free to design the murals as he

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**FIGURE 1:** Oscar Howe (Yanktonai Dakota) at the Corn Palace, Mitchell, South Dakota, 1958. Photo by Waltner, Hurley, South Dakota; photographer Bonnie Brook. Oscar Howe Papers, Archives and Special Collections, University of South Dakota.

pleased, but in keeping with the purpose and traditions of the festival they had to be made entirely from products of South Dakota agriculture.<sup>2</sup>

Upon the occasion of his first commission in 1948, Howe had commented, “This decorative designing of the panels on the Corn Palace is my first attempt to do modern Indian art with the unique media of corn and grain. Although the work with corn is new to me, I am very much interested in it.”<sup>3</sup> By 1953, having honed his techniques over the previous years, Howe decided to move from realistic representations to the straight-line method that he was developing as a signature style. The program warned viewers that they were in for a more “modernistic” art experience, but Howe explained his decision by noting that his approach was derived from the “earliest American Indian painters” and well-suited to the 40,000 pounds of corn, 10,000 pounds of cane tops, and 2,000 bundles of oats that he used to make the murals.<sup>4</sup>

Howe’s more than two decades as designer of the Corn Palace murals was an important part of his career as one of the most influential American Indian artists of the twentieth century. The commissions bolstered Howe’s reputation and provided some financial security during a period in which most American Indian artists struggled to establish themselves in the art world and make a living. The Corn Palace

murals afforded Howe a level of artistic and cultural sovereignty rare for American Indian artists, as his bold decision to employ a modern and unique style in 1953 demonstrates. However, by the time of his 1948 commission to design the Corn Palace murals, Howe already had extensive experience in negotiating the boundaries of what was considered “Indian art” for large-scale public art projects: like several American Indian artists of his generation, Howe had done some of his earliest work under the federal art programs of the New Deal.

Indeed, the New Deal was a critical period in the development of American Indian art, especially painting. During the 1930s, shifts in federal policy created new opportunities for American Indians to study art, and New Deal-era commissions enabled graduates of art programs to further develop their skills, establish their reputations, and make a living as artists, all of which was especially important during the difficult years of the Great Depression. As these artists planned and painted murals in post offices, libraries, municipal buildings, and other public spaces throughout the country, they also faced considerable challenges in the form of dominant expectations for American Indian art and the paternalism of federal officials and local administrators. Nonetheless, the benefits of these New Deal commissions and the struggles with their limitations formed a foundation that these and other artists built upon in the years after World War II as they established themselves in the art world and claimed more control over their art.

A study of American Indian artists in the New Deal era, this article contributes to recent work in American Indian history that emphasizes Native people’s engagement with modernity and their role in the creation of modern American culture and society. Contemporary Native American art has received a great deal of attention from art historians and anthropologists, but few *historians* have contextualized the growth of indigenous arts movements and the lives and experiences of Native American artists within broader patterns of United States culture and society. Thus, this essay is grounded in historical questions and analysis, even as it both draws from the work of scholars who have pioneered the study of Native American contemporary art and seeks to bridge disciplines. The interdisciplinary foundation of this essay follows from the work of both historian Philip J. Deloria and art historian Elizabeth Hutchinson. Deloria’s seminal *Indians in Unexpected Places*, for example, powerfully addresses the tension between popular culture’s expectations of Native peoples and the realities of their lived experiences. With essays on film, sports, technology, and other topics, Deloria reveals that American Indian participation in the trends of modern life has been regular, dynamic, and meaningful, yet non-Indians almost always understand this history as anomalous in part because it calls into question the ideologies that modernity had depended upon for its own definitions.<sup>5</sup> While Deloria was not the first to make the case for American Indians as modern peoples, his ability to define the issues clearly and provide language to address them has been a major influence on scholars exploring the role of Native Americans in the making of modern America.<sup>6</sup>

The visual arts is another area that has long enabled American Indians to shape modernity, in this case by directly addressing the notions and images that have often functioned as tools of their domination. Ironically, it was the pressures of modernity

that created such an opportunity for American Indian artists, as art historian Elizabeth Hutchinson shows in her pathbreaking study *The Indian Craze*. By the early twentieth century, Hutchinson argues, American Indian art came to function as a salve for European Americans facing the pressures of industrial society, a critical part of a retreat from modernity that at its greatest expression resulted in “an Indian Corner,” a constructed space in which individuals could surround themselves with reminders of a supposed idyllic, preindustrial past.<sup>7</sup> American Indian artists leveraged this interest to engage with modernity in ways that could both confirm and disrupt its basic premises. New Deal art projects are one critical piece of this longer story in that they allowed American Indian artists to “paint Native America in public.” In other words, during a time when artists were given unprecedented access to the public sphere, they were able to contribute to representations of Native people in modern American culture and society that catered to, complicated, and confounded expectations of Native peoples. While there were considerable limits on their cultural and artistic autonomy, during the New Deal American Indian artists nonetheless claimed a role in discussions about Native Americans and modernity in ways that continue to resonate today.

In another early twentieth-century irony, American Indian art, and especially painting, emerged from US government institutions even though this development ran directly against the grain of US Indian policy. Beginning with the Ulysses S. Grant administration, federal government policy moved away from full military engagement with American Indian tribes towards confining them to reservations and forcefully assimilating Native individuals into US society. A major thrust of this policy was the establishment of boarding schools and reservation day schools for American Indian children, following the strategy that eradication of Native American culture would be most effective if focused on the younger generation.<sup>8</sup> Oscar Howe, for instance, left his home on the Crow Creek Reservation in 1922 at the age of seven, not “know[ing] a word of English,” to attend the Pierre Indian School in South Dakota.<sup>9</sup>

Pierre was typical of other federal boarding schools in that it ran on a military model and strictly prohibited expressions of Native American culture. For speaking Dakota and other disciplinary code “infractions,” Howe was whipped in the face with a rubber hose, pushed into a hot radiator, and kicked in the rear end. Like other federal schools, the curriculum at Pierre was divided, with half of the day spent in the classroom on basic academic skills and the other half assigned to vocational training, in which Howe learned to make and repair shoes and horse harnesses. There was no art instruction, but the school did hold an annual competition in various subjects that included drawing. Howe, who regularly won these contests, later surmised that his work stood out because it was “different from the usual photographic drawing which the other contestants did.” Even at an early age, it seems, Howe’s artistic sensibilities went beyond literal representation.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to hidden opportunities such as this drawing contest, inconsistencies in US Indian policy also allowed art to develop at other federal Indian schools. Specifically, art could become a refuge for Native students from the relentless pressure to abandon their cultures. Indian Bureau employees sometimes gave students art supplies and encouraged them to depict community activities and other aspects

of tribal life, which violated Indian Bureau regulations banning tribal arts and crafts training. At times this occurred as a pedagogical approach to teaching English and other lessons to American Indian children and it was also in keeping with the assimilation program's focus on encouraging Native peoples to engage the market economy. As some Indian Bureau employees argued, arts and crafts production could become a source of reservation income. Other Indian Bureau employees were motivated by a combination of sympathy and scholarly interest, joining anthropologists, art patrons, and museum curators in the belief that tribal culture "salvaged" from the boarding school generation would be documented for posterity.<sup>11</sup>

Seemingly, all of these factors were in play at institutions like the Santa Fe Indian School, where in the late 1910s Elizabeth DeHuff, the wife of the school superintendent, identified students who were promising artists, and, inviting them to her home during the vocational period, provided supplies and encouragement. DeHuff later remembered, "I explained that they must paint pictures to frame as works of art; not to draw just single figures . . .; nor must they imitate the paintings of White artists; but they must visualize a whole dance movement and paint as if the participants were dancing. The promise was that I would buy the products." Impressed by her students, DeHuff arranged an exhibition at the Museum of New Mexico in 1919 that drew an enthusiastic response from Santa Fe's community of artists and intellectuals, followed by two shows at private galleries in New York and one in Chicago.<sup>12</sup>

This proved to be a start in the art world for some of DeHuff's students. Fred Kabotie, for instance, was born around 1900 in the Hopi Village of Shungopavi and began attending the Santa Fe Indian School at age fifteen. DeHuff chose Kabotie after the school's carpentry instructor informed her, "I have a Hopi boy, Fred Kabotie, who always draws a kachina figure on the board I give him to saw."<sup>13</sup> Kabotie later described his emergence as an artist in concise terms, writing: "I am a full-blood Hopi. Sent to Santa Fe Indian School by force. There I was encouraged to paint by the wife of Supt. De Huff. Naturally, being homesick I started to paint the Kachinas and my home life."<sup>14</sup> In the decade following graduation, among other jobs Kabotie made a living by working and painting for Santa Fe's museums, selling watercolors to tourists, and illustrating children's books on Native American themes. He also won commissions to paint Hopi dance scenes for New York's Museum of the American Indian and murals for the Fred Harvey hotel at the Grand Canyon.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, a group popularly known as the "Kiowa Five" emerged out of the bureaucracy of the Indian Bureau in the 1920s to become a part of this first generation that was clearing a place for American Indian painting in the broader art world.<sup>16</sup> In 1919 the Indian Bureau field matron for the Kiowa Agency in Anadarko, Oklahoma, Susie Peters, began a fine arts club "to foster appreciation of the traditional arts and crafts." Tribal members met at her house to practice painting, drawing, and beadwork, and she hired an instructor to teach color theory, perspective, and the use of line and form. In 1926 Peters worked with art professors Oscar Jacobson and Edith Mahier at the University of Oklahoma to enroll six Kiowa students in a special program providing room and board, studio space, and materials. These students—Spencer Asah, Jack Hokeah, Stephen Mopope, Lois Smokey, and Monroe Tsatoke,



and later, James Auchiah—received only minimal instruction because Jacobson and other believed that American Indian artists had inherent artistic skills that would be “corrupted” by European methods and traditions. Jacobson also encouraged the group to form an American Indian student club on campus to practice and showcase Kiowa and Southern Plains dancing, singing, and drumming.<sup>17</sup>

Over the next several years the Kiowa Five gained an international reputation as artists and dancers, while Lois Smokey, the sole woman in the group, returned home and became a noted beadworker. Jacobson arranged an exhibit that toured the United States in 1927–1928, sent several paintings to the International Art Exposition in Prague, and wrote the introduction for a limited-edition portfolio published in France, all of which caused a stir among Americans and Europeans captivated by the idea of living American Indian artists producing scenes of tribal cultures. The Indian Bureau’s Peters continued to support the group by coordinating trips to the Inter-Tribal Ceremonial in Gallup, New Mexico, where they won prizes in both the dance and art competitions and sold their work. Along with a handful of artists from northern New Mexico, the Kiowa Five’s growing reputation contributed to what was by the late 1920s and early 1930s an expanding international market for American Indian art.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to these American Indian artists, a next generation that came of age in the 1930s was poised to take advantage of significantly new directions in American Indian affairs that placed value on art as both an expression of American Indian culture and a means of economic support. John Collier became commissioner of Indian Affairs in the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration and promised the “New Deal” would extend to American Indian people, specifically by ending the federal government’s assimilation program and making a sustained effort at economic development on American Indian lands.<sup>19</sup> One immediate result of this shift was support for the first formal studio art program within the federal American Indian education system, at the Santa Fe Indian School (fig. 2). Known as “the Studio,” it was the project of Dorothy Dunn, a Chicago Art Institute graduate and Indian Service teacher who had previously experimented with an arts curriculum at Santo Domingo Pueblo.<sup>20</sup>

Studio students in the 1930s included those who would become some of the most prominent American Indian artists of the twentieth century, such as Harrison Begay (Navajo), Joe Herrera (Cochiti), Allan Houser (Chiricahua Apache), Oscar Howe (Yanktonai Dakota), Gerald Nailor (Navajo), Quincy Tahoma (Navajo), Andrew Tsinajinnie (Navajo), and Pablita Velarde (Santa Clara Pueblo). Dunn emphasized a two-dimensional, representational style for depicting community activities such as ceremonies, dances, and aspects of daily life. Like the American Indian art produced in the 1920s, the work by Studio students was met enthusiastically by audiences and critics as it was exhibited in cities throughout Europe and the United States. Meanwhile, supporters of American Indian art in Santa Fe hired Studio students to paint for museum collections and arranged local exhibitions, thereby reinforcing the city’s growing reputation as the center of the American Indian art world.<sup>21</sup>

Nonetheless, especially during the lean years of the Great Depression, American Indians struggled to translate their student experiences and the rising public interest in American Indian art into stable careers as working artists. Allan Houser and Gerald



**FIGURE 2:** *Santa Fe Indian School, ca. 1935. Oscar Howe Papers, Archives and Special Collections, University of South Dakota.*

Nailor graduated from the Santa Fe Indian School in 1937 and moved into an apartment just off the Santa Fe Plaza that also served as a studio and gallery, but business was slow and Houser remembered this as “the first of my starving-artist periods. . . . We didn’t have any money. It was terrible. Sometimes we were down to just a cup of coffee and a slice of bread for meals.”<sup>22</sup> Oscar Howe graduated as salutatorian in 1938 and returned to the Crow Creek Reservation, where he found work laboring on a road crew. Soon after, he accepted a position teaching art back at the Pierre Indian School that paid only room and board.<sup>23</sup> While painting and selling her work outside Santa Fe’s Palace of the Governors and at the annual Santa Fe Indian Market, Pablita Velarde spent the few years after graduation working as a domestic servant, teacher’s aide, nanny, and switchboard operator.<sup>24</sup>

Despite international reputations established during the 1920s, the Kiowa Five also struggled to support themselves during the Depression years. When a contract to paint murals for a federal building in Anadarko became available in 1935, Jacobson recommended Kiowa artists but noted that they were all “financially very poor” and made a series of suggestions to accommodate them, such as allocating extra travel money, figuring in the cost of room and board, paying by the mural rather than by the hour, advancing money to support the artists while they worked, and establishing a rate commensurate with non-Indian artists.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, in 1938, the Office of Indian Education established a program to train American Indian artists in fresco painting techniques for New Deal projects at Fort Sill Indian School, Oklahoma. Of the four Kiowa artists accepted into the program (the fifth, Tsatoke, had passed away from



tuberculosis the previous year), Hokeah and Asah were put on the school payroll, although “not receiving very much, but something to keep them alive,” while due to a lack of funds, Mopope and Auchiah were offered room only, and for board, a promise that the school principal “may be able to arrange to feed them.”<sup>26</sup>

Thus, arriving as they did at a time when making a living through art was at best a tenuous proposition, commissions to produce public art under the work programs of the New Deal proved to be a vital link in the careers of these and other American Indian artists. A central tenet of the New Deal, federally funded work programs were designed to address the problem of unemployment by hiring Americans to do jobs that would benefit US society. For many this translated into working on construction projects to improve the country’s infrastructure, including roads, municipal buildings, parks, and dams, but remarkably, federal work programs extended into the arts and intellectual life on the assumption that the nation’s culture was also one of its greatest assets and artists and scholars were worthy of support. In keeping with the principles of these programs, art was to be accessible to the public and reflective of American national identity, leading to commissions for art in post offices, office buildings, and other places where they would be seen in the course of daily life.<sup>27</sup> Two more New Deal-era programs employed American Indian artists as well. Willard Beatty, director of education of the Office of Indian Affairs, hired American Indian artists to illustrate children’s books for the Indian Life Readers series, which was designed to promote literacy on American Indian reservations, and the Indian Handicraft Series, which promoted American Indian arts and crafts.<sup>28</sup> Beatty also helped individual American Indian artists secure commissions and other sources of funding such as Guggenheim fellowships and teaching positions at federal schools.<sup>29</sup> Another federal agency, the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, hired a handful of American Indian painters for the 1939 Golden Gate International Exhibition in San Francisco as well as the 1941 *Indian Art of the United States* show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.<sup>30</sup>

While art historians and historians of the New Deal have studied federal art programs, some of the artists who participated in them, and the work that was produced, less is known about American Indian artists, for whom these New Deal-era commissions had special importance.<sup>31</sup> Projects carried out under the New Deal by American Indian artists not only provided essential financial support, but also allowed them to develop their skills and build their reputations, thereby establishing a foundation for the broadening of their careers in the years after World War II. Some artists also found it especially meaningful to be able to contribute their notions of American Indian culture to the larger public realm during a time when it continued to be caricatured and stereotyped by non-Indians in ways that denigrated Native peoples. Nonetheless, working for the New Deal also presented considerable challenges for American Indian artists, who often faced issues of cultural and artistic sovereignty.

The Kiowa Five’s experiences working for the New Deal illustrate how these programs provided certain crucial opportunities, yet could also reinforce existing relationships between American Indians and US society. Having established themselves during the 1920s, the Kiowa Five were among the first to benefit from the New Deal commissions being designed to support American Indian artists. Before the advent of

the New Deal, Kiowa artists had painted murals in Oklahoma for St. Patrick's Mission School (Anadarko), the University of Oklahoma (Norman), and Southwestern State Teachers College (Weatherford). Like later works created under the New Deal, these murals reflect a combination of influences from both patrons and artists. For example, the murals at St. Patrick's, a federal American Indian boarding school until 1933, were commissioned and overseen by a resident priest in 1929 to commemorate founder "Father Isidore Ricklin's role in the history and development of St. Patrick's Mission." The sixteen panels tell a generally triumphant and celebratory story of Ricklin and the school's work spreading Christianity and educating Native people in southwestern Oklahoma. Yet the four artists who completed the murals—Asah, Hokeah, Mopope, and Auchiah—added historical details that were personally meaningful, revealing a Native perspective that likely would have been neglected by a non-Indian artist.<sup>32</sup>

In one specific example, Asah painted the shields that adorned various panels with a design used by his grandfather, a renowned buffalo medicine man. One panel, which hung above the church altar, depicted Ricklin in council with four chiefs, all modeled after a relative of each of the four artists.<sup>33</sup> Kiowa artists maintained greater autonomy over the subject matter for the University of Oklahoma murals, which were part of a project to exhibit art by advanced students in campus buildings and classrooms. Mopope and Tsatoke each painted a mural of a Kiowa dancer on a panel twelve feet square for installation above the President's Box at The Auditorium, a performance hall and central building on campus. The prominent place these murals occupied, in addition to their inclusion with other topics deemed worth of display (ranging from major events in European history to scenes of University of Oklahoma football games and track meets), suggested considerable value placed on American Indian art and culture.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, the murals Mopope painted at Southwestern State for the university's library depicted the Kiowa Sun Dance and Flute Dance with "body movement, rhythm, and elaborate costuming . . . worked out in minute detail."<sup>35</sup>

When the New Deal began sponsoring art under the Civil Works Administration and Public Works of Art (PWAP) projects in 1934, Kiowa artists were chosen to paint murals at several locations throughout Oklahoma, including Northeastern State Teacher's College (Tahlequah), Oklahoma College for Women (Chickasha), the Oklahoma State Historical Society (Oklahoma City), the Five Civilized Tribes Agency (Muskogee), Fort Sill Indian School (Lawton), and the Anadarko Federal Building and Post Office, in addition to the Department of Interior building in Washington, DC.<sup>36</sup> It is likely that Kiowa artists embraced these commissions, if only for the material benefits that they provided during extraordinarily lean times. Four of the Kiowa artists worked on the federal building in Anadarko during the second half of 1937 and together received \$1,800 to plan and paint sixteen murals for its post office, \$1,200 of which was advanced to support them while they worked.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, several American Indian and non-Indian artists won commissions to paint murals for the newly constructed Department of Interior building in 1939, including Mopope and Auchiah, each of whom received \$2,000.<sup>38</sup>

These commissions, however, came with the paternalism that had long been a feature of US–Indian relations. When art professor Jacobson first heard about plans

for the Anadarko federal building in 1935, he recommended the Kiowa artists to federal officials at the same time as his correspondence worked to establish his position as their quasi-guardian. Although all of the Kiowa artists were adults in their thirties, Jacobson referred to them as “fine boys” and “my Indians,” further noting that they had long been under the “sympathetic guidance” of himself and fellow art professor Mahier, and that “as a compliment for the few things I have been able to do for these Indian artists the Kiowas adopted me into their tribe . . . an honor which has come to only two white people in all the history of the Kiowas.”<sup>39</sup>

Jacobson’s paternalism is also obvious in references to PWAP projects completed the previous year: “Naturally,” Jacobson wrote, “I supervised and guided the work of these Indians rather carefully,” producing “results [that] were remarkably satisfactory.” For the Anadarko building, Jacobson went on, the Kiowa artists would need the kind of “supervision and criticism” that could only come from Mahier or himself. If “another Indian” or “a stranger” was appointed supervisor, he explained, the artists would grow jealous and “it will not go very well,” because “Indians are peculiar that way.”<sup>40</sup> Jacobson was in fact paid \$200 to supervise the work, although he put Mopope in charge during his absences because he had “found that the more responsibility you place upon the Indians the better they will do the work” and that this “has a good moral effect.”<sup>41</sup>

While it is difficult to determine exactly how much cultural and artistic autonomy the Kiowa artists maintained in producing these murals and how much they may have chafed under such deep paternalism, the murals did place depictions of American Indian culture produced by Native artists in the public realm. Auchiah, for example, submitted sketches of his proposed mural for the Department of Interior building in Washington, DC, and federal administrators approved them without alteration other than suggesting a slight adjustment in the placement of some figures.<sup>42</sup> Auchiah complied and painted *Harvest Dance* across an entire wall of the employee cafeteria, depicting Kiowa dancers and drummers and women preparing food to mark the harvest season (fig. 3). It mirrored the placement of Mopope’s *Ceremonial Dance* on the opposite wall.<sup>43</sup>

Other American Indian artists had similar experiences negotiating the benefits and challenges of New Deal art projects. Oscar Howe received his first New Deal commission while teaching at Pierre Indian School, a book publication project that adapted



**FIGURE 3:** James Auchiah (Kiowa), *Harvest Dance*, 1939. Mural at the Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. Photograph by Carol M. Highsmith. Photographs in the Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

and refined drawings by school children that were gathered in the course of the South Dakota Works Progress Administration (WPA) Writers Project's research on Sioux oral history.<sup>44</sup> The resulting book, *Legends of the Mighty Sioux*, came to the attention of librarians in Mitchell, South Dakota, who had recently secured funds through the South Dakota WPA to commission the painting of the inside dome on their new town library. Upon their request, Howe received the commission and painted *Sun and Rain Clouds Over Hills*.<sup>45</sup> On the strength of this growing body of work and experience, Howe earned a scholarship to the fresco workshop at Fort Sill Indian School and this training helped win Howe his next New Deal project, ten murals commissioned by the WPA for the new municipal auditorium in Mobridge, South Dakota.<sup>46</sup>

Howe recalled late in life that three or four other artists had been invited to design and produce the murals first, but had been scared off by their size, sixteen by twenty feet. Howe, however, "was young and willing to take it on . . . willing to tackle any job." From his home in Mitchell, Howe painted the scenes to scale, then drew charcoal cartoons of the murals, working "so hard [on them that] he wore his fingernails to the flesh." Once these were approved by the state WPA supervisor, Howe traveled to Mobridge, saw the auditorium for the first time, and "quickly put the cartoon work up on the wall so that we would not stop to think how large [the project] was."<sup>47</sup> Howe had two assistants from Crow Creek, brothers John Saul and Tom Saul, who mixed paint and gave him technical advice as well as contributing Indian designs to the pillars that framed the murals and the frieze on the balcony of the auditorium.<sup>48</sup> Working on rickety scaffolding, over the course of a month Howe and the Saul brothers filled one wall of the auditorium with five murals depicting the "History of the Missouri River." Howe was drafted into the US Army before he could complete the other wall. When



**FIGURE 4:** Oscar Howe (center) flanked by Tom Saul and John Saul, ca. 1940. Oscar Howe Papers, Archives and Special Collections, University of South Dakota.

town residents requested a furlough for Howe so he could finish the work, army officials at Fort Snelling, Minnesota granted him a two-week pass. Working with a new assistant, it took another week before Howe was able to complete the remaining five murals, the "Ceremonies of the Sioux." After serving in Europe and receiving his discharge, Howe returned to touch up the murals two and half years later. For the entirety of his work on the Mobridge murals, Howe was paid \$60.<sup>49</sup>

Although the Mobridge project presented him with challenges about artistic control and cultural sovereignty, clearly the work had deep meaning for Howe and its significance transcended his small salary. He had "thought a great deal about" deciding on a theme for the murals and chose the "History of the Missouri River" because he and the river had "always been connected" since his childhood at Crow Creek.<sup>50</sup> Especially personal was a mural scene depicting the Fool Soldier Rescue (fig. 5), the sole commemoration of an incident in which a Santee Sioux band released several white captives to a group that included his grandfather, Don't Know How, and his great-uncle, Fast Walker.<sup>51</sup> From a perspective that was surely shaped by his experiences with the US assimilation program, Howe also felt that it was important to document Native American culture in the "Ceremonies of the Sioux" murals "so when the children ask how it was before they will have these murals to refer to."<sup>52</sup>

Indeed, Howe was barely removed from a teaching position at the same federal boarding school where he was punished for speaking his native language when the Mobridge Murals gave Howe a grand stage to argue for both the value of American Indian culture and the role that Native people played in the history of the state. Yet Howe's artistic and cultural sovereignty were limited. After his sketch treatments were approved and Howe began his work on the walls of the auditorium, he was told that the murals had to be painted realistically to resemble photographs. The WPA supervisor argued that if Howe were allowed to follow his inclinations and employ his personal style, "the people of Mobridge wouldn't like the work." At this point, Howe felt that "he had to go along with it" and he conformed to the dictates of the project.<sup>53</sup> Even at an advanced age Howe felt conflicted, continuing to emphasize the importance of their subject matter while pointing out that the "Mobridge murals were painted in a technique style I didn't like."<sup>54</sup>

Pablita Velarde also embraced the range of opportunities presented by New Deal art commissions while attempting to reconcile their shortcomings. Velarde faced tremendous challenges making a living as an American Indian artist, including a general bias against Native women as painters that was present both within Pueblo communities and among federal officials. Indeed, very few female students were admitted to the studio in the 1930s and those who did enter the program faced harassment from their peers. Such attitudes were both persistent and widespread, so that they had a particularly difficult time finding work after graduating. For instance, when studio graduates Velarde, Pop Chalee (Taos Pueblo), and Rufina Vigil (Tesuque Pueblo) took part in a competition to illustrate an *Indian Life Reader* book, anthropologist Kenneth Chapman advised Willard Beatty against all three, arguing that women were incapable of drawing men's clothes.<sup>55</sup>





**FIGURE 5:** Oscar Howe (*Yanktonai Dakota*), *History Along the Missouri, Fool Soldier Rescue*, c. 1942. *Scherr-Howe Arena, Mobridge, South Dakota*. *Oscar Howe Papers, Archives and Special Collections, University of South Dakota*.

Velarde, in fact, became one of only two American Indian women to win a New Deal art commission when hired to paint depictions of Pueblo Indian life for Bandelier National Monument in northern New Mexico, probably recommended by her former teacher Dorothy Dunn.<sup>56</sup> Velarde lived at Bandelier at two different times, first in 1939 and then again through separate funding during the winter of 1946–47. There Velarde completed eighty-four paintings, but later distanced herself from these works, noting that she had come to see them as “amateurish.” Nonetheless, the Bandelier residencies were a crucial period for Velarde. With the freedom to experiment with new techniques, she deepened her skills by adding perspective and scale to create depth in her paintings. The Bandelier paintings were very different from those produced during her Studio years and represent a crucial link to the mature style that she developed in the 1950s. While at Bandelier, Velarde not only worked from her own experiences, but also conducted research and visited with elders at Santa Clara so as to accurately depict details such as “how to make moccasins, how to make pottery, which plants were used for medicine, and how they built the houses.” Thus, as New Deal art commissions had done for other artists, the Bandelier commission provided a space for Velarde to



depict and document for future generations American Indian culture and society from a Native American perspective. Velarde herself believed the Bandelier paintings were important because they offered “so much . . . valuable information” about aspects of Pueblo life that she had “never [before had] felt were worth painting.”<sup>57</sup>

Among Velarde’s Bandelier National Monument works, however, is one painting with an exhibition history that suggests Velarde also faced some limits on her artistic and cultural expression. A National Parks Service-sponsored exhibition and catalog describes *Governor Meets the Tourists* (1940) as depicting a pueblo governor welcoming a group of tourists arriving by car, presumably to witness an event or ceremony occurring on the other side of the plaza wall.<sup>58</sup> A more recent National Park Service source, however, identifies the painting’s title as *Guard Turning Tourists Away*, which strongly suggests that Velarde intended to show that some community events remained off-limits to visitors.<sup>59</sup> This likely did not sit well with those park officials who understood access to Native American cultures was a critical draw for tourists and who perhaps prompted the title change in order to reverse the original meaning of the painting (fig. 6).

Ultimately, it may have been a small issue for Velarde, who had struggled for many years to gain recognition as an artist and appreciated that “People were beginning to take an interest in me and my paintings” at Bandelier, and later remembered of her time there that “if it hadn’t been for the Park Service, I . . . wouldn’t have had the nerve to keep it up.”<sup>60</sup> It is likely that Howe, the Kiowa artists, and other Native American painters took a similar view in reconciling the tensions between cultural and artistic autonomy and the opportunities provided by New Deal commissions to put their visions of Native American history and culture into the public sphere while earning a living as artists. Indeed, during the decades that her paintings were exhibited in the park’s visitor center, Velarde became one of the best known and respected American Indian artists of the twentieth century.<sup>61</sup>



**FIGURE 6:** Pablita Velarde (*Santa Clara Pueblo*), *Governor Welcoming Tourists/Guard Turning Tourists Away*, ca. 1940. Courtesy National Park Service, Museum Management Program and Bandelier National Monument, BAND 563.

Several more American Indian artists took on commissions to produce art under the New Deal, including Acee Blue Eagle (Creek), Woody Crumbo (Potawatomi), Velino Herrera (Zia), Allan Houser, Fred Kabotie, Solomon McCombs (Creek), Gerald Nailor, Tonita Peña (San Ildefonso), Andrew Tsinajinnie, and Richard (Dick) West (Southern Cheyenne).<sup>62</sup> For some artists, these New Deal projects could be considered a high point of their careers. Following World War II, for instance, Asah, Auchiah, Hokeah, and Mopope mostly retreated from the national and international art scene and instead focused on their lives and work as artists, dancers, and teachers in western Oklahoma. Although their paintings retained their influence, in terms of recognition and exposure subsequent generations of Southern Plains and American Indian artists eclipsed the four surviving Kiowa artists, leaving the New Deal commissions to stand as their most tangible and enduring legacy. Several of these commissions remain on view to this day, including murals at the Oklahoma Historical Society, Anadarko Post Office, Northeastern State University, and the Department of the Interior building in Washington, DC.<sup>63</sup>

For other American Indian artists, New Deal commissions were a crucial part of broadly ranging, varied careers that continued to expand into new directions after World War II. Fred Kabotie's work for the New Deal sprang from the experience and connections he developed within Santa Fe's artistic and intellectual circles during the 1920s, including his relationship with Rene d'Harnoncourt, the head of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board (IACB). D'Harnoncourt called on Kabotie for advice on some IACB policies, such as a revolving loan fund for American Indian craftspeople and establishing a stamp to certify works as American Indian-made. He also chose Kabotie to play a central role in the IACB's two most important exhibitions, the Indian arts and crafts exhibit at San Francisco's Golden Gate International Exposition in 1940 and *Indian Art of the United States* at New York City's Museum of Modern Art in 1941. Kabotie helped to organize the Golden Gate International Exposition and exhibited several of his works. That same year, archaeologists from Harvard University's Peabody Museum began excavating the ruined Hopi village of Awatobi and discovered eighteenth-century murals painted on the rock walls.

With d'Harnoncourt's and IACB's support, Kabotie was commissioned to reproduce the Awatobi murals for the *Indian Art of the United States* exhibition. Kabotie first spent a month studying mural techniques at Fort Sill Indian School and then traveled to the Haskell Institute in Kansas, where he and three Hopi assistants completed six full-size reproductions of the murals. When the show opened in New York, Kabotie served as a guide for First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt (fig. 7). After World War II, Kabotie won a Guggenheim fellowship to study and produce a book on Southwestern pottery designs and at the same time began working with the Museum of Northern Arizona to encourage and preserve Hopi silversmith traditions. The latter drew the interest of Willard Beatty, who helped Kabotie start a program under the GI Bill to train Hopi veterans as silversmiths. Kabotie assumed the role of head instructor, then secured a loan from IACB establishing the Hopi Silvercraft Cooperative Guild to market Hopi silverwork at museums and shows across the country.



**FIGURE 7:** Fred Kabotie (Hopi) and Eleanor Roosevelt in front of Awatopi murals, Indian Art of the United States exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1941. Digital image © The Museum of Modern Art, Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY.

During this period Kabotie moved away from his own painting, but taught art at Oraibi Hopi High School, mentored aspiring Hopi artists, and became an elder statesman for the next generation of American Indian artists that emerged in the 1960s. Specifically, Kabotie was a featured speaker at the New Directions for Southwestern Indian Art Conference at the University of Arizona in 1959 and an adviser on selecting students for the subsequent Summer Indian Art Workshops, both activities leading to the establishment of the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe that presaged an explosion of American Indian art onto the national and international scene.<sup>64</sup> In all of these ways, the New Deal served as a bridge to the influence and resources that supported projects personally meaningful to Kabotie and enabled him to pass on his experience and knowledge.

Still other American Indian artists used New Deal commissions as a springboard to the skills, recognition, financial rewards, and experience they needed to impact the broader art world and fundamentally redefine American Indian art. During Oscar Howe's stint in the US Army, he first painted camouflage on equipment and illustrated training lectures, then saw combat overseas. His career received a major boost in 1947 when his *Dakota Duck Hunt* won the Grand Purchase Prize at the Second Annual Philbrook Art Center's National Indian Painting Exhibition (further underlining Fred Kabotie's role as a mentor, he was one of this exhibition's three judges). Howe went

on to study for an undergraduate degree and join the art faculty at Dakota Wesleyan University, complete a MFA in painting at the University of Oklahoma, and teach art at Pierre High School. In 1957 he became artist-in-residence and assistant professor of fine arts at the University of South Dakota, where he remained for the rest of his career.<sup>65</sup> Throughout these years, as the mural designer for the Mitchell Corn Palace Howe built on the experiences and skills he had accumulated during his New Deal commissions. In addition to choosing the 1953 “Indian Everyday Living” theme described earlier, Howe depicted scenes of rodeo, the Old West, South Dakota wildlife, modes of transportation from “Indian times” to the present, and, in honor of the US moon landing, the Space Age.<sup>66</sup> Having negotiated both the technical requirements and at times stifling oversight presented by New Deal public art projects, Howe was well-suited to conceptualize and execute work that would be presented on a large-scale to a broad public while relishing the freedom to decide his subject matter and style.

Based on his New Deal experiences, Howe also led a charge for the cultural and artistic autonomy of American Indian artists by challenging established notions about what constituted “Indian art.” In 1958, presumably because it included abstract elements that were assumed to originate with non-Indian art traditions, the jury for the Philbrook annual Indian art competition disqualified Howe’s *Umine Wacipi* [War and Peace Dance] for transgressing the “traditional style.” Howe famously penned a letter of protest, chiding the jury and asserting that no one had the right to dictate to an American Indian artist what constituted Indian art. In response, the Philbrook added a new awards category for “Non-Traditional Art.” No doubt influenced by his experiences during the New Deal, when he first became a working artist confronting stubborn limits on cultural and artistic expression, Howe’s protest added momentum to a movement to recognize American Indian painting as contemporary art that was free to incorporate multiple styles, traditions, subjects, and media. In addition to the opening of IAIA in 1962, art historians generally identify this moment as the beginning of a new, modernist era in American Indian art, one that helped both Howe’s contemporaries and a next generation of Native artists establish a firmer foundation in the art world and gain wider international recognition.<sup>67</sup> Following the Philbrook controversy, he continued to expand his career and serve as a role model while honing his mature style, seen in such works as his *Calling on Wakan Tanka* (1962; fig. 8).

Despite these struggles, during the New Deal American Indian artists were able to assert their voices into discussions about Native Americans and modernity in ways that continued to resonate in subsequent decades and up to the present. During the 1960s and 1970s, at IAIA and other places throughout the American Indian art world, it became commonplace for artists like Fritz Scholder (Luiseño) and TC Cannon (Kiowa/Caddo) to transcend the boundaries that the Kiowa artists, Oscar Howe, Pablita Velarde, and others had pushed up against as they produced critically acclaimed works sought by an international audience.<sup>68</sup> Today, while US society and culture provides more room for American Indian voices and self-representation in general, at the same time it maintains degrading stereotypes that limit Native Americans to tired clichés invoking primitivism and savagery, or Deloria’s “expected” places.<sup>69</sup> Contemporary American Indian artists continue to challenge these depictions, choosing from a remarkable range of topics and



**FIGURE 8:** Oscar Howe (*Yanktonai Dakota*), Calling on Wakan Tanka, 1962, University Galleries, University of South Dakota.

influences in representing Native America, including works that highlight the tensions between American Indian experiences and the ways that Native peoples continue to be portrayed in films, literature, advertisements, youth and fraternal organizations, sports, and other venues. The Crow artist Wendy Red Star's *Four Seasons* (2006; fig. 9), for instance, features the artist herself dressed in traditional regalia and posed in four diorama-like settings, surrounded by objects often used to invoke Native stereotypes.<sup>70</sup>

Red Star's work and that of other contemporary Native American artists is built upon the foundation created by their predecessors, who relied upon New Deal commissions as a crucial part of their careers: to build their skills, gain recognition, make a living as artists, and, just as importantly, confront basic questions about who decides what constitutes American Indian art and what it says about Native peoples and culture. That this was made possible by federal funding is all the more notable and relevant in the current age, when support is being withheld from such critical programs as the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities. Considering the stubborn tendencies of US society and culture to degrade American Indians and cling to stereotypes that constrain Native peoples, including artists, a persuasive case can be made for federally sponsored programs that empower underrepresented and marginalized communities by providing a public space for self-representation.<sup>71</sup> This has been achieved before, during the New Deal of the 1930s, when many American Indian artists claimed the right to "paint Native America in public."





**FIGURE 9:** *Wendy Red Star (Crow), Indian Summer-Four Seasons, 2006. Used by permission of the artist.*

## NOTES

1. “World’s Only Corn Palace [brochure],” located with various Corn Palace festival programs in Box 45, Folder 10: Corn Palace, Mitchell, SD, 1948–1997, Oscar Howe Papers, Richardson Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of South Dakota, Vermillion, SD (hereafter “Howe Papers”).

2. “1953 Corn Palace Program,” Box 45, Folder 10: Corn Palace, Mitchell, SD, 1948–1997, Howe Papers.

3. “1948 Corn Palace Revue Program,” Box 45, Folder 10: Corn Palace, Mitchell, SD, 1948–1997, Howe Papers. Howe’s excitement upon receiving the Corn Palace commission is also conveyed by Oscar Howe to Bernhard Frazier, August 28, 1948, Box 45, Folder 11: Philbrook Art Center, Tulsa, OK, 1947–1988, Howe Papers.

4. “1953 Corn Palace Program”; “Sioux Artist Oscar Howe Will Depict Daily Indian Life with Corn Palace Panels This Year [undated newspaper clipping],” Box 59, Folder 2: Art Career, Corn Palace, Mitchell, SD, 1948–1964, Howe Papers.

5. Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004).



6. As early as 1992, Frederick E. Hoxie described the Progressive Era as a time when a generation of Indians grappled for the first time with the meanings of “being Indian” in modern society and attempted to “define ways in which their communities and their traditions might be valued in a new setting.” See “Exploring a Cultural Borderland: Native American Journeys of Discovery in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Journal of American History* 79 (December 1992): 969–95, quotation on 969. Other works along these lines that have influenced my thinking in recent years include Brian Hosmer, *American Indians in the Marketplace: Persistence and Innovation Among the Menominees and Metlakatlans, 1870–1920* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999); *Native Pathways: Economic Development and American Indian Culture in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Brian Hosmer and Colleen O’Neill (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2004); Colleen O’Neill, *Working the Navajo Way: Labor and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005); Daniel M. Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008); William J. Bauer, *We Were All Like Migrant Workers Here: Work, Community, and Memory on California’s Round Valley Reservation, 1850–1941* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Paul C. Rosier, *Serving Their Country: Native American Politics and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Alexandra Harmon, *Rich Indians: Native People and the Problem of Wealth in American History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Rosalyn R. LaPier and David R. M. Beck, *City Indian: Native American Activism in Chicago, 1893–1934* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015); Chantal Norrgard, *Seasons of Change: Labor, Treaty Rights, and Ojibwe Nationhood* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Kevin Whalen, *Native Students at Work: American Indian Labor and Sherman Institute’s Outing Program, 1900–1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016); Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place*, 2nd ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017).

7. Elizabeth Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890–1915* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), especially 11–50.

8. Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 609–758; Frederick Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indian, 1880–1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

9. Interview with Oscar Howe, July 12, 1977, Box 33, Folder 9: Oscar Howe (Yankton Sioux) Transcribed Interview (AIRP #1044), 1977, Howe Papers, 6.

10. George Agogino and Heidi Howe, “Oscar Howe, Sioux Artist,” *Institute of Indian Studies Occasional Papers*, State University of South Dakota, November 1, 1959; Interview with Oscar Howe, Howe Papers, quotation on 8.

11. Winona Garmhausen, *History of Indian Education in Santa Fe* (Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 1988), 30–46. Also see Dorothy Dunn, “Going to School with the Little Domingos,” *School Arts Magazine* 30, no. 7 (1931), 469–74.

12. Elizabeth Willis DeHuff, “American Primitives in Art,” Folder 3, Box 6, Elizabeth Willis DeHuff Family Papers, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM (hereafter “DeHuff Papers”); Elizabeth Willis DeHuff, “The Renaissance of Southwest Indian Art,” Folder 50, Box 6, DeHuff Papers; Elizabeth Willis DeHuff, “Static Kachinas Come to Life, or, The Silent Years of Southwest Indian Watercolor Painting,” Folder 58, Box 6, DeHuff Papers; Elizabeth Willis DeHuff to Dorothy Dunn Kramer, n.d., Folder 31, Box 10, DeHuff Papers (source of quotation); J. J. Brody, *Indian Painters and White Patrons* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971), 101–10.

13. Fred Kabotie, with Bill Kelknap, *Fred Kabotie: Hopi Indian Artist* (Flagstaff: Museum of Northern Arizona, 1977), 1–29; DeHuff, “American Primitives in Art,” 4.

14. Fred Kabotie, Entry Form for "1981 Festival of the Arts (Santa Fe)," Fred Kabotie folder, Native Artists Files, Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, NM.
15. Kabotie, *Hopi Indian Artist*, 27–64; Clara Lee Tanner, "Fred Kabotie: Hopi Indian Artist," *Arizona Highways*, July 1951, 16–28. Following DeHuff's encouragement, Otis Polelonema (Hopi) and Velino Herrera (Zia) also became recognized painters; see DeHuff, "American Primitives in Art," DeHuff, "The Renaissance of Southwest Indian Art," and Brody, *Indian Painters and White Patrons*, 101.
16. The inclusion of Lois Smokey in recent scholarship has led to the use of "Kiowa Six" as a group identifier, but at the time "Kiowa Five" was commonly used.
17. *Things of the Spirit: Art by the Kiowa Five* (exhibition catalog; Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1984).
18. *Ibid.*; Minneapolis Institute of Arts folder 1929, Box 6, Series 7: Kiowa, 1864–1994, Arthur and Shifra Silberman Collection, Donald C. and Elizabeth M. Dickinson Research Center, National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, Oklahoma City (hereafter "Silberman Collection"); *Kiowa Indian Art: Watercolor Paintings in Color by the Indians of Oklahoma* (Santa Fe: Bell Editions, 1979 [1929]); Brody, *Indian Painters and White Patrons*, 120–26.
19. Jennifer McLerran, *A New Deal for Native Art: Indian Arts and Federal Policy, 1933–1943* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009), 75–101.
20. Garmhausen, *History of Indian Education*, 41–57.
21. *Ibid.*; Brody, *Indian Painters and White Patrons*, 126–57; Dunn, "Going to School with the Little Domingos."
22. Barbara H. Perlman, *Allan Houser (Ha-o-zous)* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987), 118–20.
23. Agogino and Howe, "Oscar Howe, Sioux Artist"; John R. Milton, *Oscar Howe: The Story of an American Indian* (Minneapolis: Dillon Press, 1972), 19–23.
24. Sally Hyer, "Woman's Work": *The Art of Pablita Velarde* (exhibition catalog; Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian, 1993), 8; Shelby J. Tisdale, *Pablita Velarde: In Her Own Words* (Santa Fe: Little Standing Spruce Publishing, 2012), 71–80.
25. Oscar Jacobson to Olin Dows, April 5, 1935, Murals–Kiowa, Mopope, Anardarko folder, Silberman Collection.
26. Willard Beatty to Ole Nordmark, June 28, 1938, Kiowa–Ft. Sill School Murals folder, Silberman Collection.
27. Roger G. Kennedy, "Coaxing the Soul of America Back to Life," in Ann Prentice Wagner, *1934: A New Deal for Artists* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2009), 13–28; Jonathan Harris, *Federal Art and National Culture: The Politics of Identity in New Deal America* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 28–43; Bruce I. Bustard, *A New Deal for the Arts* (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1997), esp. 1–35.
28. Rebecca C. Benes, *Native American Picture Books of Change: the Art of Historic Children's Editions* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2004); Ruth Underhill, *Pueblo Crafts* (Washington, DC: United States Indian Service, 1944).
29. Perlman, *Allan Houser (Ha-o-zous)*, 122–30; Kabotie, *Fred Kabotie*, 73–82.
30. Godfrey L. Kibler to Pass Division, Golden Gate International Exhibition, July 7, 1939, Box 1, Records Relating to Exhibits and Exhibitions: San Francisco Exhibition, RG 435: Indian Arts and Crafts Board Records, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC; Frederic H. Douglas and Rene d'Harnoncourt, *Indian Art of the United States* (exhibition catalog; New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1941), 208–10; McLerran, *A New Deal for Native Art*, 133–58; Kabotie, *Fred Kabotie*, 68–72. The IACB was primarily concerned with reviving "traditional" arts and crafts to foster Native cultures and provide economic benefits to tribal communities, which only

occasionally carried over into the support for American Indian painting, most notably through artists who bridged traditional “objects” and works on paper and canvas, such as Kabetie. See Robert Fay Schrader, *Indian Arts and Crafts Board: An Aspect of New Deal Indian Policy* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983).

31. An exception is McLerran, *A New Deal for Native Art*, which breaks new ground in addressing this topic.

32. *Kiowa Murals* (exhibition catalog; Anadarko, OK: Southern Plains Indian Museum and Craft Center, 1981), in Kiowa–St. Patrick’s Mission Murals folder, Silberman Collection.

33. Ibid.

34. “Indians Give OU Beautiful Murals,” *Lawton* [OK] *Constitution*, June 24, 1929 and “Walls of University Given Touch of Beauty,” *Daily Oklahoman* [Norman], September 21, 1930, in Kiowa–Mopope and Tsa Toke Murals at University of Oklahoma folder, Silberman Collection.

35. “Mopope, Indian Artist is Painting at College,” *Anadarko* [OK] *Tribune*, December 18, 1930, in Kiowa–Mopope Murals at Southwestern State University folder, Silberman Collection.

36. Jacobson to Dows; Willard Beatty to W. O. McCown, February 15, 1938, and McCown to Beatty, February 18, 1936, Kiowa–Ft. Sill School Murals folder, Silberman collection; Kiowa–Auchiah’s Murals for the Department of the Interior folder, Silberman Collection.

37. Invoice, December 1, 1937, and “Suggested Price Schedule,” n.d., in Kiowa–Mopope, Anadarko folder, Silberman Collection.

38. Edward Rowan to James Auchiah, May 11, 1939, and Contract, United States of America and James Auchiah, May 19, 1939, in Kiowa–Auchiah’s Murals for the Department of the Interior folder, Silberman Collection.

39. Jacobsen to Dows.

40. Ibid.

41. Contract, H. E. Collins and Oscar Jacobson, July 18, 1936, and Oscar Jacobsen to I.A. Hopper, May 26, 1936, in Murals–Kiowa, Mopope, Anardarko folder, Silberman Collection.

42. Edward Rowan to James Auchiah, August 2, 1939, Kiowa–Auchiah’s Murals for the Department of the Interior folder, Silberman Collection.

43. Employee Cafeteria, Department of the Interior Building, Washington, DC. These murals remain open to public view.

44. South Dakota Writers’ Project, *Legends of the Mighty Sioux* (Chicago: Albert Whitman & Company, 1941).

45. Lora Crouch to Oscar Howe Art Center, Mitchell, South Dakota, August 29, 1978, Box 47, Folder 1: Correspondence: Incoming, 1974–1979, Howe Papers; Agogino and Howe, “Oscar Howe, Sioux Artist”; Milton, *Oscar Howe*, 20–23.

46. Agogino and Howe, “Oscar Howe, Sioux Artist”; Milton, *Oscar Howe*, 20–23.

47. “WPA Employee Gets \$60 for Painting Local Murals,” *Mobridge* (*South Dakota Tribune*) (n.d., ca. 1977), Box 6, Folder 2: Mobridge Murals, 1999–2008 (1 of 2), Howe Papers.

48. John Saul was of an older generation and became a mentor to Howe when both were working for the state WPA Artists Project in Mitchell. For the Mobridge project Saul remembered helping Howe with some details about Indian culture, such as the exact way that teepee flaps were held open. “John Saul of Fort Thompson Helped Artist Oscar Howe,” n.p., February 1, 1970, Box 50, Folder 8: John Saul, 1962–1993, Howe Papers; Martin Brokenleg and Herbert T. Hoover, *Yanktonai Sioux Water Colors: Cultural Remembrances of John Saul* (Sioux Falls: Center for Western Studies, 1992), 8–9.

49. “Catalog of Oscar Howe Murals, City Auditorium, Mobridge, SD,” 1982, Box 6, Folder 2: Mobridge Murals, 1999–2008 (1 of 2), Howe Papers, 1; “WPA Employee Gets \$60 for Painting Local Murals.”

50. Ibid.
51. "Mobridge Murals Reflect Turbulent South Dakota History," 1972, Box 6, Folder 3: Mobridge Murals, 1999–2008 (2 of 2), Howe Papers; Heidi Howe to Larry Atkinson, July 8, 1982, Box 6, Folder 2: Mobridge Murals, 1999–2008 (1 of 2), Howe Papers.
52. "WPA Employee Gets \$60 for Painting Local Murals."
53. Ibid.
54. Oscar Howe to Steve Chamberlin, May 17, 1977, Box 6, Folder 2: Mobridge Murals, 1999–2008 (1 of 2), Howe Papers.
55. Margaret Cesa, *The World of Flower Blue: Pop Chalee: An Artistic Biography* (Santa Fe: Red Crane Books, 1997), 88.
56. The other was Tonita Peña (San Ildefonso Pueblo), a mentor to Velarde, who painted murals under the WPA at the Santa Fe Indian School in the 1930s while Velarde was a student. See Samuel L. Gray, *Tonita Peña* (Albuquerque: Ayanyu Publishing, 1990), 26.
57. *A New Deal for Tse Tsan: Pablita Velarde at Bandelier National Monument* (exhibition brochure, Tucson: Western National Parks Association, 2007); Hyer, "Woman's Work," 8–9; Tisdale, *Pablita Velarde: In Her Own Words*, 84–95, 112–16; Sylvia Loomis interview with Pablita Velarde, September 29, 1965, Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Washington, DC, 11–13; Margaret Szasz interview with Pablita Velarde, February 9, 1972, American Indian Historical Research Project, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM, 12–18.
58. *A New Deal for Tse Tsan*. The painting is also sometimes referred to as "Governor Greets the Tourists." See Shelby J. Tisdale, "Pablita Velarde: From New Deal Painter to Legendary Artist," *El Palacio* 112 (Winter 2011), 64.
59. National Park Service, "Museum Management Program," [https://www.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/band/exb\\_art/BAND653\\_painting\\_exb.html](https://www.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/band/exb_art/BAND653_painting_exb.html).
60. Betty LaDuke, *Women Artists: Multi-Cultural Visions* (Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press, Inc., 1992), 81.
61. Tisdale, *Pablita Velarde: In Her Own Words*, 116.
62. Barbara Kerr Scott and Sally Soelle, *New Deal Art: The Oklahoma Experience, 1933–1943* (Lawton, OK: Cameron University, 1983); McLerran, *A New Deal for Native Art*, 161–97.
63. *Contemporary Southern Plains Indian Painting*, ed. Myles Libhart (exhibition catalog; Anadarko, OK: Southern Plains Indian Museum and Craft Center, 1972).
64. Kabotie, *Hopi Indian Artist*, 68–95; Tanner, "Hopi Indian Artist," 27–29; Fred Kabotie to Mr. and Mrs. D'Harnoncourt, March 12, 1940, Hopi Agency Folder, Box 1, RG 435: Records of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, National Archives and Records Administration, Perris, CA; "Directions in Indian Art [Agenda]," Program Materials First Year folder, Box 5, Lloyd H. New Papers, Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, NM (hereafter "New Papers"); Faculty/Student Applications folder, Box 5, New Papers. For the importance of the conference and workshop in establishing IAIA and raising the profile of American Indian art, see Ryan S. Flahive, *Celebrating Difference: Fifty Years of Contemporary Native Arts at IAIA, 1962–2012* (Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 2012).
65. Milton, *Oscar Howe*, 27–49; Agogino and Howe, "Oscar Howe, Sioux Artist."
66. Box 45, Folder 10: Corn Palace, Mitchell, SD, 1948–1997, Howe Papers.
67. "Jury's Decision," Jeanne Snodgrass to Oscar Howe, 1958, and Oscar Howe to Jeanne Snodgrass, April 18, 1958, Box 45, Folder 11: Philbrook Art Center, Tulsa, OK, 1947–1988, Howe Papers; Bill Anthes, *Native Moderns: American Indian Painting, 1940–1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), esp. 142–81.
68. Flahive, *Celebrating Difference; Super Indian: Fritz Scholder, 1967–1980* (exhibition catalog; Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2015); Joan Frederick, *T.C. Cannon: He Stood in the Sun* (Flagstaff, Ariz.: Northland Publishing, 1995).

69. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*.

70. The contemporary Native American art scene is too large and varied to survey here, but for Red Star and two additional artists who work with the tensions between perceptions of Native Americans and lived realities, see Wendy Red Star, <http://www.wendyredstar.com/>; Frank Buffalo Hyde (Onondaga), <http://frankbuffalohyde.com/home.html>; and Pamela J. Peters (Navajo), <https://pamelajpeters.com/>.

71. The Canadian government has demonstrated a greater a willingness in recent years to focus support on indigenous artists, specifically through the Canada Council for the Arts' "{Re}conciliation" initiative, which ran from 2015–2016. See Canada Council for the Arts, "{Re}conciliation," accessed October 1, 2018, <https://canadacouncil.ca/initiatives/reconciliation>.