



Epilogue

The Society of American Indians conference in 1911 was not the only time Native artists and intellectuals gathered to discuss the proper place of Native American art in mainstream American society. In 1959 the Rockefeller Foundation convened a conference at the University of Arizona titled “Directions in Indian Art”; in March 1970, Princeton University hosted “The First Convocation of American Indian Scholars,” which included a session titled “Native Arts in America” and was organized by the Luiseño painter Fritz Scholder. In 1980, Native artists, art historians, and others interested in indigenous art began gathering for biennial conferences in which they attempted to clarify and expand the understanding of both “traditional” and “contemporary” Indian art and its relationship to the mainstream art world. This group, which became known as the Native American Art Studies Association, has convened regularly ever since. The 1970 Princeton convocation is perhaps the least well-known of these events, but it is instructive, as the discussion between Scholder and his respondents—who included fellow painters Dick West (Cheyenne), Frank LaPena (Maidu/Wintu), the sculptor-jeweler Charles Loloma (Hopi), and other Native intellec-

tuals and culture workers—reveals that many of the issues raised at the 1911 Society of American Indians conference had yet to be resolved. As with the earlier conference, the proceedings of the Princeton meeting were published in full, making it possible to trace the diversity of opinions Native intellectuals have had toward the visual arts.¹

Like DeCora, Scholder argued that a “well-developed aesthetic sense” was an inherent Indian trait, and, like her, he rejected the idea that this sense required Indian people to work in specific media or styles and heralded the emergence of a “new Indian art.”² Challenging the separation of Native and non-Native work into different artistic worlds, he argued that Indian art could take its place beside the most avant-garde products of mainstream modernism: “Today a Zuni War God would not look out of place at the Museum of Modern Art, and a shield design can certainly compete with the best non-objective painting. The universal power of these objects is undeniable” (193). Proclaiming the artist’s freedom to engage both tribal and mainstream aesthetic traditions, he argued that the “new Indian art . . . will take many forms and . . . will be vital, not faddish” (196). As in Cleveland over half a century before, his audience responded in a variety of ways. While many supported the notion of artistic freedom, Jack Reynolds (Cheyenne) was concerned that artists weren’t mindful of their responsibility to their tribes and their traditions (208). Some were concerned about the diversity of the kinds of objects presented as Native American art and whether all were equally capable of bearing aesthetic and cultural value. Several of those present were concerned about the limited access that Native artists had to venues for exhibition and sale, and about the Anglo control of those venues. Some called for institutional solutions to the problem of supporting and promoting Native artists, ranging from nonprofit galleries to a professional artists’ association and government agencies who regulate the market.

Scholder and his colleagues were reacting to the historical developments in Native American art history in the interwar and cold war years, but their comments reveal that many of these developments were rooted in the ideas and problems of the beginning of the century. This epilogue will focus on the legacy of the Indian craze, tracing its influence on Native art in the 1930s, the 1970s, and the present. Making these connections allows us to see the persistent linkage between Native American art and Indian welfare, the difficulty both Indians and non-Indians face in defining Native Ameri-

can art as indigenous and modern at the same time, and the general ambivalence about the aesthetic status of handicrafts.

ART AND ACTIVISM IN SANTA FE

The history of Native American art related by Scholder was focused on Santa Fe, New Mexico, which had become the preeminent center for Indian art by the 1920s. This was in part because of the remarkable success of the local tourism industry, which emphasized indigenous culture as an important regional attraction. The Santa Fe Railroad and its retail partner, the Fred Harvey Company, had been promoting Native American art in its ads and through its depots since the early years of the twentieth century, but southwestern tourism expanded in the 1910s and 1920s, first because of the blossoming of domestic tourism during the years when World War I made European travel impossible and then with the expansion of automobile travel in the twenties. The latter prompted Harvey to develop packaged “Indian detours,” which brought carloads of tourists into pueblos where they could buy handicrafts directly from the producers. While Native material culture was incorporated into the tourist industries of other regions, particularly the Pacific Northwest and the western National Parks, few regions had the same combination of factors that made the southwestern story so successful. The development of tourism in Santa Fe benefited not only from its proximity to a major transcontinental railroad, but also from the active support of the local government, a small and tightly networked community of Anglo-American civic leaders, and, to a certain extent, Native communities.³

Anglo-Americans who had relocated from the East to Santa Fe and, to a lesser extent, Taos, were particularly important in bringing the ideas of the Indian craze to the region. They included some individuals who had been involved in the earlier celebration of Native art and others who had developed their ideas about the relationship between art and society during the Progressive Era. Among the former were Edgar Lee Hewett, an archaeologist who had spoken about the Southwest at a lecture at the National Arts Club (see chapter 3) in 1905.⁴ Within a few years, he became the director of the School of American Archaeology (in 1907) and the Museum of New Mexico (in 1909), positions from which he exerted a strong influence on the scholarship on Native American art. Hewett is known for his promotion of the careers of Native artists such as Maria Martinez and Alfonso Roybal



FIGURE 80 Alfonso Roybal (Awa Tsireh) (San Ildefonso Pueblo), *Thunder Dance Procession*, ca. 1922. Watercolor on paper. Inv. no. 35461/13, Museum of Indian Arts and Culture / Laboratory of Anthropology, Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe. Photo by Blair Clark.

(Awa Tsireh) (see figure 80), both from San Ildefonso Pueblo, as well as for inviting modernist painters such as Robert Henri, John Sloan, and Marsden Hartley to visit the region. The artists and Anglo intellectuals in Hewett's circle shared his interest in southwestern Native art and supported projects to promote it, including organizing exhibitions in the East, such as Sloan and Oliver LaFarge's 1931 Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts at the Grand Central Galleries in New York City, and establishing local institutions focused on encouraging preserving and perpetuating local traditions, such as the Pueblo Pottery Fund (later renamed the Indian Arts Fund) and the annual Indian Fair at the Santa Fe Fiesta (both established in 1922).⁵

As Molly Mullin and Margaret Jacobs have demonstrated, these efforts were spearheaded by Anglo-American women who were grounded in the social ideas of the Progressive Era, including Elizabeth Sergeant, Martha and Elizabeth White, and Mabel Dodge Sterne (later Luhan).⁶ Experienced in urban philanthropic work, they were familiar with the progressivist notion that art could be the site of economic and cultural revitalization for Indian people as well as a meaningful medium of cross-cultural contact, and they saw the patronage of art as a means of social activism. Indeed, Mabel Dodge Sterne's first trip to the Southwest was the result of her husband's invitation that she come "and save the Indians."⁷ Similarly, John Collier was a follower of John Dewey who spent the 1910s working for the New York City People's Institute, a social center built on the settlement idea. Collier became an Indian rights activist as a result of a visit to Sterne in 1919, and

went on to head the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs, where he oversaw the several projects geared toward promoting Native arts in the 1930s.⁸

In keeping with their community orientation, this generation married patronage with political activism. Santa Feans were involved in Indian rights organizations such as the Eastern Association on Indian Affairs and the New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs and were leaders of the effort to defeat the Bursum Bill, a piece of federal legislation aimed at resolving southwestern land disputes in favor of Anglos. They used this battle to publicize other issues they thought important, including the preservation of religious freedom and other cultural traditions. They saw the support of Native art as directly related to these efforts, not only because they defined Indian art as an expression of religion but also because they had witnessed the poverty faced by Native people firsthand and believed the support of art offered much-needed economic support.

AESTHETICS AND POLITICS

Like Estelle Reel and members of the Indian Industries League, many promoters of Native arts of this generation believed that the government had a role to play in the development of Indian art. In 1928, investigators from the Institute for Government Research (now the Brookings Institute) undertook a survey of Indian conditions for the secretary of the interior, Hubert Work. The IGA investigator Lewis Meriam directed the survey with the help of nine others, including the veterans of the Indian reform movement Fayette McKenzie and Henry Roe Cloud. The report, commonly called “The Meriam Report,” recommended that the government get involved in what it called “Native Arts and Industries” through reservation-based projects and by developing an arts curriculum in the Indian schools. In the chapter on “Women and Handicrafts,” we read that “Indians as a race, and particularly the Indian women, show a great fondness and aptitude for handicrafts.”⁹ This racial propensity, the commission argued, offered an important potential source of income as well as a means of strengthening tribal and community ties. Although none of the members of the survey team were part of the Santa Fe community, their ideas may have been influenced by the Indian craze and the subsequent work of Sterne, Hewett, the Whites, and Chapman to promote Native art in the 1920s. The report also encouraged the government to get involved in regulating the production and sale of

Native goods, creating standards of style, materials, and workmanship that could be used to demand fair compensation for Native craftspeople. It calls for the appointment of a person whose responsibilities would be “to arrange for increasing production and better marketing of native Indian products, a work which will interest the Indians, permit them to make a distinctive contribution, and materially increase their income.”¹⁰

The federal government immediately began exploring how to implement these suggestions, soliciting input from Collier’s Indian Defense Association. Around the time Collier became commissioner of Indian affairs, the Indian Defense Association director, James W. Young, was tapped to chair a federal “Committee on Indian Art and Crafts,” which included several members of the Santa Fe scene, including Dodge and LaFarge and the Indian trader Lorenzo Hubbell. In 1935, the committee became the Indian Arts and Crafts Board; to this day the group works to promote the economic development of Native communities through the promotion and distribution of Native American art.¹¹ The new organization operated under Collier’s direction and emphasized the industrial economic development of handicraft production over the cultural and aesthetic goals championed by the earlier group. The projects undertaken reveal the bureaucratic nature of the board. One was an attempt to create a trademark that would be affixed to Navajo wool products and Navajo, Pueblo, and Hopi silver products, offering an official guarantee of their authenticity. Another was adapting traditional products for modern uses, a project that was at the heart of an exhibition organized by the board’s assistant general manager, Rene d’Harnoncourt, for the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco in 1939. As explored in great detail elsewhere, this exhibition, and the 1941 Museum of Modern Art exhibition that grew out of it (“Indian Art of the United States”), used contemporary display techniques to draw attention to the utility of Native products for contemporary clothing and house decoration, a strategy with an obvious connection to the Indian craze.¹² As critics of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board have pointed out, the standards of quality developed by the board were dictated by the board representatives’ tastes, biases, and expectations of what could be manufactured in a style and quantity that could sell.¹³

The Meriam Report also advocated a reintroduction of Native industries at the Indian schools. The authors called for vocational training “that will

preserve the original craft values and yet give the Indians the full benefit of their skill and creative genius.”¹⁴ During the early 1930s, W. Carson Ryan, the director of education at the Bureau of Indian Affairs and a member of the Meriam Commission, addressed this issue by reinvigorating training programs in Native arts in various schools and creating a special arts and crafts program at the Santa Fe Indian School for graduates of Indian schools seen to have particular artistic talent. “The Studio,” as this art school came to be called, included a program in handicrafts (weaving, embroidery, pottery, beadwork, basketry, carding, tanning, wool dying, silverwork, and wood-working) and a program in painting that built on the success of the earlier generation of Pueblo watercolorists.¹⁵ The teaching methods of the Anglo-American women in charge of these two programs differed. Mabel Morrow, who ran the arts and crafts program, emphasized collaboration and sought to ground her students in distinct traditions by hiring indigenous master craftspeople as teachers. Dorothy Dunn, who taught painting, encouraged students to develop their work as individuals, in dialogue with their tribal traditions and what she identified as the key aesthetic qualities of Native American art, but not with one another. Nevertheless, each stressed the importance of skilled commercial artists for resolving the economic and cultural problems facing Indian people, including the problem of defining the positive value of Native culture for mainstream Americans. As one writer proclaimed upon describing the new program in 1932, the program would stress the “peculiar racial capacities and arts” of Native Americans, which would offer “a permanent contribution to our national life.”¹⁶

Whether or not they were aware that their ideas and habits of thinking were informed by the Indian craze, the leaders of these programs perpetuated a turn-of-the-century habit of linking art and social and economic well-being. It is worth pointing out that this tendency was not at odds with discussions going on in the mainstream art world, particularly among the directors of federal relief projects directed toward artists (some of which employed Native artists).¹⁷ As with those projects, we can see the 1930s as reviving Progressive ideas that once emerged from local or community organizations and now were coming under the increased institutional and bureaucratic control of the federal government. But while most New Deal art projects might be understood as being committed to the idea that art benefits the community, only those projects directed toward the Native

American community were thought to offer a solution to the economic and cultural problems of an entire race.¹⁸

Subsequent generations have come up with new ideas about the proper way for the U.S. government and supporters of Indian rights to foster the development and sale of Native American art. In so doing, they have continued to link Indian art with the broader place of Native Americans in American culture. In 1962, for example, the federal government replaced the Santa Fe Indian School's Studio with a new secondary and postsecondary art school called the Institute of American Indian Arts, which was designed to offer pupils more freedom in working in both mainstream and traditionally Indian mediums and styles.¹⁹ Speaking in 1970, at the first convocation of American Indian Scholars in Princeton, Fritz Scholder, who had taught design, drawing, printmaking, and art history at the institute for five years, argued that Indian artists should pursue their training outside of government-run institutions. But this doesn't mean that he saw no role for the government to play in the Indian art world. He proposed, for example, that the government should maintain a directory of Indian artists.²⁰ Speaking at the same convocation, the Cree singer and activist Buffy Sainte-Marie felt the need for a "non-profit corporation of some sort to promote and protect authentic Indian art."²¹ While she focused on the private sector, Sainte-Marie perpetuated the idea that "authentic Indian art" could be defined and that this definition should be policed, thus lending her voice to the cause of racist aesthetics that was then almost a century old.

The task Sainte-Marie describes is one that has continually been undertaken by the Indian Arts and Crafts Board. At the end of the twentieth century, the board (now headed by Indian people) accelerated its legislative efforts, passing a series of bills that gave legal significance to the description of an object as a piece of "American Indian Art." The Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 and the Indian Arts and Crafts Enforcement Act of 2000 made it a criminal act to sell a product as Indian if it was produced by someone other than an enrolled member of a federally recognized or state-recognized tribe or an artisan certified by such a tribe. The law was designed primarily to protect craftspeople from competition by foreign-made wares fraudulently presented as Native-made; this is a significant problem, especially for artisans producing for the souvenir and curio trade. But it has been received with ambivalence by some Native artists, who are concerned

about its definition of Indian identity, which privileges government records made during the height of American control of Indian people as the authoritative determinant, leaving out members of Indian nations who have not achieved federal recognition as well as those who, due to the history of their tribal nation or for reasons of mixed heritage, might not be able to use these documents to prove a legal Indian identity.²² As this book has argued, the very notion of authenticity that the board privileges is itself an artifact of American colonial control of Indian people.

Some Native artists have also pointed out the way the Indian Arts and Crafts Act uses authenticity primarily as a sales tool, reinforcing the association between Indian art and its market, and cutting creativity off from other associations. In response to the act, the photographer Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, whose mixed Navajo, Seminole, and Muscogee ancestry bespeaks the complex interactions of Indian people with each other as well as non-Indians in the twentieth century, produced the “Creative Native” series, which consists of self-portraits with her tribal enrollment number and sometimes also a bar code tattooed on her face, exposing how the act denies an artist’s critical faculties to privilege her place within a bureaucratic, industrialized system.²³

MODERN INDIAN ART

Tsinhnahjinnie is pointing to the way in which the Indian Arts and Crafts Act perpetuates a distinction between the Native creative process, which is beholden to a legally defined ethnic identity, and that allowed to a mainstream artist, which is valued for its freedom from socially bound constraints.²⁴ Native artists have recognized and reacted to this problem steadily since Angel DeCora gave her speeches and published her articles. Each mainstream campaign to recognize the aesthetic qualities of indigenous art has encouraged some Native artists to aspire to participate in the mainstream American art world. At times artists have argued that Indian people can conform to the aesthetic standards of a New York gallery system. At others, they have sought to broaden the art world to include diverse cultural expressions of aesthetic value and be open to art made using a variety of mediums and techniques.

As this book has shown, while the Indian craze facilitated the development of American modernism, it was ambivalent about the potential for

Native Americans to be modern artists. This problem continued for subsequent generations. This is most apparent in the course taken by Native American painting. While painting is understood by many to be an inherently modern medium, the rigorous control over the boundaries of Native American painting exercised by Dorothy Dunn and her successors at the Studio kept it in a separate category from mainstream modern painting. While the history of “modern” Indian painting begins before Dunn’s project, the Santa Fe Indian School is where it became codified. As other scholars have related, Dunn’s program, which trained a large number of painters from the Southwest and beyond, encouraged students to work in a distinctive “Indian” style, which centered on flat, decorative compositions depicting prereservation or ceremonial subjects.²⁵ Receiving support from the local community, the federal government, and an emerging network of exhibition venues focused on Indian art, the Studio allowed several artists to achieve national prominence, but they did so only by working in Dunn’s prescribed style. Studio graduates who began working outside these parameters, such as Oscar Howe, found themselves barred from Indian art world events, such as the annual exhibition of Indian painting at the Philbrook Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and also not fully welcomed into a mainstream art world, which persisted in expecting work by indigenous artists to maintain recognizable Indian style and subject matter despite the increasing emphasis on formal abstraction within European American painting.²⁶

Howe understood Dunn’s desire to restrict the definition of Native art as a dimension of the colonial control to Indian people. He wrote, “Are we to be held back forever with one phase of Indian painting, with no right for individualism, dictated to as the Indian always has been, put on reservations and treated like a child, and only the White Man knows what is best for him?”²⁷

Howe’s opinion was not unique, and, beginning in the late 1950s, Native artists and their European American supporters began exploring ways to redirect current discussion of “modern Indian art.” This effort was concentrated in the Southwest Indian Art Project, a two-year project based at the University of Arizona and funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, that resulted in the creation of the Institute of American Indian Arts. At the conference with which this project began, both Indians and non-Indians argued that Native artists should not be kept separate from developments in

the mainstream art world. For example, the Anglo artist Andreas Andersen claimed that attempts to keep Indian art “within the tradition” had been a failure and called for a “transition between the Indian-artist and the artist.”²⁸ As Joy Gritton has pointed out, the individualist rhetoric used by the Institute of American Indian Arts supported contemporary Indian policy, which had recoiled from the emphasis on tribal sovereignty during the Collier years to emphasize relocation and termination.²⁹ However, Native artists associated with the Institute of American Indian Arts, such as the late Lloyd Kiva New, have stressed the fact that Native artists did not have to give up their identities when they moved away from tradition. As he said, “Let’s try to find challenging opportunities for the young Indian mind. Let’s be more concerned with the evolution of artists rather than of art products. . . . Indian art of the future will be in new forms, produced in new media and with new technological methods. The end result will be as Indian as is the Indian.”³⁰

New had obtained his artistic training outside of the federal Indian school system, at the Art Institute of Chicago. Several other founding faculty members, such as Fritz Scholder, who had studied in California, and Charles Loloma (Hopi), also had mainstream art school training, but the Institute of American Indian Arts was eventually criticized for being too similar to previous government-funded efforts to cultivate indigenous art. Scholder decried it as “the same old story of bureaucracy and inefficiency in the government, resulting in disenchantment of the Indian people.”³¹ Yet artists continued to struggle to articulate how art could be modern and Native at the same time. For example, several of those involved in the Princeton conference were active members of their tribal communities who contributed to ceremonial life, yet they were ambivalent about allowing this to dictate their work. Charles Loloma suggested that Hopi people should retain control over the use and representation of their well-known Snake Dance, for example, but when he was asked about his own work, he claimed “I am not selling my work as Indian work, I am selling my work as Charles Loloma,” leading Jack Reynolds to ask “if there is such a thing as an Indian artist.”³² Just over a decade later, in 1982, George Longfish and Joan Randall proclaimed the arrival of *another* “new Indian art,” one grounded in “concepts which were clearly reflective of their perspectives as Native American in a modern setting.”³³ In subsequent decades, Native artists have made great

inroads into the mainstream art world. Native artists have increasingly been featured in exhibitions at major museums and involved in the art fairs and biennials that constitute the center of the contemporary art world. But there continues to be what one writer refers to as a “buckskin ceiling,” a barrier that prevents indigenous artists from achieving the same fame and financial success as European American artists.³⁴

ART AND CRAFT

One of the challenges involved in defining “modern” Native American art is the place of so-called traditional work. During the Indian craze, mainstream collectors and critics celebrated the aesthetic potential of handicrafts, in large part because they were part of a mainstream art world that was interested in the aesthetic qualities of applied and decorative arts. Though its openness to truly valuing the work of Native craftspeople was compromised by its racism, the Indian craze posed the theoretical possibility that modern Native American art could take both “traditional” and European American forms. Histories of modern Native American art of the rest of the century tend to isolate the histories of fine arts genres and those of other mediums, internalizing the mainstream hierarchy and separation of genres that fell more or less solidly into place with World War I. The twentieth century witnessed the emergence of celebrity craftspeople such as the Pueblo potters Maria Martinez and Lucy Lewis (Acoma), but their work has not usually been integrated into the narrative of “Native moderns.” While they have been reluctant to dismiss the value of traditional work, Indian intellectuals have contributed to this problem of genre hierarchies. At the convocation of American Indian scholars at Princeton in 1970, Frank La Pena’s question of the place of “the so-called traditional arts” in the “new Indian art” spurred a discussion revealing the panelists’ anxiety about broaching the boundaries between painting and other mediums.³⁵ Yeffe Kimball, an artist who self-identified as Osage, suggested that there was a difference between objects that had historic value and those that were examples of “the highest expression” (212). When challenged by La Pena, she admitted that crafts *could* make an aesthetic statement but not that they always did. Pushed further, she resorted to the notion of taste to describe the distinction between what she categorized as “authentic” and inauthentic art, the latter including objects made for the curio trade. Fritz Scholder moved the conversation away

from the question of authenticity toward an interrogation of the degraded conditions under which souvenir producers worked (213).

In his review of the 1991 exhibition “Our Land/Ourselves: American Indian Contemporary Artists,” W. Jackson Rushing pointed out the flawed assumptions behind privileging painting and sculpture in discussions of modern Native American art: “The subliminal message being sent here, albeit unintentionally, is that weaving, pottery, basketry, woodcarving, embroidery, and other ‘pre-Modern’ forms are less able to speak meaningfully to a ‘contemporary’ art audience.”³⁶ Fortunately, curators and artists are beginning to undermine this assumption. Institutions such as the National Museum of the American Indian’s Gustav Heye Center in New York continually stage exhibitions that put innovative work in traditional mediums on view at the same time as cutting-edge works in more mainstream genres, and New York’s Museum of Art and Design has organized a three-part exhibition devoted to contemporary Native work in clay, glass, fiber, jewelry, metal, and wood.³⁷ At the same time, Native artists operating within the mainstream gallery system are increasingly referencing traditional materials and techniques. Examples of artists working in this vein range from Nora Naranjo-Morse to Jolene Rickard and Brian Jungen. While each of these works in mediums and practices that are fully integrated into the contemporary art world (primarily installation and photography), their work draws viewers’ attention to the complex historical frames needed to understand their work.

It may be that the current openness demonstrated by the mainstream art world in this moment of “postmedium” practice has helped these artists break a boundary that was vexing to their forebears a generation ago. But it would be wrong to assume that the desire to define Native American aesthetics across the art/craft divide is a recent development. Despite their flawed politics and problematic assumptions about the government’s role in fostering indigenous art, both the Santa Fe Indian School and the Institute of American Indian Arts were established on the principle that Indian artists could pursue a range of practices. As I have argued in the case of the Indian craze, a full understanding of this framing of Native American aesthetics requires an exploration of how they fit into debates going on in the mainstream art world as well as those referring to Native art and politics. It is important to know, for example, how Lloyd Kiva New and Charles Lo-

loma's ambitions for Native artists were influenced by their own studies in design-oriented mainstream art schools at a time when the American studio crafts movement was beginning to build up steam.

With the arrival of the National Museum of the American Indian on the Mall in Washington, D.C., in 2004, debates over the definition and value of modern Native American should continue for some time.³⁸ The fact that there is no single answer to this question does not render it unimportant, for any answer must address how Native identity has been constructed historically, often in ways that served the mainstream, and how contemporary Indian artists and curators create their own evolving definitions in dialogue with others at the individual, communal, tribal, and pan-Indian levels. Those participating in these discussions would do well to pay attention to earlier debates, not only to learn from the past but also to understand the ways in which the very terms that they use draw on the assumptions and struggles of their forebears. Though often overlooked, the Indian craze contributed a great deal to this history, providing an early link between Native American art and Indian welfare that continues to this day, suggesting the potential for a definition of Indian aesthetics that can embrace practices that cross the traditional/modern and high/low divides, and providing an early example of how Indian people themselves reflected on the relationship between art and identity. As Robert Warrior has pointed out, scholars of Native cultural history have frequently dismissed the cultural debates of the beginning of the twentieth century as tainted by a problematic assimilationism, but to do so distorts the historical record and blinds us to the serious questions raised in the period. As he writes, without "allow[ing] their sincerity to blind us to the perturbing implications of their work," a recovery of this history "provides a means of asking difficult ethical, cultural, and political questions in the context of complex, often dire, situations."³⁹