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Creation of an identity: American Indian protest art

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The University of Arizona, 1993

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CREATION OF AN IDENTITY: AMERICAN INDIAN PROTEST ART

by

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ABSTRACT:

This thesis addresses and critically reviews American Indian protest art as a legitimate art genre. Brief discussions of the Studio (the first formal American Indian art school), the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA), and the American Indian protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as irony, satire, and humor in Indian art are included. The concept of the "Indian" identity as a motivating factor of the art, and the redundant use of stereotypical imagery as it relates to cultural conflicts are addressed. Descriptive interpretations of the art of David Bradley, Alex Jacobs, and Stan Natchez and the three fundamental elements of this art style are presented in detail.
I

Introduction:

My decision to pursue a master's degree in American Indian Studies at the University of Arizona was predicated on an understanding that numerous courses in American Indian art and art history were offered. However, only two courses were offered in these fields. In compliance with the requirements of the program, study of Federal-Indian policy was mandatory. Although law and politics were never areas of interest to me, my initial reluctance to pursue these subjects turned into fascination. Prior to these courses, the ramifications and the complexities involved in this field had not affected my life. While researching topics for a thesis, the combination of Federal-Indian relations and American Indian art intrigued me. This unlikely combination led me to an art genre that emerged from the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, referred to as "American Indian Protest Art".

Until now this genre of Indian art has been neglected. There is only a limited amount of information available because few scholars or critics are addressing American Indian protest art. Those that discuss it do not elaborate beyond a myopic view that these American Indian artists are "angry young men". Research into this genre revealed an apparent dependence on stereotypical imagery. The repetitive use of stereotypical imagery required research and analysis of the phenomenon known as the Indian. Particularly the
invention of Indian identity, its accompanying dynamic, and the artists' molding of an American Indian identity. What resulted was a study of the combination of contemporary American Indian art and politics.

My attendance at several art openings in Santa Fe, New Mexico during the Indian Market weekend (August 1993) revealed that protest art was exhibited in only two galleries: Copeland/Rutherford and Elaine Horwitch Galleries. There was little information available about the artists and even less on the style of art they are producing. I decided to interview artist Alex Jacobs (Mohawk) in hopes of obtaining information to fill the void of information regarding American Indian protest art. Although Mr. Jacobs made himself available for interview, other artists were unavailable. After I returned to Arizona, artist Stan Natchez (Shoshone/Paiute) agreed to my visit to his studio in Tempe, Arizona. The other artist included in this study, David Bradley (Chippewa), was unavailable for interview, but inclusion of his work and background are provided to give the reader an enhanced understanding of this style of art and present information that has not been previously available.

Even though there is a lack of information available about the male artists creating protest art, there is even less information about female American Indians who also produce this style of art. They should not be disregarded because their roles were, and still are, essential to the survival of their people and the creation of an Indian identity. This paper will present the male artists and their involvement in the creation of American Indian Protest Art. This topic has not been presented in terms of a "formal" art genre, nor has it been thoroughly analyzed by anyone. The information presented here is a valuable tool for the interpretation of a virtually ignored field. To attempt to understand
the contemporary Indian, it is necessary to understand these artists and their search for an American Indian identity through their creation of protest art.

For the purposes of this paper several terms require definition. (Terms 1 and 2 are interchangeable.)

1. **White** -- a general, broad term used for non-Indians. This encompasses all races and members of the dominant culture.

2. **non-Indian** -- any person that is not an American Indian in the political and/or cultural sense.

3. **American Indian Protest Art** -- art that depicts American Indians' anti-government and anti-White attitudes through a variety of media-generated, White, and American Indian images. The art is used as a political tool to address and protest the artists' perceptions of past atrocities by the dominant culture against American Indians. Most significantly, the art appears to be used to create the artists' American Indian identity.

   The art incorporates some or all of the following images: stenciled lettering, the United States flag, paper money, photographs of easily identifiable historical figures, excerpts from treaties and the United States Constitution, federal institutions, and military battles between Indians and non-Indians.

4. **traditional** -- art that utilizes "symbolic" imagery. This style appears prior to contact with Europeans and the American Indians' "confinement" on reservations. It also includes the "romanticized" or "noble savage" images that appear after contact and art instruction from Indian boarding schools and is often referred to as "Bambi" art. This art also depicts ceremonies and lifestyles of American Indians. American Indian protest art is not considered traditional Indian art.
5. **contemporary** -- art that reflects the more current or recent lifestyles, material cultures, and societal functions after Whites' attempts to assimilate and acculturate American Indians. Specifically, for my purposes, it focuses on the period from the 1960s to the present and the emergence of contemporary American Indian protest art.

6. **traditional/reservation Indian** -- an Indian who is raised on a reservation with knowledge of their tribal cultural heritage. For example, a Chippewa born and raised on their respective reservation with little contact with White society who is taught Chippewa heritage, including language, ceremonies, and lifestyles, and who is not totally immersed in White society and culture. Their background is traditional and their orientation is toward their tribal way of life.

7. **non-traditional/urban Indian** -- an Indian who is raised in a city who has little or no knowledge of their tribal cultural heritage. Knowledge of their specific cultural heritage is limited and they are constantly exposed to other cultures, especially White culture i.e., acculturated into White society. They have virtually no knowledge of their tribes' language or ceremonies, instead they have a pan-Indian perspective, i.e. a person who is immersed in White society which includes many different cultures and lifestyles. Their background is non-traditional and they are oriented toward White culture and society.

The chapter entitled "The Studio", describes the influence and history of the Studio in Santa Fe, New Mexico where many young Indians attended or were sent to receive an education and to study art. The Studio's teachings were influential on the students for a variety of reasons. They were taught how
to create traditional art, instructed on how to market their art, and attempt to earn a living from the sales of their art works.

The following chapter, "The Institute of American Indian Arts", describes another influential agent upon young Indian artists during the 1960s and 1970s: the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The instructors' and students' art expressions were influenced by the philosophy of the school, other faculty and students. The work of graduates of the IAIA who produce protest art lacks recognition because the art market rarely acknowledges American Indian protest art.

The chapter entitled "Evolution of an Indian Identity", discusses the American Indian political movement of the 1960s and 1970s and the emergence of the "Indian" identity. The attitudes and emotions of American Indians during this era encouraged American Indians to address issues of self-determination. Art during the 1960s and 1970s depicted issues and events related to the turmoil and social upheaval that appeared throughout the country. Protest art is considered a non-violent outlet for some of the young people of this period as well as a vehicle used to explore or create their American Indian identity. The "idea" of the American Indian, the evolution of identity, and the constantly changing, or non-static "definition" of Indians are also discussed. Many non-traditional urban Indians appear to be unsure of their identity in a society where cultures are in constant conflict. This conflict and history of Indian-White relations is represented in American Indian protest art.

The next chapter, "Limited Perspectives", discusses current interpretations of American Indian protest art. Included in this analysis is American Indian political art that is subtle and utilizes humor and is separate
from the protest art that blatantly depicts dissatisfaction with the dominant society. More attention is given by most observers to those artists who utilize ironic or satiric images, including the "romanticized" Indian. Rarely are the more overt depictions of protest art discussed or analyzed. The artists creating this style utilize a combination of images from White, and American Indian cultures to depict the conflict of these cultures. Some critics view protest art with sympathy and recognize that these artists are angry, but such art is viewed by others as offensive and negative towards Whites or non-Indians. Some critics and scholars mention art in terms of identity and self-esteem, but they omit details and fail to elaborate upon their analyses, specifically regarding the issue of identity in relation to American Indian protest art.

The chapter entitled "The Artists", refers to the artists who are creating protest art. Generally, they are urban Indians who were or are politically active, members of American Indian organizations such as the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), or who support the philosophies of such organizations. The backgrounds of the three male artists previously mentioned are presented. Two interviews are included to present a sample of the philosophies and attitudes of contemporary male American Indian protest artists.

The final chapter entitled "The Images: Reasons Why", presents descriptions of the three artists works and analyses of their use of White and American Indian images This chapter also includes three elements of American Indian protest art not previously addressed by critics or scholars. These three elements are: 1) creation of an American Indian identity, 2) anti-government and anti-White attitudes, and 3) a vehicle to earn a living. All three of these
elements are interrelated. American Indian history and art may, at times, appear simple and straightforward, but in actuality they are complex, confusing, and disorienting. American Indian protest art and Federal-Indian relations are similar in that they are complex, convoluted and dynamic.

The art market does not fully recognize American Indian protest art, yet the artists are able to exhibit their style in a few galleries and sell it to wealthy patrons of American Indian art. The term American Indian applies to the artists, yet it is an ideology yet to emerge. These urban Indian artists appear to be unstable in their identity as American Indians and are trying to manufacture that identity due to lack of guidelines and little or no meaningful connection with reservation or traditional Indians who seem to be more aware of their cultural identity. They do not understand the more traditional Indians due to their (the artists') assimilated and acculturated position in White society. The artists' utilization of stereotypical White and American Indian images implies a conflict between their American Indian and White cultural and social mores. They are raised in a society that is not distinctly Indian nor definitely White, but a combination of both and this dichotomy is apparent in the art. The non-traditional urban Indian artists are depicting the past, in the present, to direct their individual economic and cultural survivals in the future. It is necessary to understand that the notion of identity is a pertinent factor behind the creation of American Indian protest art.
II
The Studio.

The advent of American Indian protest art is rooted in prehistoric rock art, but from the 1960s and 1970s this art has taken on a new dimension and is aimed at the federal government and White society. The institutionalization of contemporary American Indian art, specifically painting, began in the Studio in Santa Fe, New Mexico through the initiative of Dorothy Dunn.

In the late 1920s Ms. Dunn, an Indian Service teacher at Santo Domingo Pueblo, was teaching art to Indian students.1 After Ms. Dunn had left the Indian Service in 1928 to complete her studies at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) anti-art attitude was substantially diminished. The BIA soon realized the impact American Indian art could have on the public and that it was "a source of revenue for the Indians and a means of cultural expression.2 In supporting art production the BIA realized it could achieve its political agenda to avert assimilation and to "encourage the development of the reservations as viable economic and cultural communities that preserved tribal integrity."3

The BIA, prior to the Meriam Report in 1928 and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, did not encourage the idea of teaching art or the practice of Indian arts and crafts, therefore, it was difficult to implement the study

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3 Goetzman 1986, p 402.
of art in government-run schools. The decision to encourage the production of Indian arts and crafts and economic development was an action directly associated with the Indian New Deal of 1934. The New Deal was the policy of the federal government to end attempts of assimilation, originally implemented within the Allotment Act of 1887. The New Deal resulted from the Meriam Report of 1928 that investigated and provided solutions to "problems" concerning American Indians. The report exposed high levels of poverty on reservations, that assimilation attempts did not work, and that it was too expensive and time consuming for the government to expend more than it already had on forced assimilation of American Indians.

After completing her degree, Dunn, with support from the Indian Service's Superintendent Chester Faris, proposed and instituted an art program at the Santa Fe Indian School. The Studio, oriented to Southwest Indians, opened in 1932 and within a year was an unqualified success. Its popularity was such that the Bureau of Indian Affairs officially recognized the Studio and the art classes. Even though they have not received much recognition, teachers in other boarding schools, such as Carlisle and the Haskell Institute, were encouraging students to paint and create other types of art after school. The Studio was not the first to implement the teaching or instruction of American Indian art. Other schools such as Carlisle and most notably Bacone Junior College in Muskogee, Oklahoma, were just as important and beneficial to Indian students. In fact Bacone can boast that more well-known Indian artists studied there and received more recognition than the artists at Santa Fe. As Santa Fe was important in the Southwest, Bacone was important in the Plains region. Bacone was originally run by American Indians, but the Studio was
founded and run by a non-Indian and after the IAIA emerged, was run by American Indians and non-Indians. Ms. Dunn, a non-Indian, was the first designated "Teacher of Fine and Applied Arts" in the Indian Service. Dunn hoped that instructing Indian students to paint would "build respect among her charges for their own cultural traditions and as a medium for personality development."  

Although Dunn primarily instructed the students on the basics of how to paint and encouraged them to utilize images from their own cultures, including traditional motifs and symbolism, she also introduced art from other cultures. She encouraged students to research different designs and motifs to implement in their art, but she stressed that their art should remain "traditional." The program and encouragement Dunn initiated were beneficial but also constraining because she dictated the styles and motifs that she desired they practice, leaving no freedom for the young artists to experiment. As critic Erin Younger explains, "Careful brushwork, flat application of paint, emphasis on line and a decorative use of color became the trademarks of the Studio style." The art style never evolved beyond the flat, simplistic and romantic images because the students' individuality was not encouraged and Dunn's own romantic notions based on models of the "noble savage" were the only frameworks for representation allowed. Apparently Dunn taught the students how and what to paint and allowed them little room to use and develop their own skill and knowledge. The style was also promoted because of its success with patrons of American Indian art, who rapidly purchased much of the

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4 Brody 1979, p 127.
students' works. Because students who were trained in the Studio style were successfully selling to patrons of American Indian art, the style was encouraged and promoted.

One result of the instruction of American Indian art was the idea of art as commodity. This was not a new idea. In the early 1930s, Santa Fe was already a hub for tourists who were attempting to procure Indian arts and crafts. A substantial impact was the railroad which traveled through the Southwest and at each stop Indians would greet the trains and sell their art to the tourists. The Studio was centered in this area enabling the students to sell their work soon after completion.

Dunn, in addition to teaching art, taught students about economics and marketing: how to produce art and to sell it in order to make a living. Because the students were encouraged to sell their art, they conformed to the styles desired by the buyers and this allowed the American Indian art buyers to dictate the type of art produced. Whether this concept was understood by the students or not, they were conforming their styles to suit the patrons' desires and were able to sell their work accordingly. The tastes and desires of the patrons were influenced by opportunities for investment and by what was already visible on the market, in essence the traditional styles or the stereotypical, "romanticized" images of American Indians. "Whites...set standards for native production and clearly chose those crafts to value as art which conformed to their thinking and images of Indians." Although there are exceptions, the majority of artists have conformed and, in turn, have succeeded commercially as artists. Today new

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8 Garmhausen 1988, p 43.
9 Garmhausen 1988, pp 43-44.
10 Holm, Thomas, "The 'Discovery' of Indian Art: Awareness or Choices?" Los Angeles, 1984, p 68.
genres have caught the attention of some critics and buyers, but it is difficult to continue the trend of American Indian art and to successfully sell the work unless the Studio's "traditional" or "romantic" images are represented. Art was a relatively new area of economic development for American Indians in the 1930s. This provided for the transition of Indians' utilitarian objects and culture into aesthetically pleasing and popular pieces of fine art: "[M]any Indians turn to commercial arts and crafts simply to make a living, and they are faithful to the prescribed styles and media so as not to endanger that livelihood."11

After Dorothy Dunn's departure in 1937, the Studio felt the effects of World War II. Budget and personnel cuts, applications to the defense industry for jobs, and young men joining the service, all eventually led to the diminishing enrollment of the school. After the war was over, many students turned away from the arts and crafts industry to concentrate on agricultural and technical training. This was probably due to the difficulty of surviving in the arts and crafts industry and because the other industries were more economically viable for American Indians. Indians, upon returning to the United States after the war, attended technical schools and universities under the GI Bill. They were exposed to different experiences from which they could draw from and fully express their creativity. They attended schools that did not dictate a particular style or type of art. The Santa Fe Indian School could not compete with the other Bureau of Indian Affairs' and missionary boarding schools in technical and vocational training in agricultural and manufacturing industries.12

The Studio was slowly phased out as the school was forced to implement numerous changes in order to recruit and maintain students. In the early 1960s,

the Studio was closed and the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) opened. The IAIA was "the nation's only all-Indian, all-arts training center. This institute was controlled and supervised by the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, which was implemented in 1935 with assistance from Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier. The Board was implemented to promote the development of arts and crafts among Indians, thus promoting economic welfare and development. In essence, the Board was created to oversee development and marketing of Indian arts and crafts. The Institute was funded directly by the Washington Bureau of Indian Affairs, and open to all Indians of North America, Eskimos, and Aleuts of one-fourth Indian blood heritage." The Studio era ended in the early 1960s against a backdrop of social and political turmoil throughout the United States.

Perhaps the most complete source for information regarding the art schools in Santa Fe is Winona Garmhausen's *The History of Indian Arts Education in Santa Fe: The Institute of American Indian Arts with Historical Background 1890-1962*. Although information about the Studio and the Institute of American Indian Arts School can be found in reference to American Indian Art, Dr. Garmhausen's text is quite detailed and accurate. In particular, for more information on the Studio under Dorothy Dunn's direction, read her book entitled *American Indian Painting of the Southwest and Plains Area*.

III

The Institute of American Indian Arts.

The parameters of the Studio style were ultimately seen to lack the elasticity to change with and reflect the times. As more personal and increasingly reflective art work began to emerge, the foundations of 20th century Native American art were strongly shaken.¹

The Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe, New Mexico opened in the early 1960s on the grounds of the Santa Fe Indian School previously housing the Studio. In keeping with the changing times and markets, new direction and instruction were necessary to maintain interest in American Indian art. Although academics were to be emphasized, art eventually dominated and became the central focus of instruction. The faculty at the IAIA, as at the Studio, influenced the students on how and what to create as they were considered authorities in the field. During the 1960s and 1970s the attitudes and opinions of the faculty and students at the IAIA influenced and had considerable impact on other American Indian students to create particular styles of art. One of these styles, American Indian Protest Art, emerged from the IAIA, due, in part, to the movements and social motivation of the 1960s and 1970s.²

¹ Gardiner Art Gallery 1983, p 3.
The original impetus for the IAIA dated from the 1950s when Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Glenn Emmons, authorized Hildegard Thompson, former BIA Director of Education, to implement a school for young Indian artists. From this authorization the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) was established and opened in 1962. The IAIA was first under the superintendence of George Boyce, who retired in 1967. Lloyd New (Cherokee), previously the Director of the Art Department, took over Boyce’s duties as Superintendent and changed his title to Director of the IAIA. The faculty and staff of the IAIA were Indian and non-Indian while the student body was composed entirely of American Indians and Alaskan Natives who had at least one-quarter Indian blood and enrolled in a federally recognized tribe.

Hildegard Thompson’s original intention for the IAIA was to combine “emphasis on college preparatory curriculum and vocational training in the arts.” George Boyce, on the other hand, emphasized development of the whole individual where art instruction was the key to the “developmental process” of young people. From its inception and contrary to its title, the IAIA was not exclusively an arts school. It also emphasized academics and encouraged students to pursue further education after they graduated from the IAIA.

The IAIA remained oriented to academics until the early 1970s when Lloyd New became the Director. New’s belief was that the IAIA was an arts school. Rather than use art as a tool in the developmental process, the arts were to be “the end to which the students were to strive.”

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3 Garmhausen 1988, p 62.
4 Garmhausen 1988, p 71.
6 Garmhausen 1988, p 100.
wanted to combine the Indian and non-Indian worlds and enable the students to retain their traditions and cultures. As New stated,

We want to develop methods to teach the American Indian how to live in today's world, to belong and contribute to it, to take his rightful place in it.\(^7\)

The IAIA, throughout its history, was a "multi-tribal dumping ground for young persons whose mental, physical, and attitudinal problems had become unsolvable on their home reservations."\(^8\) If tribal authorities observed that the youth had an interest in art, he/she was often referred to the IAIA. The reputation of the IAIA was soon somewhat tarnished, but the staff did not refuse students if they had some inkling of artistic potential. While it is not clear whether the IAIA ever refused some of these youth admission to the school, it appears that they needed to maintain retention levels as well as encourage the pursuit of the arts among young American Indians. Perhaps Garmhausen's insight sums up the matriculation of so many varied students: "[T]he Institute was considered a means of therapy for the student who lacked other available treatment."\(^9\)

The attitude at the IAIA was less constrained than at the Studio in terms of creating a style of art that would sell to patrons of American Indian art, and teaching marketing skills in conjunction with art classes. George Boyce, during his tenure,

...wished to hire art instructors who were 'producing artists with a high degree of recognized national reputation,' for they would

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\(^7\) Garmhausen 1988, p 98.
\(^8\) Garmhausen 1988, p 76.
\(^9\) Ibid.
'keep up their contacts with the market, with the style, economics, changes in fashion, and many other insights of importance in their vocation.'

The instruction of marketing and economics was strategic at the IAIA. Boyce wanted the students to make a living from their art and comply with the "changes in fashion" in order to sell their work.

Former students and well-known artists were hired as faculty to carry out Boyce's plan. These artists included: Charles Loloma (Hopi) and his wife Otollie, Ralph Pardington, Jim McGrath, Alan Houser (Apache), Louis Ballard (Osage/Quapaw), Geronima Cruz Montoya (San Juan Pueblo), and Fritz Scholder (Mission/Luiseno). Although the faculty was not entirely composed of American Indians, they were highly regarded in their respective fields and had the ability to teach their art and assist the students with deliverance to the art world.

Fritz Scholder, a graduate of the Studio, returned to the IAIA as an art instructor. Scholder, a critic of the style of instruction at the Studio, taught students how to paint and allowed a certain degree of freedom and experimentation, encouraging them to go beyond the traditional and explore contemporary styles. In this context, innovations in techniques and subject matter were often adopted by the students. As Garmhausen states,

The works produced at the IAIA were very much influenced by the quality and personality of the teacher. In such a familial setting students gathered around the teacher or teachers of their choice and oftentimes closely emulated their work. But by the same token some instructors were very much influenced by the works of

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10 Garmhausen 1988, p 73.
certain of their students, and all the students greatly affected each other.\textsuperscript{12}

An example of this emulation is the rumor that Fritz Scholder "borrowed" a style from a student that gained Scholder international renown. This series of paintings, the Indian Series, skyrocketed Scholder's career. It has been implied that it was not originally Scholder's idea, but Bill Soza's.

Because the students represented different cultures and interacted in the White culture, they were encouraged to experiment and use all types of media, explore new techniques, and utilize non-Indian art forms in their art.\textsuperscript{13} The faculty and staff were open to new ideas whether contemporary or traditional. There was a range of creativity and experiences that American Indian students from across the United States and Alaska were encouraged to express through their art, yet the traditional styles and motifs were still present within the school. Unlike the Studio, the traditional styles were not the only styles encouraged at the IAIA.

As any academic institution is known for teaching, it is also influential in what is taught. In any field the information that is taught is left to the professors' preference and discretion. Ideas are formed and passed on to students, but the impacts of the opinions of the professors and other students are extremely influential. This could be considered a transference of the attitudes and outlooks of the professors to the students. One is encouraged to conform to the instructors' style in order to pass, but it may also be that the student chooses to use and manipulate a new and interesting idea.

\textsuperscript{12} Garmhausen 1988, p 83.
\textsuperscript{13} Garmhausen 1988, pp 74-75
The arts, as well as the students, at the IAIA were influenced by the political upheaval of the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was difficult for American Indians to separate themselves from the activities of the period because the reasons behind the protests and demonstrations greatly affected their lives; socially, culturally, politically and economically. The confrontations, occupations, founding of activist organizations, and passage of laws that directly related to American Indians were influencing every aspect of their lives, including their identities, autonomy and survival.

The influences of this era appeared in the form of recognition and acknowledgment of Indian concerns and the belief that it was socially acceptable to challenge, verbally or visually, perceptions of past injustices and atrocities the dominant society inflicted upon American Indians. The American Indian protest movement and organizations such as the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC) were rapidly gaining media coverage and international attention. The IAIA was greatly affected by the activities and attitudes of these organizations and their members. Disruption in routine and classes were brought to the fore when members of these radical groups appeared on the IAIA campus and infiltrated the minds and attitudes of the students, faculty, and staff. Russell Means, an AIM leader, visited the IAIA and encouraged some of the students to become members of the organization. These few students soon became active in the protest movement.

The artists at IAIA began to depict the period and the events that transpired in their painting, music, dramatic arts, and poetry. These depictions
included current demonstrations, historic battles between American Indians and the United States military, upside down United States flags symbolizing American in distress, and images of Indians who appeared strong and powerful instead of the vanquished foe (noble savage) as was so often depicted by non-Indian artists. Some works utilized traditional symbolism to express war or rage that only those familiar with the culture would recognize. The students were expressing emotions of a tumultuous period in Federal-Indian relations and with the White society. It appears that the artists were releasing contemporary attitudes of frustration and anger through their art, although how widespread or influential their art was outside the IAIA is not clear. Some students of the IAIA joined the organizations and participated in militant activities. Some were arrested and jailed and forced underground to avoid authorities. Of these students who were painting protest art, some are still actively involved in this art form and in militant activity. Others have graduated to new styles of expression that may or may not be associated with protest, and some artists changed styles only to return to protest art.

Although there are few well-known protest artists, there are many more who receive little recognition for their work. Some of these protest artists who attended the IAIA include: Delmar Boni (Apache), Gerald McMaster (Plains Cree), Grey Cohoe (Navajo), Don Montileaux (Oglala Sioux), Austin Rave (Miniconjou Sioux), Alfred Youngman (Cree), Sherman Chaddleson (Kiowa), and Richard Ray Whitman (Yuchi/Pawnee). Other artists preferred to utilize the more satiric and ironic stereotypical imagery in their art, while the artists above chose to depict overt dissatisfaction with the federal government and White

society. Their style of protest art utilizes images from White culture, American Indian cultures, media-generated images, words and phrases, and symbolism that represents a collision of the two cultures. Apart from activism implied in certain artworks, the artists have to consider the stylistic ramifications of protest art and the art market.

More attention and recognition are awarded to artists who create traditional art. As American Indian artist Kay Walkingstick states,

For any artist serious critical review is an important part of becoming established, and the lack of serious critical discussion of Native American art outside of its relationship to ethnographic or tribal art and artifacts is one of the biggest problems we artists face.\textsuperscript{17}

The market dictates the type or style of art that will sell and make an artist popular. This influences the decision of the artists to conform or rebel, which could hamper their career. On the other hand, there are artists who create in their own preferred style and who occasionally receive recognition for their art through shows in galleries and biographical information on them that accompanies the shows.

The American Indian protest art genre was conceived within the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe. This art genre has survived and succeeded to the present and will probably continue as long as there is interest and people who are willing to purchase the art works. It is difficult to succeed as an artist, but there are many people who attempt it and the IAIA was an influential and significant factor in many artists' attempts. The faculty, staff, and students who were present at the IAIA during the 1960s and 1970s were

influencing each other, exchanging experiences and generating new ideas.\textsuperscript{18} The protest movements of the time were also a significant factor. The attitudes and emotions of activists infiltrated the IAIA perhaps because they were advocating to retain their Indian identities. They were also fighting for their human rights and because the students were composed of Indians of different cultures it greatly affected their experiences as American Indians.

\textsuperscript{18} Garmhausen 1988, p 83.
IV

Evolution of an Indian Identity.

While other minority groups are fighting to get out of the ghetto, the American Indian is fighting like crazy to maintain his identity as an Indian.¹

The events that dominated the American Indian protest movement of the 1960s and 1970s are essential to understand the attitudes and motivations of American Indian artists and the creation of the "Indian" identity.

In the 1960s and 1970s protests and demonstrations were abundant and minorities were demanding civil rights and an end to discrimination. American Indians took their lead from the civil rights movements, particularly the Black Panther Party, a radical African-American group, that chose to express their opinions, protest feelings of discrimination, and, through violent and non-violent activity, gain attention for their cause. This group chose to protest the unfair and unequal treatment they perceived as emanating from the federal government and White society, and demanded action from government agencies. The choice to demonstrate and protest conditions escalated with the advent of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC) whose social ideals were based on obtaining recognition and social and economic benefits for urban Indians.

¹ Garmhausen 1988, p 98.
Hundreds of American Indians actively participated in demonstrations and protests advocating American Indian rights and emphasizing violations of prior treaty agreements. These activities included fish-ins in Washington State beginning in 1964; the occupation of Alcatraz Island in 1969; the Mayflower II demonstration in 1970; the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs building in Washington, D.C. in 1972; and the occupation of Wounded Knee, SD in 1973. These activities were intended to focus attention on the injustices felt by some American Indians and to advocate change in Federal-Indian relations.

All of these demonstrations and protests were, of course, much more extensive than has been indicated here.\(^2\) Emotions and tempers were flaring during the movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The activism ranged from passive sign carrying demonstrations to more violent gun fights resulting in the death of both Indians and non-Indians. Some Indians supported the movements and others were outraged that radical, urban militant groups were parading around presuming to represent every American Indian.

There was virtually no trust of the federal government due to broken treaty obligations and promises. American Indian activists followed the lead of other minority groups by protesting the discrimination they felt they had been receiving. The militant activists who participated in these occupations and demonstrations were predominantly non-traditional urban Indians who were members of urban Indian organizations. Two such organizations are the American Indian Movement (AIM), originally founded to combat racism toward urban Indians and demand better services for Indians in the cities, and the

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\(^2\) If the reader is interested, the References section lists a small sample of the numerous texts and documentaries that deal specifically with the events and Indian organizations.
National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), whose foundation was based on protesting the government's mistreatment of Indians.\(^3\)

The most physical and visible protests led to the arrests and deaths of many people in pursuit of what they thought were their rights. In conjunction with the protests there was a growing movement among artists to create and produce art that vented their frustration and anger and acted as a form of therapy for them. Though some of these activists were artists who did participate in the demonstrations and protests, it was "safer" for them to paint than to join militant groups who used physical force to put forth demands.

The 1960s were also a tumultuous period for urban Indians regarding their identity. Attempts to discover who they were and their roles in society were hampered by living in the cities. Urban Indians were bombarded with the White culture that was in direct conflict with their "Indianness".\(^4\) The attempts to reclaim their Indian status resulted in the ideology of the American Indian. In essence, the urban Indian artists' created an "Indian" identity through their art.

A complaint that occupied the minds of many Indians was that the militants were regarded, by Indians and non-Indians, as representing or speaking on behalf of all Indians. This ignored the fact that there are four distinct "types" of American Indians including; traditionals, non-traditionals, urban Indians and reservation Indians. The majority of the militant groups were composed of young, semi-educated Indians, brought up in urban environments and learning their heritage through movies, television, and inadequate textbooks. Their visibility and perceived relationship to even more radical

\(^3\) Hill 1990, p 12.
protest groups evoked tremendous reaction in both the Indian and non-Indian populations.

To understand the emotions and reasons behind the protests of the 1960s and 1970s and thus the emergence of protest art, details of the events that overshadowed the period are not necessary here. However, the need for attempts at solidification of Indian identity needs to be discussed if the reader is to understand American Indian protest art.

The idea of "Indian" is a relatively new concept for Indians themselves. The idea of Indian first appeared when Christopher Columbus identified the population of North America as "los Indios," but prior to the late 1960s and early 1970s a unified concept of Indian did not exist. The population referred to as Indians referred to themselves in terms of members of specific tribes or clans. There is no satisfactory definition; the term is an attempt to classify a diverse race of people. The catalyst for this unified concept appeared with the advent of the American Indian Movement (AIM). Perhaps it will be easier to comprehend its development with an analogy: the evolution of the airplane.

The idea of the airplane was conceived of centuries ago, yet the reality of the airplane did not emerge until the Wright brothers constructed it. The first airplane was crude and not without problems, but because the concept was implemented and constructed, the reality emerged. Now the idea was solidified. Since its emergence, the airplane has changed and expanded to include numerous different types of aircraft that far exceed and bear little resemblance to the original idea.

This analogy is similar to the idea of Indian. The idea existed in nebulous form, and due to the civil rights movements and the advent of AIM in
the 1960s, the reality of an Indian identity emerged and is presently evolving. The idea of the Indian was galvanized during the confrontation at Wounded Knee, SD after attempts were made by federal forces to eradicate the movement and its members. Had the government succeeded in annihilating the militant occupiers, the Indian identity probably would have been solidly defined and a powerful uprising of the Indian people might have occurred.

The idea of the Indian is still evolving today. Due to the different types and experiences of Indians, there is no singular cultural definition for Indian. Earnie Frost explains the essence of influences on oral tradition that can be directly related to sense of self or identity wherein,

[Culture] is a living body, the creative source of the people's collective and individual selves. It is in continuous flux, and that fluidity enables it to accommodate the reality of the people's present world. If it is tampered with by outsiders, the sense of self is also tampered with, and when that alteration includes the intrusion of sexist and racially prejudiced assumptions where they never before existed, then the consequences are culturally devastating.5

In the search for cultural and political survival the Indians' perception of their identity is changing, and protest art is an attempt to define this ever-changing concept. The Indian appears to be in a state of flux regarding cultural identity due to the numerous cultural and political influences and experiences each individual encounters. Donald Fixico explains this view in American Indian Identity.

Assimilated Native Americans in most parts of the West experience a similar cultural void as that of other Americans. The mixed-bloods and full-bloods, who have been raised without prior

knowledge of their Indianness, have little experience of their native culture. A substantial number of Indians have been adopted or placed in boarding schools where they are raised to young adulthood with very little knowledge of their native cultures. In addition, some Indians have chosen to forego the cultural past to live as mainstream citizens in society. Later they sometimes desire to learn about their native past. Over the years these individuals experience personality differences or an identity crisis resulting from our fast-paced, stressful and neurotic society. In this sense, these Native Americans are no different than white Americans or other ethnic Americans who are without a cultural identity. Basically, people need a cultural past which they find comforting. During a national or world crisis they especially need a cultural identity for security and stability. They need to know where their people came from and which traditions they must defend. In brief, identification with a cultural past enables people to escape from tension and establish a base from which to operate against social threats.  

The artists who create protest art are perhaps producing it in an attempt to solidify their identity as Indians. Yet the art emerges as a multi-cultural collage. It is rarely questioned if these artists are Indian or not, but whom they are representing. These men are urban Indians and appear to be conceptualizing the idea of Indian from their own experiences of life, including their tribal heritage, other tribal cultures, and their acculturation into White society. All of these aspects can not help affecting the artists. They seem unsure about who they are or whom they represent, as is apparent in their art, which appears to depict conflict, complexity and confusion.

Who are the artists representing? They can not effectively represent all Indians as there is no singular definition of Indian. There are many different types, cultures, and political agendas of American Indians. The artists can only

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present their art to society as a representation of their particular idea of what it means to be Indian.

The emergence of Indian protest art can be conclusively traced to the IAIA, but also from the era that included the protest movements and the fight for American Indian rights. The artists who created the protest art genre have not been fully recognized. The artists that utilized the ironic and satiric stereotypical imagery in their art have received more attention and recognition by galleries, critics and scholars. Perhaps this is because the use of such imagery is more comfortable or less threatening than the style of protest art that is more blatant and chilling. The latter style receives little recognition in the art world. Some artists have ceased production and others, within the last few years, have begun producing this style of art with some financial success. Apart from the influences of the IAIA and the American Indian Movement, the 1960s and 1970s were also tumultuous for American Indians for another reason, the emerging ever-changing notion of identity and what it meant to be Indian. The artists can relate to their own cultural values, but they are not qualified to speak for or to represent all Indians’ experiences, or their notions of who they are. As Jamake Highwater states,

Indians are creating new definitions of what it means to be Indian in the twentieth century and beyond. In contemporary American Indian art we clearly see the American Indian re-created as an Indian individual.  

All of the influences; the Studio, the IAIA, and the American Indian protest movement of the 1960s and 1970s affected American Indian protest artists' art

and their notions of identity. A wide array of images are utilized in their art, which depicts the history of Federal-Indian relations which has been presented in books and the media. Their ideas of Indians are generally derived from the images they see, hear, or read about from non-Indians and the information obtained may contain biases and misconceptions. It is difficult for a person to interpret what transpired in the past if they did not actually experience it. Rarely have these urban artists had much contact or association with the more traditional Indians. The search for or creation of an American Indian identity resulting from the clash of the White and American Indian cultures reminds these artists that they may be Indians, but they were raised in a White society. Therefore, they use their art as a vehicle to perhaps define their Indianness, whatever that may be.
The Indian protest art movement has been blatantly ignored by scholars, critics, galleries, museums, the general public and/or patrons of American Indian art, and Indians. Reviews and recognition of the artists who utilize ironic and satirical stereotypical imagery are more abundant than those of the overt Indian protest art. The notion of identity is mentioned, but fails to be adequately addressed by scholars and critics. These scholars and critics are Indian and non-Indian. Richard Hill is the only one who specifically addresses "American Indian Protest Art" and Robin Cembalest, another scholar, acknowledges the "Indian Protest Art" genre, but she does not explain or elaborate on the genre. No others specifically address political art in these terms, but merely as Indian art. Most scholars and critics examine American Indian art as one genre. These "authorities" on art discuss stereotypical imagery in the form of satire or irony, anger and identity, but fail to acknowledge or even recognize the protest artists' use of such imagery as a unique and dynamic subject. If the scholars and critics even introduce these ideas, they generally fail to support their statements and conclusions regarding American Indian protest art.

The style of political art that utilizes irony and satire is best expressed by painters such as Fritz Scholder (Mission/Luiseno), T. C. Cannon
(Caddo/Kiowa), and Harry Fonseca (Navajo) who have received recognition for their art. There are other artists who use these forms in their work, but they are not as well-known. Irony or satire are used to present to the viewer the absurdity of the stereotypical American Indian image and is a way artists can comment on contemporary issues without being overtly offensive. The artists' intentions are often to ridicule the traditional White view of who Indians are and to attempt to erase the noble savage images. David Bradley, who will be discussed later, uses irony or humor in some of his work. He "uses his art to question the stereotypes that still invade our thinking about Indians." These artists believe that stereotyping can be neutralized by the use of irony and satire. It appears that the artist is in search of his American Indian identity, but he is subtle in his approach.

Humor is an essential element in American Indian cultures and societies. Artist and writer Claire Wolf Krantz recognizes the use of humor with the statement, "Wit and irony . . . are seen as contributing to their survival in a hostile world." It is used as a form of interaction, to relieve tensions and to release emotions in a way that is not destructive to the intended receiver. The artist uses this style of art to transcend the hostility and discrimination that some Indians encounter almost daily. It is also a means of social control within the Indian culture. As American Indian artist Juane Quick To See Smith relates,

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5 Trafzer 1991, p 140.
8 Krantz 1989, p 37.
Humor is a tie that binds tribe to tribe. Humor has a panacea for what ails. Humor is a mainstay of Indian life.\(^9\)

The use of humor in the art also makes it easier for people to view the work.\(^10\) The message appears to be clear, but the presentation is not as offensive as the blatant protest art. The use of irony and humor is the subtle and sophisticated form of protest against the stereotypes and attitudes that non-Indians have and/or had about Indians and is not regarded as protest art. In addition, the use of humor assists the artists' attempt to make a point to the viewer whether he/she is Indian or non-Indian. Lucy Lippard contends that,

> Certain messages are just becoming apparent to outside observers. A deceptively gentle sarcasm is revealed as a weapon for the long haul. It allows apparently decorative elements to pass as such, even when they shelter more profound meanings.\(^11\)

William Thompson expresses the utilization of humor in the Indian realm with this statement, "Satiric Indian humor helps soothe the sting of a people who survive but can never forget."\(^12\)

The use of irony and satire appears to be a coping mechanism for the artists and is their attempt to erase the stereotyped images. As these American Indian artists attempt to represent themselves in a less stoic manner, they use the traditional stereotype, yet include humor in the depiction. Perhaps the artists relieve their frustration with people who seemingly do not view American Indians as anything more than an image of the noble savage. By using

\(^9\) Trafzer 1991, p 140. Quote regarding the use of irony and satire in hers and other American Indians' art.
\(^10\) Cembalest 1992, p 90.
\(^12\) William Thompson, "The American Indians Attempt To Get The Last Laugh," 1989, p 9.
humorous images of American Indians, the artist continues a traditional form of social control where the artists' and other Indians' anger is restrained and they can appreciate the irony of the images.

Some examples of humor are represented in cartoons created by and published in American Indian newspapers. In 1992 an exhibit, entitled "Muttonman Discovers Columbus", opened in Albuquerque with the Columbus Quincentennial theme. An example of satiric humor is depicted in a cartoon by Vincent Craig (Navajo). Four adult Indians and two young Indians are listening and staring somberly at a wide-eyed, gaping mouthed preacher whose left hand is across his chest holding a bible. His right index finger points towards the sky as he exclaims: "IF YOU HEATHENS ARE WORTHY. . . . . . ALL EVIL SHALL PERISH FROM THE EARTH!!" In the next frame the preacher has disappeared in a cloud of smoke or dust leaving his hat and bible suspended in mid-air and the word "POOF!" appears where he originally stood. The six Indians now stand with smiles, gleeful, and humorous expressions upon their faces.

It appears that scholars and critics emphasize the ironic and humorous art perhaps because it does not challenge their White perceptions of the American Indian. Ironic and satiric images depict stereotypes and rarely the violent clash of Indian and White cultures or historical events. The scholars do not confront issues that extend beyond the humor of the art other than the use of wit by the artists and their attempt to reverse the traditional stereotype of American Indians.

The artists are diverging from the "timeless" romanticized image of the American Indian as an anthropological subject or "cultural artifact" and are
demonstrating that there is more substance to American Indians than has previously been presented. Some American Indian artists use overt and stereotypical imagery to depict their anger and dissatisfaction with White society. This is a potentially volatile subject, and the lack of critical attention is not surprising due to the negative and somewhat disturbing nature of the work. If these paintings are reviewed, it is with sympathy for American Indians and the artist. Some scholars such as Richard Hill, Jimmie Durham, Jackson Rushing and Claire Wolf Krantz mention the anger that is depicted in the art, and identity, but fail to elaborate. Perhaps the non-Indian viewer is afraid that there may be more to the art and the reasons behind it than they are willing to admit or are able to explore. It appears that scholars and critics do not want to offend the egos of the artists, or fully interpret the art because of what they may uncover, or perhaps they just do not know what it means. Non-Indians do not appear to understand American Indian cultures, or realize the injustices that have been inflicted upon American Indians by the federal government and non-Indians. This blatant style of art could be a manipulative technique to entice the less attentive viewer to observe the art, or it could reveal an attack on the patrons' views of cultures and societies that they presume to understand, but in actuality do not.

While the ironic and satiric images are regarded as acceptable by most people, the protest art is seen by many people, Indian and non-Indian, as offensive and insulting. Perhaps this is because few people want to be reminded of what has happened to American Indians in the past and would like to move beyond the offenses and try to find a balance between the cultures. It appears that this style of art is unjustifiable in some peoples' minds and may not
even be considered art, causing the lack of recognition of this genre. As Rudy Martin contends, "If an artist does not fit into the preconceived notions of the patron, the artist is viewed as 'less than authentic' or 'less than traditional.'"\(^{13}\)

American Indian protest art in its overt form depicts the collision of both the White society and culture and the American Indian society and culture. Indian scholar Rick Hill explains that, "Native artists continue to remind us that many issues remain unresolved and they use their talents to confront the viewer to make some choices."\(^{14}\) These choices may include confronting their past, whether Indian or non-Indian, and either accepting it or attempting to make changes. These changes should perhaps redirect the future or atone for the past in the present. The artists may believe that the more disturbing imagery must be presented in order to make the viewer understand the artists' attitudes and emotions regarding events in American Indian history. William Goetzman pinpoints a crucial issue with his statement that American Indians are,

Forced . . . to respond to myths and stereotypes, to explore their past, to deal with the dual identity as both modern American and Indian. Native American Indian artists have brought the contemplation of the Indian experience . . . demanding that the viewer explore with the artist the multifarious threads of his influence, and begin to understand the history of the West from his point of view.\(^{15}\)

It appears that Goetzman acknowledges the "modern American" and the "Indian", but does not include the "modern Indian". This appears to be the attitude of many scholars and critics. They do not acknowledge that there is more than their singular stagnant perception of Indian identity, instead they

\(^{13}\) Rudy Martin, "Our Cultures Speak for Themselves." Santa Cruz, 1990, p 122.
\(^{14}\) Hill 1993, p 12.
\(^{15}\) Goetzman 1986, p 398.
lump all Indians and subsequently all Indian art into one category. Because of the different types, experiences, and cultural and political ideas and influences upon each individual there are many possible Indian identities, but there is no explanation given by critics as to which identity is being researched or presented other than it is an Indian identity.

The scholars and critics state that Indians are ever-changing, that the culture is not, nor has it been, static. Cultural borrowing, and infiltration by other cultures have in one way or another melded with the Indian culture and produced a different type of Indian. Joseph Traugott states that American Indian artists utilize imagery from both American Indian and White cultures. Further he states that the artists are promoting a view of Indianness that opposes the influence of the dominant culture and that the reason for this "merging" is not to become "like Whites". This assumption is of great importance! The non-traditional urban Indian artists are similar to Whites in that they have been acculturated into White society. Traugott is correct in his statement that these artists create the art to further their own identity, yet their identity is so immersed in White culture that it is difficult to distinguish it from the Indian culture. Perhaps the Indian artists are seeking to dissociate from White culture and attempting to reinforce their perception of Indian culture. But this presents a culture that is not tribal specific and incorporates White or American influences. The Indian protest artists utilize both cultures' images and ideas to express their own sense of identity. The urban Indian artists creating protest art appear to be manufacturing an Indian identity. They are not as traditional as the reservation Indians may be, due to their (the artists) assimilated and acculturated position in

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White society. They were raised with a combination of influences, in a society that is not distinctly one culture, especially not one specific Indian culture, whereas the reservation Indians may be affected by White culture but are not as bombarded or, apparently, as affected by it. Scholars Rushing and Krantz address these areas, yet fail to elaborate on the issue of whose identity the artists are seeking.

Jamake Highwater's essay in *The Arts of the North American Indian*, addresses the controversy of identity with the conclusion that the conflict is between the traditional Indians arguing for "ancient images, media and forms" and the non-Indians "demanding modernism and idiosyncratic style and form." He fails to mention the numerous Indian artists who do not fit into the traditional category. It appears that he is asserting that all Indians are traditional Indians. Highwater prefers to address the question, What is Indian art? He refers to how a person determines which images are or are not Indian, but fails to address the artists' conception of their own identity. On the other hand he does admit that,

> It is exceptionally difficult in our era of Indian progressives and traditionalists, activists and conservatives, to identify either an Indian leadership or Indian spokespersons who have the approval of a truly wide constituency and are not the target of considerable internal or intertribal factionalisms.  

Yet he never fully addresses the issue of identity nor what his definition of Indian is. He freely admits that Indians are not static, are influenced by everything and everyone around them, that there are different types of Indians, 

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but he does not elaborate on what his perceived idea or notion of Indian is, nor what the artists may perceive. He prefers to address the traditional art and imagery which is humorous and neglects the blatant protest art that American Indians are also creating.

Gerald Hoffman refers to identity in his essay in the *Arts of the North American Indian*. He states,

> The Indian artist must decide whether to adapt to mainstream Western art and lose his identity as an Indian artist (whatever that identity may mean, given the number of disparate Indian tribes and an ever-growing force of acculturation), or try to preserve the images of his culture, recast in modern forms.\(^{18}\)

Hoffman never expands upon the idea of identity. He does describe the modern Indian art form as being influenced by the "dominant culture", European materials and techniques, but the impetus for the art, the reason for portraying a protest against the establishment or society is never explained.

Scholars and critics do not elaborate on the issue of identity beyond stating that this is Indian or for what Indian artists are searching. Rick Hill exposes the idea of identity by stating, "Indian art becomes a testament to a belief in the unique identity and perspectives that come from being an Indian in the modern world."\(^{19}\) With this statement he places all Indians into one category and fails to explain what his definition of Indian is or what it means to be Indian. As so many Indian critics, scholars and authors imply, non-Indians do not understand what it is like to be Indian in today's society. Instead of accusing people of being ignorant perhaps they should address these issues

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\(^{18}\) *Wade* 1986, p 258.

\(^{19}\) *Hill* 1990, p 34.
and attempt to explain them so that non-Indians can attempt to understand precisely what is implied. If the majority of society is ignorant, then why not attempt to educate them? These scholars and critics may admit to the numerous influences of other cultures, Indian included, and that Indians should not propose to represent all Indians, yet they do not elaborate on the issue of identity. The influences of different types of Indians such as traditional, non-traditional, urban and reservation Indians regarding American Indian art are not recognized. Probably the underlying reason is that these scholars and critics do not know and will not admit with whom the American Indian artists identify.

Claire Wolf Krantz in her article, "Bridging Two Worlds" discusses the bombardment of opposing cultures upon the Indian culture and that a search for a static Indian culture is futile.\(^{20}\) She explains her observation and interpretation that all Indian artists are creating their art for self definition in order to benefit the whole community. She also categorizes all Indians as "Indian artists". Yet if Indians are not static and there are admittedly distinct types of Indians, her statement that all Indians represent the entire Indian community is obviously an inaccurate assessment.

Jackson Rushing addresses her statements in a subsequent article and proposes alternative points of view. He contends that the, "Native artists' search for self is being replaced by a search for forms, images, and techniques that will engage cultural difference at a level that produces tangible politics."\(^{21}\) He does not specifically address the idea of identity other than that its construction is being investigated by artists on numerous levels. Rushing realizes the

\(^{20}\) Krantz, 1989.
differences between artists, whereas Krantz tends to lump all American Indian artists into one category.

Some scholars and critics have acknowledged the artists' anger due to the unfair treatment American Indians have received in the past, and have implied that it is the basis for the art. For example Rick Hill states that,

The hundred years of attempted assimilation created a very angry Indian . . . [It was] natural for Indians to use art to express their frustrations, their anger over their past treatment and their visions of strong and proud Indians of the future.\(^{22}\)

In protesting the past treatment of American Indians by the government, the artists creatively addressed the attitudes and injustices they perceived were inflicted upon them. In order to prove Indians were strong, respectable, and "civilized", as well as to express the anger and frustration they experienced when people did not perceive them in this way, the artists, according to Richard Hill expressed these values and emotions in their art.

The non-Indian viewer does not want to believe that he/she is the reason for the hate and anger depicted on the canvas. It appears that non-Indian and Indian viewers would rather view the traditional or humorous Indian art because these are considered more comfortable than the blatant attack on White society. It is discomfoming, disturbing, and difficult for some to observe this style of art and not be offended. "Contemporary Indian art disturbs and is intended to disturb."\(^ {23}\). It is portrayed as if the viewer has committed the offense and is the "oppressor". One intention of the art is to force the viewer to think and it does not appear to matter to the artist whether the viewers' interpretation is negative.

\(^{22}\) Hill 1993, p 14.
\(^{23}\) Wade 1982, p 5.
or not as long as the artist inspires a reaction. It accomplishes its goal if it makes the viewer evaluate or re-evaluate the depictions and does not allow the viewer to leave without "seeing" the art. It appears that the viewers do not want to use their minds. Instead they want to be entertained with comfortable and familiar images, not with images of death, destruction and anger.²⁴

VI

The Artists.

Among the artists who are creating American Indian protest art, I have chosen to concentrate on three men of various cultural affiliations. These men, in general, are urban Indians in the sense that they either were born and raised in a city, or in a non-traditional environment where they were acculturated to some degree into White society. Each has had formal training in the arts from the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe and/or a university where their concentration was on the arts. Some were active during the American Indian protests and demonstrations of the 1960s and 1970s. The three selected artists are: David Bradley (Chippewa), Alex Jacobs (Mohawk), and Stan Natchez (Shoshone/Paiute). Of these three, two have been interviewed, Alex Jacobs and Stan Natchez. Their comments are an interesting array of opinions concerning art, the protest movement, American Indians, and their role in the American Indian protest art genre.

David Bradley was born in 1954 and raised on the Little Earth Reservation in Minneapolis, MN. He attended the IAIA in the mid-1970s where he concentrated on sculpture. Bradley returned to the IAIA as a guest artist and instructor from 1990 to 1992. This is the extent of his formal art training. He refers to himself as a "self taught" artist. He was not an active protester during

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1 Analysis of art work will be provided in Chapter VII.
2 Biographical information courtesy of Elaine Horwitch Galleries in Santa Fe, NM and Scottsdale, AZ.
the 1960s and 1970s, but has admitted to participating in demonstrations within
the last few years. Bradley has been creating protest art fairly recently and has
been receiving death threats due to the nature of his art work. His art has
toured all over the world and his list of exhibitions is extensive.

Alex Jacobs was born and raised on the Mohawk Reservation at
Akwesasne on the border between the United States and Canada. He
attended the IAIA in the mid-1970s as a sculpture and creative writing student,
and continued his education at the Kansas City Art Institute. He was part of the
Akwesasne Notes newspaper team that reported news and events concerning
American Indians around the country. Jacobs has only within the last few years
been creating protest art. He was concentrating on writing and poetry in the
1970s and continues to write today. He was present and participated in several
protests in the 1970s, mainly as a writer and editor for the Mohawk Nation's
newspaper, Akwesasne Notes. He has had a few art exhibitions, but has
achieved more recognition as a result of his poetry readings and performance
art work.

Stan Natchez was born and raised in Los Angeles, CA and graduated
with a B.S. from the University of Southern Colorado in the mid to late 1970s.
He visited the IAIA before deciding that he would rather attend a school where
he could "actually study the arts". Natchez has taught art for over ten years and
is currently working on an M.F.A. at Arizona State University. He was not
actively involved in demonstrations and protests in the 1960s and 1970s, but

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3 Information courtesy of Elaine Horwitch Galleries.
4 Biographical information courtesy of Copeland/Rutherford.
5 Personal interview.
6 Personal interview.
his art reflects some of the attitudes and emotions that were rampant at the time. He has had many exhibitions and his art tours the world.

These artists have studied and practiced one form of art or another for the past twenty to thirty years. These forms include the visual arts such as painting, drawing, or sculpture; performance art; writing and poetry. The dramatic movements of the 1960s and 1970s and other American Indian artists have had an effect on these three artists. The encouragement they have received has enabled them to continue creating their art to the present. Two of these artists did not begin by creating protest art, yet all of them continue to depict the conflicts between the White and the American Indian cultures. In whatever art form they are creating now or desire to, each of these men has illustrated his perceived state of Indian affairs in his paintings and collages at one time or another. These collages depict issues that they feel are important to bring to the fore. Unless the reader has extensive knowledge of American Indian history and Federal-Indian relations or policy, it may be difficult to understand the underlying foundations of the art, but the imagery does speak for itself. The interpretation of the imagery is dependent upon the viewer, yet clearly these artists believe that their emotional statements must be made, whatever the motivating reasons each may have.

The two artists who made themselves available for interviews were Alex Jacobs and Stan Natchez. The following information and analysis are from personal interviews with each artist. Both men were willing to speak to me, although one appeared to be uptight and acted as though he was being imposed upon while the other was enthusiastic and encouraging. I gained personal insight about both men and what motivates them to produce the styles
of art that they have chosen. I departed from the interview with Alex Jacobs with mixed emotions. He appeared to be the stereotypical "angry" young artist unenthusiastic about discussing his art. Stan Natchez, on the other hand, was very congenial and amenable to talking and was curious as to why American Indian protest art was an interest of mine. He was open and honest and appeared to have no qualms about my wanting to learn more about him and his art. He had no reservations about answering questions and elaborating on his answers.

Both artists' influences and reasons for their art are similar, yet the final results for both are quite different, in the art they produce and the recognition they receive. They have both been generating their unique art, in one form or another, for the past 20 years and both are currently creating protest art in the form of collage.

Alex Jacobs attended the IAIA in the mid-1970s, concentrating on sculpture and poetry. He studied sculpture under Carl Ponca who studied under Alan Houser and Dale Eldridge. Eldridge was an instructor at Kansas City Art Institute and after graduating from IAIA, Jacobs went to Kansas City to study with him. Jacobs was preceded at the IAIA by artists such as T. C. Cannon, Delmar Boni, and Alfred Youngman who had graduated, but remained in the immediate vicinity. They were using the studios and conducting workshops for the students at the IAIA. Jacobs was admittedly influenced by these artists through observation of them at work in the studios, viewing slides of their art, and by personal contact with them.

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7 The reader may remember that these men were mentioned on p 25 regarding their protest art.
Although these artists influenced Jacobs, and he was impressed with the way that they were expressing themselves, he contends that he is also influenced by people on the reservations whom he refers to as "Res Indians" and "Res artists". Jacobs did not specify which reservations and it is difficult to believe that he speaks for all people on all reservations as each reservation is unique and possesses differences in traditions and contemporary societies. He respects the "Res artists" because there are "certain things that a reservation artist tends to portray and to express rather than...say gallery artists." From his comment it appears that the reservation Indians are producing or creating the style of art that they choose, while the "gallery artist" produces what will sell, in essence, what the public demands.

I asked Jacobs about the influence that the 1960s and the protest movements of the period had on him, referring to an article that I read where he stated that the era was influential to his work. Jacobs did not answer regarding the influence of the movements, but of the people who were attending the IAIA while he was there.

Alex Jacobs, whose primary interest is writing, creates a collage of words on his canvas. His imagery is not as intense as some other artists because, it appears, he prefers to express himself through the creative use of words. Jacobs does utilize "stereotypical" imagery to represent American Indians, but his utilization of words and phrases conveys more information and produces a more profound impact upon the viewer. The backgrounds of the collages are a brilliant red. The words, depicted mostly in black, white, and yellow, create spirals and circles emanating from the center of and bordering the canvas. The

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8 Personal interview.
words and phrases depict a convergence of White and American Indian cultures. He incorporates the acronyms and words BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs), CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), Alcatraz, Wounded Knee, Sitting Bull, Mother Earth, and fry bread. He also uses the names and images of familiar automobiles and products clearly associated with White culture in his paintings. In addition to the words and phrases, he paints images of Indians that are somewhat traditional, yet he incorporates intrusive elements, such as watches, sunglasses, automobiles, etc., from contemporary American or White culture.

Jacobs insists that he is expressing and creating for himself and that he is not sending a specific message via his art. Additionally, he believes he is speaking for the Indian people through his art, as a form of therapy and education.

It is for the Indian people...It's therapy for urban, educated Indians who are maybe cut off from their Indian roots...and it's for everybody else. All the non-Indians and White people who deal with the Indian stereotype and the Indian image.  

He believes that "some things [issues] need to be confronted or addressed". These issues (whatever they may be for him because he did not clearly state them) are to "open people's eyes" whether they be Indian or non-Indian. In essence, he wants to make the viewing public aware of concerns of Indian people.

Jacobs contends that there should be more reviews and critiques of Indian protest art, specifically because "politics isn't all yelling at the White
man":11 and because scholars appear to believe that this style of art is an "attack" directed at White society. He believes there is more to the art than an assault on the government or White society. The desired result should be to put the debate inside the head of the audience, inside the head of the viewer. Jacobs explains,

If you just hit them with a political sticker or a guilt sticker, you know it's like trying to train a dog, you know, I mean you want them to look at something and walk away thinking about it. [W]ho are they arguing with? They end up arguing and debating inside their head, what they see and what they feel.12

Although Jacobs believes it is important to encourage the viewer to contemplate the images portrayed on the canvas, he also indicates that he edits his work for the viewers. It is a difficult task to accomplish (if the art is to be meaningfully oriented to a complex variety of people) to be able to depict and utilize images that will convey meaning to each viewer and achieve the desired purpose of contemplation by each viewer. Not everyone will necessarily comprehend the entire canvas, but the central issue for Jacobs is to convey emotions and to entice the audience or viewer to ponder the meaning of the art. It doesn't matter so much what they think, as long as the art stimulates the individual to think and creates an effect upon the viewer whether he/she is Indian or non-Indian.

Stan Natchez never attended the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA), however, he did visit the school for one week to determine whether it was an

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11 Personal interview.
12 Ibid.
atmosphere where he would be able to advance his artistic abilities. He opted to attend the University of Southern Colorado where he could concentrate on the arts. He was not influenced by the formal structure of the IAIA, but was inspired by the Indian art that was appearing across the country. Among Indian artists who have influenced him, Natchez admires Fritz Scholder, T. C. Cannon and all the ledger artists. The ledger artists were American Indian men (warriors) who had been "captured" by the United States military and incarcerated in prisons such as Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida. They were given pencils and ledgers which they used to depict their past, and experiences within the prisons. In addition, Natchez states that contemporary issues affect him and his art, as well as the "great [Indian] warriors who fought to influence what we are today."\textsuperscript{13} Everything and everyone around him have affected his art and he does not identify a specific person or time, preferring to emphasize the world around him and all the people that populate it.

The images that Natchez presents in his art are represented on items such as copies of the United States Constitution, sheets of money and stock certificates that are notably from White society. On top of these, he paints ledger style Indians and horses, depictions of General Custer or Chief Red Cloud of the Oglala Sioux, the United States flag and other images that are extracted from both societies and cultures, and blatantly depicts the dichotomy of Indian-White relations. Instead of the majority of the canvases being stylized with stenciled letters, he manipulates the use of materials from American culture and creates images that he then superimposes onto the canvases.

\textsuperscript{13} Personal interview.
Natchez discusses art in terms of documenting the time that we live in and he believes it is his responsibility as an artist to document his time anyway he sees it.

I think the reason I touch on Custer and especially Red Cloud is because these are some of the people that had a great impact on Indian people all around the country...as an historian myself, I think all Indian people...have to know our history, to know...where we are going in the future. It's important that we research where we come from.\textsuperscript{14}

Natchez doesn't consider his art to be a political weapon, but educational. He believes it is important to document issues pertinent to American Indians today. If the issues involve the government and/or White society, or Indian stereotypes then these are what he illustrates. He emphasizes historical events in his depictions and claims that these are inseparable from current issues. Natchez comments on stereotypes by stating that,

We all teach different facets [of life]. But I think that one thing we all have in common is that we're all concerned with . . . consciousness. Making people aware that not all Indians wear feathers and that we are modern man.\textsuperscript{15}

Natchez depicts numerous issues, e.g. that American Indians have been damaged socially, culturally, politically and especially economically. "Those are the things that I try to put [in my art]. That economically Indian people have to focus, reservations have to become businesses."\textsuperscript{16} In essence, they must be

\textsuperscript{14} Personal interview.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
self-governing and learn, by trial and error, to sever their dependence on the United States federal government.

The creation of art, contrary to Alex Jacobs’ statement, is not an outlet for Stan Natchez. It is a living part of him. It is something that he believes he has to do to “stay alive”. Natchez insists that it is important to entice people to contemplate his art and he places this responsibility upon the viewer.

[If] I can make them think, What does this mean? Then, well, I’ve succeeded because all I want them to do is to actually think on their own and if they take the time to think on their own here they may think about the next time they throw trash or they may think about the environment or something. It’s all part of it.17

He contends that his art is not intended to be negative, but to make people more aware. Natchez has no control over people who view his art and who may assume guilt for what is depicted in his work. Emotions come from within the viewer and, for Natchez, it is “o.k.” to believe what they want as long as they ponder the art.

Alex Jacobs and Stan Natchez are both American Indian artists who produce American Indian protest art. Their backgrounds, influences, individual styles and imagery differ somewhat, but the motivation behind their art is similar. This motivation is to produce this style of art to entice people to become more aware, to educate the viewer, and to encourage people to ponder the art to solicit a response within the viewer him/herself. The point is not what the response or interpretation is, but that there is one.

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17 Personal interview.
The public recognition and financial success of these artists differs. It appears that Alex Jacobs is not recognized for his painting, instead, he has achieved success for the poetry he has concentrated on during the past twenty years. The prices of his paintings are high, but he also produces poster art enabling the less wealthy to purchase his work. It appears that Jacobs survives financially from the variety of art forms he creates, rather than solely relying on his paintings to earn a living.

Stan Natchez appears to be making a comfortable living from his highly priced art. Even though he is in graduate school, he rents his own studio space, has art showing consistently in at least three states, and drives a Mercedes Benz. His art works, on the other hand, are all monoprints. He does not own, nor produce any copies of his work. Natchez' commercial success, reinforces his statement that financial survival is attainable for Indian people.

The reader must be aware that no two artists are completely alike in style and motivation. The personalities and opinions of Alex Jacobs and Stan Natchez were opposite in that Jacobs appeared to be "angry" and non-cooperative, while Natchez was congenial and possessed no reservations nor hostility when directly questioned regarding his art. Yet each chooses to express their opinions of Indian-White relations through their art work, specifically paintings and collages and the use of similar imagery.

An important element in each of these artists' works is the complexity of each piece. The words and images overlap and fill the canvas, creating an aura of confusion. This can be directly related to the history of Federal-Indian relations, i.e., the confusion and complexity associated with laws, treaties, and policy. No matter how many times a person views the art or reviews the history
of policy, it will appear different each time. More information is perceived and reinterpreted with each study of the canvas and, consequently, of the history of Federal-Indian relations. In the following interpretation of the art and elemental reasons behind it, the reader must keep in mind that additional interpretations should not be ignored as this style of art and the creators of it have been.
VII
The Images: Reasons Why.

There is virtually no acknowledgement of American Indian protest art. There are no valid reasons why interpretations of this art genre should be overlooked. There can be several interpretations and consequently more than one conclusion, yet only limited perspectives and analyses of the art are presented in prior literature regarding Indian art. I maintain that the artists' motivations deserve review. My analysis will be presented after descriptions of David Bradley's, Alex Jacob's, and Stan Natchez's art works which were created between 1989 and 1993.

David Bradley's protest works are canvases of disorientation. The images are confusing and complex, overlapping themselves across the canvas. Bradley utilizes newspaper articles concerning American Indian events and issues, paper money, excerpts from copies of treaties, bingo tickets, and other items to create the backdrop for his collages. He also haphazardly incorporates, on the initial images; stenciled lettering, old photographs, maps, and flyers on which he paints. He paints images of the United States flag, tipis, M-16's (United States military assault weapons), realistic depictions of Indians, landscapes and scenes of events in the ledger style. An example of his use of ledger style is a representation of the shooting on the Jumping Bull Property on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. On some paintings and collages he also attaches shells to the canvas. His art becomes a conglomeration of
visual information in a seemingly disorganized and disorienting representation of the American Indian and political activities.

The repetition of stenciled letters contributes to the piece by explaining (as if explanation were necessary) that Indians have been ill-treated in the past. In one painting, entitled "POW", the use of the letters POW (acronym for Prisoner of War) stretch across the canvas, correlating with the image of an Indian behind cell bars. The scene is painted over photographs depicting AIM and NIYC occupations and takeovers. In the background photographs of well-known Indian leaders, such as Russell Means (Sioux and AIM member) and Geronimo (Apache) are also presented. The use of these images is intended to depict the incarceration of American Indians.

In a similar work, entitled "4 Days in Oklahoma", the repetition of the words POW WOW are repeated along the lower portion of a canvas below the photograph of Apache prisoners at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. The photograph is duplicated twice and the words "GOOD INDIANS" appear below one copy, which is shaded slightly darker than the second copy below which the words "BAD INDIANS" appear. Paper money, newspaper articles and copies of treaties create the background, suggesting that perhaps the Indians in Oklahoma are being held prisoner. The treaties and money appear to be significant factors of the incarceration. Although the pow wow is a relatively recent event in Indian culture, its roots could well be founded in the restriction of Indians on reservations in an attempt to reclaim a sense of cultural identity.

"Ghost Revelations: The Resurrection"¹ is a stark depiction of past events where Indians were massacred and "unjustly" treated. The use of photographs

¹ See Appendix A, p 82.
of Indians from the past (posed and unsmiling), tipis, crosses and the words Wounded Knee, Sand Creek, Columbus, and the Trail of Tears appear, as well as drips and splatters of brilliant red paint which represents the blood that was shed, and results in a powerful presentation.

Bradley utilizes vibrant colors within his work, which adds to the shock value and power of each piece. There is no question that Bradley, in his paintings and collages, is exemplifying American Indian protest art. His collages are complex and every time the viewer observes each piece, something new is revealed or discovered. A person can stand for hours and read the copies of the treaties and articles, apparently intended to be the canvas, if patient enough to wade through the paint and images that overlay them. If interested one could read the background, but the images speak for themselves and words are often used to reinforce the images rather than setting the stage for the art work.

Alex Jacobs primarily utilizes words on his canvas. These are situated along the borders and emanate from the center of the canvas in circular and cross-like patterns. The words, all in capital letters, are represented in yellow, black, white and red. Jacobs arranges these words on a background of brilliant "blood" red. The words he utilizes are derived from two conflicting cultures: the American Indian and White cultures. He recreates, through words and phrases,

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2 Referring to the Sand Creek massacre in Colorado in 1864 where hundreds of Cheyenne were attacked by the United States military. During the attack, the United States flag and a white flag, the symbol for truce and surrender were flying above Chief Black Kettle's tipi, yet the military ignored the flags and began the assault.

3 Referring to Christopher Columbus who "discovered" America and started the tidal wave of immigrants to the Americas. Disease, decimation and desecration of their religions were only the beginning of the "plight" of the American Indians after contact with Europeans.

4 Referring to the long trek of Cherokee from their homeland in North Carolina and Georgia to Oklahoma or Indian Territory in the winter of 1838. Perhaps more than 1/4 of the Cherokee perished on this trip due to their forced relocation by the United States government.
parts of each culture to perhaps represent the collision of the whole. In essence, he may be attempting to show the collision of both cultures, trying to make sense of them, or melding them into one, perhaps representing assimilation or acculturation.

Jacobs also depicts images of Indian issues and icons related to both Indian and White culture. The majority of his collages use solely words, yet one painting, entitled "At The Crossroads", depicts the view from the front seat of an automobile. The image of a speedometer which reads 100 m.p.h. is situated on the left side of the console and the word PONTIAC on the right. Between these two images is a plaque with, among other words and phrases, the words AUTO REVERSE ROADMASTER and JOIN PRAY FIGHT. Above this plaque on the dashboard is the depiction of what appears to be a statue of three Indian figures. The orientation of these figures is as follows: an Indian with a feather headdress, arms folded across his chest, sitting cross-legged, is staring directly at the viewer and two Indians sitting below him face in opposite directions, one to the right and one to the left. The latter two Indians' elbows rest on raised knees, their hands extended palm up as if in prayer, an offering, or perhaps acceptance. The scene in front of the vehicle is that of a two lane black-top highway with crosses (the size of telephone poles) on both sides extending down the length of the road. At the end of the highway, as well as in the two rear view mirrors on the windshield is the image of a mountain as well as the crosses along the side of the road. The upper portion of the painting is a brilliantly colored sunrise or sunset. In the middle of the sun is the outline of an eye. In the middle of the iris is a face surrounded by a geometric image. There

5 See Appendix B, p 83.
is an image of two Indians (a mirror image) wearing sunglasses, hair braided and facing each other in what appears to be the front seat of the automobile. The lower portion of the canvas contains six rows of words and phrases. Overlapping these stenciled letters, on the left hand side, is a left hand holding a cigarette and wearing a watch. The words and phrases represented refer to various people, items and issues of Indian and non-Indian cultures. For example, the words RED MAN, POW WOW, PEACEMAKER, SITTING BULL, TRUCK, COKE, AIM, IAIA, etc., are included.

Jacobs appears to represent the merging of the White and Indian cultures with images from both prominent in his art. The use of words and acronyms that are easily identified merge and run into the next as if they were one continuous word. Jacobs is apparently representing the clash of the Indian and non-Indian, but also the acceptance of both. His imagery is not as flamboyant or as disorienting or aggravating as David Bradley's or Stan Natchez's art.

Stan Natchez utilizes imagery similar to David Bradley's. Natchez utilizes copies of the United States Constitution, sheets of paper money, sheets of stock certificates, and maps as the backgrounds of his canvases. On top of these he paints and recreates photographs of General Custer; Buffalo Bill; Indian men, women and children; and ledger drawings of horses and Indian warriors attempting to outrun United States military rifles. None of the people are smiling; they are posed with blank eyes and expressions on their faces. He incorporates the United States flag and tipis, and attaches shells and his own beadwork to the canvas. His colors are not as brilliant nor vibrant as those of
the other artists, but are dull and appear to depict the "age" of the past, the people, and events upon the canvas.

In his painting, "Custer: The Zero Hero", a sheet of dollar bills with the backs showing, eight bills across and four bills down, contains a tinted photograph of General Custer superimposed upon the bills. He sits stoicly with arms folded across his chest, in profile, in his United States military uniform. His stature and expression appear to convey Custer’s attitude of himself as a person of authority, superior to people who may view the "portrait". An egotistical and self-assured stance is perhaps fitting for the attitude that he held and for the contemptuous image that some American Indians have of him. Ironically, however, this pose and apparent attitude are similar to those of the photographs and paintings of many American Indian chiefs. This may imply that money was a motivating factor for Custer, or that, perhaps, no price was too high to pay for his success, even the death of hundreds of people.

In "Buffalo Bill's", Natchez has utilized paper money and stock certificates as the background. Superimposed upon these is a tinted photograph of, from the chest up, Buffalo Bill and "leaping" buffalos. Above these images are the words "Buffalo Bill's" and superimposed below the image is the photograph of Geronimo poised in his Cadillac with Buffalo Bill and the driver in the front seat and another Indian in the back seat, all appearing stoic with blank expressions on their faces. The photograph was originally black and white, but Natchez hand tinted the image of the car and Geronimo. The imagery is dulled, apparently to represent the use of money to buy that which is desired,

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6 See Appendix C, p 84.
and to suggest that Indians are not removed from this desire to have or acquire material possessions.

As do the other artists, Natchez utilizes mixed media. The images are superimposed and the canvas, as a result, is confusing and appears jumbled or complex. He downplays the colors apparently to represent the past with an aged-look. Apparently his preferred background is money, in the sense of actual paper money or stock certificates, which, he contends, is humorous because "I am able to get the stuff that guides people in the material world and paint all over it and actually sell it back to them."^7

Although I have noted some significant similarities and differences in this art genre, there are three elements that are common to the three artists and probably to all artists of American Indian protest art. The three elements of American Indian protest art that will be addressed are: 1) the artists' creation of an Indian identity, 2) the anti-government and anti-White attitudes and images projected in the art, and 3) its use as a vehicle for these men to earn a living. These elements do not represent all of the motivations behind this style of art, but when independent analysis of the art work and personal interviews with the artists are combined the preceding three motivations stand out. These elements are continuous across the spectrum of art from these artists. Though the three aspects can be individually identified, it is necessary to combine all three elements into one continuous explanation for clarity.

Who is a person without an identity? How can a person relate to people, especially those of the same culture unless they can identify with them? These

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^7 Personal interview.
artists seem to be creating their identity as American Indian men through the creation of their protest art. They appear to be searching for their role or place in society. It is reasonable to assume that they feel as if they are missing something and are trying to create their identity. These men were not raised in the conservative, traditional manner and their personalities are the result of the collision of conflicting cultures.

The lifestyles of non-traditional Indians raised in cities and traditional Indians raised on reservations are separate and unique. There are similarities, but culturally traditional reservation Indians appear more comfortable with their identity, while the non-traditional urban Indians appear to be in search of who they are and where they belong within society. David Bradley has stated, "Indians are by definition, political beings. To be an Indian is to seek the truth. I am an Indian who is an artist." This suggests that Bradley is seeking the "truth" of his Indianness. From what he says he is obviously in search of something and although he identifies himself as Indian, he does not specifically address what that means to him other than a "political being". In actuality all people can be considered political beings, but judging from his statement he does not address his culture or his perceptions of it. The artists seem to be attempting to discover themselves through production of protest art and representing past issues in order to identify themselves as Indians. This is apparent through the use of stereotypical imagery and the combination of elements of White and Indian culture.

The images depicted in American Indian protest art appear to represent the clash of the Indian culture and White culture, i.e. the acculturated Indian. In

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8 Information courtesy of Elaine Horwitch Galleries.
the artists' search for an Indian identity, evidence suggests that they are blaming the government and White society for aggressions against Indians in the past and, perhaps unconsciously, as causing their loss of identity. This evidence is the depiction of historic "battles" and well-known Indians who have "fought" the government and consequently were perceived by Whites to be "savages".

The artists do not appear to understand that without Whites there would be no Indians. Their identity is intimately dependent upon Whites. Sam Stanley and Robert Thomas recognized that, "The combination of acculturative pressures and language and culture loss has produced a growing sense of identity loss for many American Indians, especially the young, in both urban and rural areas." When there were only American Indians on this continent, there was no perception of being Indian, what mattered was what type of Indian - Mohawk, Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Seminole, etc. Without White people there would be no one to blame the current degeneration of Indian America on. It appears that the artists need to prove that they are Indian to themselves and through the creation of this art they are able to assert that they "identify" with Indians and their "plight" from the time of contact with Europeans.

The turmoil which has characterized American Indian life since 1950 is a function of Indians' determination to maintain their identity and values in the face of overwhelming pressures to change. The future will feature more of the same unless Indians feel free to make their own adjustment.9

9 Stanley and Thomas 1978, p 119.
10 Stanley and Thomas 1978, p 111. Note that this article has been overlooked by many regarding demographics of Indians and the pan-Indian phenomenon.
In reality they may not have directly experienced the atrocities they depict, but rather the repercussions and consequently the results of current actions by the federal government. However, current or future Indian concerns are not often seen in American Indian protest art. The majority of the images represent historical conflicts although the idea of conflict and acculturation can be applied to the present state of Federal-Indian relations. Some images and words imply contemporary elements that are directly associated with the above mentioned acculturation, i.e. bingo tickets, Pow Wows, etc., which are not traditional, but are the result of acculturation and influences of White culture and society.

These artists are basically urban Indians, although they may have been raised on a reservation where perhaps few traditionals reside. They have been acculturated into White society because their reservation was situated within a city and White influences such as telephones, televisions, automobiles, etc., are commonplace. Is it realistic to believe statements by urban Indians contending that they can identify with the traditional Indian? This appears rather unlikely because the non-traditional urban Indians and the traditional reservation Indians are affected by different experiences and different amounts of contact with White society. There is reason to believe that urban Indians develop an acculturated perspective, whereas reservation Indians identify more with their unique cultures and traditions. However, the advent of pow wows and militant organizations appears to indicate that urban Indians' influences are becoming increasingly popular among traditional and reservation Indians, especially among the younger generation. This is reasonable to assume due to the number of people attending and the increased number of such events being
held on reservations. Unless urban Indians have spent an extensive amount of
time with traditional Indians, the probability of them understanding the latter and
the ability to use art as an outlet for both, may be unrealistic at this time.

Until now researchers have rarely acknowledged the visual protests, but
have concentrated upon the physical and sometimes violent protests and
demonstrations. It appears that it is predominantly the urban Indians who are
joining the militant organizations, while the traditional and reservation Indians
appear to be less concerned with the urban organizations' activities. This is a
credible assumption because the organizations are urban and based on
assisting and benefiting urban Indians. Some traditional reservation Indians
declare a desire to acquire sovereignty and autonomy, but they realize that the
federal government supports them financially, and they are not ready to
surrender that dependence. This is clearly proven by the aftermath of the
Termination Act of 1953. Some tribes have been forced to terminate and others
have voluntarily terminated themselves from the government and discovered
that they were unable to survive without governmental support. They realize
that government intervention is necessary to a degree, to survive in
contemporary society as a viable political entity. Yet, it appears that the urban
Indian insists that all American Indians' problems are directly related to the
federal government and White society, and that complete separation is
essential. This idea appears to be expressed by the imagery in the American
Indian protest art work as seen by the use of paper money, documents of
treaties and the Constitution. The superimposition of the Indian images on top
of the previously mentioned images suggests that ideological separation exists,
Indians are categorized, and the "battle" still rages between the federal government, White society, and Indians.

The issue of identity leads to the second aspect of American Indian protest art, anti-government and anti-White attitudes. The federal government and American Indians have argued over numerous issues, and some artists have chosen to illustrate these "battles" and, perhaps, fight for ultimate sovereignty through the use of their canvas. In using negative and disturbing images that appear to be resplendent with hate and anti-government and anti-White attitudes, the artists apparently believe that such forceful protest will initiate emotions of guilt and shame in the non-Indian viewer. In essence, the artists are saying, "look what you have done to us and feel sympathy for us because you have attempted to destroy our people too many times. You can atone for your guilt by purchasing this art and thereby enable me to continue my existence and survival."

This negativity is also evidenced by the use of the United States flag as the backdrop for depictions of warfare between Indians, the United States military and other Indian tribes. It implies that the government may have been responsible for some of the battles between Indians in order to separate Indians and create dissension between those tribes who may have been allies. David Bradley depicts the government's intrusion into Indian affairs and organizations of the 1970s that led to bloodshed, whereas the belief of the general public is that the government's duty is supposed to protect and defend the rights of all citizens. The apparent hatred or anger that is portrayed may be misleading in that the artists intention for the images that fill the canvas is to lure the viewer to the piece, then stimulate the viewer to react emotionally to guilt or anger.
Whatever emotions are experienced by the viewer, though, are beyond the artists ability to control.

These artists are utilizing stereotypical imagery, imagery that is White in origin, media-generated, and easily identifiable with the non-Indian society. The use of these images seems illogical if the point of the art is to move beyond the control of the government and White society and to establish themselves as autonomous. They are perhaps utilizing these images because the artists are so acculturated in White society that there are no alternative images with universal meanings for them. For example, Alex Jacobs utilizes imagery that is a confrontation and subsequent merging of both American Indian and White cultures. The words and phrases he utilizes represent contemporary as well as historical ideas or images. The amount of acculturation and limited tradition of urban Indians is apparent because of their general lack of knowledge regarding philosophies and activities of the traditional cultures.

The reader may argue that the use of White images is precisely the reason for the protest, yet there are numerous reasons for using specific imagery. These images apparently emotionally affect the non-Indian and the young Indian. The use of universally recognized stereotypical imagery of Indians suggests that the artists use romanticized illustrations to enunciate that they are Indians. Stan Natchez applies the word "Cancelled" over the romanticized image perhaps to represent that Indians in this sense or tradition no longer exist. He fails to replace the image or create a new image of his idea of what Indians are. In all probability this is his search for an Indian identity. He knows that Indians are not representations of the noble savage, yet the concept of Indian is not defined in his art.
It appears that American Indians do not purchase this type of art. The majority of the buyers are upper- and upper-middle class Whites (who constitute the majority of art purchasers), who are educated and perceive past atrocities inflicted upon Indians. These patrons may be absolving their guilt by purchasing the art of "angry, young American Indian artists". Producing such art may be a ploy to entice the White viewer to experience emotional distress and to believe that this is an outlet or release for the Indian artist. It is also a means, regardless of what the purchasers think of it, of making a living.

This third aspect, economic viability, is also central to American Indian protest art. It is difficult for artists to earn a living solely by selling their art work. Unless they conform to the demands and wishes of the patrons of art, they may never sell a single piece of work. The three American Indian protest artists discussed in this paper appear to be "surviving" comfortably, even though this style of art appears to be less attractive to patrons than the more traditional form of American Indian art. The purchasers of this style of art have been identified by Stan Natchez as people who are well traveled and have knowledge of the world and politics. They are educated and can afford to pay for the protest art which appears to be gaining popularity. More galleries are exhibiting the protest art and appear to be advocating for the artists. Although this type of art has not made a dramatic affect on the market, these artists appear to be persistent and able to earn a living.

The artists could be described as exploiting their own people to earn money and to elevate their social status. The artists are utilizing imagery that depicts 19th century issues and appear to be reliving or revising history in order

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11 Interview with Stan Natchez.
to make money. The artists are acculturated into White society, as is apparent in their depictions and subsequent selling of their heritage and ancestors. The imagery of money in the art also depicts that some Indians "sold out" or were "bought out" in the past, only later to experience severe repercussions. Money "bought" this land whether the majority of American Indians were willing to "sell" or not. This imagery could imply that the United States is based on greed, where Whites want to get everything they can and use whatever means are necessary to obtain it.

By examining the past, a person can review and analyze decisions that were made, but this will not necessarily help American Indian concerns in the present. Current events can be changed or redirected, whereas Wounded Knee, Alcatraz, the Indian Wars, etc., can not be annulled. Perhaps a more direct course of action would be to address current issues in a more obvious fashion if change is truly what these artists desire. These paintings and collages are being sold to wealthy patrons to be displayed in the privacy of their homes. Protest art if it is meant to have an impact upon society or to make a statement should be exhibited where all people can view it. If it is not made public and it is sold for an exorbitant amount of money, than perhaps a prime motivating factor for creation of this art is to make money. There are some exceptions to this, for example Edgar Heap of Birds whose art is represented on signs in parks and on the sides of busses. In addition, Alex Jacobs reproduces his work into poster form for the less financially secure to purchase. Yet the majority of the protest artists are not making a political statement for the public to see. If they did then perhaps more people would be aware of American Indian protest art. Perhaps the artists' only intention is to obtain money from illustrating
past injustices, fear, pain and anger, thus, fanning the flames of division and discontent between Whites and American Indians, or perhaps they are merely selling absolution.

The artists' research and influences (including the Studio, the Institute of American Indian Arts, art training, other artists, and movements of the 1960s and 1970s) have contributed to the artists rendition of American Indians. Yet no one can presume to understand another unless they have experienced the same events or lived within their particular culture or society. The militant organizations appear to be a continuation of an idea of warrior societies or perhaps bands of "renegades" living in urban environments. They learn to identify with the "struggle for survival" from, perhaps, misdirected, radical leaders and members who learned about American Indians from information obtained from a non-Indian perspective. In relation to these influences, the American Indian protest art could be an outlet for the frustration of living within a society where they experience a conflict of cultures. In all probability protest art is the artists vehicle for establishing and legitimizing their Indian identity.

I previously stated that these artists are using stereotyped images that reinforce the romantic stereotype of American Indians. True, the works not only incorporate the romantic depictions of Indians in traditional dress, but also use images and concepts detrimental to the White images of American Indian people that are more closely associated with White or American culture and society. Yet, if the intent is to erase the stereotypes and "attack" Whites and the federal government, then the use of romanticized imagery could be interpreted as destructive to Indians because of the history of those images, and, thus, appears to be counterproductive.
Using these stereotypes emphasizes the attempts of domination of Indian people by Whites rather than emphasizing images that could be more supportive of American Indians. Another interpretation of the White images is that these artists are so immersed in White or American culture that they depict and seemingly associate or identify with these images and concepts more so than they relate to their traditional philosophies. To progress and create a better life for the future of the people they want to be spokespersons for may be more constructive than exploiting the past tragedies of American Indians.

Despite the failure of this style of art to effectively penetrate the art market, it continues to be produced and sold at a modest rate. Although it may be an overt attack against White society, some patrons believe it worthy of purchase. The motivations behind the patrons' choice to buy the art are not clear, but I have suggested some possibilities. Obviously this style has not attracted the majority of art buyers or Indians (except the Indian artists who create this style) or more people would be recognizing and acknowledging protest art.

It is reasonable to assume that the imagery in these artists' works is an attempt to create or define their identities. The use of imagery is slightly different for each of these three artists. Stan Natchez depicts historical events and confrontations, David Bradley utilizes imagery to illustrate the turn of the century and the era of the 1960s and 1970s, and Alex Jacobs presents a more contemporary view of Indians, yet adds past conflicts and words depicting both Indian and White cultures.

This imagery, although primarily historical in nature, contains some contemporary elements suggesting acculturation and conflict of Indian and non-
Indian cultures and societies. There is great difficulty defining who Indians are based on the multiple influences and acculturation. This is apparent in the art which utilizes superimposed images, numerous amounts of images, and strategic positioning of the images all over the canvas. This creates confusion, complexity, and turmoil, and this is precisely the history of Federal and Indian relations. The art builds tension and part of that tension is created by the past, as well as the present, yet what is the present identity of Indians? Perhaps these artists do not know, and the conglomeration of a variety of images helps them to attempt to define who they are today and to define their role in today's society, i.e. the urban Indians' role in White culture and society.
VIII
CONCLUSION.

The preceding chapters present historical influences, the emergence and creation of an Indian identity, and the author's perceptions of American Indian protest art. Identity, conflicting cultures, reflections on the past, and financial success are all involved in this style of art that, unfortunately, has been under-studied and rarely acknowledged within the American Indian art market and realm.

From the implementation of art instruction for Indian youth at the Institute of American Indian Arts and the concentration on different styles, to the political movements of the 1960s and 1970s, painting has evolved. It is a form of expression, a form of "therapy," and a form of identity for American Indian artists. The artists who predominantly create protest art are from a variety of backgrounds and tend to be urban, non-traditional members of White society. There is little direct link to the traditional reservation Indian due to the influences of White society and the acculturation of these artists within it.

The creation of an Indian identity is linked to this style of art. The images presented, the upbringing of the artists and financial survival all assist in the artists' search. It appears that they question who they are by depicting the past and utilizing stereotypical imagery that shapes their perspective of who an Indian is. The romanticized representations are well-known to virtually everyone, but those representations are inaccurate today. These images were
originally created by non-Indian artists and historians hundreds of years ago. Modern Indian artists may connect that imagery to being Indian and use it to retain the old notions of who Indians were perceived to be. The fact that most of these Indian images are well-known or historical figures, represented in native or traditional dress, relays to the viewer that there is no question that the image is of an Indian. If the artists had chosen to depict Indians as they are today, there would be much less, if no, stereotypical romanticized imagery. American Indians would be depicted wearing White clothes, living in White houses, and utilizing items of White society. There would be little to indicate that these people are Indians. The artists are manipulating, recreating and utilizing "White man's images" because they can not identify Indians in other ways, i.e. they use the images to describe themselves as Indians, to define who they are. Yet the images are outdated due to new influences and acculturation: change. Combining these images of Indians and images of White culture in their art reflects a loss of identity and an attempt to reclaim their Indian identity.

Apparently the combination of elements of White and American Indian cultures in their art represents the bombardment and conflict of these cultures on today’s urban Indian artist. The collages depict confusion, complexity, and tension just as the history of Federal and Indian relations and the mix of White and Indian cultures stimulate these emotions. It is virtually impossible to escape the influences and lifestyles of White culture when situated in the middle of it. A person could escape to a remote reservation that is the home of more traditional people who identify more with their cultural heritage, yet there will still be some features of the dominant society represented. It appears strange that the artists
would lash out so much at White society because these urban Indian artists live in that society and are a functioning part of it.

Although this style of art is virtually unknown and rarely acknowledged, the artists appear to be earning a living from sales of their art. The high prices and limited availability may prove financially beneficial to the artists if this style penetrates the art market and affects the patrons. The art market is so innundated with the traditional or Indian art that it sometimes fails to acknowledge that non-traditional art can be and is created by Indians, and does not have to be umbrellaed under Indian art. Currently, American Indian protest art is lumped into the area of "Indian art", although it is not awarded much recognition and is basically ignored. Perhaps this is a way to keep it underground.

This current trend in defining Indian art will continue unless more patrons realize that there are other art styles that American Indians are creating and that Indian art does not have to remain the traditional representation just because that is how it has always been. It is the 1990s and as the world progresses, advances and changes, identities, cultures, and lifestyles change, and so inevitably our appreciations will change. Because nothing is static, trends in the market will likely change and the critics should reassess their attitudes and look beyond traditional art to include all styles and forms of "Indian art". Perhaps the familiar romanticized images are so popular because the art market dictates style and because people are more comfortable with the old, non-threatening styles and are afraid of what the new styles may entail. Conversely this new style is just a search for identity or an outlet, not demanding special attention as
a new art style as long as some people have an interest in it and buy it, enabling the artist to add to his income.

This thesis has presented American Indian protest art as having at least three motivations which are: 1) creation of an Indian identity, 2) anti-government, anti-White attitudes through historical depictions, and 3) financial survival. These are addressed in hopes that more researchers will explore additional reasons behind this art genre.

The lack of information about, and recognition of American Indian protest art limits the popular perceptions of American Indians and American Indian art by confining each into artificially narrow categories and the diversity and uniqueness of American Indians is lost sight of. The unique experiences of American Indian artists contribute to their diversity and to their creation of non-traditional protest art. This requires the public and patrons of Indian art to re-evaluate their limited perceptions, changing the non-Indian's perception of American Indian people away from the stereotyped (romanticized) Indian. In actuality these artists are developing their Indian identity by combining the collision and conflict of American Indian and White cultures.
APPENDIX A:

"GHOST REVELATIONS: THE RESURRECTION"

By David Bradley
APPENDIX B:
"AT THE CROSSROADS"

By Alex Jacobs
REFERENCES:

BOOKS:


**ARTICLES:**


THESIS: