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Terpning: Tribute to the Plains People by Harley Brown
(review)

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Great Plains Quarterly, Volume 34, Number 1, Winter 2014, pp. 105-106
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Published by University of Nebraska Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/gpq.2014.0007>

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alism, or a commitment to the local, is vital to a comprehensive understanding of American Scene artists, and within this framework Nichols's art warrants the thoughtful attention it receives, particularly when Guenther compares his regionalism to that of Wood or Rockwell Kent. Future investigation of Nichols might compare his work to his Nebraska regionalist contemporaries Terance Duren or Aaron Pyle or expand the geographic sphere to other American Scene painters who explored agrarian themes such as Joe Jones or Alexandre Hogue.

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Terpning: Tribute to the Plains People.

By Harley Brown. Paintings by Howard Terpning. Foreword by Darrell R. Kipp. Introduction by Stuart Johnson. Greenwich CT: Greenwich Workshop Press, 2012. 183 pp. Illustrations. \$85.00.

Many collectors and critics in the world of western art consider Howard Terpning a living master; some go so far as to declare him a national treasure. The contributors to *Terpning: Tribute to the Plains People* are certainly part of this group. The book was designed to accompany a retrospective exhibit of the same name that opened at the Autry National Center in May 2012. Despite its title, the volume is more a tribute to Howard Terpning as an individual and artist than a tribute to Plains people.

The book is divided into four chapters written by Harley Brown, with brief essays from collectors of Terpning's work. Throughout are reproductions of the paintings included in the exhibit (although the book lacks an exhibit checklist) with short descriptions also writ-

ten by Brown. The chapters are dominated by Terpning's biographical details, with the focus on his time as a professional illustrator and his transition into life as a full-time fine artist. Even though Terpning's subject matter is largely the Native people of the Great Plains, Brown's commentary is far more concerned with Terpning's technique and process as an artist. Stuart Johnson of Settlers West Gallery wrote the introduction, and Apiniokio Peta (Darrell R. Kipp), a member of the Crow tribe and longtime friend of Howard Terpning, penned a foreword.

Throughout the book—in the chapters, the letters from collectors, and the text accompanying each image—contributors make much of Terpning's commitment to historical research and his desire to paint detailed and "authentic" portraits of Plains Indian life. The foreword offers some insight into Terpning's relationships with the Crow people and his experiences among them, providing a clear sense of strong bonds between the artist and the community. As a resource to historians, however, the book could have been improved by a deeper exploration of the background and historical research Terpning undertakes and of his connections to the Crow people. Unfortunately, little to no insight is given into these aspects of Terpning's work, and many questions remain: What kinds of sources does he consult? How does he consider and weigh new perspectives on Plains history? How have his experiences among the Crow people shaped his subject matter? What role does oral tradition play in research? Without such insight, readers might be left with the impression that Terpning is painting scenes and people as they actually happened. Rather, his paintings, as with all artists, are the product of experience, research, and most significantly, imagination.

It is important to remember that *Terpning:*

Tribute to the Plains People was intended as a catalog to accompany a retrospective exhibit. The text of the book is a celebration of Howard Terpning's life and work rather than a critical analysis or a scholarly resource for those researching Plains Indian cultures. As such, the book, which includes 120 full-color plates of Terpning's paintings, will appeal to collectors and admirers of the artist's work.

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Visualities: Perspectives on Contemporary American Indian Film and Art.

Edited by Denise K. Cummings. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011. xxiv + 243 pp. Photographs, illustrations, notes, works cited, index. \$29.95 paper.

This illustrated edited volume aims to embrace "a visual field perspective in order to examine aspects of the social importance of indigenous visual culture." Divided into two parts—"Indigenous Film Practices" and "Contemporary American Indian Art"—the essays draw primarily from a literary theory and cultural studies perspective; their authors teach in English departments or undertake their scholarly analyses from a critical literary perspective. Given that the title and emphasis of the text is on "visualities," this dynamic presents some compelling challenges. It is telling that the most successful chapters concern the moving image. Perhaps the narrative structure of the screenplay speaks most directly to the skills of the literary theorist. Some difficulties lie in the scope of inquiry selected (the

"crowd syndrome" of discussing too many artists within one piece); others arise from a lack of theoretical focus (the "floating thesis"). Of interest to Great Plains scholars are chapters that discuss the work of Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, and Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds.

It is instructive and a bit disappointing to note how the same constructs of two decades ago—Stephen Leuthold's "Indigenous aesthetics" (1998), Gerald Vizenor's "survivance" (1993), Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie's "visual sovereignty" (1998), and Jolene Rickard's "sovereignty" (1996)—are still being relied upon somewhat uncritically as theoretical destinations rather than signposts for further inquiry. This is odd given the introduction's assertion that the essays will "parallel the contemporary moment from a critical perspective." Legal scholars have long questioned the imposition of political sovereignty "granted" to Native nations rather than the recognition of inherent sovereignty that predates the formation of the United States. Two chapters escape this didactic theorizing—Joanna Hearne's "Indians Watching Indians on TV" and Theodore Van Alst's "Sherman Shoots Alexie," both dealing with Native spectatorship. These authors demonstrate how sharp, creative approaches to the arts that employ a well-articulated theoretical frame can accomplish more than reliance on verbiage alone. I would likely excerpt these two contributions and assign the reading to a 300-level or higher college course; however, the compilation itself would not serve well as a textbook, given the unevenness of the essays and the overall dense arguments staged.

The best Native arts scholarship today looks beyond the eternal dualisms of individual/collective, traditional/modern, linear/holistic, and corrective/reactive formulas to engage in the specific details of singular art-