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The American Indian Quarterly, Volume 39, Number 1, Winter 2015,
pp. 25-51 (Article)

Published by University of Nebraska Press

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This Is (Not) Indian Painting

George Morrison, Minnesota, and His Return to a
Land He Never Really Left

DAVID MARTÍNEZ

In the case of Indigenous North American art, the label “Indian art” persists in the “Indian art market,” which is complemented by galleries and museums that have cast a long shadow over generations of Indigenous artists who have striven to get out from under the pervasive influence it has had on their work and identity. Despite the increased diversity and sophistication among Indigenous artists, particularly during the latter half of the twentieth century, it is still commonplace for curators and art historians to refer to Indian art as a shorthand way of referring to a kind of racial or ethnic essence that lies at the heart of the works under analysis. While colloquialisms, tropes, and figures of speech abound in any community of discourse, including American Indian art history, in which a word like “Indian” can be exchanged with a spectrum of implicitly understood meanings, sometimes, as in the case of “Indian art,” commonplace terms become institutionalized, complete with traditions and orthodoxies that are of eminent value to those whose identities (and statuses) depend on their preservation.¹ What this article ultimately recommends, in light of a dual analysis of the work of George Morrison and Gerald Vizenor, is doing away with the framework “Indian” in favor of recognizing the complexity of individual oeuvres as forms of self-determination that, when Indigenous frames of reference are considered, can liberate the critical, curatorial, and scholarly discourse from the oppression of an obsolete concept. In the case of Morrison, his images were “postindian” before Vizenor taught us the meaning of that term.

In one respect, Indigenous artists are part of a wider issue that many artists have with labeling their work at all in terms of either genre, style, aesthetics, or ideology. With respect to the Indigenous art community,

the label “Indian art” has long been used as a way of acknowledging the artistic value of work often considered crude and primitive by generations of non-Indigenous traders, missionaries, and Indian Bureau officials. Numerous authors, from the infamous Jamake Highwater to Christian Feest, not to mention Rennard Strickland, Janet C. Berlo, Ruth B. Phillips, and W. Jackson Rushing III, have written about the emergence of Indigenous arts within the mainstream American art community, complete with their transformation from trade goods to collectibles to artifacts and, finally, to art. Noteworthy is the effort during the 1920s and 1930s at promoting Indigenous art and artists as part of the fine arts community. This effort occurred concomitantly in New Mexico and Oklahoma and was complemented by the Indian Arts and Crafts Board. Perhaps because of the federal recognition of “Indian art,” which included creating “government trademarks of genuineness and quality,” the notion that any art could be certifiably “Indian” took root.² By extension, this included Indigenous studio art, as phenomena like the San Ildefonso Watercolor Movement and Bacone School became a prominent part of American Indian art history. Consequently, because so-called Indian art was exemplified by particular artists and institutions typically supported by non-Indian benefactors, the concept began to ossify into a recognizable set of traits and styles. Prior to 1945, as Rennard Strickland observes, “Indian art” was once thought to be easily identified as “flat, nonmolded watercolor records of tribal legend, history, and custom.”³ However, as has also been much written about, Indigenous art in the aftermath of World War II expanded into a panoply of styles and media that were as diverse as the art world in which these works were created. Ironically, many Indigenous artists, rather than embracing a firmly established Indian art market, sought to explore and express a wider range of Indigenous cultural and aesthetic experiences.

Through a range of genre-breaking works inspired by everything from French surrealist automatism and New York abstract expressionism to the gritty and often humorous side to life on the reservation, Indigenous artists have sought recognition based on the merits of their work and the quality of their ideas. The notion of “Indian art,” however, is an institution in American visual culture and is not easily overcome, no matter how original the artwork. But like blades of grass bursting through the pavement, Indigenous artists have asserted themselves against prevailing stereotypes, affirming their place in the discourse on

indigeneity, history, and self-determination. George Morrison (1919–2000), for example, never thought of himself as an “Indian artist”; instead, he considered himself to be an artist “who happened to be Indian.” This was Morrison’s “we talk, you listen” moment (to borrow a phrase from one of Vine Deloria Jr.’s books), in which the Indian as artist asserted his own artistic agenda, free from the preconceived notions of what an Indian is supposed to be, notions that have dominated the American discourse on Indians from Christian missionaries to Indian agents and anthropologists, not to mention the much-criticized stereotypes populating pop culture. Morrison, on the contrary, affirmed his uniqueness as the American Indian Movement (AIM) emerged during the early 1970s, in addition to becoming one of the first professors hired in the newly established Department of American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota. Morrison was renowned as an abstract artist whose peers included Willem de Kooning and Louise Nevelson, and his return to Minnesota during the latter part of his life would paradoxically emphasize his rootedness in *this place*, even as he continued to develop and refine his abstract vision of color, light, and space, as exemplified in his Horizon series.

Given that Morrison spent part of his childhood in boarding school, it is tempting to conclude that his resistance to being labeled an “Indian artist” was due to being “brainwashed” into feeling resentful toward his race and ethnicity. Mary Abbe has noted: “The third of twelve children, Morrison grew up in a house without electricity or running water and was sent to a government-run school in [Hayward,] Wisconsin where ‘we were made to be ashamed of being Indian.’”⁴ Indeed, shame and low self-esteem are recurring problems in most Indigenous communities, even among those who never went through the boarding school system. Nevertheless, while boarding school trauma has been thoroughly documented, the historical record also includes many stories of Indian students who adapted to and overcame the obstacles of racism and poverty that were set upon them.⁵ This isn’t to suggest that they succeeded because they assimilated into white American society (though that certainly happened), nor does it mean that Morrison discovered the secret to dispelling racial prejudice. Morrison instead credits his off-reservation experiences with educating him about “negotiating” the white world, which he recalls in *Turning the Feather Around*:

I could feel prejudice. A lot of people were down on Indians because, I suppose, the Indians were poor and more shabbily dressed, and many of them were uneducated. A lot of us, of course, were darker in skin. I believe in the color line. This is a racist country. People in this country are predominantly white and they are prejudiced against anyone who is dark-skinned. I believe in the color line wherever there is a community of blacks or Indians or maybe Chinese.

Morrison goes on to portray his parents being more oppressed by the dominant white society than he. While respecting his parents' memory, Morrison summarizes their problematic relation to whites and the effect it had on their parenting: "I don't think they were ashamed of being Indian, but they always looked up to the white man."⁶ After all, in a nation dominated by European American institutions and values, Indigenous customs and values were at best regarded as quaint or romanticized relics of the past that one had to set aside in order to "succeed" in the modern world. Moreover, success for anyone from a nonwhite American background typically entailed accommodating—or negotiating, as Morrison described it—European Americans' worldview and their assumptions about people different from them. Consequently, one of the things Morrison learned firsthand was the fact that "the white man" had his own varied and often conflicting conceptions of "the Indian," and he often clung to these conceptions tenaciously against all contravening evidence.

Generations of scholars have analyzed the varieties of stereotyping that Indigenous people have been subjected to during centuries of contact with non-Indigenous settler populations. These stereotypes are depicted in a plethora of case studies, all of which generally fall into one of two categories: "bloodthirsty savage" or "noble red man." Both types of fictional characterizations ultimately are sublimated into the image of the "vanishing race."⁷ Furthermore, all three motifs infiltrated American art as the history of exploration and conquest made its way into the burgeoning republic's self-image. Anyone familiar, then, with the history of Indian-white relations knows that a prominent part of the American settler tradition is Indian bashing. The belittling of Indians in America, whether as "warlike savages" or as "deadbeats living off their casinos," goes back to colonial times, when the "Indian problem" first became a major factor in the country's domestic policy agenda. With this in mind, it stands to reason that when Morrison sought to distance himself from

being labeled an “Indian artist,” it had less to do with poor self-esteem and was more about freeing himself from the race-based delimitations that Americans have historically loaded onto the word “Indian.” Since even when the stereotypes are supposedly positive, the negative ones are not far behind, critiquing the custom of calling Indigenous people “Indian” has become a prominent theme in the American Indian intellectual tradition, which is a tradition that includes every Indigenous person compelled to reflect on his or her identity in an anti-Indian world. This is a critical discourse that encompasses every genre of Indigenous expression, including the visual arts.

With respect to the historical record, William Apess stands out as someone who spoke up during a time of deep crisis among Indigenous communities as they faced forced removal from their homelands. Specifically, in his 1831 autobiography, *A Son of the Forest*, Apess observes:

I thought it disgraceful to be called an Indian; it was considered as a slur upon an oppressed and scattered nation, and I have often been led to inquire where the whites received this word, which they so often threw as an opprobrious epithet at the sons of the forest. I could not find it in the Bible and therefore concluded that it was a word imported for the special purpose of degrading us.⁸

More than eighty years later Carlos Montezuma felt compelled to speak out against the kind of racial segregation pervading Indigenous communities as a consequence of the reservation system. “There is a wrong feeling, a wrong thought, and a wrong judgment that we must fight,” Montezuma proclaimed before a 1915 gathering of the Society of American Indians. “It is an individual battle! It is called ‘prejudice.’” Then, long before there was American Indian studies, the Institute of American Indian Art, or AIM, Montezuma railed:

Keep in mind that Indian Bureau, Indian Reservations, Indian Schools, Indian College, Indian Art, Indian Novels, Indian Music, Indian Shows, Indian Movies, and Indian Everything create prejudice and do not help our race. To tackle prejudice it is better to do it face to face in the busy world. To play the same card as the other fellow we must know him.⁹

While the Indian world continued to change dramatically, instigated by the onslaught of World War II, when thousands of young Indigenous

men and women were serving overseas around the Pacific and Europe, in many ways the American perception of “Indians” as relics of the past persisted. Indigenous society changed, in other words, but white preconceptions of Indians stayed the same. Consequently, nearly 140 years after Apess bemoaned the demeaning connotations of the word “Indian” among New England settlers, Vine Deloria Jr. wrote in *Custer Died for Your Sins*:

People can tell just by looking at us what we want, what should be done to help us, how we feel, and what a “real” Indian is really like. Indian life, as it relates to the real world, is a continuous attempt not to disappoint people who know us. Unfulfilled expectations cause grief and we have already had our share.¹⁰

A regularly doleful experience among Indigenous people across the United States is getting “that look” from non-Indians when Indians don’t match non-Indians’ expectations for what an “Indian” ought to be like. The history of Indian-white relations is inconsequential to many non-Indians, whether they are tourists, historians, anthropologists, or federal officials. Furthermore, the fact that the pop culture stereotypes with which many of them are so enamored never existed in the first place is equally irrelevant when they’re judging Indians on their appearance. Such attitudes, unsurprisingly, have become institutionalized not just in Hollywood westerns and comic books but also in supposedly learned institutions, including the US Supreme Court, as Robert A. Williams Jr. demonstrates, or American universities, as Deloria has clearly shown.¹¹

Furthermore, the “not Indian enough” disposition is also a storied part of American Indian art history, as exemplified in the stories of Allan Houser (Apache), Oscar Howe (Lakota), and Morrison. As Charleen Touchette documents, “Morrison’s work was rejected when he first applied to the Philbrook Museum of Art’s Native American art competition in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1946. ‘My art was too extreme; it wasn’t *Indian enough* for them.’”¹² At the time of this rejection, Morrison was thoroughly immersed in the New York abstract expressionist movement. For most people outside of the 1940s New York art scene, the jarring and radical images coming out of Manhattan galleries were still too controversial and disturbing. Needless to say, an Indigenous artist working in this style was simply unimaginable. Unsurprisingly, when Morrison began experimenting more with his art while he was still a young

artist, he felt compelled to leave the provincial limitations of Minnesota in order to find his muse. In other words, not only was Morrison venturing into artistic fields unaccustomed to an Indigenous presence, but also he was too avant-garde for Minnesota in general at the time. “I couldn’t have done work like this in Minneapolis,” Morrison admitted to Margot Fortunato Galt, referring to his developing interest in modernist movements. “In Minneapolis the teachers were pushing a certain kind of realism; they were portrait painters. They wouldn’t have gone in for this at all. This was the influence of New York; this was going toward expressionism.”¹³ Adapting a non-Indigenous medium like oil paint or acrylic to express a reverence for traditional customs such as ceremonies and the oral tradition was one thing; however, demonstrating a fascination with radically experimental styles in order to engage the complicated modern world that has become integral to contemporary Indian society is something altogether different, not to mention unacceptable.

In Morrison’s case, while he shares a common struggle with his peers at getting his work recognized as a valid expression of the Indigenous experience—which includes world travel and going to mainstream educational institutions—the side to that struggle that isn’t always acknowledged is getting affirmation from his community. With regard to Morrison’s highly abstract style, it’s not just non-Indians who may question the authenticity of his work but also his family and community. In an interview with *Akwe:kon Journal*, Sam Olbekson asked Morrison, “Have the people on your reservation accepted your work?” Morrison responded, “I think they accept me because I have had some success with my art but they really don’t understand what I am doing. My reservation is very remote. It is nice country—it lives in one’s memory. I was born near here right on the lake and I guess I came back because of that and to be near my people, too.” In the same interview, Morrison spoke about his close affiliation with other Indigenous artists. Although he did not consider himself an “Indian artist,” as noted repeatedly above, this didn’t mean denying his identity as an Indigenous person, namely, Ojibwe. There’s a fundamental difference, after all, between identifying oneself as Indian in the colloquial sense and labeling one’s artwork as “Indian.” “I consider myself an American Indian working in art,” Morrison stated. “I think I’m more of an artist who is Indian and there might be some Indian coming through in some of the works. I guess I’m just one of many working in different ways and I’m glad to be in with that whole group.”¹⁴

An important difference between Morrison and his contemporaries is the level of political and social awareness in his work with respect to others like, say, T. C. Cannon, Fritz Scholder, and Jaune Quick-to-See Smith. Certainly, other Ojibwe artists working during the Red Power era of the late 1960s and early 1970s, including Frank Big Bear and Norval Morrisseau, were more culturally aware than Morrison. Despite returning to Minnesota during the peak of the Red Power movement, Morrison would remain consistently apolitical. However, he was far from judgmental toward those artists who pursued a more politically overt agenda. "I don't consider myself a protest artist but I think there are a lot of them in the American Indian scene. A lot of them are protesting and are angry about land and how they are treated as a minority. I experienced some of that growing up in a white community near here."¹⁵ Judging by the numerous photographs of Morrison published in a variety of resources, he also never felt compelled to add any obvious "Indian" accoutrements to his personal appearance, such as the typical displays of beads and turquoise, let alone growing out his hair.

The Red Power era would eventually run its course, and by the end of the 1970s its influence on Indigenous art had metamorphosed into a plethora of interests and styles that a panoply of artists would put into works about their respective tribal histories, critical of westward expansion and "Manifest Destiny." Elements of the Red Power movement also appeared in works critiquing dominant Indian stereotypes, as well as works about the modern and unexpected lives of Indigenous people living in America today; it also appeared in works expressing concern for the environment, gender equality, and sexual orientation. In a word, diversity abounded in the Indigenous art world, and Morrison was a part of this world throughout the 1970s, when the Red Power movement's influence was strongest. He would also be a part of the post-Red Power era during the 1980s and 1990s. However, even in the post-Red Power world, identity questions continued with regard to Indigenous art. While thinkers like Arthur C. Danto may have proclaimed the "end of art" with respect to mainstream art, in which artistic movements such as surrealism and cubism have been supplanted by a plurality of artistic tendencies, the same is not necessarily the case with Indigenous art. Since the 1970s, in spite of Indigenous art becoming more diverse, the predilection for labeling Indigenous art as "Indian art" has stubbornly endured. Some of this may have been self-inflicted, as Indigenous artists

capitalized on a growing awareness of American Indians as a distinct community induced by nationally and internationally reported events like the 1972 Trail of Broken Treaties and the 1973 conflict at Wounded Knee, not to mention the growing notoriety of AIM.¹⁶ Jim Denomie, who began his artistic career during the 1990s, just as Morrison completed his Horizon series, felt compelled to avoid the frustrations of “Indian art,” just like Morrison. Denomie once spoke about this problem while concurrently reflecting on Morrison’s influence:

I think George’s biggest influence on me was the fact that he was a contemporary artist stepping outside of and expanding the boundaries of indian art. That is what I have purposely tried to do with my art. When I was in art school, I felt an expectation by both indian and non-indian people to do “indian art.” In most people’s minds, this meant the stereotypical genre of spirits and eagles, buffalo and teepees etc. But I grew up in south Minneapolis where most of that did not exist. I thought, if I was going to paint images like those just to sell work, I might as well be painting Elvis’ [*sic*] on black velvet. When I went to research contemporary indian art, George was one of the first artists I found any published material on.¹⁷

Morrison’s return to Minnesota, albeit southern Minnesota, as opposed to Grand Portage, signified the reaffirmation of his origins both personally and artistically. Yet, given his determination to avoid having his work stuffed into an ethnic pigeonhole, what explains his move back to the Great Lakes region, which he deliberately left so long ago as a young artist? What is noteworthy about Morrison’s transition is that it occurred at a critical juncture in his life. Many who have written about Morrison’s life and art note the daring decision he made when he deliberately left a tenured position at the Rhode Island School of Design for an appointment in the fledgling Department of American Indian Studies (which was actually a joint appointment with the Department of Studio Arts). His move was significant not only because RISD was a prestigious art institution but also because it was in a region, the Northeast, that fomented much of Morrison’s mature style as an artist. What’s overlooked is the fact that not long before Morrison decided to relocate to Minnesota his mother passed away. Since Morrison is characteristically understated about the impact his mother’s death had on him, it

may seem, at first glance, inconsequential to him (at least with respect to decisions about his art and career). Morrison recollected this for Margot Galt some thirty years later:

In 1969 I was granted an honorary Master of Fine Arts degree from the Minneapolis School of Art. They paid our way to attend the graduation ceremonies and treated us like dignitaries. It was a very nice honor.

Later that summer [my son] Briand and I came back to visit my mother, who was stricken with cancer.

Her death came just before Christmas. Briand remembers that she died just after many of the family had left, and the highway patrol had to stop them and send them back.

I don't remember the funeral except she was not buried in Chippewa City. The service must have been in Duluth, and she was buried in an ordinary cemetery there.¹⁸

In my estimation, Morrison didn't move back to Minnesota merely because of a career opportunity, nor was it simply due to the effect that the Red Power movement was having on Indians nationwide. The root of his decision to return home was because he had just lost his mother. Morrison described this desire to move:

I wanted to come back to the Indian connection, to Minnesota and my family. I felt an inner need to come back, not realizing the consequences of what I was doing. I felt the need to put certain Indian values into my work.

There was a job opening at the University of Minnesota in a new program in American Indian studies. I applied. It turned out to be a dual appointment with the Studio Arts Department and the American Indian Studies Department. The Indian Studies course was a lecture course that met once a week like a seminar.¹⁹

Obviously, Morrison's reference to "Indian values" needs to be clarified with respect to the thesis of this article. It is not, as I will explain further below, an acquiescence to the colonial concept of "Indian" critiqued throughout this article. On the contrary, Morrison is using a colloquialism to express his reconnection to the northern woodland environment from where he originated as an artist and as a member of the Ojibwe community. With respect to Morrison's life-changing move back

to Minnesota, American Indian studies emerged during a volatile time, when the students at “the U” and other campuses were agitating for a host of changes. Specifically, at the Twin Cities campus, as recalled in *Native American Studies in Higher Education*, “it wasn’t until after African American students occupied the central administration building in January of 1969 that the university actually agreed to press forward in implementing programs that served the needs of students of color.” As a result of student activism, American Indian studies was formalized into a department on June 7, 1969, when “the Minnesota Board of Regents approved the proposal with one dissenting vote.” The following year, the newly established department made its first three hires, “which included Roger Buffalohead as chair, George Morrison, and Tim Dunnigan.”²⁰

In addition to joining the Minnesota faculty, Morrison saw some unexpected personal developments appear upon rejoining his home state. More specifically, despite the sheer abstraction of his images, Morrison demonstrated a subtle but growing political awareness, which he exhibited not in his artwork but by supporting AIM (albeit, in his own subdued way), which originated in the Philips neighborhood of Minneapolis, a short distance from the University of Minnesota campus. “These Indian studies programs helped spur the American Indian Movement,” Morrison recalls. “Though I didn’t consider myself an activist . . . I became a member of AIM and, with Hazel [Belvo], did my bit by helping to raise money.”²¹ Morrison’s history with AIM, however, doesn’t extend beyond this anecdote.

Still, Morrison was hardly immune to the excitement engrossing Indigenous communities nationwide. “I came back to teach at the University of Minnesota at just the right time,” as Morrison remembers it. “Indians were coming up in education. There wasn’t much opportunity in the East. But various institutions in the West, from California to Minnesota, were forming Indian studies programs. It was the result of the civil rights movement of the ’60s. The Indians picked it up after the blacks.” Not only did Morrison receive several invitations during this time to do slide presentations at different campuses, but he also recalls fondly the rapport he developed with his Indigenous students, some of whom took his American Indian art history course, while others studied with him in the studio, such as Frank Bigbear Jr. and Kent Smith.²² This was also a time when a number of significant events took place, such as the 1969–71 occupation of Alcatraz, the 1969 opening of Navajo Community Col-

lege, and the publication of *Custer Died for Your Sins* by Vine Deloria Jr. Equally important is the fact that the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, was celebrating nearly a decade of operation in 1971, changing the face of American Indian art. Then, in 1972, the same year that AIM organized the Trail of Broken Treaties, which would march to Washington DC, the Walker Art Center, in collaboration with the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, held a major exhibition titled *American Indian Art: Form and Tradition*. The exhibition catalog includes a poetic and moving essay by Gerald Vizenor titled "Tribal People and the Poetic Image: Visions of Eyes and Hands." Vizenor affirmed that the Ojibwe and other Indigenous peoples were not primitive toolmakers but insightful and eloquent artists who infused their dream-inspired visions into the otherwise utilitarian objects they made.²³

With regard to Morrison's artistic output over the ensuing decades, his work never became outwardly conscientious of either his ethnicity or the political climate of the times. In other words, Morrison remained steadfast in his aversion to "Indian art" in the non-Indigenous institutionalized sense articulated above, which, as also noted above, is substantially different from the conversational way in which "Indian" is used among Indigenous people. While the former is based on the historical fictions and romanticized fantasies endemic to American westward expansion, the latter is a kind of kinship term that is applicable to persons of the same tribe, as well as to those from very different Indigenous communities. "Indian" in the everyday sense refers to an unspoken understanding that one possesses a set of values common among Indigenous peoples, such as a regard for the land and for one's elders, in addition to which is a common history of colonization, dispossession, and disenfranchisement in American society. With that in mind, it is often the case that "Indian" becomes synonymous with one's specific tribal identity. For example, as seen in several quotes attributed to Morrison, he frequently uses the word "Indian" when referring to his own community and personal identity. The fundamental difference, then, between calling one's art "Indian" and calling oneself "Indian" is that between letting others define you ("Indian art") and defining yourself ("Indian").²⁴ With the foregoing in mind, Morrison's legacy as a revered Minnesota artist began to grow substantially. Kathleen Van Tassell summarizes this stage of his artistic career:

During these years [1970–83], Morrison was involved in several important projects. From 1973 to 1975, he served as a design consultant to the architects Hodne-Stageberg of the American Indian Center on Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis. . . . Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, presented a major one-person exhibition of his drawings in 1973. . . . In 1981, he . . . had a one-person show at the University of Minnesota, entitled *George Morrison: Entries in an Artist's Journal*. His most recent solo exhibition, *HORIZON: Small Painting Series, 1980–1987*, was presented at the Tweed Museum of Art, University of Minnesota, Duluth, and Minnesota Museum of Art in 1987.²⁵

The list of Minnesota-related credentials also extended into other commissioned works, as well as the acquisition of his pieces by a variety of galleries, museums, and private collections. Morrison also left his mark multiple times on the Minneapolis cityscape with works on display in the halls of the University of Minnesota Law School, on the exterior of the American Indian Center, and, perhaps most prominently, on the sidewalk in front of the IDS Building on Nicollet Mall. Morrison was also involved with work and events outside of Minnesota that were no less important; however, his recognition by Minnesota institutions evoked a deepening relationship with the land and region that gave birth to his artistic vision. As such, Morrison played a meaningful role in asserting to the general public that Indigenous people, in particular the Native nations of what is today the state of Minnesota, are very much a part of the contemporary world.

Whereas the transparency that Deloria bemoaned above, which enables non-Indians to know all about “real Indians,” would have dictated that Morrison paint tepees and medicine men, the reality of Morrison’s life, career, and community (perhaps the better word is “communities”) is far different and much more interesting. One might even add “inspirational” to his distinctions. On this point, Vizenor said about his friend in an exhibition essay for the National Museum of the American Indian: “I was inspired by his Native vision and sense of liberty, and admired his dedication to the creation of surreal and expressionist art. I first told him that some thirty years ago. He was always modest, even shy, and eschewed my praise with an invitation to share a bottle of imported wine.” Vizenor then recounts telling Morrison that they may have met in Greenwich Village in 1955, when Morrison was working and mingling

with the likes of Franz Kline and Willem de Kooning, while he was a student at New York University: "George Morrison has inspired many Native artists and creative writers. I honor his courage as an artist, and might have found my confidence as a Native writer much earlier if we had become friends that year in Greenwich Village."²⁶ Indeed, one may cogently argue that Morrison's artistic example was a direct influence on Vizenor's concepts of "survivance" and especially "postindian."

One can certainly see Morrison's influence on Vizenor not only in the obtuse experimental style in which he often writes, as seen in *Wordarrows* and *Earthdivers*, but also in the concept of "postindian," which is Vizenor's attempt at moving Indigenous literature beyond the limitations of "Indian writing."²⁷ In many ways, postindian narratives have always been a part of Vizenor's portrayal of contemporary Indigenous life as mediated through his understanding of Nanabozho, the trickster from the Ojibwe oral tradition. This aesthetic and intellectual agenda is exemplified in *The People Named the Chippewa*, in which the reader is introduced to historically important Ojibwe writers, the boarding school experience as seen through the eyes of Ojibwe children, and the dubious legacy of Dennis Banks (one of the founders of AIM).²⁸ Openly influenced by French postmodernism, especially Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida, Vizenor deconstructs European American notions of "the Indian" and their partiality for noble savages, supplanting them with stories of tragedy, survival, and outrageous humor.

In *Manifest Manners* Vizenor points out the inappropriateness of the word "*indian*," which is deliberately spelled with a lowercase *i* in order to deny the word substance or reification: "Manifestly, the *indian* is an occidental misnomer, an overseas enactment that has no referent to real native cultures or communities."²⁹ In one sense, Vizenor is contributing to the critique of "the Indian" noted above in the references to Apess, Montezuma, and Deloria. In another, Vizenor is attempting to break free from having to make that critique in the first place. Instead, he seeks a point where Indigenous storytellers can tell their stories from the vantage point of their own subjective lives, grounded in their actual experiences, as opposed to either stereotypes or the withering expectations of being an "old-time Indian." In other words, Vizenor is attempting to answer the question: What if we simply stopped asking what is an Indian? After all, "the Indian" doesn't exist except in the colonial imagination of European American settlers and their descendants.

“The postindian,” Vizenor writes, “absolves by irony the nominal simulations of the *indian*, waives centuries of translation and dominance, and resumes the ontic significance of native modernity.”³⁰ What this means as a way of looking back on Morrison’s work and legacy is that once one wipes away the cobwebs of racism and oppression that Indigenous people have endured for centuries—which linger today in the stereotypes embedded in words like “Indian”—then one can see clearly the colorful and vibrant world in which persons like Morrison (and Vizenor) actually dwell, a world that is not limited to staying on the reservation and being self-conscious about being “Indian” all the time.³¹ Morrison’s images, on the contrary, anticipated the postindian discourse on Indigenous modernity: “George Morrison was an introspective, meditative artist who was liberated from racialism and poverty by chance, by his imagination and ambition, by his painterly associations, and by memorable revolutions in aesthetics.”³²

What Morrison’s images demonstrate is the power of art to unleash a wave of emotions, hopes, dreams, fears, and ideas that inhabit every viewer; they are then projected back onto the work under contemplation. On this point, Steven Klindt observed: “We have a tendency to think of George Morrison as a Minnesota artist, but such a label is too constricting, as is the term Native American artist. I have always been more comfortable thinking of George as a Native American who is a powerful, contemporary artist.”³³ In many ways, Morrison’s beautiful abstractions have nothing whatsoever to do with being Indian, Ojibwe, or even Minnesotan. They are simply works of lines, colors, and forms made from paint and other material. Or, as Vizenor describes Morrison’s aesthetic agenda in *The Everlasting Sky*, “Morrison was dedicated to the freedom of creative expression and, for that reason, would not burden an artist with the political and cultural demands of an identity. He expressed ‘feelings about life’ in his paintings, ‘rather than what the society expects in traditional symbols. He is not a traditionalist in the sense that he produces familiar images about cultural values.’”³⁴ At the same time, because the art in question is made from modern art supplies and rendered in a very sophisticated style, it would be ironic to then claim that, for example, Morrison’s Horizon series represents a primordial or even precultural vision of the lake now known as Lake Superior and known to the Ojibwe as Gitchi Manitou. Yet, to be ironic does not mean the same as to be untrue or false. So, while Morrison’s Horizon series may

not be overtly Ojibwe, it nonetheless took *this artist* who emerged from the Ojibwe community to make these images. Consequently, the genealogy of the Horizon series connects it to a diverse and ever-changing Ojibwe world.³⁵ In other words, rather than placing Morrison's work on a timeline complete with a linear notion of "progress" or "evolution" in which one moves horizontally from precontact times to early trade relations, then onward to the reservation system and beyond into the so-called modern era, it would be more fitting to think vertically and root Morrison's work in a deep relation to the Ojibwe world, into which countless non-Indigenous things have entered. This ancient homeland over time has enabled persons like Morrison to access places, ideas, and experiences far from the boundaries defined by oral tradition, custom, or treaty. Yet, in the final analysis, Morrison is ineradicably related to *this place* and *these people*.³⁶

Still, in the contemporary Indigenous art world, it seems that it is better to create subject-matter that is identifiably Indian to your nonIndian viewer than it is to create something as an Indigenous artist that your viewer can't recognize as "Indian art." Even though much of traditional art consists of abstract symbols and images, unless these abstractions are rendered in beads or painted on pottery, the purveyors of "Indian art" will always hesitate at accepting that work as "authentic." In Morrison's case, while he earned recognition as an accomplished and talented artist, he nevertheless remains on the periphery of American Indian art history. More to the point, despite being part of a generation that included other major figures of the post-1945 generation, Morrison's work has been consistently omitted from the scholarly contributions to American Indian art studies, especially historical surveys.³⁷ Even a scholar as thorough in his treatment of Indigenous art as W. Jackson Rushing III has overlooked Morrison's presence in key works, although he has rectified this substantially with a 2013 exhibition and catalog.³⁸

Indeed, Morrison's profile has become more prominent in recent American Indian art history and critical cultural scholarship. Noteworthy are an article by Charleen Touchette that appeared in the *American Indian Art Magazine*; an article and essay by Gerald Vizenor that appeared in *American Indian Quarterly* and *Native Modernism: The Legacy of Allan Houser and George Morrison*, respectively; and an essay I wrote for *American Indian Thought*, an anthology of essays by Indigenous philosophers. *Native Modernism* not only was the catalog for the

National Museum of the American Indian's inaugural 2004 exhibit but also included pieces from other important voices in Indigenous art and art history, specifically W. Richard West Jr., Truman T. Lowe, and Gail Tremblay. Nearly a decade later, there is *Modern Spirit: The Art of George Morrison* exhibition, complete with a catalog edited by Rushing and featuring a foreword by Kay WalkingStick and an introduction by Kristin Makhholm. The volume also includes Rushing's historical and aesthetic analysis, which sets Morrison in a discourse that examines his work and legacy as a central figure in the ongoing development of Indigenous modernist art.

WalkingStick's piece is a moving homage to her friend's memory as a loved and respected person who also distinguished himself as a great artist. In its brief pages there is a rather poignant story in which WalkingStick deliberately seeks out Morrison for his advice on "being an Indian in a white art world while not playing the 'Indian card.'" Being a proverbial "man of few words," Morrison provides an answer to WalkingStick's dilemma more through example than in the form of spoken advice:

George never promulgated the idea that he was an Indian artist, yet his work seems to exude a love of the land and a richness of our shared vision that we like to think of as an Indian state of mind. He was simply, quietly himself. That is what I understood when we met. Nothing was verbally expressed, yet I felt my questions were answered. He had silently told me to go home and be myself.³⁹

Kristin Makhholm, who is an accomplished and well-respected curator in addition to being the current executive director of the Minnesota Museum of American Art, which owns much of the work now on exhibit, sees Morrison's identity in terms of creating distance between his work and ethnicity. More to the point, when Morrison describes himself as an artist who happens to be Indian, Makhholm rejoins: "This tactic of distancing himself from his identity as a Native American painter in favor of the more universal notion of the 'artist' strikes at a fundamental friction between cultural and ethnic identity and the role of the artist in twentieth-century American art." At the same time, the importance of "place," specifically Minnesota, emerges as "one of the most indelible ways in which we can honor the work of this beloved native son."⁴⁰ Makhholm then proceeds to demonstrate the numerous ways in which Morrison maintained his connection to Minnesota throughout every

phase of his lengthy career. With respect to Rushing's historical analysis of Morrison's work and status in American Indian art, Makhholm makes two rather curious remarks. First, she states that Rushing's argument is based on appreciating Morrison as "a product of a time when definitions of 'Indianness' were evolving in significant ways," which sounds enticing, except for the fact that Rushing never really goes over the history of how the term "Indian" changed historically, either politically or culturally, during Morrison's life and career. Second, Makhholm mentions Gerald Vizenor's concept of "post-Indian [*sic*]," stating that both arguments, namely, Rushing's and Vizenor's, "help us understand Morrison, whose work and life embody the collision of cultural identities that occurred in the twentieth century."⁴¹ Neither Makhholm nor Rushing, however, ever does anything with Vizenor's concept of postindian, let alone shed any light on any aspect of Morrison's identity or art.

Having said that, while it is dubious that Rushing has resolved Morrison's identity issues as successfully as Makhholm claims, the noted art historian does make a commendable effort at demonstrating Morrison's importance to American Indian art history and his now legendary career as a cosmopolitan artist who, as has often been said, happened to be Indian. What is especially convincing about Rushing's essay is his argument that Morrison was a sophisticated artist fully capable of understanding, not to mention employing in his own style, the significant ideas arising throughout his worldly career, be it surrealism, cubism, constructivism, or abstract expressionism.⁴² Moreover, Morrison was able to work deftly with a variety of aesthetic ideas across a range of media. With respect to being labeled an "Indian artist," Morrison seemed especially sensitive to when non-Indian critics and historians made much ado about his race and ethnicity. Indeed, there are multiple instances in Rushing's essay in which an otherwise learned viewer, meaning the non-Indian critics and historians he cites, insists on appreciating Morrison's work based on its supposed "Indianness." Helen Carson, for example, wrote for the *New York Sun*: "Unconsciously or otherwise, these figures and forms derive from the ideography of Morrison's forebears."⁴³ Then, at the Galerie Craven, Morrison's work was noted "as a quest for the traditional esthetics of his race."⁴⁴ Earl Fineberg, in turn, is quoted as saying in the *Duluth News-Tribune*: "That Morrison is a Chippewa Indian may have something to do with his view of the visible world," adding with some recognition of the artist's accomplishments,

“if one remembers that through travel, education, and influence the artist is among today’s most sophisticated abstract composers.”⁴⁵ Lastly, Colette Roberts, while acknowledging Morrison’s exceptional painterly abilities, goes on to state: “Morrison is of Indian ancestry and has often found vigor and inspiration in a cultural background more related actually to pre-Columbian Peruvian textiles than to North American Indian workmanship.”⁴⁶ As for Morrison’s reaction to all this admiration for his Indian background, he is quoted as saying, “Critics [who aren’t Indigenous themselves] will refer to my Indian background to try and make sense of the work. I wasn’t pushing it, but they found it anyway.”⁴⁷

Does this mean that Morrison was consistently resistant to any Indian-related appreciation of his work? Among non-Indian critics, Morrison makes a major exception for Evan M. Maurer, whom he met in 1971 after his life-changing return to Minnesota. Maurer, at this juncture, was working at the Minneapolis Institute of Art. However, it was a show that Maurer curated for the Chicago Institute of Art in 1977 titled *The Native American Heritage: A Survey of North American Indian Art*, in which Morrison installed *Red Totem I* as the centerpiece, that made the difference in Morrison’s attitude. With respect to Maurer’s interpretation of Morrison’s work and the artist’s reaction, Rushing points out the curator’s substantial experience in the field of American Indian art, as well as his background as “a first-generation American Jew descended from Eastern European Jewry,” which presumably forms a meaningful basis for his understanding of cultural “marginalization” and the possibility of “extinction,” that is to say, genocide, vis-à-vis American Indians. As for what Maurer says about Morrison’s centerpiece work, it is actually no different from earlier critics who made Morrison bristle with discomfort. Specifically, Maurer comments in the exhibition catalog: “Morrison felt that the sculpture was completed with the application of the red stain—an allusion to the sacred earth paint and a sign of consecration emphasizing the traditional strengths of his ancestral heritage.”⁴⁸ Yet, as Rushing observes, Morrison’s positive response to Maurer’s construal of his work—stating that he “got the feeling of what I was trying to do”—appears to be due to the artist’s deliberate effort at this time to “assimilate a certain Indianness” into his creations.⁴⁹

So, where does this leave us with regard to the ethnic implications of Morrison’s art? Is it “Indian art” or not? While the discussion over the ethnic identity, if any, of Morrison’s images has evoked a range of opin-

ions, not to mention a bevy of complex interpretations of lines, colors, and brush techniques, one development in the critical analysis of Morrison's paintings and sculptures should not be overlooked, and that is the historical and cultural work done by Indigenous critics. While Rushing does acknowledge Indigenous critical opinion sporadically throughout his essay, he overlooks how these critics have generated a body of discourse that is substantially different from individuals like Bernstein, Maurer, and even himself. In particular, as noted above, since Morrison's death, Indigenous writers have reflected on Morrison's influence on their perception of Indigenous art, which ought to be more central in any meaningful discourse on the relation between aesthetics and ethnicity within an Indigenous context. Consequently, it is worth noting that Rushing minimizes Vizenor's (*White Earth Ojibwe*) discourse on Morrison's work, and he does not cite Charleen Touchette's (*Métis*) reflections on Morrison's life and legacy. Rushing has also omitted, even from his selected bibliography, my own (*Gila River Pima*) phenomenological work. All of us appreciated Morrison in kinship terms, as an Ojibwe, an artist, and a thinker, respectively.

Touchette, for example, although her essay, titled "George Morrison (1919–2000): Standing on the 'Edge of the World,'" is more of a eulogy than a critical analysis of his work, refers to Morrison as an "Anishinaabe Indian raised in the Chippewa tradition on the north shore of Lake Superior," where he "grew up to be 'an elder and a guiding spirit whose character and career exemplified Minnesota's best.'" Ernie White-man is then quoted as referring to Morrison as "a legend," as well as affectionately calling him the "godfather of contemporary Indian art."⁵⁰ Touchette's survey of his life and work, similar to other treatises, acknowledges all of the geographical and artistic changes and developments throughout his career, never once trying to simplify either his oeuvre or his identity. Ultimately, in a section titled "Morrison's Position on Being an Indian Artist," Touchette respects Morrison's resistance to being forced into an ethnic pigeonhole, stating: "Refusing to identify himself solely as an Indian artist, Morrison preferred to be seen simply as a painter who faced the canvas with the same concerns as any other painter of any ethnicity." Before there was "Indian art," there were Indigenous peoples, each of whom knew what to call themselves. In the case of the Anishinaabeg, their autonym affirms themselves as the "original people," which is not so much chronological as it is genealogical,

meaning that if one identifies as Anishinaabe, then one belongs to or is related to or originates from these people. The man named George Morrison (and later named Wah-wah-ta-ga-nah-gah-boo and Gwe-ki-ge-nah-gah-boo by his cousin, Walter Caribou, during a healing ceremony), before he is anything else, is one of the “original people.” With respect to the latter, Touchette concluded her reflections by bringing the epic journey of his life full circle: “George Morrison was an Anishinaabe man who stood upon the earth gazing at the water and the sky and truly saw it, thus transforming the way we look at the horizon.”⁵¹

Just prior to the appearance of Touchette’s article in the *American Indian Art Magazine*, the Weisman Museum at the University of Minnesota launched a retrospective exhibit during the fall of 2000 that would be the inspiration for my own 2004 philosophical essay, titled “Along the Horizon a World Appears: George Morrison and the Pursuit of an American Indian Esthetic.” In the essay I analyze how Morrison’s Horizon series evokes a relationship between place, person, and image. Moreover, insofar as Morrison was purposely seeking an Indigenous connection between himself and his work, I examine the variations on the horizon that were created during this time for how they generated an Indigenous vision within a visually abstract narrative. In the final analysis, I appreciate Morrison’s work for what it suggests to any viewer whose perception is informed by Indigenous culture and history. With the Ojibwe oral tradition, including Vizenor’s postmodern rendition of the trickster figure Nanabozho, along with appropriate references to Edward S. Casey’s phenomenology of place in mind, I observe:

What I see in the paintings that constitute the Horizon Series is not the “spirit” of the lake [Lake Superior] in some superficial sense, rather, I see the various faces of the Underwater Manito. These are the powers that otherwise lie hidden from our profane vision, which does not know how to perceive objects except for what they yield in terms of form and function. “This magic of the artist,” as Morrison reminds us of the primal roots of all artists, “works with the magic of nature in change. The rock, which I began to regard late in life, has a presence of its own, and the water is a living force, moving and changing. The same changing in the wind—that phenomenon of nature we can’t even see, but it has a sound and presence of its own.” The horizon, too, is like

the wind—a phenomenon we can perceive but never really apprehend. For as we move about any given place, the horizon is that which constantly moves away from us as we approach it, yet which never leaves our perceptual field.⁵²

Vizenor adds his own observations and reflections on Morrison's Horizon series in his 2004 essay, titled "George Morrison: Anishinaabe Expressionism at Red Rock." Of particular interest is Vizenor's own appreciation for Morrison's Horizon series, which suggests, as it did to Touchette and me, an inherent connection to his ancestral homeland. "Morrison explained many times," Vizenor recalls, "that he was obsessed with the horizon because he was born and matured near the shore of Lake Superior," where the "magic of nature," alluded to above, reminds one of "the sound of waves on the shore, the ambient light, and the constant changes of the horizon outside of his studio window."⁵³ In turn, Vizenor points out, Morrison learned the words and stories of primary colors in two languages, a source of "envisioned tone, concentration, and intuitive artistry." Words like *misko* (red), *miskomin* (raspberry), *miskwaawaak* (red cedar), and *miskwi* (blood), all of which call to mind the redness of the horizon along the lake, which Morrison captured in red pencil.⁵⁴ Thus, Morrison entered the world of art through a portal that first opened when he lived in northern Minnesota, where, as he remembered, there "were twelve children in our family, crowded into a small frame house without electricity or plumbing. We were often hungry and sick."⁵⁵ When Rushing overlooked the above Indigenous voices in his discourse, he also overlooked the opportunity to be more sensitive to Indigenous frames of reference, which precluded him from participating more meaningfully in a discourse about Indigenous art. It is an opportunity that one would hope every critic, historian, and curator—Indian and non-Indian alike—would pursue.

In the end, Morrison's rebellion against "Indian art" is an antipathy that generations of Indigenous people have felt for how non-Indians have presumed to define them. What the Indigenous discourse on Morrison's art and legacy compels one to recognize is that there is no such thing as "Indian art" to begin with, let alone being an Indigenous concept. While Morrison only asserts his status as an "artist," as opposed to doing what many are doing lately in Indigenous communities, which is use Indigenous terms for describing their work, his impulse to reject "Indian art"

as a label was his way of establishing a boundary—maybe horizon is the more fitting word—in which he maintained the privilege of defining himself, which he did visually, powerfully, and effectively.⁵⁶ For me, the significance of Morrison's work is that, aside from its beauty and profundity, it teaches that the critique of "Indian art" is not simply a curatorial debate but an existential problem endemic to being Indigenous in modern American society. To insist that any Indigenous artist accept the label of "Indian art," thereby denying him or her the right to self-definition, especially when this is enacted by institutions, be they academic or artistic, is the equivalent of seizing Indigenous land and forcing Indigenous people behind lines, such as reservations, not of their own making. Morrison, on the contrary, knew how to draw his own horizon.

NOTES

1. Issues regarding the essentializing of ethnic identity have long been a concern in museum and curatorial studies. See, for example, Shepard Krech III and Barbara A. Hail, eds., *Collecting Native America, 1870–1960* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Books, 2010); Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); and Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

2. Francis Paul Prucha, ed., "Indian Arts and Crafts Board," *Documents of United States Indian Policy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 229.

3. Rennard Strickland, "Where Have All the Blue Deer Gone? Depth and Diversity in Post War Indian Painting," *American Indian Art Magazine* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1985): 39.

4. Mary Abbe, "Gone but Hardly Forgotten," *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, September 9, 2004, n.p.

5. For examples of the Ojibwe boarding school experience, see Basil Johnston, *Indian School Days* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1988); and Peter Razor, *While the Locust Slept: A Memoir* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002). For an overview of the boarding school system in the United States, see David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997).

6. George Morrison and Margot Fortunato Galt, *Turning the Feather Around: My Life in Art* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1998), 32.

7. Several scholars have attempted to comprehend the schizophrenic attitude that Americans have expressed about the continent's aboriginal inhabitants, be they historical, contemporary, real, or fictional. See, for example, Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Berkeley:

University of California Press, 1988); Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1999); Elizabeth Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890–1915* (Chapel Hill NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Shari M Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); and Alan Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha: Staging Indians, Making Americans, 1880–1930* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005).

8. William Apess, “A Son of the Forest,” in *A Son of the Forest and Other Writings* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 10.

9. Carlos Montezuma, “Let My People Go!,” in *The American Indian Intellectual Tradition: An Anthology of Writings from 1772 to 1972*, ed. David Martínez (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 207.

10. Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 1.

11. See Robert A. Williams Jr., *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Williams Jr., *Like a Loaded Weapon: The Rehnquist Court, Indian Rights, and the Legal History of Racism in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005). See also Vine Deloria Jr., “Anthropologists and Other Friends,” in *Custer Died for Your Sins*, 78–100; *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (Golden CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997); and *Power and Place: Indian Education in America* (Golden CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2001).

12. Charleen Touchette, “George Morrison (1919–2000): Standing on the ‘Edge of the World,’” *American Indian Art Magazine*, Winter 2001, 76. W. Jackson Rushing III adds to this anecdote: “*New England Landscape II* (1967) . . . took the Grand Award in 1968 at the Fourth Invitational Exhibition of Indian Arts and Crafts, sponsored by the Center for Arts of Indian America in Washington DC. Morrison’s success in that invitational is noteworthy, since early in his career he was rebuffed in his efforts to show his work in juried exhibitions of American Indian art because it wasn’t Indian in style, and so before the late 1970s he was rarely included in such shows.” See W. Jackson Rushing III, “George Morrison (1919–2000),” in *Our Treasures: Highlights from the Minnesota Museum of American Art*, <http://mmaatreasures.org/pages/GeorgeMorrison>, accessed November 9, 2012.

13. Morrison and Galt, *Turning the Feather Around*, 64–65.

14. Sam Olbekson, “Beyond the Horizon: An Interview with Anishinabe Artist George Morrison,” *Akwe:kon Journal*, Spring 1993, 34.

15. Olbekson, “Beyond the Horizon,” 34.

16. See Beverly Gordon, ed., *American Indian Art: The Collecting Experience* (Madison WI: Chazen Museum of Art, 2002), 11–14. Gordon analyzes the correspondence between the Red Power movement and developments in American Indian art, specifically as objects of interest among collectors and curators.

17. Cited in David Martínez, “Rabbits and Flying Warriors: The Postindian Im-

agery of Jim Denomie,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 35, no. 4 (2011): 142.

18. Morrison and Galt, *Turning the Feather Around*, 132–33. Despite Morrison’s legendary effort at expanding his artistic horizons by living and working abroad, Rushing notes evidence that Morrison still felt tied to his family and home: “After Morrison finished his fellowship in France, another one, from the John Hay Whitney Foundation, enabled him to work in Duluth [Minnesota]. He later wrote, ‘By the time [the fall of 1953 through the winter of 1954] I was working almost entirely as a studio artist, working from imagination, so I didn’t need the real atmosphere around me. I was back in my own country, *near my people, particularly my mother in Duluth*’ (W. Jackson Rushing III, “Modern Spirit: The Art of George Morrison,” in *Modern Spirit: The Art of George Morrison*, ed. W. Jackson Rushing III [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013], 18, my emphasis).

19. Morrison and Galt, *Turning the Feather Around*, 135.

20. Patricia C. Albers et al., “A Story of Struggle and Survival: American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities,” in *Native American Studies in Higher Education: Models for Collaboration between Universities and Indigenous Nations*, ed. Duane Champagne and Jay Stauss (Walnut Creek CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 146.

21. Morrison and Galt, *Turning the Feather Around*, 138.

22. Morrison and Galt, *Turning the Feather Around*, 137–38.

23. See Walker Art Center et al., *American Indian Art: Form and Tradition* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1972).

24. While it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss, I should note that more frequently today the colloquialism used by Indigenous people is “ndn,” which is a grapheme meant to signify a renunciation of the colonizer’s definitions of “Indian” while retaining the social value of this word among community members.

25. Kathleen Van Tassel, “Standing in the Northern Lights,” in *Standing in the Northern Lights: George Morrison, a Retrospective* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Museum of Art, 1990), 21–22. Kristin Makhholm would expand greatly on this facet of Morrison’s career in her essay “The Journey toward George Morrison, Minnesota Artist,” in Rushing, *Modern Spirit*, 5–8.

26. Gerald Vizenor, “George Morrison: Anishinaabe Expressionism at Red Rock,” in *Native Modernism: The Art of George Morrison and Allan Houser*, ed. Truman T. Lowe (Washington DC: Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, 2004), 38.

27. Gerald Vizenor, *Wordarrows: Indians and Whites in the New Fur Trade* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978); Gerald Vizenor, *Earthdivers: Tribal Narratives on Mixed Descent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981).

28. Vizenor pursued this literary agenda both in his works of fiction and in his literary criticism. See, in particular, Gerald Vizenor, ed., *Narrative Chance: Post-*

modern Discourse on Native American Literatures (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).

29. Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln: Bison Books, 1994), vii.

30. Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*, viii.

31. See, for example, Deloria Jr., "Anthropologists and Other Friends," in which Deloria observes: "After World War II anthropologists came to call. They were horrified that the Indians didn't carry on their old customs such as dancing, feasts, and giveaways. In fact, the people did keep up a substantial number of customs. But these customs had been transposed into church gatherings, participating in the county fair, and tribal celebrations, particularly fairs and rodeos. The people did Indian dances. BUT THEY DIDN'T DO THEM ALL THE TIME" (86–87).

32. Vizenor, "Anishanaabe Expressionism," 48.

33. Steven Klindt, introduction to *Standing in the Northern Lights: George Morrison, a Retrospective* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Museum of Art, 1990), 13.

34. Gerald Vizenor, introduction to *The Everlasting Sky: Voices of the Anishinabe People* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2000), xi.

35. For a deeper analysis of how Morrison's Horizon series connects with the Ojibwe cultural world, see David Martínez, "Along the Horizon a World Appears: George Morrison and the Pursuit of an American Indian Esthetic," in *American Indian Thought*, ed. Anne Waters (Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), 256–62.

36. On this point Rushing refers to Scott Pratt's notion of "emplacement" as cited by Bill Anthes, "in which the indigenous homeland is the fundamental ground out of which oral traditions derive their meaning" ("Modern Spirit," 60). For more, see Scott L. Pratt, *Native Pragmatism: Rethinking the Roots of American Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

37. Morrison will only garner scant mentions in works that have done much to establish the discourse on American Indian art history, for example, Jamake Highwater, *Song from the Earth: American Indian Painting* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1976); Christian F. Feest, *Native Arts of North America* (London: Oxford University Press, 1980); Janet C. Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); and David W. Penney, *North American Indian Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004).

38. See *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde* (1995). Rushing also edited an anthology in which there was no mention of Morrison in any of the essays. See W. Jackson Rushing III, ed., *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1999). Rushing, however, refers to Morrison's work in an essay about Allan Houser. See W. Jackson Rushing III, "Allan Houser: American Hero," in *After the Storm: The Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art, 2001*, ed. W. Jackson Rushing III (Indianapolis: Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, 2001), 3–10.

39. Kay WalkingStick, "A Special Visit with George Morrison," in Rushing, *Modern Spirit*, viii, ix.
40. Makhholm, "The Journey toward George Morrison," 4, 5.
41. Makhholm, "The Journey toward George Morrison," 4-5.
42. W. Jackson Rushing III, "Modern Spirit: The Art of George Morrison," in *Modern Spirit: The Art of George Morrison* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 12-26.
43. Rushing, "Modern Spirit," 14.
44. Rushing, "Modern Spirit," 17-18.
45. Rushing, "Modern Spirit," 19.
46. Rushing, "Modern Spirit," 23.
47. Rushing, "Modern Spirit," 14.
48. Rushing, "Modern Spirit," 33-34. See also Evan M. Mauer, *The Native American Heritage: A Survey of North American Indian Art* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978).
49. Rushing, "Modern Spirit," 34.
50. Touchette, "George Morrison," 73.
51. Touchette, "George Morrison," 83.
52. Martínez, "Along the Horizon," 260.
53. Vizenor, "Anishinaabe Expressionism," 47.
54. Vizenor, "Anishinaabe Expressionism," 40.
55. Vizenor, "Anishinaabe Expressionism," 40.
56. For more on the curatorial debate over names and labels in the field of American Indian art, see Nancy Marie Mithlo, "No Word for Art in Our Language? Old Questions, New Paradigms," *Wicazo Sa Review* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 111-26. Mithlo does an outstanding job at analyzing more recent trends in Indigenous art studies, including a rise in "post-Indian ideologies," which ironically lead to a type of assimilation.