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South Dakota Art Museum Newsletters and Publications

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News from the South Dakota Memorial Art Center, September 1986

South Dakota State University

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News from the South Dakota Memorial Art Center

September 1986

Art of the Sioux opens Saturday, September 20, 5 - 9 p.m., and shows through November 30. This special exhibition, supported in part by Friends of the Arts in Brookings and the National Endowment for the Arts, includes material collected mainly in South Dakota by Frank Dudeck, Joanita Kant, Beatrice Medicine, Ben Reifel, Harold Shunk, Frank Thorburn, Albert Wentzy, and Claude Whitlock.



Lakota eagle feather headdress with trail, collected during the early 1900s by Albert Wentzy of Scenic, South Dakota. Gift of Nannette Harker Moxon and Woodrow Wentzy.

Although now common usage, "Sioux" is a French corruption of an Ojibwa epithet for their traditional enemies, the Dakota (or Lakota or Nakota, depending on the dialect), meaning "an alliance of friends." Dakota bands began moving from the woodlands west of Lake Superior in the 17th century, eventually forming three major tribal divisions in areas of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, the Dakotas, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Montana. The seven Teton or Lakota bands formed the western division, the Yankton and Yanktonai formed the middle division, and the four Santee or Dakota bands formed the eastern division. They prospered on the prairies of the Northwest and became a power to be reckoned with.



Moses Bulltail and wife, Rosebud Reservation, South Dakota, September 28, 1931. Photograph by Fr. Eugene Buechel, S.J., gift of St. Francis Mission.

Although they fiercely resisted white encroachment on their territory, culminating in 1876 with the annihilation of George Custer's command at the Little Big Horn in Montana, the Sioux eventually acquiesced to reservation life. Despite the tremendous change that reservation life represented, Sioux tribal traditions survived and the arts actually flourished. Even the most ordinary articles were richly embroidered with dyed porcupine quills or European glass beads. The idea of art as something apart from daily existence has never been recognized by the Sioux, and during the reservation period works of art came to be the most tangible evidence of traditional Sioux life and values. This remains true today. One has only to consider the quillwork of Alice New Holy Blue Legs, winner of the 1985 National Heritage Master Artist Award, to understand how important it is for the Sioux to maintain traditions and to preserve their ethnic identity.

Friends of the Arts in Brookings has allocated \$4,000 in support of programs at the Memorial Art Center this year from proceeds of the Evening for the Arts. This generous support will help bring the Cone Collection of work by Henri Matisse to the Center in March 1987, and enable the Center to include such classics as Akira Kurosawa's *Kagemusha* in this season's film series.

Oscar Howe Paintings show September 20 - November 30. Howe (1915-1983), a Yanktonai Sioux born on the Crow Creek Reservation in South Dakota, studied at the Santa Fe Indian School during the 1930s. The School's art program, called simply "The Studio," produced such masters as Harrison Begay (Navajo), Ignatius Palmer (Mescalero Apache), and Pablita Velarde (Santa Clara). Not content with the decorative and highly popular Santa Fe style, Howe meticulously researched old Sioux painting techniques and concepts, and eventually was able to bring Sioux and modern Euro-American ideals into harmony within his work. This exhibition, selected from the Center's collection of the artist's work, includes "Dakota Medicine Man," Howe's gift to South Dakota State University on the occasion of his honorary doctorate from SDSU.



Oscar Howe's "Dakota Medicine Man," 1968, casein on paper. Gift of the artist.

The Institute of Museum Services, an independent agency within the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities, has granted a General Operating Support Award of \$17,551 to the Center this season, assistance meant to strengthen educational programs and improve methods of caring for the collections.

South Dakota Memorial Art Center

Medary Avenue at Harvey Dunn Street
Brookings, South Dakota 57007
(605) 688-5423

A state center for the visual arts at South Dakota State University, accredited by the American Association of Museums.

Free public hours: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Mondays - Fridays, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Saturdays, and 1 - 5 p.m. Sundays and holidays; closed New Year's, Thanksgiving, and Christmas days.

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Paul Goble's "Buffalo Dance," 1981, ink and watercolor on illustration board. Gift of Dr. Lawrence Stine.

South Dakota Artists show September 20 - November 30, featuring work by Carol Hepper of McLaughlin, Carl Grupp of Sioux Falls, Arthur Amiotte of Custer, and other leading state artists represented in the Center collection. A new acquisition is Paul Goble's "Buffalo Dance," a version of one of the Illustrations for his *Gift of the Sacred Dog*, published by Bradbury Press. A native of Haslemere, England, Goble lives near Deadwood, South Dakota, in the Black Hills. He first visited the United States in 1959. Later, as a teacher, he spent summer vacations on Indian reservations in Montana and South Dakota. "I have felt the pull of the Native American tradition as long as I can remember," he said, "probably since the time my mother read me the stories of Grey Owl and Ernest Thompson Seton." He has written and illustrated a number of stories based on Native American history and legend, including *The Girl Who Loved Horses*, which won the Caldecott Medal.

Masterworks by South Dakota Artists show at the University of South Dakota's Coyote Student Center in Vermillion through September 26, one of four exhibitions available through the Memorial Art Center's Exhibition Loan Service this year. Among the 14 artists are Palmer Eide of Sioux Falls, James Gibson of Aberdeen, and Gerald Kruse of Brookings.

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