

Lesson 1:

Origins of Contemporary Native Art

Tiger Style – An Avant-garde Approach to Indian Art

Jerome Tiger (1941 - 1967)



One of the leading innovators in contemporary Native American art was Jerome Tiger. Tiger's uncanny ability to draw virtually anything after only a momentary glance has led critics to refer to him as the Rembrandt or Goya of Indian art. This is quite a

lofty comparison particularly since Tiger had little formal training. But characteristic of all great art, Tiger's work had universal appeal. Its beauty and deep spirituality spoke to people of all races, not just Native Americans.

The success and genius of Tiger's art can be attributed to what was called the *Tiger style*—a unique combination of spiritual vision, human understanding and technical virtuosity. In subject matter and composition his art was traditional. In every other respect, it was a radical departure from classic Indian art.

Jerome Tiger was a full-blood Creek-Seminole, born in 1941. He grew up in Eufaula, Oklahoma. When Tiger began painting in the 1960's few if any artists could make a living in Indian art. He committed himself to producing hundreds of paintings that from the outset received the acclaim of critics, won awards, and brought him success and recognition. The average Indian art buyer of the 1960's was overly critical and ready to find fault with either the quality of a piece or the authenticity of its details. To be popular with such an audience, not only did Tiger have to be technically competent, but inventive and prolific as well.

Jerome Tiger's style has had a tremendous influence on the Indian artists that have succeeded him. One art critic commented, "Wherever there are Indian paintings today, Tiger's influence can be felt." With almost unanimous agreement, Native American artists credit Jerome Tiger with being a major influence in the development of contemporary Indian art. Tiger's legacy lives on through his paintings: a body of work of exquisite beauty that revolutionized American Indian art.

-Tiger's Biography shared by Mid-American All Indian Center

Activity:

- Study the imagery in the Jerome Tiger painting, *Stomp Dance*.
- What elements do you see in the painting that make you think of traditional Native American culture?
- What elements do you see in the painting that make you think of contemporary Native American culture?



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