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Janvier and Morrisseau: Transcending a Canadian Discourse

Curtis J. Collins

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ABSTRACT

Janvier and Morrisseau: Transcending a Canadian Discourse

Curtis J. Collins

The art of Alex Janvier and Norval Morrisseau successfully transcended the aesthetic norms of Canadian culture in the 1960's and 1970's. Their respective works synthesize indigenous North American arts to forge a new definition of painting by artists of Native ancestry, which acknowledges the artistic traditions of Europe. Morrisseau and Janvier reacted to the political and social climate of this nation through their respective expressions. However, each artist's contributions to Canada's artistic identity have been excluded from the our modern art history as a result of a problematic Western discourse, which has remained active for over a century. Fortunately, this situation is gradually changing as First Nations people such as Morrisseau and Janvier assert their beliefs within the context of Canada's true cultural diversity. Morrisseau's spiritual outpourings and Janvier's symbolic declarations are communicated through paintings, which have profoundly reshaped Native and non-Native approaches to art and culture during the twenty-year (1960 - 1980) focus of this thesis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the careers and paintings of Norval Morrisseau (1931-) and Alex Janvier (1935 -) during the 1960's and 1970's, in order to transcend a number of inherent problems with the history of art in Canada. Janvier and Morrisseau have been selected to achieve this goal because their artistic activities represent a notable movement within modern painting. These two individuals were among the early artists of Native ancestry [1] to synthesize aboriginal North American and Western aesthetic traditions; creating innovative paintings that were accessible to both Native and non-Native audiences.[2] However, their achievements have been marginalized from this nation's mainstream art discourse, which since its inception has denied the validity of Native artistic expression.This situation is intimately connected to the history of social and political relations between Canada and the First Nations. Celebrating the *oeuvres* and experiences of Janvier and Morrisseau offers an opportunity to transcend the exclusivist definition of modern Canadian painting and expose the injustices of racist ideals in this country.

Morrisseau and Janvier: A survey of the 1960's and 1970's

We begin with a twenty-year survey of Morrisseau's and Janvier's activities within Canada's artistic community. The 1960's and 1970's offer an

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[1] First Nations, Native, indigenous and aboriginal are terms which refer to the original inhabitants of North America as a collective group; within the context of this thesis they do not refer to the Inuit.

[2] Norval Morrisseau is of Ojibwa ancestry and Alex Janvier is of Chipewyan ancestry. Both of these terms represent European classifications for aboriginal tribes in North America. For the purpose of this thesis I will use terms that are commonly employed by these respective groups to refer to themselves. Therefore "Anishnabai" will replace "Ojibwa" and "Dene" will replace "Chipewyan".

excellent selection of paintings by both artists, which will be used to underscore the major developments in their respective *oeuvres*. Janvier's and Morrisseau's achievements, along with those of their colleagues during this era, marked the emergence of modern First Nations painting in Canada. However, the work and exhibitions of Native artists were excluded from the nation's mainstream art discourse, which failed to communicate the true diversity of Canadian art in the latter of half of the twentieth century. It is important to remember that Morrisseau and Janvier continue to produce significant paintings, however the length limitations of this thesis prevent further discussion here.

Norval Morrisseau

Norval Morrisseau was born on March 14, 1931 on the Sand Point Reserve, in northern Ontario. His mother was of Anishnabai ancestry and his father was of Anishnabai/French descent. A crucial event in Morrisseau's artistic career occurred in the late 1950's during his treatment for tuberculosis at the Fort William (currently Thunder Bay) sanitarium. It was there that he had a vision and spoke to the Great Manitou, who encouraged the artist to create and exhibit paintings of the Anishnabai people's sacred legends:

> It says, 'I'm the Great Manitou. I'm testing you. Now, here's a charm for you.' And he throws down two pieces of silk, like flags, yes. Light blue and dark blue. Day sky and night sky. These will protect you. Go ahead and do these things. Never fear. I will help you.' I woke up. Since then I am not afraid.[3]

Supernatural encounters were a key source of subject matter for Morrisseau throughout the 1960's and 1970's. In the early 1960's he used tempera and

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[3] Morrisseau, quoted in Olive Patricia Dickson, Indian Arts in Canada (Toronto: Simpson Press, 1972), p. 92.

watercolour paints, as well as ink, to render his visions on birchbark, plywood and kraft paper. Most of the works from this period were executed from his residence in Beardmore, Ontario, a small town near the Sand Point reserve where the artist was born.

One of Morrisseau's more notable early works on birch bark is entitled Man Changing into Thunderbird (figure 1), of *circa* 1958-60 . This painting relates directly to the visual and oral traditions of an Anishnabai medicine society in the Lake Nipigon area of northern Ontario, known as the Midewiwin. Midewiwin society members practice various forms of magic and medicine that pay homage to the energy of local plants, animals, weather conditions and geographical formations. The artist's maternal grandfather, Moses "Potan" Nanakonagos, was a pivotal figure with regard to the thematic origins of Morrisseau's work, for it was he who recounted many of the Midewiwin legends to the artist during the latter's youth. Man Changing into Thunderbird is Morrisseau's version of a transformation phenomenon that is a common part of these ancient legends, in which humans, animals and supernatural creatures have the ability to alter their form.[4] As an adolescent the artist was given the name "Copper Thunderbird" by a female member of the Midewiwin and this creature became an integral part of his identity. Man Changing into Thunderbird, painted when Morrisseau was in his late twenties, is one of his first self-portraits.

This ink on birchbark also represents an important technical development, for it marks his exploitation of the contrast between black lines and coloured shapes. The rigid frontal poses of the man, thunderbird and fish are rendered by the artist in simple thin outlines of black ink. Much of his

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[4] Norval Morrisseau, Legends of My People, The Great Ojibway (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1965).

work from *circa* 1960 utilizes this coloured drawing format. The characters echo those of the animal, supernatural and human forms employed by Midewiwin artists on their birch bark scrolls.[5] However, naturalistic details such as the man's hands, feet, and torso resemble those of human figures common to Western commercial art forms. Each of the linear black figures is filled in with areas of unmixed red, yellow, blue, green and orange watercolour. A collection of circular symbols completes the picture of the two full-length figures, who face a central radiating sun constructed of orange and black lines.

The artist's choice of birchbark as the support material for this water-colour painting is important for it reinforces the work's reliance on the conventions of Midewiwin. Members of this society incise birch bark scrolls to record ancient stories and songs; see for example, an untitled scroll (figure 2), of *circa* 1900, by an anonymous Anishnabai artist. In many of his works from the early 1960's Morrisseau isolates one or two of the Midewiwin images and increases their scale to create full-length portrait studies on birch bark. However, the use of these images in non-sacred settings was forbidden by Anishnabai elders and the young artist was often scorned for his actions. [6]

During the late 1950's and early 1960's Morrisseau came into contact with a number of non-Native individuals who would make a profound impact on his career. In 1959 the artist, while working as a miner in Red Lake, became acquainted with an avid art collector, Dr. Joseph Weinstein. Weinstein provided Morrisseau with art materials and access to his collection of art books. Reproductions in the doctor's library of Northwest Coast

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[5] Selwyn Dewdney, The Sacred Scrolls of the Southern Ojibwa (Toronto: Universtiy of Toronto Press, 1975).

[6] Morrisseau, quoted in James Stephens,"Norval Morrisseau," Art Magazine (Summer 1974), p. 31.

painting and sculpture as well as Navajo art impressed the young painter.[7] Perhaps the most influential person Morrisseau met during the early stages of his artistic development was the Toronto art dealer Jack Pollock. Pollock first encountered the painter in 1962 while giving an art seminar in Beardmore, Ontario. He was stirred by the works on birch bark and paper that the young artist presented to him, admiring Morrisseau's ability to communicate through painting the spiritual beliefs of his people.[8] In August of 1962 Pollock presented a solo exhibition of Morrisseau's work at his gallery in Toronto. The artist remained associated with the Pollock Gallery for the next seventeen years.

By the mid-1960's Morrisseau had gained greater confidence with his materials and was able to create larger, more powerful paintings of his spiritual beliefs. Thunderbird with Serpent (figure 3) of 1965 is an excellent example of the artist's skillful employment of line, colour and form. Undulating black and red lines of acrylic paint define the interior and exterior compositions of both beings. The thunderbird's solid blue plumage is accented with orange dots, while a series of short parallel lines adds texture to the serpent's green skin. Six yellow and red heart-like forms are connected by a red line to the serpent's eye, revealing its interior composition. Brown lines extending from the serpent's mouth and tail are linked to two circular symbols and converge at the thunderbird's eye. These lines and forms suggest a communication between the two supernatural characters, who float on the surface of the kraft paper.

This painting's rhythmic black lines, pools of primary and secondary colour, interior composition and shallow rectangular space constituted the

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[7] Selwyn Dewdney, "Norval Morrisseau," Artscanada (January/February 1963).
[8] Jack Pollock, "A View From His Agent," Tawow (vol. IV, no.4 , Winter 1974).

essential formal elements of Morrisseau's *oeuvre* throughout the 1960's and early 1970's. They appear repeatedly in Morrisseau's many reinterpretations of the legends of the Midewiwin, in which he presented scenarios involving thunderbirds, fish, sacred bears, serpents and shamans. However, by the mid 1960's the artist had abandoned birch bark and plywood as support materials and began to work on canvas with acrylic paint. Almost all of the works from this period were signed by the artist using the Cree syllabic system, which he had learned from his wife, Harriet, in the 1950's. Morrisseau used the name Copper Thunderbird rendered in Cree syllabics as a statement of his Native identity, a practice that he continues to maintain.[9]

Among the highlights of Morrisseau's early career were two solo shows at the Pollock Gallery and a 1966 solo exhibition in St-Paul-de-Vence, France. That same year he was commissioned to create one the three large exterior wall murals for the Indian Pavilion at Expo '67 in Montreal, which will be discussed further in Chapter III. In 1967 the Musée du Québec, in Quebec City, organized a solo exhibition of the Anishnabai artist's drawings and paintings. The Royal Ontario Museum featured Morrisseau's works in two group exhibitions, the first, in 1973, entitled Canadian Indian Painting and the second in 1976, called Contemporary Native Art of Canada - The Woodland Indians, which toured to London, England and Lahr, West Germany. From 1966 to 1976 the artist resided in a number of locations across Canada, including Montreal, Toronto, Beardmore, Kenora, and Vancouver. Morrisseau suffered from alcohol and drug abuse during this period, problems which often affected the quality of his work. However, the painter

[9] The Cree language syllabic system was invented by Jame Evans, a Jesuit missionary, in the early nineteenth century.

maintained a regular exhibition schedule with shows at venues across Canada, as well as internationally (see Appendice A).

In 1972 the artist converted to the Apostolic faith, an evangelical sect that focuses on the missions of the Apostles.[10] It was around this time that Morrisseau concentrated on the production of Christian images, a subject area that he had only touched upon in the 1960's. Virgin Mary With the Christ Child and Saint John the Baptist (figure 4) of 1973 is one in a series of paintings that delves into Western religious iconography, which will be discussed at greater length in Chapter II. The painter renders this Christian portrait using a system of bold calligraphic lines and colour pools that he developed in the 1960's. However, his use of purple and pink in Mary's body and headdress mark the expansion of his palette.

Morrisseau's art shifted again during the mid-1970's when he became immersed in the Eckankar faith.[11] This religion is based on a combination of Western and Eastern spiritual beliefs and focuses upon higher levels of consciousness attained through astral travel. In Door to Astral Heaven (figure 5) of 1977, Morrisseau depicts an Eckankar world view. The central human figure, flanked by a bird and fish, is contemplating astral travel which will raise him above physical reality. Each of the red, blue and green circles in the sky are levels of self-realization. The floating heads at the top of the canvas represent the portal to the highest level of spiritual, mental and physical consciousness throughout which all Eckankar followers aspire to pass .

Door to Astral Heaven also indicates a change in the artist's painting technique. Morrisseau creates a background, middle ground and foreground

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[10] O.R. Vassal-Phillips, Apostolic Christianity (London: Burns, Oats and Washbourne, 1932).
[11] On Eckankar, see Paul Twitchell, The Shariyat Ki-Sugmad (Las Vegas: Illuminated Way Press, 1970).

using a blue wash, three rings of various blue shades and a roughly rendered area of blue and purple. He also investigates a drip technique in the rendering of the floating heads' red hair, which dribbles down the canvas haphazardly. This work is essentially a self-portrait which places Morrisseau on the brink of a supernatural realm, a theme that had been at the forefront of the artist's imagery since 1960. However, despite his interest in Apostolician and Eckankar, Morrisseau never completely abandoned the Midewiwin-inspired images, as many other works from this period recount ancient Anishnabai beliefs using elaborately coloured creatures set into surreal landscapes.

During the latter half of the 1970's Morrisseau resided in Winnipeg and in the summer of 1978 he returned to Beardmore. By this time his paintings were in collections across Canada, including the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Canada Council Art Bank and the Imperial Oil collection in Toronto. Earlier in the decade, Morrisseau and Carl Ray, a Cree artist who painted legends, visited high schools across northwestern Ontario as part of a two-year art education tour sponsored by the province's Ministry of Education. He also co-authored and illustrated several books that celebrated the oral traditions of the Anishnabai. In 1978 his work was included in Images of Man in Canadian Painting: 1878 -1978, an extensive exhibition of portraits at the McIntosh Gallery in London, Ontario. Morrisseau had become Canada's most celebrated artist of Native ancestry and later that year he was awarded the Order of Canada. The artist's style of painting was coined the "woodland school", as other Native artists in Ontario and Manitoba embraced the Anishnabai painter's themes and techniques throughout the 1970's.

Alex Janvier

Alexandre Simeon Janvier was born on February 28, 1935 on the Le Goff Reserve of the Cold Lake First Nations, in northern Alberta. He was one of ten children in Mary and Alex Janvier's family. In 1960 Janvier graduated from the Alberta Institute of Technology (currently the Alberta College of Art) in Calgary with a four-year diploma in Fine Art. He spent the following two years as an art instructor for the University of Alberta Extension Department, giving workshops in communities across the northern part of the province. By 1962, Janvier returned to his birthplace, the Le Goff reserve of the Cold Lake First Nation, in Alberta. For the next three years he worked with his father and brother operating a Hereford beef farm and continued to paint.

Throughout the 1960's Janvier explored the possibilities of tempera, gouache and ink on paper and board. In 1962, the artist created a series of works on paper using Japanese brush and India ink. An untitled painting (figure 6), from this series is composed of sweeping lines and organic shapes that are spontaneous in character. These black forms on a white background resemble Chinese and Japanese ideograms. The artist had been encouraged to engage in instinctive forms of expression as a student at the Alberta Institute of technology. His design instructor, Marion Nicoll, who actively practiced automatic painting under the influence of Jock Macdonald, had taught her students to draw upon their automatic impulses as sources of inspiration.[12] Years later, Janvier combined this method with Eastern influences to create the 1962 series of ink-on-paper works, which represent personal symbols derived from his subconscious. The untitled painting noted above thus

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[12] Valerie Greenfield, Founders of the Alberta College of Art (Calgary: Alberta College of Art Gallery, 1986), p. 22.

marks the early stages of an intuitive abstract vocabulary that the artist would develop over the next two decades.

Other paintings created by Janvier between 1962 and 1965, when he lived on his father's farm, ranged from linear figurative works to abstract watercolours. It was the work from this early period that gained him a solo exhibition at the Jacox Gallery in Edmonton. A collection of his paintings was presented there in June of 1962, an event which marked Janvier's debut as a professional artist. In the spring of 1965 the painter left for New York to further his career. However, during a stop-over in Ottawa he met with a Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) officer who offered him a job as an arts and crafts consultant. Janvier welcomed the opportunity to visit First Nations reserves across eastern Canada and assist Native artists with the development of their work:

> There is a great future for Indian art. It is useless for Indians simply to reproduce what their ancestors achieved whether they were carving totem poles or making ceremonial masks. Today Indians must combine new and perfect old techniques.[13]

In 1966 the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) [14] posted Janvier to Calgary and commissioned him to paint a series of works. Too Many Spotted Treaties (figure 7) is an interesting acrylic on canvas board from this series. The background is divided into areas of yellow and orange, upon which white, green and pink shapes float in the middle ground. A human figure composed of geometric shapes occupies the center of the board and is positioned in the foreground. The interplay between colour,

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[13] Janvier, quoted in Jan Gould, "Indian Artist Has New Post," Edmonton Journal (September 24, 1965).

[14] In 1966 The Department of Indian Affairs became the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

space and form is also accented by ten small orange, blue and red circles scattered across the foreground. Janvier's employment of simple colour areas and his emphasis on the plastic relationship of shapes refers to the concepts of geometric abstraction championed by painters such as Fernand Leduc, Kazuo Nakamura, B.C. Binning, and Ronald Bloore in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Regina during the 1950's and 1960's. The Dene artist had been exposed to movements such as the Regina Five and the Plasticiens as a student and while visiting galleries in eastern Canada.[15]

However, Janvier's formal concerns were combined with cultural issues that related to his position in Canadian society as a person of Dene ancestry. Located inside the red and orange circle in the lower part of Too Many Spotted Treaties is the artist's Indian status number, 287.[16] All of the works from the 1966 series are signed with this number only, which Janvier used as a means of protesting the dehumanizing bureaucracy of the DIAND. The painting's title also contains a political message, as it questions the validity of the agreements signed by the First Nations and the Canadian government. This concept is conveyed by the painting's human figure who points to a green shape, a symbolic reference to the parcels of territory that were illegally taken from the aboriginal people by government officials.

The artist's rendering of the human in this painting is reminiscent of those found in Native hide paintings such as a buffalo robe (figure 8), created by the Blood artist Crop-Eared Wolf in 1882. Wolf's nineteenth-century piece features images of warriors and horses, as well as geometric designs. Janvier's

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[15] Derek Robert Swallow, "The Art of Alex Janvier: A Blend of Euroamerican and North American Indian Art Traditions," (University Victoria: M.A. Thesis, 1988), p. 85

[16] Following the Indian Act of 1876 each member of the bands and tribes which signed treaties with the British and Canadian governments, was assigned an Indian status number by the Department of Indian Affairs.

military figure, like those on the robe, is rendered using an economical linear style. This warrior represents a vital facet of the Dene painter's personal symbology which was derived from nineteenth-century North America tribal art of the western plains. The recontextualization of utilitarian and sacred Native art vocabularies within a contemporary Canadian political framework was an integral part of Janvier's *oeuvre* from 1965 to 1980.

In 1966 Alex Janvier became involved with the organization of the Indian Pavilion for Expo '67 and created one of the five round panel works that adorned the building's exterior. His role and work at Expo '67 will be discussed further in Chapter III. During the summer of 1968 the artist returned to Alberta and began teaching at the Saddle Lake Indian School outside of St. Paul. In 1969 Janvier moved to Fort Chipewyan to teach for Alberta Newstart Inc., a project sponsored by the Indian Chiefs of Alberta. However, the artist's most important relocation occurred in 1971 when he decided to pursue his painting full-time from a new residence in Sherwood Park, a suburb of Edmonton.

Up Towards Sky-Eagle (figure 9), created in 1972 while Janvier was residing in Sherwood Park, marks an important achievement in the artist's style and technique. This acrylic on canvas painting is considerably larger than his previous pieces on paper and board. Such a change in format allowed Janvier to increase the complexity of his figure-ground relationship. An eagle sores from the lower left corner of the painting across a central white area towards a multi-coloured zone in the upper right corner. Janvier manipulates the white and coloured areas to create the effect of diagonal motion. The dynamic interplay between positive and negative space was a major feature of the painter's work throughout the 1970's. The shapes and lines used to compose the eagle and multi-coloured zone are more intricately

assembled than in his work of the 1960's. Janvier was here able to achieve crisp yellow, orange, green and blue organic and geometric forms through the use of acrylics on canvas. These hard-edged forms are woven together upon a shallow surface to produce an animated atmosphere that is similar in character to nineteenth-century paintings by Northwest Coast aboriginal artists, which will be discussed further in Chapter I.

Janvier regularly combined representational and abstract elements in the paintings he created during the early and mid-1970's. Eagle and buffalo images were a major feature of his work during this period, and they were combined with whiplash lines, circles and irregular shapes to create paintings that evoke a fantastic world. The artist's cosmology was based on ancient Dene spiritual beliefs that celebrated the local environment and ascribed magical powers to animals such as eagles and buffalo.[17] Therefore, Up Towards Sky-Eagle thus represents Janvier's commemoration of the natural and supernatural powers of the eagle and its habitat.

In 1972 Janvier's work was selected for a group exhibition of modern painters, Treaty Numbers 23, 287, 1171 - Three Indian Painters from the Prairies, at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. The following year the Edmonton Art Gallery organized a solo exhibition of Janvier's art, featuring twenty-two acrylics and gouaches. During the mid-1970's he was exhibiting regularly in commercial galleries across Canada, including the Pollock Gallery in Toronto, the Framecraft Gallery in Edmonton and the Calgary Galleries in Calgary (see Appendice B). His works were also featured in DIAND group exhibitions that toured to Paris, London and New York. The painter was appointed Director of the National Indian Art Council in 1975, a position he held for two years. By

[17] James W. Vanstone, Athapaskan Adaptions (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1974).

the end of the decade, Janvier was represented in a number of major collections, including those of the Edmonton Art Gallery, the Toronto-Dominion Bank and the Canada Council Art Bank. He had also completed eight commissioned murals through his company, Janvier Murals and Fine Arts Inc. In 1977 Toronto's Gallery Moos presented a solo exhibition of Janvier's work and this marked the beginning of his long association with the internationally-renowned art dealer Walter Moos .

During the summer of 1977 Janvier moved back to the Cold Lake reserve and set up his studio/residence in a log cabin. Later that year the artist traveled to Linkoping, Sweden to mount a solo exhibition and while there he created a series of new works. A number of the paintings that Janvier executed in Sweden and after his return to Canada were featured in a 1978 solo show entitled Contemporary Native Art of Canada: Alex Janvier, at the Royal Ontario Museum. The works in that show and those produced the following year represent an important development in his artistic and political concepts, which set the tone for his work well into the 1980's.

Fly, Fly, Fly (figure 10), of 1979, is indicative of the artist's move towards a more fantastic style. This acrylic on linen features a central mass of multi-coloured lines and shapes. Tentacle-like forms sprout from the depicted body, grasping and probing the empty brown background and occasionally reaching beyond the edges of the painting. Each tentacle, as well as the central mass, is composed of forms which resemble the antenna, palpus and segmented legs of a fly. Many of these elements are rendered in dark purple and are combined with green, blue and orange circles, hooks and triangles. The entire focus of this work is on an imaginary being that exists on the surface of the linen, similar to a fly floating on water. In this respect the work is akin to the 1930's paintings of Joan Miro, an artist that Janvier had

admired since the late 1950's, who also created fictitious creatures that hovered on the surface of the canvas.[18]

The absence of Janvier's band number below his name on Fly, Fly, Fly is a practice that the artist initiated in Sweden. This new signature, which featured only his surname, was indicative of his desire to be recognized as an artist free of political labels. Towards the end of the 1970's he had developed a very personal pictorial language that focused on conveying a sense of natural phenomena, rather than literal reproductions of humans, animals or plants. This respect for natural environment was taught to Janvier by his father, who was a hunter and trapper. By 1979 Janvier had attained a level of confidence and skill that enabled him to move beyond the DIAND's oppressive numbering system and create paintings that represented a contemporary Dene understanding of ecological systems.

Two innovative painters

By the late 1960's, Norval Morrisseau had fully developed an approach to painting that he maintained until the end of the next decade. Rhythmic black lines and pools of pure colours on a flat background represent the central formal components of the Anishnabai painter's vocabulary, which he used to visualize fantastic interactions between humans, animals and spiritual beings. Shifts in the subject matter and technical aspects of Morrisseau's art in the 1970's amplified the basic narrative expression of his work. Conversely, the 1960's was a period of experimentation for Alex Janvier, who matured as an artist in the early part of the following decade. Colourful whiplash lines, circles and irregular shapes placed on shifting

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[18] Alexander Best, Contemporary Native Art of Canada: Alex Janvier (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1978), p. 7.

positive and negative planes, were typical of the Dene painter's most accomplished work. These elements were used by Janvier throughout the 1970's to create non-objective and figurative symbols of his political and spiritual convictions. The professional activities of Norval Morrisseau and Alex Janvier during the 1960's and 1970's marked a debut for First Nations' artists within the Euro-Canadian and international artistic milieus. Morrisseau's 1962 solo show of thirty works at the Pollock Gallery sold out in two days. A subsequent article in the September 28, 1962 issue of Time magazine, entitled "Myths and Symbols," gained him a national reputation almost instantly. In their catalogue essay for the 1967 Norval Morrisseau show at the Musée du Québec, Madeleine and Jacques Rousseau referred to his work in the following manner:

> L'artist, imprégné depuis la nâgane d'un folklore aussi vivant, y trouve une source d'inspiration jaillissante que le réve colore de fantaisie....Plus tard, crayon et pinceaux la fixeront sur l'éncorce, le cuir fumé, avec un sûreté de style et une sûreté de style et une aisance étonnantes.[19]

In a review of Alex Janvier's 1964 show at the Jacox Gallery, an anonymous writer for the St. Paul Journal described the artist's paintings as "metaphysical in nature."[20] By 1972 Janvier's impressive *oeuvre* had convinced curator Jacqueline Fry to select him for Treaty Numbers 23, 287, 1171 a momentous exhibition at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Fry's catalogue essay for the show represents an early attempt to place Janvier's work within a critical context:

> In this non-objective treatment that took over twenty years to develop, there is a subtle affirmation of the

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[19] Madeleine and Jacques Rousseau,Norval Morrisseau (Quebec City: Musee du Quebec, 1967), p. 4.
[20] "Exhibition of art work," St. Paul Journal (May 21, 1964).

> Indian Presence that goes beyond the possibilities of purely figurative illustration of legends.[21]

These achievements and others placed Janvier and Morrisseau at the forefront of this nation's art scene during the 1960's and 1970's. Their joint participation in group exhibitions such as Contemporary Indian Artists in 1968 at the University of Calgary, Canadian Indian Art '74 at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and Fierté sur Toile at Montreal's Dominion Gallery in 1975 solidified their reputations as important Canadian artists and will be discussed further in Chapter III. At the same time exhibitions such as Kinder des Nanabush of 1979 in Hamburg, West Germany developed an international audience for Janvier's and Morrisseau's paintings. The acquisition of their pieces for major public and private collections substantiated each artist's credibility. Janvier's academic achievements and posts with the DIAND placed him in the role of intellectual leader, while Morrisseau functioned as a spiritual guide with his impressive knowledge of ancient Anishnabai legends and understanding of shamanistic power.

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[21] Jacquline Fry, Treaty Numbers 23, 287, 1171 (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1972), p. 9.

CHAPTER I

Arts of the First Nations

This chapter focuses on a selection of First Nations arts created over the last two hundred years, in order to demonstrate their relationship to the paintings of Norval Morrisseau and Alex Janvier. Each artist's *oeuvre* is examined with regard to its role as a continuation of aboriginal North American artistic traditions. A selection of nineteenth-and early twentieth-century objects created by Dene and Anishnabai artists will be used to establish direct aesthetic and cultural links between these two painters and their respective ancestors.[1] This connection will be extended to historic forms of Tsimshian and Navajo painting, as a means of identifying the pan-Native qualities of Janvier's and Morrisseau's work. The manner in which Morrisseau and Janvier adapt indigenous North American aesthetics to a Western-based art format is identified in order to position their work within the context modern Canadian painting.

There are a number of important factors to consider when examining First Nations sacred and utilitarian art. The local natural environment defined the materials that were available to an artist and also influenced her/his imagery. Hence, work created using such methods possessed a regional quality that reflected factors such as flora and fauna, as well as land and water formations. Social structure and cultural beliefs also determined the character as well as usage of art objects, which ranged from common daily

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[1] The majority of historic Native art collections in Canada are composed of nineteen-and early twentieth-century works. This is due to the often impermenent character of materials used by Native artists and Western collecting practices. During the above mentioned period European and Canadian individuals and institutions obtained sacred and ultilitarian arts for historical and ethnographic purposes; and to preserve the artistic traditions they assumed would soon become extinct.

situations to special spiritual ceremonies. Many of these nineteenth-century First Nations artistic traditions perished due to European cultural domination in North America; however there are many arts from this period that have been maintained throughout the twentieth century. During the 1960's and 1970's Alex Janvier and Norval Morrisseau adapted a number of these aesthetic ideals to a Western format, thus creating a unique form of painting in Canada.

Hunter's Son

> I am Dene alias Chipewyan of the Athabascan stock. I speak my language and I can say that to be proud like my ancestors I can never be, because to be as proud I must be free to live in harmony with nature and the Great Spirit, therefore my pride would never measure that of my grandfathers. [2]

Alex Janvier's father taught him how to hunt and trap as a child, hence he was the recipient of knowlegde that been passed on for centuries among his people. The ancient Dene were hunters who traveled throughout the western subarctic region of this continent in search of game. Janvier's ancestors spoke Dene, an indigenous North American language shared by the Beaver, Kutchin and Chiloctin in Canada, as well as the Navajo and Apache in the southwestern United States. During the early eighteenth century four bands of Dene speaking people occupied the northern reaches of the present-day provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba and the southern part of the Northwest Territories including the northwestern shores of Hudson Bay. The Thilanotinne, Etheneldeli, Desnedekenade and Athabasca were

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[2] Janvier, quoted in Jaculine Fry, Treaty Numbers 23, 287, 1171 (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1972), p. 2.

referred to by the Cree, who lived further east, as the "Chipwayanawok". This term alluded to the pointed skins of their clothing and is the basis for the European tribal classification of Chipewyan. These four nomadic bands lived on the edge of the boreal forest, venturing to the Arctic plateaus and plains to hunt. Caribou, moose and deer were the primary sources of food and clothing for the Dene, who supplemented their diet with fish, berries and other local flora and fauna. They excelled in the tanning and smoking of hides and created finely tailored clothing.[3] Janvier's earlier reference to the Great Spirit is based on the spiritual beliefs of these ancient hunters and trappers. Good and evil spirits were thought to take the form of local animals and they had a great impact upon the daily lives of the Dene. Individuals would seek a guardian spirit through a dream or vision, and this spirit enabled them to communicate with the supernatural world.

Janvier's ancestors came into contact with French fur traders towards the end of the 1600's and later with English traders when the Hudson's Bay Company established a post at the mouth of the Churchill River in 1717. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Dene assumed the role of middlemen in the fur trade between the Hudson's Bay Company, the Northwest Company and those aboriginal groups which inhabited the western expanses of the subarctic region. However, the prosperity of this period for the Dene was tempered by the outbreak of numerous smallpox epidemics, a disease which Europeans brought to North America . Starvation due to seasonal food shortages also greatly reduced their numbers. At the end of the century the fur trade was in recession and the remaining Dene were

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[3] National Museum of Man, The Athapascans: Strangers of the North (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1974).

pressured into relinquishing their aboriginal title over large tracts of land.[4] Dene leaders negotiated reserve lands with the British and Canadian governments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These lands included the Le Goff reserve on Cold Lake.

This unfortunate period was also marked by the erosion of Dene artistic traditions; however a number of customs were maintained. A pair of moccasins (figure 11), collected by Frederick C. Bell in 1905, provides an excellent example of this culture's historic tailoring and beading practices. The pointed shape of the toes has been a feature unique to Dene clothing since the seventeenth century. This pair of tanned and smoked moose-hide footwear is embellished with beads sewn on black velvet, located on the upper foot portion. The Dene obtained glass and metal beads from French and English traders and these items replaced dyed porcupine quills that had been used to create motifs on pre-contact bags and garments. Porcupine quills, furs and skins were the most common materials used by Dene artists in the creation of pre-contact utilitarian and sacred arts.

Female members of the bands adapted indigenous quill work and sowing skills to incorporate European floral patterns that were provided by Catholic nuns. This pair of early twentieth-century moccasins is an excellent example of the colourful linear beadwork that had been developed by female Native artists for over two hundred years. Opaque green, blue, pink, yellow and translucent rose are the colours of the beads used to create flowers with tentacle-like stems and leaves. These forms appear to float on the surface of a semi-circular black support. Pale pink, rose, green and yellow piping surrounds this area, enhancing the bead work's linear character.

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[4] James W. Vanstone, Athapaskan Adaptions: Hunters and Fisherman of the Sub-arctic Forests (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1974).

The expressive use of line and colour evident in these Dene moccasins is a quality also found in the works of Alex Janvier during the 1960's and 1970's. San'Kiye Nos'alazzy (figure 12) of 1974, features a central circular design from which a number of appendages radiate. The undulating character of these linear forms is similar to that of the anonymous Dene woman's beaded leaves and flowers and both motifs are set upon a shallow monochromatic background. Janvier's colour choice of cool blues, greens and yellows on a stark white canvas is parallel to that employed in the moccasins, where the beads are placed on a black velvet background. The painting's central black and yellow circular symbol appears to be a direct reference to rosettes originally rendered in quills and later with beads by Dene, Blackfoot and Sioux female artists.

The similarities between this painter's acrylic on canvas and historic Dene quill-and-bead works are substantiated by his title. San' Kiye Nos'allazzy, translated from Dene into English, means: My Aunt Rosalie Andrew. The title identifies the painter's aunt, as well as the artistic impetus behind the work. Rosalie Andrew beaded well into her old age and Janvier produced this work to commemorate her creativity. He brings the rosette symbol forward into the context of modern art and pays homage to Dene aesthetic traditions from a personal perspective:

> My aunt was about 100 years old, or thereabouts, and she was still beading. I wanted to pay tribute to her for keeping alive our background stuff. [5]

[5] Janvier, quoted in Derek Robert Swallow, "The Art of Alex Janvier: A Blend of Euroamerican and North American Indian Art Tradions," (University of Victoria: M.A. Thesis, 1988), p. 72.

Shaman Artist

> If I would have been born say 300 hundred years ago I could have been a shaman or a medicine man or what have you, I could have been that.[6]

Norval Morrisseau was raised by his maternal grandfather Potan, who taught him the ancient Anishnabai ways. During the seventeenth century the painter's Native ancestors had occupied a vast expanse of land in the eastern woodland and subarctic regions of this continent, an area that encompasses the present-day provinces of Ontario and Manitoba and the states of Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin. These people spoke a dialect of Algonkian, the most widespread aboriginal language in North America, also used by cultures such as the Micmac, Cree and Blood. The Anishnabai are most commonly known by the European classification of Ojibwa in Canada and Chippewa in the United States.[7] Morrisseau is a descendant of the nomadic bands who inhabited the northern shores of Lake Superior, existing on a diet that included whitefish, deer and blueberries. A major means of transportation for the Anishnabai was the canoe, which they constructed from birch and elm bark. They also made birch bark baskets and beaver pouches to store food, tools and sacred objects.[8] Shamanism was a crucial part of pre-twentieth century Anishnabai spiritual life and select band members formed medicine societies such as the Midewiwin and Wabinowin. These groups continue to exist in number of Native communities and practice a variety of ancient supernatural rituals. Morrisseau gained knowledge of

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[6] Morrisseau, quoted in the Henning Jacobsen film, The Paradox of Norval Morrisseau (Toronto: Henning Jacobsen Productions, 1974).

[7] There are conflicting etymologies of the words Ojibwa and Chippewa. However both words refer to Algonkian-speaking people who live in the Great Lakes region.

[8] Frances Densmore, Chippewa Customs (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1929).

these spiritual beliefs from his grandfather, who was a shaman and member of the Midewiwin.

The painter's ancestors first came into contact with French fur traders during the mid-1600's at the present-day site of Sault Ste. Marie. The French and Anishnabai developed a strong trading alliance that was based on the exchange of items such as firearms, metal goods and blankets, for beaver, mink and otter pelts. In the late eighteenth century the North West Company took over the trade routes that the French had vacated following their military defeat in Lower Canada. In 1812 the Hudson's Bay Company amalgamated with the North West Company and under the former title dominated trade in Anishnabai territory for the remainder of the century. [9]

The aboriginal population was ravaged by a series of epidemics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, caused by the introduction of European diseases. Overhunting and fishing also had an adverse affect on the Anishnabai's ability to maintain a wild game diet and they gradually became more dependent on European food sources. The declining fur trade in the mid-nineteenth century, and the Anishnabai's shrinking numbers, propelled them into a state of poverty.[10] British officials coerced band leaders to sign treaties during this period. These treaties established specific Native territories throughout Ontario, including the Sand Point reserve on Lake Nipigon .

The history of the Anishnabai is intimately tied to pictographic works such as those found on a sheer cliff at Agawa Bay, on the northeastern shore of Lake Superior. These paintings are related to the spiritual beliefs of groups

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[9] Harod Adams, The Fur Trade in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962).
[10] Robert Dunning, Social and Economic Change among the northern Ojibwa (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959).

such as the Midewiwin. The precise dates of these works are unknown, but reports of their existence date back to the early 1800's. It is presumed that Anishnabai artists stood in canoes and applied paint made of iron oxide and a binder (fish or mammal glue) to the rock face using their fingers.[11] An image at the Agawa site of a horned creature with a spiked back and tail standing on two legs is of special concern (figure 13), for it represents a supernatural feline called "Misshipeshu" that roamed the local waters. This mythological character is unique to the Anishnabai culture and its likeness is used in other sacred art forms such as the birch bark scroll mentioned in the Introduction. The word Misshipeshu translated into English means great lynx, a creature believed to be the demi-god of swift waters. There are a number of legends among the Midewiwin concerning the sinister acts this being committed against humans and other demi-gods. The horned serpent image on the water's edge at Agawa marks the specific area where the creature was known to visit. It is most probable that the Misshipeshu pictograph was created by a shaman and was part of a legend told by the artist. This visual/oral system is still used by present day Midewiwin in Ontario.

Norval Morrisseau's Water Spirit (figure 14) of 1974 is a bold and colourful interpretation of the sacred Misshipeshu image. Strong black lines define the water god's horns, as well as the spikes on its back and tail. Groupings of reddish-brown parallel lines and green dots rendered in acrylic paint punctuate the creature's white body, head and limbs. Morrisseau's Misshipeshu maintains the same basic form as that of the Agawa pictograph and his use of burnt sienna acrylic paint echoes the ancient rock painting's colouration. Supernatural visions were a critical part of Morrisseau's and the

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[11] Selwyn Dewdney, Native Rock Paintings (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

unknown Anishnabai artist's creative processes and their respective images are related to local oral traditions:

> It was in the summer, and the water demigod helped my great-great-grandfather to put its sign on the walls of the cliffs. From then on, until thirty years ago, Indians of that area offered gifts to Misshipeshu.[12]

Cross-cultural references

The paintings created by Alex Janvier and Norval Morrisseau in the 1960's and 1970's represent a transitional movement in the respective histories of Dene and Anishnabai art. However, the analysis of each painter's work would be incomplete if it were not correlated to utilitarian and sacred pieces created by aboriginal artists from other tribes. In the early 1960's the Toronto anthropologist Selwyn Dewdney and art collector Dr. Henry Weinstein were among the individuals who provided Morrisseau with access to books and collections of aboriginal arts from across North America. This experience and others inspired the Anishnabai painter to create works which expressed a universal Native sensibility, "I do not speak only for my own tribe," commented Morrisseau in 1962,"but for all Indians."[13] Similarly, during the mid-1960's Alex Janvier was exposed to a wide variety of indigenous North American arts, especially in his capacity as arts and crafts consultant for the DIAND. The Dene painter also acknowledged the general Native character of his symbols: "Some are traditional; others are symbols to come, yet ahead of their time."[14]

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[12] Norval Morrisseau, Legends of My People, The Great Ojibway (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1965), p. 27.
[13] Morrisseau, quoted in Mary Bletcher, "Indian Artist Mirrors Stained Glass Windows," Winnipeg Free Press (December 4, 1962).
[14] Janvier, quoted in Anne Payne, "Janvier," Arts West (March/April, 1976), p. 22.

Sacred and utilitarian First Nations art is heterogeneous in character, as a result of each band's or tribe's particular social, environmental and spiritual conditions. However, techniques and materials were often exchanged among different Native cultures through commerce, inter-marriage and warfare. These outside influences were incorporated by people such as the Dene and Anishnabai, as a means of expanding and redefining their distinctive artistic expressions. Such a process was repeated when Europeans arrived in North America, as their beads, paints, metals and fabrics were absorbed into the Native art lexicon.[15] Janvier's and Morrisseau's exposure to a wide variety of First Nations art in the 1960's and 1970's enabled them to conceive painting vocabularies that have many aboriginal North American reference points. This is the basis for linking a selection of their paintings to specific examples of Tsimshian and Navajo art, which serves to identify the modern pan-Native qualities of Morrisseau's and Janvier's art.

The Native populations who presently reside in the province of British Columbia, the Yukon Territory and the states of Alaska, Washington and Oregon are referred to in Euro-Canadian terms as the Northwest Coast peoples. Among the many sedentary indigenous cultures that flourished along the Pacific coast of North America, before European domination, were the Tsimshian. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they occupied an area south of the Nass River to the Douglas Channel, including Banks and Pitt Islands and extending west to the Skeena Mountains. These people were vigorous traders exchanging oolichen oil, a delicacy derived from candle fish, with tribes of the interior and otter furs with the Europeans. Both activities brought them great material wealth.[16] The Tsimshian practiced a

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[15] Nancy-Lou Paterson, Canadian Native Art (Toronto: Collier-Macmillan Canada Ltd., 1973).
[16] Philip Drucker, Indians of the Northwest Coast (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965).

number of arts including painting, weaving and carving, using local materials and trade articles. Their artists developed a complex imagistic vocabulary based on coastal flora and fauna.

An untitled painted wooden screen (figure 15), created by an anonymous Tsimshian artist during the early twentieth century, features a central dragonfly motif. Using European commercial black and red paints the Native artist rendered a symmetrical representation of the insect, which is composed of conventionalized form-lines. Its body parts are defined by bold lines of varying widths and within each is the face or form of an animal or human. An elongated U-shape placed horizontally delineates the left wing, which accommodates two ovals that contain the profile of a man and an animal. The calligraphic quality of the entire image emphasizes an interplay between the shapes and the surface of the screen. The Tshimshian painting style was well defined before contact with Europeans, although most surviving examples are from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This *circa* 1900 Tsimshian screen painting functioned as the backdrop for ceremonies held inside large wooden houses and the dragonfly crest served to identify the members of a specific family. Each clan had a special crest that was rendered in a standard fashion on blankets, chests, poles and other objects and that communicated its lineage's history and mythology. Images of local creatures were combined to create narratives that justified the hunting, fishing and gathering rights of specific clans.[17]

As avid students of Native art Morrisseau and Janvier were exposed to indigenous Northwest Coast painting and sculpture, through publications and a familiarity with nineteenth-century works in Canadian museums. If we

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[17] Viola Garfield, The Tsimshian Indians and Their Arts (Seattle: University of Washington, 1966).

compare the unknown Tsimshian artist's painting to works by Morrisseau and Janvier certain parallels can be established. Morrisseau's Sacred Moose (figure 16), of *circa* 1960, is an image of a mammal common to the forests and lakes of the eastern woodlands. The painter uses black lines to render the exterior form of the moose, while blue and red lines delineate its interior composition. A red circle surrounded by yellow and black rings located above the moose is an image of the sun, which is connected to the supernatural animal by a yellow line. Morrisseau and the Tsimshian artist depict simultaneous views the moose's and mosquito's internal and external compositions. Conversely, Janvier's Spring (figure 17) of 1978, makes reference to a seasonal occurrence using a non-objective colour and image system derived from nature. This painting's cool blue and green colour scheme alludes to the rushing waters and new plant life, which characterize spring in the western subartic, while its various shoot-like forms and swirling lines imply budding plants and overflowing creeks. The dynamic interplay of negative and positive shapes in Janvier's painting is similar to that employed by the Tsimshian artist. Sacred Moose and Spring express the absorption of a particular natural environment by their respective creators, a sensibility these works share with the dragonfly curtain.

The Tsimshian artist, Janvier and Morrisseau treat the respective rectangular surfaces of wood, canvas and paper as shallow spaces upon which their images float. These artists all use systems of interlocking flat shapes rendered in pure primary and secondary colours, which are visual indicators of their respective Native identities. The unknown artist's mosquito crest, Morrisseau's Sacred Moose and Janvier's Spring represent three of the many First Nations in Canada. Communal narrative systems were a feature common to many nineteenth-century Native art forms, which consistently

refer to humanity's place within a specific region of land and water. Janvier and Morrisseau synthesized many of these shared artistic vocabularies, including that of the Tsimshian, and personalized them using Western acrylic, oil, watercolour and gouache paints on canvas, paper and board.

The pan-Native message of Morrisseau's and Janvier's *oeuvres* is also based on elements from sacred aboriginal North American art. A selection of paintings by Janvier and Morrisseau express formal concerns and spiritual beliefs that merit comparison with ancient Navajo sandpainting. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Navajo occupied the arid plateaus of southwestern North American. This area includes the present-day states of Colorado, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico. They were a sedentary people who raised crops and livestock, a livelihood they supplemented with hunting. Navajo homes, known as hogans, were constructed of wooden poles, stones and earth. Such dwellings continue to be used in the production of an ancient sacred art form. Navajo sandpaintings are created on the dirt floors of hogans by individuals referred to in English as singers. These singers undergo years of intense painting, music and shamanic training before they are permitted to create sandpaintings. These works are an integral part of spiritual ceremonies performed upon patients to prevent or cure sicknesses.[18]

Sandpaintings are destroyed after each ritual. However, many have been reproduced in non-ceremonial settings for non-Native observers. An untitled painting (figure 18) of 1966 was created and photographed during the Navajo Craftsman Exhibit in Arizona. Its human and plant forms were rendered using dry pigments made from sand and a variety of ground sandstones, ochres and charcoals. A ceremony involving chanting normally

[18] George Mills, Navajo Art and Culture (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983).

accompanies the creation of works in sacred settings, during which the singer carefully sprinkles pigmented sand onto a smooth dirt floor. The four white, blue and red elongated humans in this 1966 painting are perched on black clouds. These figures represent the rainbow people, a group of mystical beings who possess supernatural powers. Situated between the rainbow people are blue, orange, white and black plant forms: corn, beans, squash and tobacco. Located in the center of the painting is a black circle which represents a watering hole, lake or spring. Navajo painters developed a standard set of symbols during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for humans, plants, animals, supernatural beings and atmospheric forms. In a sacred setting this 1966 painting would by accompanied by a "windway" chant. Such a chant and painting are used to alleviate a number of specific physical ailments including: gastrointestinal troubles, eye itching and lung disease.[19]

A number of formal elements in this sandpainting are similar to those of Janvier's Up Towards the Sky-Eagle and Morrisseau's Thunderbird with Serpent. Each painter employs colour schemes that focus on pure pigments. Black and blue are prevalent colours in Thunderbird with Serpent and the sandpainting, while the red-orange combinations of Up Towards the Sky-Eagle are very close to those of the Navajo work. The unknown singer, Janvier and Morrisseau all employ pure colours to define flat geometric and organic shapes, which hover upon the monochromatic backgrounds of their canvas, paper and sand works. These artistic devises are used by each artist to express cosmologies that are common to many indigenous North American cultures.

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[19] Leland C. Wyman, Southwest Indian Drypainting (Santa Fe: School of American Research, 1983).

The ancestors of this sandpainting's creator migrated to the southwestern United States from northwestern Canada well before the arrival of Europeans in North America. The ancient Navajo originally shared the western sub-arctic region with Janvier's ancestors, the Dene. Both groups speak the same language and believe in a cosmology based on the existence of earth, sky and water spirits. The various symbols of Up Towards the Sky-Eagle and the windway chant painting are linear abstractions of local plants and animals, presented as supernatural beings that inhabit the sky. This common sky environment is enhanced by swirling lines and shapes, which serve to suggest movement on the part of the Navajo rainpeople and Janvier's sky-eagle. Such active compositions are used by both artists to chart local universes, presenting viewers with a map of their Dene and Navajo spiritual beliefs.

Ancient oral traditions are intricate parts of Morrisseau's and the Navajo artist's works. The thunderbird and serpent are featured in many Anishnabai legends, while the rainbow people are the subject of numerous Navajo chants. These characters have each been assigned a specific visual form, that is a shared symbol among a group of artists who are spiritual authorities. Shamanism plays a critical role in the production of Thunderbird with Serpent and the windway sandpainting, as each artist is inspired by supernatural contacts with demi-gods. Navajo singers enter a trance-like state while painting, which is similar to that experienced by the Anishnabai painter during creation the his work:

> I don't continuously think superstition. I don't continually think about gods and all this. The time when I paint is as if something like a force ... starts pouring .[20]

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[20] Morrisseau, quoted in Eve Norton, "Indian Artist at Expo," Montreal Star (February 25, 1967), p. 4.

The modern universal First Nations aesthetic qualities in Janvier's and Morrisseau's painting is reinforced by each artist's acknowledgment of secondary influences from ancient Central and South America arts in their respective oeuvres. In a circa 1969 questionnaire issued by the DIAND Morrisseau lists: "Copper Thunderbird, Maya artist, Great Lake painters, Ojibwa Mida-wiin Birch Bark Scroll artist, and Norval Morrisseau," as his favorite artists.[21] Janvier's resume for the Fierté sur Toile exhibition at Montreal's Dominion Gallery in 1975 mentions "des articles et des symboles indiens...et aztèque" as a source of inspiration.[22]

Alex Janvier's and Norval Morrisseau's *oeuvres* from the 1960's and 1970's thus express an artistic sensibility that is directly linked to the utilitarian and sacred arts of their respective ancestors, the Dene and Anishnabai. However, each artist's connection to indigenous North American aesthetic traditions can be extended beyond their respective tribes to recognize the impact of Tsimshian, Navajo, Aztec and Mayan arts upon their work. This phenomenon confirms Morrisseau's and Janvier's abilities to synthesize the ideas of external Native cultures and confirms each painters contribution to the emergence of pan-Native artistic movement in the latter half of the twentieth century. Hence, paintings such as Sacred Moose, San'Kiye Nos'allazzy, Thunderbird with Serpent and Spring serve to blur the lines between heterogeneous and homogeneous developments in First Nations art, while communicating each artist's absorption of specific local environments from a modern perspective.

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[21] DIAND, Indian Art Centre files, Hull.
[22] Dominion Art Gallery files, Montreal.

CHAPTER II

The imposition of Western ideals

The imposition of Western ideals in North America dates back to the fifteenth century. However, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that European concepts of land ownership began to have an adverse effect on Native communities in this country. By that time, the British had successfully gained military superiority over the First Nations in eastern Canada and Native leaders had been pressured into relinquishing their legal title to vast tracts of land in the present-day provinces of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Ontario. Following Canada's confederation this treaty process was continued by the federal government in the present-day provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, as well as the Yukon and the Northwest Territories.[1] As descendants of the Dene and Anishnabai leaders who signed treaties, Alex Janvier and Norval Morrisseau occupy a distinct place within Canadian history and a selection of their paintings address the issue of Native political subjugation.

Similarly, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the federal government enacted legislation aimed at erasing many Native social and spiritual traditions. Such cultural oppression directly affected Morrisseau and Janvier, as will be made evident in this chapter through an examination of their paintings that relate to Christianity. The political subjugation and cultural oppression of Canada's Native people was accompanied by an

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[1] many instances aboriginal groups did not sign treaties with the Canadian government and their ancestral lands were expropriated. See Peter Cumming and Neil Mickenbury, editors, Native Rights in Canada (Toronto: General Publishing Co. Ltd., 1972).

intellectual marginalization. Late nineteenth-and early twentieth-century English-language texts devoted to the development of art in this nation, by authors such as J.W.L. Forster and Newton MacTavish, systematically placed utilitarian and sacred Native art outside the Canadian experience. They also relegated the importance of First Nations culture to the status of picturesque subject matter. These two detrimental approaches to indigenous North American art and artists were maintained by later art historians such as William Colgate and R.H. Hubbard. By the mid-twentieth century Native artists had been virtually removed from texts which documented Canada's artistic legacy. However, the effects of World War II and other world events on this nation's social policies, combined with the growth of First Nations political movements, gradually changed the position of Native people in modern Canadian society.

Political subjugation

The political subjugation of the First Nations in Canada dates back to the Royal Proclamation of 1763 by King George III of Great Britain, which declared that:

> ...the several Nations or Tribes of Indians with whom we are connected, and who live under our Protection, should not be molested or disturbed in the Possession of such Parts of Our Dominions and Territories as, not having been ceded to or purchased by Us, are reserved for them, as their Hunting Grounds.[2]

This document is an early example of the Western concepts which British officials introduced to the people and land of North America. It describes the Crown's authority over the tribes of eastern Canada and outlines the notion

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[2] King George III, Royal Proclamation, 1763.

of foreign land possession in North America. Britain's appetite for territories in North America increased steadily throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Native leaders negotiated treaties with Crown officials in the hope that these agreements would ensure the survival of their people, who were suffering from severe population declines and economic difficulties.[3] For example, Norval Morrisseau's ancestors, the Anishnabai in the northern Lake Superior region, signed the Robinson Superior Treaty in 1850, thereby ceding large tracts of land to the Queen and her successors.

Morrisseau's painting The Landrights (figure 19) of 1976 examines the relationship between Natives and Euro-Canadians with regard to land privileges. The Anishnabai artist positions two orange and green humans and a collection of animals against a flat blue background, while two white-faced people stand in a shallow red space. A vertical black line divides the two colour areas representing Native and non-Native territories. The red area pushes against this border, threatening the blue area, in an act which symbolizes Canadian encroachment upon lands and waters legally reserved for the First Nations. Undulating black lines emanating from the mouths of the indigenous figures and animals are cries of unrest with their situation:

> The words cross the lines between the white man and the Indian. The fist is clenched. The animals are protesting the change in their environment. They are an important part of the land, the water and the Indian's life.[4]

The political character of this 1976 work is uncommon for Morrisseau, who normally addresses more supernatural subjects. However, the internal composition of the human figures suggests a spiritual reason for the

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[3] The total aboriginal population in Canada during the sixteenth century was approximately 200,000, which had dwindled to 90,000 by the mid-nineteenth century.

[4] Morrisseau, quoted in Lister Sinclair and Jack Pollock, The Art of Norval Morrisseau (Toronto: Methuen, 1979), p. 134.

misunderstandings between Native and Western societies. The pulsating heart of the larger Native figure is connected by black lines to a bird, a fish, a bear, two trees and the earth. In contrast, the heart of the large Caucasian male, who represents a Canadian government official, is small and black and void of any connection to other beings. It is this difference in spirit that the artist presents as a source of the problems with legal agreements made between Native and Western leaders. The endorsements of Ahmutchiwagabow, Manitoushanise, Totomenai and other Anishnabai leaders on the Robinson Superior Treaty guaranteed their descendants specific privileges in northern Ontario:

> ...to allow the said Chiefs and their tribes the full and free privilege to hunt over the territory now ceded by them, and fish in the waters thereof as they have heretofore been in the habit of doing.[5]

Unfortunately, however, one century later Western mining, forestry, hydro-electric and industrial manufacturing practices in northern Ontario had profoundly changed the Native people's lifestyle.[6] The Landrights objects to the destruction of the natural environment that deprived the Anishnabai population of its hunting and fishing privileges. Morrisseau rejects Euro-Canadian society's insatiable lust for material goods, land and water, which in the 1950's motivated the federal government to cancel Native territories such as the Sand Point reserve.

The political subjugation of the First Nations was a prominent theme in Alex Janvier's *oeuvre* during the 1960's and 1970's. The Dene signed a variety of treaties with Canada following Confederation and in 1876 Janvier's

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[5] Robinson Superior Treaty, 1850 (no.61).
[6] Robert Dunning, Social and Economic Change Among the Northern Ojibwa (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959).

ancestors in the Cold Lake region endorsed Treaty Number 6. This was a critical period in the development of the Dominion of Canada, which by 1906 included all of the present-day provinces and territories west of Nova Scotia. The gradual displacement of the First Nations coincided with the nation's desire to fulfill its motto (adopted in 1871): "A mari usque ad mari". However, the aboriginal populations of western Canada were opposed to this expansion program. Unfortunately, these First Nations lacked the military and economic resources to prevent the erosion of their autonomy. [7]

A 1972 acrylic on canvas by Alex Janvier entitled Divide and Conquer (figure 20), using a strictly geometric design, expresses an objection to the political and military domination of the First Nations. Ten elongated diamond shapes rendered in blue and red refer to aboriginal North American cultures. These diamonds are intersected by four white bands, which suggest Western methods of conquest of indigenous populations. For example, many bands and tribes in western Canada were isolated from each other by military means and forced to remain on designated tracts of land. Divide and Conquer is a non-objective image which alludes to the splintering of cultures by Euro-Canadian authorities and the racist confinement of Native people to territories such as the Le Goff reserve.

Alex Janvier's ancestors were coerced into making treaties with the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, a process which involved written and oral agreements between Native leaders and representatives of the Crown.[8] The "X's" marked on Treaty Number 6 in 1876 by Naa-Poo-Chee-Chees,

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[7] During the nineteenth century a number of the western First Nations entered into military conflicts with the Canadian forces over sovereignty disputes. See Ian Getty and Antoine Lussier, editors, As Long as the Sun Shines and the Water Flows (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983).

[8] Alexander Morris, Treaties of Canada with the Indians of the North-West (Toronto: Bedfords, Clarke and Co., 1880).

Wah-Wis, Kah-Pah-Pah-Mah-Chatik-Way and Kee-Yeu-Ah-Tlah-Pim-Waht, "Councillors of Chipee-wayun," ceded large tracts of land in Alberta and Saskatchewan to the Queen. However, this document was later used by federal authorities to deny all aspects of Dene sovereignty and it is unlikely that the Native leaders who signed Treaty Number 6 fully understood the implications of their actions; these men were illiterate in the language of their conquerers. Thus the ramifications of Treaty Number 6 upon subsequent generations of the Dene were great and Janvier often targeted this issue in his work. Divide and Conquer is signed "Janvier 287 '72," a symbol of Canadian authority over the First Nations effected through Western systems of words and numbers. However, the painter reverses the oppressiveness of his Indian status number and uses it as mark of protest against the federal government. His signature attempts to reclaim the sovereignty that his Dene ancestors unjustly lost by marking "X's" on a foreign document:

> It's a reminder that I'm a diplomatic slave to the Indian Department....Maybe the day will come when governments change their functions. When I can see really significant action in Ottawa, then I might quit 287.[9]

Cultural oppression

The British North America Act of 1867 placed "Indians" under the rule of the newly-formed Canadian government. It also assumed a legal responsibility to the First Nations that had previously been held by the British Crown. However, the Indian Act of 1876 set the tone for future policies regarding Native communities. It was intended to destroy indigenous North American social and spiritual customs, which were

[9] Janvier, quoted in Inge Vermeulen, "Alex Janvier," Heritage (September-October 1977).

intimately linked to the natural environment. In 1873 the Department of Indian Affairs was created to enforce the federal government's assimilative directives. Bands, tribes and entire nations fell under the control of local federal agents. These bureaucrats had immense control over the daily activities of individuals on reserves and their duties included: administering the sale of Native land and timber, overseeing the actions of local councils and chiefs, and watching for evidence of non-Christian activities.[10] This patriarchal system remained virtually unchanged for decades and it most certainly had an impact on the work of Norval Morrisseau and Alex Janvier during the 1960's and 1970's. Their paintings express First Nations ideals that had endured over a century of racist foreign government policies.

A revision to the Indian Act in 1884 is an excellent example of the manner in which federal authorities attempted to extinguish a number of critical Native cultural activities:

> Every Indian or other person who engages in or assists in celebrating the Indian festival known as the "Potlach" or in the Indian dance known as the "Tamanawas" is guilty of a misdemeanor, and shall be liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than six nor less than two months in any gaol or other place of confinement; and any Indian or other person who encourages, either directly or indirectly, an Indian or Indians to get up such a festival or dance, or to celebrate the same, or who shall assist in the celebration of the same is guilty of a like offense, and shall be liable to same punishment.[11]

A potlatch involved the exchange of art among Northwest Coast tribes such as the Tsimshian and was crucial to the maintenance of their artistic traditions in painting, sculpture, jewelry and metalwork. Pieces such as the

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[10] Statutes of Canada, Indian Act, 1867 (chap. 18, sec.1-25).
[11] Revisions to the Statutes of Canada, Indian Act, 1884 (chap. 27, sec. 3).

dragonfly screen mentioned in Chapter II celebrated the Tsimshian culture's connection to the land and water. However, by the early twentieth century this and other revisions to the Indian Act had severely eroded the social and environmental basis of First Nations arts across Canada.

Much of the Canadian government's assimilative legislation was aimed at destroying the transfer of knowledge from Native elders to their children. The information required to lead a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle was supplanted among Native youngsters by Western rural and urban traditions. This was achieved through a revision of the Indian Act in 1894 that authorized the governor-in-council to exercise the following power over aboriginal children:

> ...to make whatever regulations on school question that he thought necessary and empowering him to commit children to the boarding and industrial schools founded by the government.[12]

Minors were taken from their parents and interned in schools. Teachers used methods such as corporal punishment and manual labour to systematically convert their aboriginal charges into Western boys and girls. This assimilative strategy was in place throughout Canada until the 1950's and contributed greatly to the decline in aboriginal languages, as well as the cultural estrangement of countless women and men. [13]

Norval Morrisseau and Alex Janvier were among the victims of a brutal education system that was designed to detach Native children from their heritage. Such a system had also been used the by the British to "civilize" indigenous cultures in Africa, Asia and South America.

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[12]Revisions to the Statutes of Canada, Indian Act, 1894 (chap. 30, sec. 7).
[13]Celia Haig-Brown, Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School (Vancouver: Tillacum Library, 1988).

Morrisseau's recollections of the nuns who instructed him while he was at the St. Joseph Boarding School in Thunder Bay during the late 1930's reveal the pressures placed on Native children to accept Western ideals:

> They said, "You got to learn your spelling, arithmetic and so on." "Oh geez, I still don't know how to divide in arithmetic. I still don't know how to do it my mother, I don't know." They used to strap me. Sister Lorenzia used to say, "Do your schooling. We want you to do that for a simple reason. We want you to be a developed man, to understand." [14]

Janvier's childhood memories of the Blue Quill Residential Indian School near St. Paul, which he attended from 1943 to 1956, also disclose the destructive nature of such institutions:

> We prayed day and night, meal in meal out, class in class out. It was seven days a week. We were just harpooned with that stuff. It was a brainwashing system. Towards the end they would just openly say our parents and our grandparents are evil, that they're no good. ...I didn't know who the hell I was for years after that. [15]

These residential and boarding schools were funded by the federal government and operated mainly by Christian orders, which outlawed Native spiritual and social customs in the classroom. Nuns and priests insisted that aboriginal children believe in God rather than the Great Manitou or Great Spirit and languages such as Dene and Algonkian were discouraged by teachers in favour of English and French. [16]

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[14] Morrisseau, quoted in James Stevens, "Interview with Norval Morrisseau," Art Magazine (Summer 1974), p. 31.
[15] Janvier quoted in David Staples, "Artist Alex Janvier," The Edmonton Journal (January 31, 1988).
[16] Celia Haig-Brown, Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School (Vancouver: Tillacum Library, 1988).

Christianity played an interesting role in the early work of both painters, who maintained a Native sensibility in their respective treatments of this foreign religion. Father Etienne Bernet-Rollande was a critical figure in Janvier's art training at the Blue Quill Residential Indian School. It was there that the young Janvier was exposed to a wide variety of Christian images through publications. Bernet-Rollande recognized the child's artistic talent and prompted Janvier to enter art competitions, and later arranged special painting and drawing classes for him with Karl Altenburg, an Edmonton artist.

In 1950 Janvier submitted Our Lady of the Teepee (figure 21) to the International Vatican Exhibition in Rome and was awarded an honourable mention. This painting was created well before 1960, but it does mark an important development in the painter's early art education. Janvier draws upon the history of Western art in this work and it is related to pieces such as The Virgin and Child with Two Angels (figure 22) of *circa* 1420 by an unknown Italian artist.[17] The grouping of the child and mother by Janvier is similar to that by the Early Renaissance painter. Both artists maintain a naturalistic method of rendering their human figures in a deep space. This window effect is a common Western aesthetic ideal and is created by applying paint to the entire surface of a rectangular board. However, the physiognomies of Jesus and Mary are those of Native people. The geometric patterns on Mary's robes are based on nineteenth-century Dene, Blackfoot and Blood beadwork patterns, while the tee pee at her feet is direct reference to indigenous North American architecture of the western plains. Janvier uses these details to assert his Native identity, which by the age of fifteen had been

[17]This work is presumed by the London's National Gallery to derive from an original by Robert Campin.

bombarded by Christian values. The young Dene painter's synthesis of Native and European artistic traditions in Our Lady of the Teepee foreshadows the spirit of his mature work.

Norval Morrisseau dealt regularly with Christian themes during the 1960's and 1970's. In Portrait of the Artist As Jesus Christ (figure 23) of 1966 the painter presents himself as the Son of God, wearing a hooded red robe and a necklace with a large blue cross. This work expresses the impact of Morrisseau's Catholic boarding school experience, which was reinforced by members of his family who had embraced Christianity. As an intensely spiritual man Morrisseau was attracted to Western religious images and stories, combining them with aspects of Native spirituality. This 1966 work presents Jesus in the form of a shaman, who is Morrisseau. However, the difference between Anishnabai and Catholic values often posed a problem for the artist:

> I pray directly to the Great Manitou of the Indian - believing He is every man's God - and thank him for the beauty and for the gift of being an artist. Then a wave of Christianity comes over me and I get confused about what I believe and I am unhappy.[18]

Morrisseau's attempts to resolve this inner conflict are evident in an assortment of works from the early 1970's. In 1973 the artist spent six months in the Kenora jail, for a number of transgressions committed while he was intoxicated. During his incarceration he was permitted to visit the local community's churches and to set up a studio in the jail.[19] It was there that he created Virgin Mary With the Christ Child and Saint John the Baptist

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[18]Morrisseau, quoted in Lenore Crawford, "Norval Morrisseau," London Free Press (September 29, 1962).

[19]Elizabeth McLuhan and Tom Hill, Norval Morrisseau and the Emergence of the Image Makers (Toronto: Methuen, 1984), p. 65.

(figure 4) of 1973, mentioned in the Introduction. This acrylic on canvas refers directly to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Western religious painting traditions, which were often copied by church decorators in Canada. If we compare Morrisseau's painting to Raphael's The Madonna and Child with the Infant Baptist (figure 24) of *circa* 1510, a number of similarities become apparent. Both painters employ a format that is centered on Mary and she gazes in the direction of the infant St. John. A pyramid-like structure is achieved through the positioning of the three figures, who occupy most of the canvas. However, Morrisseau breaks with Raphael's devices through the employment of unique critical details. Jesus, Mary and St. John are presented as North American aboriginals with brown skin and black hair, a stark contrast to the Caucasian features of the Italian painter's trio. These changes enabled the Anishnabai artist to maintain a connection with his culture, while at the same time revealing the Western spiritual and artistic ideals that had affected him since childhood.

Intellectual marginalization

Since the late nineteenth century the development of art in Canada has been recorded by historians, who have propagated a practice of exclusion towards the artistic expressions of North American aboriginal people. This phenomenon reflects a greater trend by Euro-Canadian society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to devalue the distinct qualities of the First Nations through the political and cultural methods mentioned earlier. Acts of subjugation and oppression were validated by notions that the Native races were inferior to those of Europe and that the enforcement of Western ideals was necessary to raise the aboriginal populations to the heights of Euro-Canadian civilization. Consequently, nineteenth-century

indigenous North American art was considered sub-standard by art historians such as J.W. Forster (1898), Newton MacTavish (1925) and William Colgate (1943), who insisted it was incapable of expressing a national identity. By the latter half of the twentieth century such concepts had led to the exclusion of Native artists from the history of art in Canada. This art historical precedent was used by authors during the 1960's and 1970's to place Norval Morrisseau and Alex Janvier on the fringes of discourses regarding the development of modern painting in this nation.

The late nineteenth century marked the beginning of English art historical criticism in Canada. The 1889 publication Canada: An Encyclopedia of the Country devotes an entire section to the evaluation of "Canadian Art, Music and Sculpture." J.W.L. Forster's article "Art and Artists in Ontario" foreshadows the manner in which First Nations art would be denied a place within the Canada's aesthetic heritage for the next century:

> ...The designs which formed the sign manual of the Indian chiefs, and their graphic picture-writing on birch-bark, might, by some, be considered the dawn of Canadian Art. A good deal of this "art" is still to be found emblazoned on the skins which line the lodges of the prairies; while the remains of pottery, copper arms, and the like, show traces of a still higher culture and no inconsiderable development of technical skill in a previous age. All this was, perhaps, rather the end of a phase of Art in a decaying race than the beginning of it in Canada. Indian Art is childish and unfinished.[20]

Forster attempts to exterminate the First Nations, denigrates their art and relegates the creativity of Native artists to a position outside of the Canadian experience. The displacement of art such as the Anishnabai legend scroll

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[20] J.W.L. Forster, "Art and Artists in Ontario," in J.C. Hopkins, editor, Canada: An Encyclopedia of the Country (Toronto: Linscott Publishing Co., 1898, vol.4), p. 347.

discussed in the Introduction, is based on the author's need to confirm the cultural superiority of Europeans. This was a necessary step in the establishment of a Canadian art based on Western achievements imported from Europe.

Subsequent English art historians of Canada perpetuated the devaluation of Native art. Survey texts such as Newton MacTavish's The Fine Arts in Canada disseminated these ideas to the nation's educated population. MacTavish's 1925 publication proclaims that in the search for the origins of art in Canada, a turn to the "red man's" art forms is of no consequence, because he created mere curios:

> The turn is not a happy one, for while tradition, assisted by poets and romancers, leads us to imagine the red man as being in himself and his surroundings both picturesque and romantic, there are but few records and no traditions to show that in art he experienced anything beyond his first impulses. Artistic impulses undoubtedly he did possess, and his handicrafts almost might be classed among the fine arts.[21]

MacTavish's suggestion that Native art lacked a history was used as just cause to place it below Western art, and thus as being unimportant within the realm of Canadian experience. The Fine Arts in Canada attempted to identify the special qualities of art made in Canada; landscapes by the Group of Seven are cited as paintings that express a national character. This fixation on identity echoes the directives of Euro-Canadian society in the early twentieth century, which focused on defining this nation as a unique political and cultural entity. Such was the case following World War I, when this nation's diplomats insisted that Canada be awarded a separate delegation to the League

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[21]Newton MacTavish, The Fine Arts in Canada (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1925), p. 1.

of Nations under the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. Their bid for independence from Britain's commonwealth was successful and the League recognized Ottawa as an official international capital.[22]

The construction of a unique Canadian identity was intimately tied to the image of this nation as a vast untouched northern wilderness. Tom Thomson's The Jack Pine (figure 25) of 1919, evokes a sense hinterland purity and is used by MacTavish to stake out the Dominion's visual territory. The author presents Thomson's painting as a worthy "aesthetic impulse," which captures the essence of Canadian culture. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century sacred and utilitarian First Nations art did not delineate such literal portraits of the land and water. Native artists used materials, images and formats which expressed an absorption of local landscapes, rather than detached views of it. The utilitarian character of works such as Crop-Eared Wolf's buffalo robe, discussed in the previous chapter, played a functional role within the local environment it expressed. However, this painting's format did not adhere to the Western notion of art as a delicate object removed from the harmful effects of nature. Therefore, according to MacTavish pieces such as Wolf's lacked cerebral content and were of no value to Canada's art history:

> Records in the form of crude drawings on bison hides are valuable as curiosities or documents of history, but they scarcely can be regarded as objects of artistic achievement. For art is the product of mind and imagination.[23]

A discourse of exclusion mounted as English survey texts standardized an art history that started with the work of Frère Luc in New France, progressed through to Paul Kane, Cornelius Kreighoff, Robert Harris and

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[22] Robert Bothwell, Canada, 1900-1945 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1987).
[23]Newton MacTavish, The Fine Arts in Canada (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1925) , p. 2.

Ozias Leduc, and by the mid-twentieth century included Tom Thomson, Jean-Paul Lemieux, and Emily Carr. These surveys frequently focused on portable rectangular oil and watercolour paintings on wood, paper and canvas by artists of English and French ancestry. Such traditions were foreign to most Native artists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Western painting materials and formats were not widely adopted by Native artists until the latter half of the twentieth century. Norval Morrisseau and Alex Janvier were among the early artists of Native ancestry in Canada to adopt Western paintings formats and pursue professional careers within the Euro-Canadian art community.

Paintings by A.Y. Jackson, Emily Carr and Frederick Varley became lasting symbols of Canadian identity, as is evident by the fact that their accomplishments were the main focus of English art discourse in this nation more than ten years after the Group of Seven had officially disbanded. William Colgate's 1943 publication Canadian Art: Its Origins and Development devotes over forty pages to the achievements of the Group's members and champions their "revolutionary" discoveries:

> These men, then, were the pictorial prospectors of Canada's vast Northland, and much of what they discovered there has made us conscious, as we had not been before, of the richness of our heritage.[24]

The "richness" of Canada's history was directly linked to a capitalist exploitation of the natural environment, which by the mid-twentieth century included massive mining, forestry, hydro-electric and fishing operations, as well as textile, steel, chemical and pulp-and-paper factories.[25] Literal images of

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[24]William Colgate, Canadian Art: Its Origins and Development (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1943), p. 101

[25]W.T. Easterbrook, Canadian Economic History (Toronto: MacMillan Company, 1970).

the land, water and trees, Colgate suggests, were to be used as the basis for an aesthetic identity.

The overwhelming social and economic influences of the United States on Canada's population during the 1940's and 1950's, compelled cultural authorities to define such a unique national consciousness. These predilections and others provoked the federal government to establish a Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, which produced the Massey Report of 1951. This report outlined the need for federal support systems that encouraged the development of Canadian cultural activities, such as the visual arts.[26]

The search for a national identity in painting had been the focus of Canadian art history since the late nineteenth century. J.W.L. Forster and Newton MacTavish suggested Euro-Canadian artists use indigenous North American people and their arts as symbols of Canada. However, these authors carefully delineated the imagistic limitations of "Indian" subject matter and the manner in which it should be interpreted. In 1898, for example Forster claimed that the image of Native people was interesting only in very specific situations:

> The Indian as seen in civilized conditions is as unpicturesque and as uninteresting as a horse pursuing the treadmill's ceaseless round. It is only in natural situations that he is interesting. [27]

In 1925 MacTavish put forward suggestions regarding how painters should respond to First Nations art and people:

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[26] Blair Fraser, The search for identity, Canada 1945-67 (Toronto: Doubleday and Company, 1967).

[27] J.W.L. Forster, "Art and Artists in Ontario," in J.C. Hopkins, editor, Canada: An Encyclopedia of the Country (Toronto: Linscott Publishing Co., 1898, vol.4), p. 367.

> The wigwam, the canoe, and the Indian are facts, not objects of imagination. The artist who sees them is impressed not so much by what they are as by what they might be. They stir his imagination, and the result, should he respond with brush and paint, is the proof or disproof of his greatness.[28]

The appeal of Native people and their art is confined to a pre-reserve period before indigenous North American cultural, social and political customs had been severely altered by Euro-Canadian legislation. Forster and MacTavish commit the First Nations to a very limited history and associate their imagistic importance with picturesque concepts of Canada's vast untouched wilderness.

By 1943 such pictures of "Indians" were the only evidence of their existence in Colgate's Canadian Art: Its Origins and Development. He makes no reference to the development of utilitarian and sacred First Nations aesthetic traditions in Canada and Native art receives mention only in reference to paintings by Emily Carr and Edwin Holgate. By the mid-twentieth century First Nations people had absorbed many Western traditions which included customs of dress, such as pants, shirts, dresses and blouses. Their reserves resembled villages across Canada, although poor housing, bad roads and high unemployment was especially prevalent in First Nations communities and have persisted throughout the twentieth century.[29]

The misrepresentation of Native culture was repeated by R.H. Hubbard in The Development of Canadian Art, published for the trustees of the

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[28] Newton MacTavish, The Fine Arts in Canada (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1925), p. 2.

[29] H.B. Hawthorn, A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada (Ottawa: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, vol. I & II, 1966-67).

National Gallery of Canada in 1963. Hubbard was the Chief Curator of Canadian art at the National Gallery from 1954 to 1975 and his survey text pushed the elite nature of art historical discourse into the era of modern painting, sculpture and architecture. This text's lack of consideration for Native expression is most obvious in Hubbard's examination of religious and decorative Canadian arts. In the second chapter of his book, "The Arts of French Canada," Hubbard makes reference to a *circa* 1780 chalice by F. Ranvoyze and a *circa* 1800 anonymous French arrow sash as examples of Canada's artistic origins. The discussion of these sacred and utilitarian arts could easily have been extended to Anishnabai birchbark scrolls or Dene beaded moccasins. However, such a radical departure was beyond limits of Canada's standard art history. Instead, The Development of Canadian Art maintains Native art's vague relation to Euro-Canadian painting. Emily Carr's Blunden Harbour of 1928, which depicts totem carvings by Northwest Coast artists, is presented in the chapter entitled "The Period of the National Movement." In the final section of Hubbard's book, "Contemporary Art," even First Nations subjects have been completely effaced from painting, sculpture and architecture movements that took place between 1930 and 1960. Hubbard's erasure of nineteenth-and twentieth-century North American aesthetic traditions from the Canadian identity was particularly damaging for it was validated by the nation's most prestigious art institution, which until recently has refused to collect art by Native people.[30]

[30] The National Gallery's collection contains no sacred or utilitarian North American arts. However in 1982 this institution began collecting works by contemporary artists of Native ancestry who employ Western art formats.

Social shifts

The increase in the Native population at the turn of the twentieth century defied the nineteenth-century Euro-Canadian notion that the "Indians" were a dying race. In 1900 the total number of Native people in the Dominion of Canada was 99,010. By 1959 the rate of growth on reserves was one percent above the overall Canadian average of two percent. In 1967 the total number of aboriginal people in Canada had risen to 230,902.[31] This population boom placed a great stress on Native communities, which required more land, increased health care and larger schools. Bands and tribes pressed the federal government in the early twentieth century to honour its treaty commitments and questioned the legality of countless Native land expropriations. These lobbying efforts led to the formation of regional political organizations such as the Allied Tribes of British Columbia in 1915, the League of Indians of Canada in 1919, the Indian Association of Manitoba in 1927, the Indian Association of Alberta in 1939, the Union of Saskatchewan Indians in 1947 and the Union of Ontario Indians in 1959. The establishment of the National Indian Council (NIC) at a 1961 meeting in Winnipeg of leaders from across the country was a crucial event in Canadian political history. This group represented the first national Native organization committed to the furtherance of First Nations political, social and cultural ideals.[32]

During the same period the federal government revised many of its Indian policies as result of pressure from Native groups and the changing

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[31] These numbers represent the estimates of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and do not include people of First Nations ancestry whom the federal government considers non-status Indians.

[32] William Wuttunee, Ruffled Feathers: Indians in Canadian Society (Calgary: Bell Books, 1971).

ideals of Western society. World War I and World War II had exposed the inherent dangers of racist politics on an international level and had forced Canadian society to reconsider its treatment of North American aboriginal cultures.[33] In 1951 the repeal of sections 2 to 186 of the Indian Act effectively removed the ban on cultural ceremonies, including the Potlatch, Tamanawas and the Sun Dance. The civil liberties movements of the 1960's in the United States also had a great impact on this nation, with regard to the inequality of Native peoples' rights and their exclusion from the democratic process. By 1960 Native people such as Janvier and Morrisseau had been granted the right to vote, almost a century after their ancestors had been relegated to the status of minors under Canadian law.

The political subjugation, cultural oppression and intellectual marginalization of the First Nations in Canada extended over two centuries and was based on a racist notion that people of European stock were superior to the indigenous inhabitants of North America. Such a concept was used by British and Canadian government leaders as justification for the destruction of Native communities, for the benefit of material greed and political ambition. Alex Janvier's and Norval Morrisseau's *oeuvres* from the 1960's and 1970's address the impact of Western ideals on people such as the Dene and Anishnabai. Morrisseau's The Landrights and Portrait of the Artist as Jesus Christ, as well as Janvier's Divide and Conquer and Madonna of the Tee Pee, communicate the drastic transitions in First Nations culture and art, which were a necessary part of survival in Canada.

However, each artist's synthesis of Native and Western artistic traditions has no place in a Canadian art history, which champions only the

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[33] J.R. Miller, Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

achievements of Euro-Canadian artists. Western political, economic and social directives were used by nineteenth-and twentieth-century art historians to construct a national aesthetic identity. First Nations arts were dispelled as artistically inferior and reduced to the status of interesting subject matter. Fortunately, the First Nations survived this bleak period in their history and during the latter half of this century Native political and cultural leaders have asserted their presence in Canada. Morrisseau and Janvier have been key contributors to the emergence of modern Native sensibilities and their paintings express a distinct aesthetic and social movement in this nation.

CHAPTER III

A modern Canadian context

The process of locating the *oeuvres* of Alex Janvier and Norval Morrisseau within the context of modern painting in Canada is dependent on the events and discourses of the 1960's and 1970's. Native politicians played a key role in the resurgence of First Nations culture, as they insisted that the federal government honour its historic commitments to their people. H.B. Hawthorn's 1966-67 report, A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada, for the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, presented public proof of the overwhelming social and economic adversities faced by Native communities in this nation. Janvier's and Morrisseau's commissioned works for the Indians of Canada pavilion at the 1967 world's fair in Montreal were indicative of a renewed First Nations identity in Canada. Their participation in the foundation of Professional Native Indian Artists Incorporated in 1972 marked the establishment of an art collective committed to the integration of Native and Western aesthetic ideals. The artistic innovations of Janvier and Morrisseau, along with those of their colleagues, gradually gained recognition through commercial and public venues across Canada.

Conversely, the Department of Indian Affairs and North Development's approach to artists such as Janvier and Morrisseau during the 1960's and 1970's assisted in the segregation of their work from mainstream Canadian art. This dilemma was augmented by Canadian art history survey texts published between 1966 and 1983 by J. Russell Harper, Dennis Reid, Marilyn Schiff and David Burnett, who continued to ignore First Nations arts. This standard methodology was placed in question by Barry Lord's and Nancy-Lou Patterson's exceptional survey publications in the 1970's, which

celebrated the contributions of First Nations artists to Canadian art history and acknowledged the achievements of Alex Janvier and Norval Morrisseau.

In 1969 the federal government's proposed treaty rights abolition was conceived as a means of granting the indigenous population an equitable position in the cultural, social, economic and political activities of Canada. However, Native leaders such as Harold Cardinal, President of the Indian Chiefs of Alberta, voiced their unrest regarding the national government's bid to renege on its legal obligations to the First Nations. In his 1969 publication The Unjust Society, Cardinal articulates the sensibilities of modern Native society, comparable to that which is evident in the paintings of Morrisseau and Janvier. The cultural transitions of this era were echoed by Native curators and historians such as Tom Hill, Robert Houle and Jamake Highwater, who developed a discourse that focused on a rejuvenated First Nations and sought to empower the *oeuvres* of artists such as Alex Janvier and Norval Morrisseau within a revised Canadian identity.

Expo '67

In the 1960's Native political groups from across Canada vigorously presented their concerns to the federal government and one of the most effective lobbying organizations during this period was the National Indian Council. The NIC's mandate included establishing a Native land claims bill, improving educational and medical facilities on reserves, encouraging cultural activities and ensuring Native participation in the centennial celebrations.[1] Their efforts, combined with federal government's realization that its existing Native policies were ineffective, led to H.B. Hawthorn's

[1] William Wuttunee, Ruffled Feathers (Calgary: Bell Books, 1971).

A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada of 1966-67. Hawthorn's report recommended greater Native autonomy in the areas of political and social systems, justified by the special status of Native people in Canada:

> Indians should be regarded as 'Citizens Plus', in addition to the normal rights and duties of citizenship, Indians possess certain additional rights as charter members of the Canadian community.[2]

Although Hawthorn's suggestions were never fully adopted, they did affect the Department of Indian Affairs and North Development's approach to Native issues. The DIAND established a number of Native advisory councils during this period and granted the NIC operating funds. These events and others set the tone for indigenous people's involvement in Expo '67.

In 1967 Canada celebrated one hundred years of confederation and the federal government organized a world's fair in Montreal as a focal point of the centennial festivities. A guide distributed to the public at Expo'67, entitled Canada's Indians and the Centennial, lists each province's Indian Events, such as powwows and athletic competitions, and proudly proclaims: "Canada's first citizens - the Indian people - are playing a prominent and enthusiastic role in the nation's Centennial celebrations."[3] This is an ironic statement considering that the nation's Native citizens were denied full democratic rights until 1960. Two main groups were responsible for the Native presentations at Expo'67, the DIAND's Cultural Development Department and the Centennial Indian Advisory Council (CIAC). [4] The

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[2] H.B. Hawthorn, A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada (Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs, 1967, vol. 2), p.5.

[3] Canada's Indians and the Centennial - A Guide to Indian Events in 1967, (Ottawa: Centennial Commission, 1967), p.1.

[4] The CIAC was funded and organized by the DIAND. Mohawk chief Andrew Delisle was head of the council, which included Native political leaders from across the country.

relationship between the DIAND and the CIAC was often uncomfortable, as the government agency was determined to present a favorable picture of Native history in Canada, while the latter group insisted that Expo'67 visitors be exposed to the problems faced by the First Nations since European contact.[5]

This difference of opinion is most evident in the respective histories of Native people presented via the Canadian government pavilion and the Indians of Canada pavilion. The former pavilion's public brochure restricts "the Indian's" involvement in Canada's history to "prehistory", while distorting the subjugation and oppression of the First Nations by foreign governments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

> Although our prehistory shows evidence of strife, major hostility and conflict, it was not the primary effect of the coming of the first white explorers, but a later by-product of the economic and territorial expansion of the British and French, the fur trade syndrome, and the consequent alignment of tribal forces on either side.[6]

A considerably different storyline is presented in the Indians of Canada pavilion's brochure, which documents the history of Native people in four components from "The Beginning," to "The White Man," "The Present" and "The Future":

> The heroic figures of Canadian history made their epic explorations of the wilderness in Indian canoes of birch bark or dug-out logs, wore Indian snow-shoes, ate Indian food, lived in Indian houses. Their Indian hosts guided them through the rivers, lakes and mountains, passing

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[5] Ruth Phillips and Sherry Brydon,"Arrow of Truth: The Indians of Canada pavilion at Expo '67," in Pauline Turner, editor. Commemoration and Critique: The Columbian Quincentenary in Comparative Perspective (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

[6] My Home, My Native Land - Canadian Government pavilion Expo '67, (Ottawa: Centennial Commission, 1967), p.2.

> them from hand to hand across the Continent. Many Indians of today believe the White Man betrayed their fathers' trust. They are not ready to accept the story of Canada written by people of European ancestry. [7]

Such contradictions in Canadian history marked the difference between Euro-Canadian and Native perceptions of this nation's development.

The above passage from "The White Man," as well as the three other historical components, were also featured on public information panels that accompanied visual displays inside the pavilion. This entire storyline was written by Robert Majorbanks, a non-Native, who composed each narrative in direct consultation with the Centennial Indian Advisory Committee. However, CIAC's control over the Indians of Canada pavilion was limited and many major decisions regarding First Nations presentations at Expo'67 were made solely by the DIAND. For example, the original 1965 design for the pavilion was conceived by the DIAND's in-house architect J.W. Francis, with no input from Native people. His proposed structure featured a tower constructed of tempered steel beams and vinyl covered panels, that was attached to a series of cedar out buildings (figure 26). However, in 1966 a number of features in Francis' giant tee-pee design were altered at the request of Native advisors.

Alex Janvier was an arts and crafts consultant from 1965 to 1966 for the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and became involved in the architectural planning stages of the Indians of Canada pavilion. At a Montreal meeting in early 1966 he objected to the placement of a monorail through the modern tee-pee structure, a design feature about which Native consultants had not been advised by the pavilion's architect:

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[7] Indians of Canada pavilion - Expo' 67, (Ottawa: Centennial Commission, 1966), p.4.

"You put your highways right through the reserves, you put your powerlines right through the reserves...you never ask the Indian." [8] Janvier's protest was heeded. However, shortly after this incident the Department of Indian Affairs withdrew the artist from the Expo'67 proceedings and posted him to Calgary to work on a series of paintings. In October 1966 Janvier's contract as arts and crafts consultant was not renewed by the Department.

Two months later Janvier, Norval Morrisseau, Henry Hunt, Tony Hunt, George Clutesi, Gerald Tailfeathers, Noel Wuttunee, Ross Woods, Francis Kagige, Tom Hill and Jean-Maire Gros-Louis were commissioned by the Department of Indian Affairs to create art for the Indians of Canada pavilion at Expo '67. The sculpture and paintings to be created included a totem pole, three wall murals, five circular panel pieces and a large sign. Morrisseau was selected to execute a mural and prior to its production he came into conflict with DIAND officials. They insisted the painter outline the character of his commission well in advance of its creation, a suggestion that according to Tom Hill, a Seneca from the Six Nations reserve near Brantford, Ontario, infuriated Morrisseau:

> He then accused the coordinator of trying to tell him what to paint. "When I paint...it is as if a force inside me - starts pouring out. I don't know what my mural will look like. It could be a thunderbird, wolves or a moose."[9]

Morrisseau's problems with Expo'67 continued during the installation period when his sporadic attendance, a situation resulting from his problems with alcoholism, compelled his assistant, Carl Ray, to execute much of Earth

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[8] Janvier, quoted in Sherry Brydon "The Indians of Canada pavilion at Expo'67," (Carlton University: B.A. Honours thesis, 1991), p. 30.
[9] Tom Hill, quoted in Lister Sinclair and Jack Pollock, The Art of Norval Morrisseau (Toronto: Methuen, 1979), p. 32.

Mother With Her Children (figure 27). Regardless, the painting's prominent place on the exterior south wall entrance to the Indians of Canada pavilion was a powerful image of Anishnabai values. Morrisseau's twenty-five-by-eighteen-foot mural featured a large Native female cradling a child. She is flanked by a bear cub and surrounded by three circles. The artist used black outlines to define the figures, which are composed of interlocking ochre, sienna, blue and green shapes that complement the red cedar surface of the entrance. Yellow is used to highlight an inner area in both the cub and child, as well as the mother's hood. The exoskeletons of both offspring are rendered in white paint, as is the adult's hair. White and yellow express the Anishnabai belief that there is a spiritual connection between humans, animals and the natural environment.

The mural's strong lines and pools of pure colour are similar to those in Thunderbird with Serpent of 1965, discussed in the Introduction, as is the use of symbols to describe each beings inner essence. Both paintings present images that focus on the spiritual power of humans and animals. Morrisseau's commitment to such beliefs, according to Tom Hill, made him a central figure among the Native people present during Indians of Canada pavilion's construction:

> ...Morrisseau's presence dominated the period during the construction of the pavilion, not in a political sense but in the sense of emerging as the spiritual mentor, totally possessed by the forces that create his art.[10]

Alex Janvier also played a central role in asserting Native concerns at Expo' 67 and he, too, experienced frustrations as a result of the DIAND's attitude towards the Indians of Canada pavilion. Janvier was commissioned

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[10] Ibid, p. 32.

to create a circular panel painting that would adorn an exterior bay. The artist executed Beaver Crossing Indian Colours (figure 28) during his stay in Montreal prior to the opening of Expo'67 . It was composed of brightly coloured shapes and lines floating on a shallow white background and all converging at the work's center. The interplay between negative and positive spaces in this late 1960's work is an element that Janvier would pursue throughout the 1970's, as is evident in Up Towards the Sky-Eagle , discussed in the Introduction. However, the nine-foot circular canvas for Expo'67 is completely non-objective and its visual content relates solely to the plastic relationships of the colours and lines.

The original title for the panel, The Unpredictable East was conceived during the painting's creation in Montreal and provides a clue to the geometric composition's meaning. Perhaps the irregular shapes and lines emanating from the painting's center refer to the myriad of Native directives communicated by the federal government in Ottawa, that to people such as the Dene seemed distant and perplexing. Such were circumstances surrounding the retitling of Janvier's commission, which was requested over the telephone by a DIAND coordinator for the Indian's of Canada pavilion, Joe Garland. Janvier's nine-mile walk from his home to the general store telephone in Beaver Crossing, Alberta motivated him to rename the circular panel Beaver Crossing Indian Colours.[11] The second title offers a simple and non-confrontational interpretation of the work's non-objective elements, while maintaining a veiled reference to the federal government's manipulation of Native people.

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[11] Sherry Brydon "The Indians of Canada pavilion at Expo'67," (Carlton University: B.A. Honours thesis, 1991), p. 73.

The spiritual force of Morrisseau's Earth Mother With Her Children and the political vigor of Janvier's Beaver Crossing Indian Colours exemplify a modern Native sensibility that developed in the 1960's and 1970's. The Indians of Canada pavilion at Expo'67 was a crucial international platform for the First Nations, who insisted that the public be made aware of the contrast between Native and Western ideals:

> The struggle of the Indian is to accept a modern technological society with its mass culture while preserving his identity, his personal integrity, and the moral and spiritual values of his fathers.[12]

For the First Nations painters and sculptors who participated in Expo'67, it was an opportunity to proclaim the views of their respective cultures and come together as an artistic community:

> It brought a sense of power to the artists, people of all of a sudden realized what they could do, as artists, to communicate ideas.[13]

DIAND and PNIAI

The Cultural Affairs Department within the DIAND was formed in 1964 to support Native artists, writers, poets and film-makers. It represented the DIAND at Expo'67 and assisted in the organization of events and displays surrounding the Indians of Canada pavilion. As a result of Expo'67, this sub-department of DIAND became involved in the marketing of Native arts and crafts. By 1969, the Cultural Affairs Department had organized a wholesale warehouse operation in Ottawa managed by the Arts and Crafts section, which received the work of Native artists from across Canada. Items such as

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[12] Indians of Canada pavilion - Expo' 67, (Ottawa: Centennial Commission, 1966), p.2.
[13] Tom Hill, quoted in Sherry Brydon "The Indians of Canada pavilion at Expo'67,"(Carlton University: B.A. Honours thesis, 1991), p. 46.

moccasins and miniature birchbark canoes were stamped or labeled with a stretched beaverskin logo that read:"Certified by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs."[14] In the 1970's the DIAND used the same logo as a "certification of authenticity"[15] for prints they distributed by artists such as Alex Janvier, Norval Morrisseau, Daphne Odjig, Benjamin Chee Chee, Roy Thomas and Jackson Beardy.

In 1972 the DIAND, the Museum of Man and the Glenbow Foundation sponsored the publication of Indian Arts in Canada. This government subsidized book features a short essay by Olive Patricia Dickson, but its primary focus is on images of contemporary utilitarian, souvenir and sacred First Nations arts. It also features a small selection on Western-format paintings, including works by Janvier and Morrisseau. The publication was made available to the public through retail bookstores for six dollars. Such a low price, combined with the book's minimal text and numerous glossy colour reproductions, gave it a retail catalogue character. Such a quality was consistent with the Department of Indian Affairs' management of contemporary Native art. This treatment concentrated on the merchandising of souvenir, utilitarian and graphic art products. The book's emphasis on pieces which relied exclusively on utilitarian and sacred First Nations aesthetic traditions was reinforced by Dickson's awkward portrayal of the innovations by modern Native artists such as Janvier and Morrisseau:

> Canada's Indian artist is faced with the necessity of making a decision: should he accept his own culture as the wellspring for his inspiration, or should he assimilate into Western culture and express his creativity in art

[14] DIAND, Indian Arts and Crafts Outlets 1969, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1969).
[15] DIAND, untitled brochure, Indian Art Centre files, Hull.

> forms that give no indication of his particular cultural background. [16]

Such a conclusion applied to paintings such as Sacred Moose and Too Many Spotted Treaties denies the transitional character these works, which is intimately linked to aboriginal North American art traditions. It also suggests that Morrisseau's and Janvier's employment of Western aesthetic concepts negates their connection to Native artistic sensibilities. Dickson's emphasis on the concept of "traditional Indian art" echoes the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development's marketing strategies which attempted connect the value of this art with its "authenticity." For example, the Arts and Crafts section stressed the "Indianness" of the artists and exhibitions it financially supported in the 1960's and 1970's. Tom Hill claims that modern Native painters such as Janvier and Morrisseau felt this ideology tended to hinder their creativity. Such a situation was made worse by the fact that the DIAND's cultural grants, which both painters received, were the only avenue of financial assistance for Native artists. [17]

In November 1973 Daphne Odjig, Alex Janvier, Jackson Beardy, Eddy Cobiness, Roy Thomas, Carl Ray and Joseph Sanchez formed the Professional Native Indian Artists Incorporated (PNIAI), in opposition to the Arts and Crafts section's marketing strategies. In February 1974 the PNIAI was legally incorporated and at that time Norval Morrisseau joined the group to participate in a series of exhibitions that will be discussed later. The collective often referred to itself as "The Group of Seven," a title which the members appreciated for its Canadian art historical impact. The PNIAI 's mandate was:

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[16] Olive Patricia Dickson, Indian Arts in Canada (Toronto: Simpson Press, 1972), p. 3.
[17] Tom Hill and Elizabeth McLuhan , Norval Morrisseau and the Emergence of the Image Makers (Toronto: Methuen, 1984). p. 24.

> to develop a fund to enable artists to paint; to develop a marketing strategy involving prestigious commercial galleries in order to exhibit their works, to travel to aboriginal communities to stimulate young artists; and to establish a trust fund, using a portion of the sales of artworks, for a scholarship programme for emerging artists.[18]

The collective's aesthetic focus was the advancement of painting and exhibitions by artists of Native ancestry who incorporated both indigenous North American and Western art traditions. Most of the group's activities were centered around a gift shop in Winnipeg owned by Odjig and her husband, Chester Beavon. Unfortunately, the administrative duties connected with such an organization demanded a great deal of time from the members, many of whom were more interested in making art. Shortly after the PNIAI's incorporation, Janvier resigned over a dispute regarding the group's decision to hire media agents whom he considered "too conventional."[19] In late 1975 the Group of Seven disbanded. However, its existence had symbolized the growing solidarity among modern Native artists.

Critical group exhibitions

Contemporary Indian Artists, organized by the Glenbow Museum in 1968 and exhibited on the second floor of the University of Calagary's Arts Building, was the first group exhibition to feature paintings by both Norval Morrisseau and Alex Janvier. This two-week show also included the work of Gerald Tailfeathers. It later toured to venues across western Canada. A brief

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[18] Lee-Ann Martin, The Art of Alex Janvier: His First Thirty Years 1960-1990 (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Art Gallery, 1993), p. 28.
[19] Janvier, quoted in Anne Payne, "Janvier," Arts West (March-April, 1976), p. 20.

review in the Calgary Herald describes the work of Janvier as consisting of "playful lines and colours, positive and negative forms," while Morrisseau's images were said to be "strong, firm lines [that] create forms which are often interwoven."[20] Two years later Morrisseau and Janvier showed in company with painters Arthur Shilling and Allen Sapp, at the University of Western Ontario's McIntosh Gallery in London.

However, the most pivotal exhibition in the emergence of a modern First Nations painting was Canadian Indian Art '74 , held at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. This show opened during the summer of 1974 and included two works by Morrisseau, Ancestral Figure and Water Spirit, as well as two paintings by Janvier, The Last Joke and Up Towards Sky-Eagle . Tom Hill co-ordinated the event, which featured over one hundred and fifty pieces by contemporary artists. His exhibition catalogue essay presents a Native perspective on the diversity of First Nations art history in the latter half of the twentieth century:

> Examples from the contemporary-traditional culture include masks, dance costumes and wood carvings while modern-western inspired art is represented in paintings and sculptures....It is the more modern media, such as painting, that are often misinterpreted by both the Western and Indian audiences, for the paintings are the manifestations of the merging of the traditional with the contemporary culture to produce a wholly new and sometimes ambiguous artistic expression.[21]

Canadian Indian Art '74 championed the synthesis of Western and aboriginal North American aesthetic values through the inclusion of works by twenty modern painters. It provided a context in which these paintings

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[20]"Indian Artists To Show Work In 2-week U. of C. Exhibition," Calgary Herald (December 2, 1968).

[21] Tom Hill, Canadian Indian Art '74 (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1974), p.1.

were recognized as a contemporary Canadian expression by artists who were nonetheless dependent on the aesthetic ideals of utilitarian and sacred Native arts. The curator thus makes no attempt to ignore the impact of Western painting traditions on artists such as Morrisseau, Janvier, Odjig, Thomas and Beardy, whom he celebrates for their abilities to synthesize the ideas of another culture. Up Towards Sky-Eagle and Water Spirit were the only paintings to be reproduced in the catalogue, a sign of Janvier's and Morrisseau's immense contributions to the development of this new Canadian art movement.

The following year Indian Art '75 was organized by the Woodland Indian Cultural Educational Centre in Brantford and its was an open invitational show with a more commercial focus. Each catalogue listing included the price of the work and a brief biography of its creator. By 1976 the Indian Art exhibition had become an annual event at the Woodland Centre and its emphasis was on painting that maintained a Western format.[22] Janvier and Morrisseau were represented in this show, which marked the last time they would exhibit together at the Woodland Centre annual. However, it continued to be an important venue throughout the late 1970's for young modern Native painters such as Arthur Shilling, Clifford Maracle, Carl Beam and Robert Houle.

In 1977 the MacKenzie Gallery, of Trent University in Peterborough, held Contemporary Indian Art -The Trail from the Past to the Future. This show was another critical step in the validation of present-day First Nations art. Dr. Bernhard Cinader, an avid art collector and biochemistry professor at the University of Toronto, organized the exhibition, which featured the work

[22] The Woodland Centre's annual Indian Art exhibition is still in existence.

of forty-one painters and carvers. Among the seventeen paintings in the show were Norval Morrisseau's 1961 Serpent Legend, and Unity of Man and Animals of 1974, as well as Alex Janvier's 1975 Buffalo. Cinader relates Morrisseau's early painting to the "visual language" of Anishnabai rock paintings and birchbark scrolls, which in the later work is modified through an "aesthetic transformation" precipitated by the artist's expanded palette.[23] Alex Janvier's work is related by Cinader to the "aesthetic of mobility" evident in buffalo robe paintings, which the artist "restates" through contemporary Western art practices. [24]

The growing presence of modern First Nations painting exhibitions in Canada's public institutions throughout the 1970's was complemented by a number of private gallery shows across the country. From 1970 to 1979 Toronto's Pollock Gallery held six solo exhibitions of Morrisseau's work, while Janvier's paintings were presented at Edmonton's Framecraft Gallery in three one-person shows (see Appendices A and B). The first two-person commercial exhibition to include the work of Janvier and Morrisseau was held in 1975 at the Toronto-Dominion Centre, a second venue of the Pollock Gallery. Perhaps the most notable commercial group show of modern First Nations art was organized by the Professional Native Indian Artists Incorporated. Fierté sur toile opened at Montreal's Dominion Gallery in April 1975 and at Ottawa's Wallack Gallery in June of the same year. It featured the works of Alex Janvier, Norval Morrisseau, Eddy Cobiness, Carl Ray, Daphne Odjig, Joseph Sanchez and Jackson Beardy. The show was a major accomplishment for the Group of Seven, as both galleries had well-respected

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[23] Bernard Cinader, Contemporary Indian Art - The Trail from the Past to the Future (Peterborough: MacKenzie Gallery, 1977),p. 15.
[24] Ibid, p. 13.

reputations in the Canadian art community. A promotional brochure issued by the PNIAI for the two shows states:

> Introducing ... an exhibition of contemporary Indian art, from abstractionists to traditionalists, in a stunning presentation showing off recent works created during a period in which the chosen artists have constantly grown in creative power. [25]

By the close of the 1970's Morrisseau and Janvier were recognized as leaders in the Native art community, as a result of their participation in Expo'67, the Professional Native Indian Artists Incorporated and numerous public and private exhibitions. These two painters had successfully penetrated the Euro-Canadian art milieu and gained the respect of curators, dealers, critics and collectors. However, their achievements were largely disregarded by Canada's art historians, who perpetuated the intellectual marginalization of First Nations art into the modern era.

Standard discourse

Painting in Canada: A History, written by J. Russell Harper and published 1966, builds upon the art historical texts discussed in Chapter II. Harper maintains the practice of omitting First Nations art from the context of Canadian painting between the late 1690's and the early 1960's. The author's failure to recognize a significant artistic tradition in this nation contradicts the broad objectives of his text:

> ...It has been my intention to present as thorough as possible a survey of the artists and movements that have contributed to the rich and varied heritage of painting in Canada.[26]

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[25] PNIAI, promotional brochure, Dominion Art Gallery files, Montreal.
[26] J. Russell Harper, Painting in Canada: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), p. viii.

His exclusion of First Nations painting practices from Canada's artistic legacy is based on a narrow late nineteenth-century Eurocentric approach, that placed aboriginal North American ideals below those of the Western world. This perspective was out of step with modern Canadian thinking, which at Expo'67 celebrated the contributions of Native people to the nation's cultural mosaic. Harper's brief reference to the paintings of Zacharie Vincent, a Huron who resided in Lorette, Quebec, provides a more blatant example of his disregard for Native creativity. Rather than appreciate the painter's interesting employment of bold primary colours in his *circa* 1880 self-portrait (figure 29), the art historian chooses to degrade Vincent's foray into Western aesthetic traditions.

> Plamondon is said to have given him advice, but throughout he remained a primitive, adding detail to detail with little regard for the final artistic effect.[27]

Seven years later Dennis Reid's immensely popular 1973 publication A Concise History of Canadian Painting, committed the same inaccuracies as Harper's book. Reid begins with an examination of this nation's painting history in New France at the end of the 1600's, with the work of l'Abbé Hugues Pommier. His analysis of the various movements in Canada over three centuries focuses exclusively on Western concepts of painting that exemplify the nation's identity:

> Painters in Canada have consistently reflected the molding sensibility of the age: a history of their activities describes the essence of our cultural evolution.[28]

The author's "our" applies only to Euro-Canadian society and ignores the expressions of First Nations painters, whose work flourished in Canada

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[27] Ibid, p. 74.
[28] Dennis Reid, A Concise History of Canadian Painting (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.7.

throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Sacred and utilitarian paintings on hides, rocks and wood proved to be beyond the scope of Reid's art history. However, acrylics on paper and board such as Norval Morrisseau's Thunderbird with Serpent and Alex Janvier's Too Many Spotted Treaties mark a cultural revolution by two artists, whose formats are consistent with those of painters presented in this 1973 text. Their achievements are parallel to those of other Canadian artists such as Greg Curnoe, a London artist who created Surrealist inspired paintings. His participation in a 1962 group exhibition at the Isaacs Gallery in Toronto is characterized by Reid as an crucial event in this nation's modern art history. Apparently, more significant than Morrisseau's first show six months later across town at the Pollock Gallery, which drew international attention to the Anishnabai painter and Canada's art scene.[29]

David Burnett's and Marilyn Schiff's Contemporary Canadian Art was the first English text to present a survey of painting and sculpture in Canada from the end of World War II to the early 1980's. This period coincides with the emergence of modern Native painting. Works such as Janvier's 1974 San'Kiye Nos' alazzy and Morrisseau's *circa* 1960 Sacred Moose express the presence of a renewed First Nations sensibility in Canada. Unfortunately, Schiff and Burnett assumed that to focus on Janvier, Morrisseau and their colleagues in a study of modern art would misrepresent them, with regard to First Nations sacred and utilitarian aesthetic traditions:

> We have decided not to include the art of the native peoples. We felt that to survey the arts of the native peoples without being able to develop their relationship

[29] In the 1988 revised edition of A Concise History of Canadian Painting Reid examines the work of Norval Morrisseau and makes brief references to Alex Janvier, Allen Sapp, Daphne Odjig and Carl Ray.

> to the cultural roots and traditions of those people would be to do so not only improperly, but superficially. [30]

The authors' claim that modern Native art is closely connected to aboriginal North American art sources is accurate. However, this relationship is an integral part of Canada's multicultural heritage and should not be used as a tool of segregation. Such a notion preserves a methodology which since the time of J.W.L. Forster 's "Art and Artists in Ontario" has excluded First Nations expressions from Canada's identity. Ultimately, this marginalization is far more detrimental to the work of Janvier and Morrisseau, than a limited view of their connection to utilitarian and sacred First Nations art.

Signs of change

The appearance of two exceptional art historical texts in the 1970's by Barry Lord and Nancy-Lou Patterson, were indicative of the social and political shifts in the treatment of Canada's Native people during the latter half of the twentieth century. Barry Lord's The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People's Art, published in 1974, offers a revised version of Canada's art history from a Maoist perspective; indigenous North American artists are encouraged to rise up against Western imperialist oppressors. The author proudly proclaims in the Introduction: "This is the only book of its kind that begins with the art of the native peoples and ends with the present day."[31] Hence, Chapter I represents the first time that a Canadian art historian adequately examined and positioned First Nations art within the nation's artistic legacy.

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[30] David Burnett and Marilyn Schiff, Contemporary Canadian Art (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1983), p.7.

[31] Barry Lord,The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People's Art (Toronto: NC Press, 1973), p. 9.

Lord begins with an analysis of Anishnabai rock painting and refers to the Misshipeshu image at Agawa Bay, discussed in Chapter I of this thesis, as an, "impressive technical achievement for a supposedly primitive people."[32] Such a celebration of sacred art dispels the notion that Native races are inferior to those of Europe and contradicts the ideals of J.W.L. Forster and Newton MacTavish. The author also discusses utilitarian arts such as the circa 1900 Tsimshian dragonfly screen, discussed in Chapter I, which he cites as an excellent example of the "graphic brush painting [which] style was developed to its highest point among the northern tribes."[33] Lord also investigates the work of contemporary Native artists and makes brief references to the work of modern painters such Norval Morrisseau and Allan Sapp, a Cree artist.

The art historical analysis of utilitarian, sacred and modern First Nations art in Canada is the impetus behind Nancy-Lou Patterson's 1973 publication Canadian Native Art. This book's primary focus is on nineteenth- and twentieth-century works and it emphasizes the need to present these art forms in a Canadian context:

> Native art is a living and essential part of Canadian art and must be given its due place in that history by teachers, students, and writers in Canada.[34]

Patterson uses geographic regions to delimit the aesthetic achievements of various bands and tribes that inhabit the political territory known as Canada. In her examination of the "Horseman of the Canadian Prairies" the author declares that Crop-Eared Wolf's buffalo robe, mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, evokes "a strong and evident sense of dynamic composition."[35]

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[32] Ibid, p. 11.
[33] Ibid, p. 16.
[34] Nancy-Lou Patterson, Canadian Native Art (Toronto: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1973), p.3.
[35] Ibid, p. 67.

Such a focus on the formal aspects of Wolf's painting contributes to an aesthetic appreciation of it and directly refutes assertions by art historians such as Newton MacTavish that works on hide can"scarcely can be regarded as objects of artistic achievement."[36]

Perhaps, the most useful concept put forward in Canadian Native Art is the transitional character of First Nations art over the last two hundred years. Patterson extols the deft manner in which artists from the Eastern Woodlands to the West Coast synthesized new materials and ideas from other tribes, as well as European cultures. Such an approach permits this author to discuss the work of Alex Janvier and Norval Morrisseau as a continuation of Dene and Anishnabai traditions within a modern Canadian context. Patterson notes the influence of Abstract Expressionism on Janvier's early work and describes his mature paintings as "highly original, strong, sinuous, hard-edged work of considerable power, with curvilinear forms suggestive of beadwork."[37] Similarly, Morrisseau's paintings are linked to ancient Anishnabai rock paintings, while at the same time the author uses his work as proof that "native art continues to develop in association with the art and presence of the majority."[38]

Political protest

The "Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy 1969" issued by Jean Chretien, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, proposed a dramatic change in the historic relationship of the

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[36] Newton MacTavish, The Fine Arts in Canada (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1925), p. 2.

[37] Nancy-Lou Patterson, Canadian Native Art (Toronto: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1973), p. 93.
[38] Ibid, p. 3.

First Nations with Canada. Chretien's "white paper" echoed Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau's concept of a "just society" in Canada, which entailed the elimination of treaties between members of society and the government. For the First Nations communities of 1969 it meant the hunting, fishing, health and education privilages their ancestors struggled to gain would be rescinded:

> Propose to Parliament that the Indian Act be repealed ... Propose to the governments of the provinces that they take over the same responsibilities for Indians that they have for other citizens in their provinces.[39]

The proposal received a resounding disapproval from Native leaders across the nation. Although the Indian Act was inherently discriminatory it did guarantee the special freedoms of Native people such as Morrisseau and Janvier, which their respective ancestors had gained through the forfeiture of vast land tracts.

The National Indian Brotherhood, a lobby group which resulted from the re-organization of the National Indian Brotherhood in 1968, provided the most vocal opposition to the Canadian government's Indian policy proposal.[40] Regional groups such as the Indian Association of Alberta presented Citizens Plus , otherwise known as the "red paper," to the government of Canada in 1970.[41] At the same time, the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood published Wahbung: Our Tomorrows in 1971. Both documents denounced the federal government's 1969 proposals and offered alternative strategies for the development of a new relationship between the First Nations and Canada. Perhaps the most in-depth rejection and harshest

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[39] "Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy 1969," (Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1969), p.3.
[40] J. R. Miller Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).
[41] The term "Citizens Plus" is derived from H.B. Hawthorn's report for the DIAND.

criticism of the Trudeau government's statement was written by the Indian Association of Alberta's President, Harold Cardinal. Cardinal's 1969 publication The Unjust Society outlines the history of injustices committed against the First Nations by Euro-Canadians and explains how the government's new plan represented a modern inequity:

> Now, at a time when our fellow Canadians consider the promise of the Just Society, once more the Indians of Canada are betrayed by a programme which offers nothing better than cultural genocide....The new Indian policy promulgated by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau's government...is a thinly disguised programme of extermination through assimilation.[42]

In the eighth chapter of The Unjust Society , entitled "Bring Back the Medicine Man," Cardinal calls for a return to early nineteenth-century Indian "values, ethics, and morals" that had guided the social structures of indigenous North American communities.[43] This pan-Native vision encourages a reconsideration of shamanistic practices that had seriously declined in twentieth-century First Nations communities across Canada. In the 1960's Native leaders were looking for solutions to the impoverished state of their people. Cardinal's belief in the power of aboriginal North American spirituality and in the need to reestablish such concepts in the present was shared by Norval Morrisseau, whose art gave added importance to such Native ideals within the context of Canadian culture in the 1960's and 1970's. Throughout this period Morrisseau professed the value of aboriginal North American spiritual concepts as evident in Serpent Legend (figure 30) of 1962. It depicts an ancient Anishinabai belief regarding the transmission of supernatural powers. This painting on paper features a large

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[42] Harold Cardinal, The Unjust Society (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1969), p.1.
[43] Ibid, p. 89.

horned reptile and four small human figures rendered in heavy black outlines. A brown line extends from serpent's horns through the mouth of the first man and the bodies of the remaining three figures. The sacred being's internal structure is composed of mnemonic symbols similar to those found on the nineteenth-century birchbark scrolls. Morrisseau's work refers to the Anishnabai notion that animal deities communicate powers of good and evil to medicine men. Medicine men used such information to ensure social order and well-being among members of a community.

The second chapter of The Unjust Society , "Red Tape," examines the problems surrounding modern Native identity. Cardinal questions the federal government's practice of determining who is a "status Indian" in Canada through legal means, regardless of an individual's ancestral background. The confusing effect of this process on Native people is heightened, claims the author, by the racist sentiments they experience in Euro-Canadian hotels, restaurants and other public places. Alex Janvier expresses the adversity associated with being a Canadian Indian in Nobody Understands Me, (figure 31). This 1972 acrylic on canvas evokes a sense of confusion through a collection of irregular shapes and whiplash lines that converge in the center of the picture. In the painting's upper left corner a Native man's face in profile observes the frenzy of colours, lines and shapes before him. The concentric circle form in the man's head is a reference to a symbol used in nineteenth-century Dene beadwork and represents the four compass directions. Janvier's painting communicates the myriad of political and social dilemmas faced by Native people in Canada and how these problems can be solved by maintaining a bearing on the past:

> The challenge to Indians today is to redefine that identity in contemporary terminology. The challenge to the non-Indian society is to accept such an updated definition.[44]

Cultural empowerment

The gradual entry of Native people into Western professions has taken place during the latter half of the twentieth century. This phenomenon was major factor in the First Nations bid to gain control over their social, political and cultural affairs from the federal government. Alex Janvier's and Norval Morrisseau's presence in the Euro-Canadian art milieu was reinforced by a number of Native curators and historians. The periodical articles written by individuals such as Tom Hill, Robert Houle and Jamake Highwater are pivotal because they represent a First Nations perspective on Canadian art. Their respective discussions of Janvier's and Morrisseau's paintings offer a framework of analysis that incorporates modern First Nations ideals and encourages a new methodological approach to art history in Canada.

Tom Hill was an active member of the Native art community during the 1960's and 1970's, both as an artist and curator. His 1974 article in Art Magazine , "Canadian Indian Art - Its Death and Rebirth," documents the shifts in Native art across the nation since the late nineteenth century. Zacharie Vincent's *circa* 1880 self-portrait is presented as an isolated example of "one man's attempt to adapt to another artistic culture." The development of argillite carvings by Charles Edenshaw, a Haida from British Columbia in the early part of this century, is referred to by the author as another form of artistic transformation conceived by Native artists. Hill's argument

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[44] Ibid, p. 25.

culminates with a celebration of modern First Nations painters and their ability to convert Western artistic concepts and materials into a contemporary statement of Native culture :

> What they have created is not necessarily a "genuine Indian art" - for Indian culture has always been adaptable to outside influences - but an art that is "fine art", modern and Canadian.[45]

Morrisseau's paintings are characterized as a "mystical conception of Indian consciousness," while Janvier's work possesses an "Indian sense of colour and movement in non-objective images." [46] The Seneca curator's article successfully pushes Native art history into the twentieth century and emphasizes its relation to Canada.

In 1977 Robert Houle, a Saulteaux from Manitoba, became Curator of Contemporary Indian Art at the National Museum of Man in Ottawa. A large part of his responsibilities there entailed the presentation of twentieth-century First Nations art within the context of Canadian culture. Houle's 1977 essay "Alex Janvier: 20th Century Native Symbols and Images," in The Native Perspective , a periodical devoted to Native issues, stresses the need to reconcile the differences between First Nations and Western ideals. He argues that the phenomenon of modern painting by artists such as Morrisseau and Janvier offers a framework for reconsideration:

> The result has been the development and re-emergence of a Native cultural expression which raises some very interesting questions. This may be the start of a new kind

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[45] Tom Hill, "Canadian Indian Art - Its Death and Rebirth,"Art magazine (Summer, 1974) , p. 11.

[46] Ibid

> of dialogue between the Canadian Indian and Euro-Canadians. ...[47]

The Saulteaux curator champions the paintings of Alex Janvier, noting that their abstract expression demands an understanding of two distinct artistic traditions by Native and Western viewers. He outlines the Dene artist's dependence on both First Nations and Euro-Canadian sensibilities. Janvier's work is compared to that of Paul-Emile Borduas and Blackfoot beadwork, in an analysis that emphasizes the artist's place in Canadian society of the late 1970's:

> Traditional culture can be manifested through a contemporary medium like painting if, like in the case of Janvier, it is approached from a contemporary perspective.[48]

Jamake Highwater, a Blackfoot-Cherokee, is among the first art historians of Native ancestry to publish survey texts that address the development of First Nations painting in North America. His 1976 publication Songs from the Earth: American Indian Painting focuses exclusively on a selection of Native painters from the United States. However, Highwater's second text, The Sweet Grass Lives On: Fifty Contemporary North American Indian Artists published in 1980, discusses a number of painters from Canada. An excerpt from this book, entitled "North American Indian Art : A Special Way of Seeing," was featured in the May 1983 issue of Arts West. The Blackfoot-Cherokee art historian considers the emergence of twentieth-century painting by North American aboriginal artists as a continental movement which reflects a distinct manner of observation:

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[47] Robert Houle, "Alex Janvier: 20th Century Native Symbols and Images," The Native Perspective (vol. 2, no. 9, 1978), p.16.
[48] Ibid, p. 19.

> The Indian painters of recent years have given greater emphasis to the personal nature of seeing than any of those before them. They have brought together Indian tradition and twentieth century Anglo techniques into a new form of idiosyncratic art which...has a great deal in common with experimental art by non-Indians.[49]

In this article Highwater concentrates on a movement in Ontario and Manitoba during the 1970's that he refers to as "Canadian Algonquin Legend Art". The author attributes the basis of this new art to the oral traditions of the Ojibway, Odawa and Cree cultures.[50] Norval Morrisseau is acknowledged as the innovative force behind this nation's school of legend painters:

> It was the Ojibway Indian Norval Morrisseau who brought this ancient pictorial heritage of his people's *midewewin* (secret) *society* into the twentieth century when he began to recapitulate aspects of the iconography of his ancestors in contemporary paintings.[51]

Alex Janvier and Norval Morrisseau made significant contributions to the development of modern painting in Canada during the 1960's and 1970's, which is confirmed by the discourses regarding their *oeuvres* and activities. The spiritual perspective of Morrisseau's Earth Mother With Her Children and the political demeanor of Janvier's Beaver Crossing Indian Colours communicated the resurgence of Native ideals to Canadian and international audiences at Expo'67. Their respective expressions defied the DIAND's manipulative directives, which often placed painters who maintained

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[49] Jamake Highwater, "North American Indian Art: A Special Way of Seeing," Artswest (vol. 8, no. 5, 1983), p. 13.

[50] This movement was more commonly referred to as the "Woodland School" and a considerable discourse regarding the painters associated with it developed in Canada during the late 1970's and throughout the 1980's. See Elizabeth McLuhan and Tom Hill, Norval Morrisseau and the Emergence of the Image Makers (Toronto: Methuen, 1984).

[51] Jamake Highwater, "North American Indian Art: A Special Way of Seeing," Artswest (vol. 8, no. 5, 1983), p.17.

Western formats into an ambiguous relationship with contemporary Native utilitarian and souvenir artists. The founding of Professional Native Indian Artists Incorporated addressed the desire of painters such as Janvier, Morrisseau, Daphne Odjig, Jackson Beardy, Carl Ray, Roy Thomas, Eddy Cobiness and Joseph Sanchez to be considered within the context of the Euro-Canadian art community.

The exhibitions of Janvier's and Morrisseau's work in major public and private institutions across this nation marked the presence of an innovative painting movement in Canada. However, the continued marginalization of Native art by art historians from the dominant culture echoed the manner in which First Nations political concerns were misrepresented by the federal government during this era. Harold Cardinal voiced Native peoples' modern social needs and affirmed their constitutional rights in Canada, using arguments that paralleled the sensibilities expressed in Morrisseau's and Janvier's paintings. The soulful outpourings and intellectual declarations of Norval Morrisseau's and Alex Janvier's *oeuvres* were embraced by Native curators, art historians and a few innovative non-Native art historians in the 1970's. These individuals elevated the public profile of First Nations art and empowered it within a more pluralistic definition of Canada's identity.

CONCLUSION

Agents of transcendence

The art of Alex Janvier and Norval Morrisseau successfully transcended the aesthetic norms of Canadian culture in the 1960's and 1970's. Their respective works synthesize indigenous North American arts to forge a new definition of painting by artists of Native ancestry, which acknowledges European art traditions. However, each artist's contributions to Canada's artistic identity have been marginalized from our modern art history because of a problematic Western discourse. Fortunately, this situation is gradually changing as First Nations people such as Morrisseau and Janvier assert their beliefs within the context of Canada's true ethnic diversity. Their paintings offered a profoundly new definition of Native sensibilities during the twenty-year time span covered by this thesis.

The late 1950's represents a period when Morrisseau employed a coloured drawing technique to communicate his supernatural visions of ancient Anishinabai legends. In the early 1960's he developed a system of rhythmic black lines and pools of pure colour to render images of thunderbirds, shamans, sacred bears and other spiritual beings. By the end of this decade the Anishnabai painter had expanded his palette and delved into Christian imagery. Throughout the 1970's Morrisseau's subject matter ranged from Anishnabai to Christian, and by mid-decade he was using drip and wash acrylic painting methods on canvas to forward Eckankar narratives. During the early 1960's Alex Janvier experimented with automatic drawing and other Western techniques he had learned as a student at the Alberta College of Art in Calgary. The artist combined irregular shapes, whiplash lines, and patterns derived from Dene beadwork to produce art that

forwarded Native political concepts. By 1970 the Dene painter had developed a system of figurative and non-objective personal symbols, which he rendered in pure acrylic colours on large canvases. Towards the end of the decade Janvier's strictly abstract compositions were set in shallow spaces and related to his interpretation of the natural environment.

Nineteenth-and twentieth-century Dene and Anishnabai utilitarian and sacred arts provided Janvier and Morrisseau with points of departure from which to develop transitional concepts of art. Norval Morrisseau made this move between 1958 and 1960, when he broke a spiritual taboo of the Midewiwin by transforming their sacred images into paintings on birchbark, paper and canvas. During the same period, Alex Janvier had just begun adapting Dene aesthetic traditions to European ideas of painting. However, both artists looked beyond their respective tribes for inspiration and incorporated the visual expressions of various indigenous North, Central and South American cultures. Janvier and Morrisseau were exposed to Navajo, Aztec, Tsimshian, Mayan and other Native arts via books and art collections in Canada, as well as through direct contact with those artists who continued to create sacred and utilitarian arts. The product of their respective assimilations was an innovative pan-Native aesthetic, which related to a common indigenous North American artistic absorption of the natural environment.

However, the imposition of Western ideals in North America debased such sensibilities and circumscribed a lesser position in Canadian society for Native people such as Morrisseau and Janvier. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century Euro-Canadian political, economic and cultural directives resulted in the destruction of Native ideals and freedoms. Both artists address this problem from a very specific perspective; Janvier's work expresses

subversive Dene attitudes toward such foreign political supremacy, while paintings by Morrisseau commemorate the Anishnabai's unyielding spiritual powers. These two painter's vehement statements were avoided in the 1960's and 1970's by most Canadian art historians, who perpetuated the marginalization of First Nations art. This situation was due in part to a racist methodology initially disseminated through Canadian art survey texts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which degraded and trivialized indigenous North American art and people. The advancement of Western aesthetic traditions and exclusive national art concepts have dominated Canada's art history in this century and served to place Native artists such as Janvier and Morrisseau on the fringes our collective identity.

The ambiguous presence of the First Nations within this country was slowly reversed in the early twentieth century by Native politicians, who proclaimed that their respective cultures were entitled to a distinct place in Canada. Their demands combined with shifts in Western social and political thought led the federal government to gradually decrease its suppression of indigenous North American communities. The Indians of Canada pavilion at Expo '67 in Montreal provided the First Nations with an opportunity to expose the hurtful effects of Western society to an international public, while celebrating the resurgence of Native traditions. Morrisseau's and Janvier's commissioned works for this event expressed modern Native cultures' delicate balance between the past and present. However, this Native perspective at Expo'67 was manipulated by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, whose involvement and support of First Nations art in the 1960's and 1970's often served to constrain modern artists. The Professional Native Indian Artists Incorporated was established in 1975 as a response to the DIAND's patriarchal programs. This group's members -

Janvier, Morrisseau, Daphne Odjig, Carl Ray, Eddy Cobiness, Joseph Sanchez and Jackson Beardy - successfully presented their work in the Canadian art mainstream. Morrisseau's and Janvier's exhibitions in commercial and public venues between 1960 and 1980 marked the emergence of a new painting movement in Canada. Their professional accomplishments and distinctive paintings empowered First Nations values in manner that echoed the social and cultural objectives of Native political leaders during this period. In the 1970's a select group of Native and non-Native art historians and curators championed the *oeuvres* of Janvier and Morrisseau and this discourse signified the beginning of a new Canadian art history.

Paintings such as Norval Morrisseau's Water Spirit and Alex Janvier's San' Kiye' Nos' allazzy offer a common ground from which to observe the meeting of distinct cultures on this continent. The aesthetic innovations of these two artists between 1960 and 1980 represent an art movement unique to Canada, which should be recognized as part of this nation's identity. Such an understanding will lead to the healing of Canada's historic political, social and spiritual misdeads and nourish a new definition of cultural diversity. Perhaps then, the pivotal achievements of modern painters such as Norval Morrisseau, who declared, "I am a shaman-artist,"[1] and Alex Janvier, who describes his work as a"Hunter's Son Dream Style"[2] will be included in the National Gallery of Canada collection of Canadian painting from 1960's and 1970's..

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[1]Morrisseau, quoted in Lister Sinclair and Jack Pollock, The Art of Norval Morrisseau (Toronto: Methuen, 1979), p.7.
[2]Janvier, quoted in Alexander Best, Contemporary Native Art of Canada: Alex Janvier (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1978), p. 9.

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APPENDICE A

Norval Morrisseau: Selected exhibitions 1960 - 1979

Solo

1962 Pollock Gallery, Toronto
1963 Pollock Gallery, Toronto
1965 Hart House Gallery, Toronto
1966 St-Paul de Vence, France
1967 Musée du Québec, Quebec City
1972 Pollock Gallery, Toronto
1974 Beau-Xi Gallery, Vancouver
1974 Pollock Gallery, Toronto
1975 Shayne Gallery, Montreal
1975 Pollock Gallery, Toronto
1976 Gallery 115, Winnipeg
1976 Pollock Gallery, Toronto
1977 Pollock Gallery, Toronto
1978 First Canadian Place, Toronto
1979 Pollock Gallery, Toronto
1979 The Gallery/Stratford

Group

1963 Kitchener/Waterloo Gallery, Kitchener
1965 University of Waterloo Art Gallery, Waterloo
1967 Expo'67, Montreal
1968 Contemporary Indian Artists, University of Calagary, Calgary
1970 MacIntosh Gallery, London
1973 Canadian Indian Painting, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto
1974 Canadian Indian art '74, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto
1975 Indian Art '75 , Woodland Indian Cultural Education Centre, Brantford
1975 Fierté sur Toile, Dominion Gallery, Montreal
1975 Fierté sur Toile,Wallack Galleries, Ottawa
1976 Indian Art '76, Woodland Indian Cultural Education Centre, Brantford
1976 Contemporary Native Art of Canada, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto
1976 Bergens Kunstforening, Bergen, Norway
1977 Contemporary Indian Art - The Trail from the Past to the Future MacKenzie Gallery, Peterborough
1978 Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver
1978 Woodland Indian Exhibition, McMicheal Canadian Collection, Kleinburg
1978 Image of Man in Canadian Painting: 1878 - 1978, McIntosh Gallery, London
1979 Kinder des Nanabush, Hamburg, West Germany

APPENDICE B

Alex Janvier: Selected exhibitions 1960 - 1979

Solo

1964 Jacox Gallery, Edmonton
1973 Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton
1973 Pollock Gallery, Toronto
1974 Framecraft Gallery, Edmonton
1975 Calgary Galleries, Calagary
1976 Framecraft Gallery, Edmonton
1977 Gallery Moos, Toronto
1977 Museum of Man, Ottawa
1977 Gallery Stenhusgarden, Linkoping, Sweden
1978 Royal Ontario Museum,Toronto
1978 West End Gallery, Edmonton
1978 Calgary Galleries, Calgary
1979 Gallery Moos, Toronto
1979 Hampton Galleries, Pontiac
1979 West End Gallery, Edmonton

Group

1964 Spring All-Alberta Show, Jacox Gallery, Edmonton
1965 Jacox Gallery, Edmonton
1967 Expo'67, Montreal
1968 Contemporary Indian Artists, University of Calagary, Calgary
1970 MacIntosh Gallery, London
1972 Treaty Numbers 23, 287, 1171, Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg
1973 Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton
1974 Gallery Anthropos, London, England
1974 Canadian Indian art '74 Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto
1974 First Biannual Invitational Painting Exhibit, Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona
1975 Indian Art '75, Woodland Indian Cultural Education Centre, Brantford
1975 Fiérte sur Toile, Dominion Gallery, Montreal
1975 Fiérte sur Toile, Wallach Galleries, Ottawa
1975 Pollock Gallery, Toronto
1976 Indian Art '76 Woodland Indian Cultural Education Centre, Brantford
1976 Glenbow Museum, Calgary
1977 Contemporary Indian Art - The Trail from the Past to the Future, MacKenzie Gallery, Peterborough
1979 Kinder des Nanabush, Hamburg, West Germany

FIGURES

1. Norval Morrisseau, Man Changing into Thunderbird, c.1960
   63 x 101 cm, water colour on kraft paper
   Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

2. unknown Anishnabai artist, untitled, c.1900
   incised birch bark scroll
   Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull

3. Norval Morrisseau, Thunderbird with Serpent, 1965
   81 x 179 cm, acrylic on kraft paper
   Norcen Energy Resources Limited, Toronto

4. Norval Morrisseau, Virgin Mary with the Christ Child and Saint John the Baptist, 1973
   101 x 83 cm, acrylic on canvas
   Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Hull

5. Norval Morrisseau, Door to Astral Heaven, 1977
   122 x 81 cm, acrylic on canvas
   collection unknown

6. Alex Janvier, untitled, 1962
   22 x 30 cm, ink on paper
   Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull

7. Alex Janvier, Too Many Spotted Treaties, 1966
   61 x 76 cm, acrylic on canvas board
   Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Hull

8. Crop-Eared Wolf, untitled, 1882
   natural and commercial paint on tanned buffalo hide
   Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull

9. Alex Janvier, Up Towards Sky-Eagle, 1972
   76 x 60 cm, acrylic on canvas
   Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull

10. Alex Janvier, Fly, Fly, Fly, 1979
    152 x 213 cm, acrylic on linen
    Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon

11. unknown Dene artist, untitled, 1906
moosehide moccasins with metal and glass beads on black velvet
Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull

12. Alex Janvier, San' Kiye' Nos' allazzy, 1974
91 x 121 cm, acrylic on canvas
collection of the artist, Cold Lake First Nations

13. unknown Anishnabai artist, untitled , n.d.
iron oxide and fish or animal glue on rock at Agawa Bay, Ontario

14. Norval Morrisseau, Water Spirit, 1974
81 x 183 cm, acrylic on kraft paper
Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull

15. unknown Tsimshian artist, untitled , c.1900
commerical paint on red cedar screen
Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull

16. Norval Morrisseau, Sacred Moose, c. 1960
81 x 142 cm, acrylic on kraft paper
Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

17. Alex Janvier, Spring, 1978
168 x 238 cm, acrylic on canvas
Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull

18. unknown Navajo artist, untitled 1966
dry natural pigments and sand
photograph taken at the Navajo Craftsman Exhibit, Arizona

19. Norval Morrisseau, The Landrights, 1976
122 x 96 cm, acrylic on canvas
Richard Baker collection, Toronto

20. Alex Janvier, Divide and Conquer, 1972
40 x 36 cm, acrylic on canvas
Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull

21. Alex Janvier, Our Lady of the Teepee, 1950
154 x 79 cm, oil on masonite
Collection of the artist, Cold Lake First Nations

22. unknown artist, The Virgin and Child with Two Angels, c. 1420
56 x 44 cm, oil on wood
National Gallery, London, England

23. Norval Morrisseau,Portrait of the Artist As Jesus Christ, 1966
166 x 72 cm, acrylic on kraft paper
Capital Guardian Growth, Toronto

24. Rapheal Sanzio, The Madonna and Child with the Infant Baptist, c.1510
38 x 32 cm, oil on wood
National Gallery, London, England.

25. Tom Thompson, The Jack Pine, 1919
44 x 21 cm, oil on canvas
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

26. J.W. Francis, Indians of Canada pavilion, 1967
8 x 9 m, structural steel, vynil and wood
Expo'67, Montreal

27. Norval Morrisseau, Earth Mother with Her Children, 1967
8 x 6 m, acrylic on red cedar
Expo' 67, Montreal

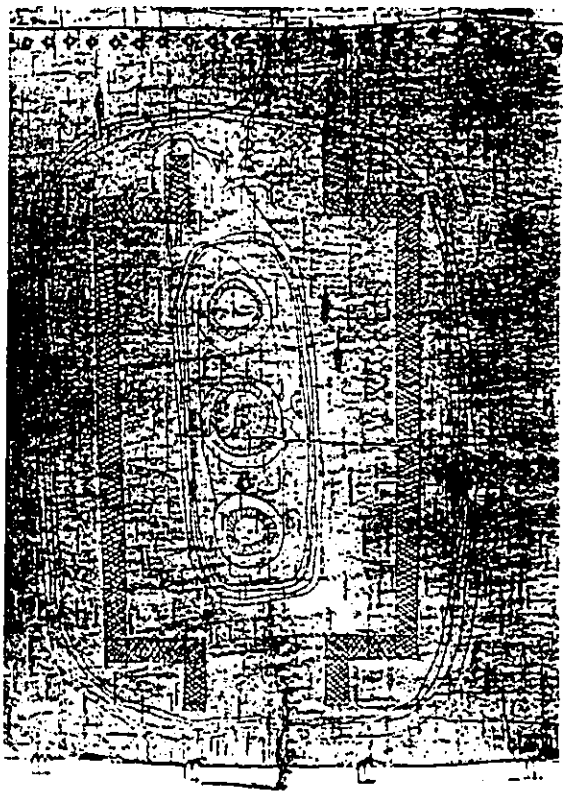
28. Alex Janvier, Beaver Crossing - Indian Colours, 1967
3 m diameter, acrylic on panel
Expo '67, Montreal

29. Zacharie Vincent, untitled, c. 1880
74 x 55 cm, oil on canvas
Chateau de Ramezay Museum, Montreal

30. Norval Morrisseau, Serpent Legend, 1962
79 x 106 cm, ink, acrylic and tempera on kraft paper
Bernhard Cinader collection, Toronto

31. Alex Janvier, Nobody Understands Me, 1972
92 x 122 cm, acrylic on canvas
Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Hull

figure 1



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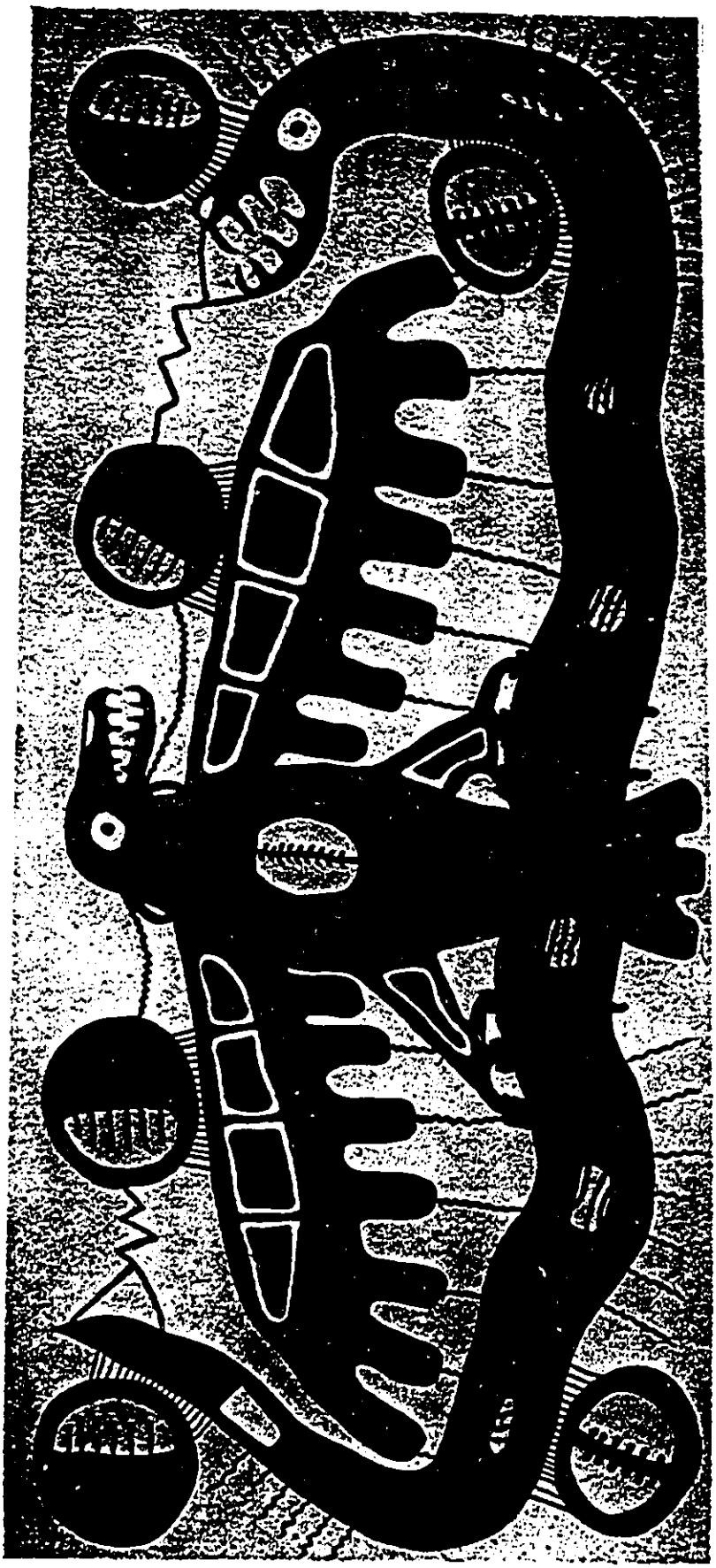

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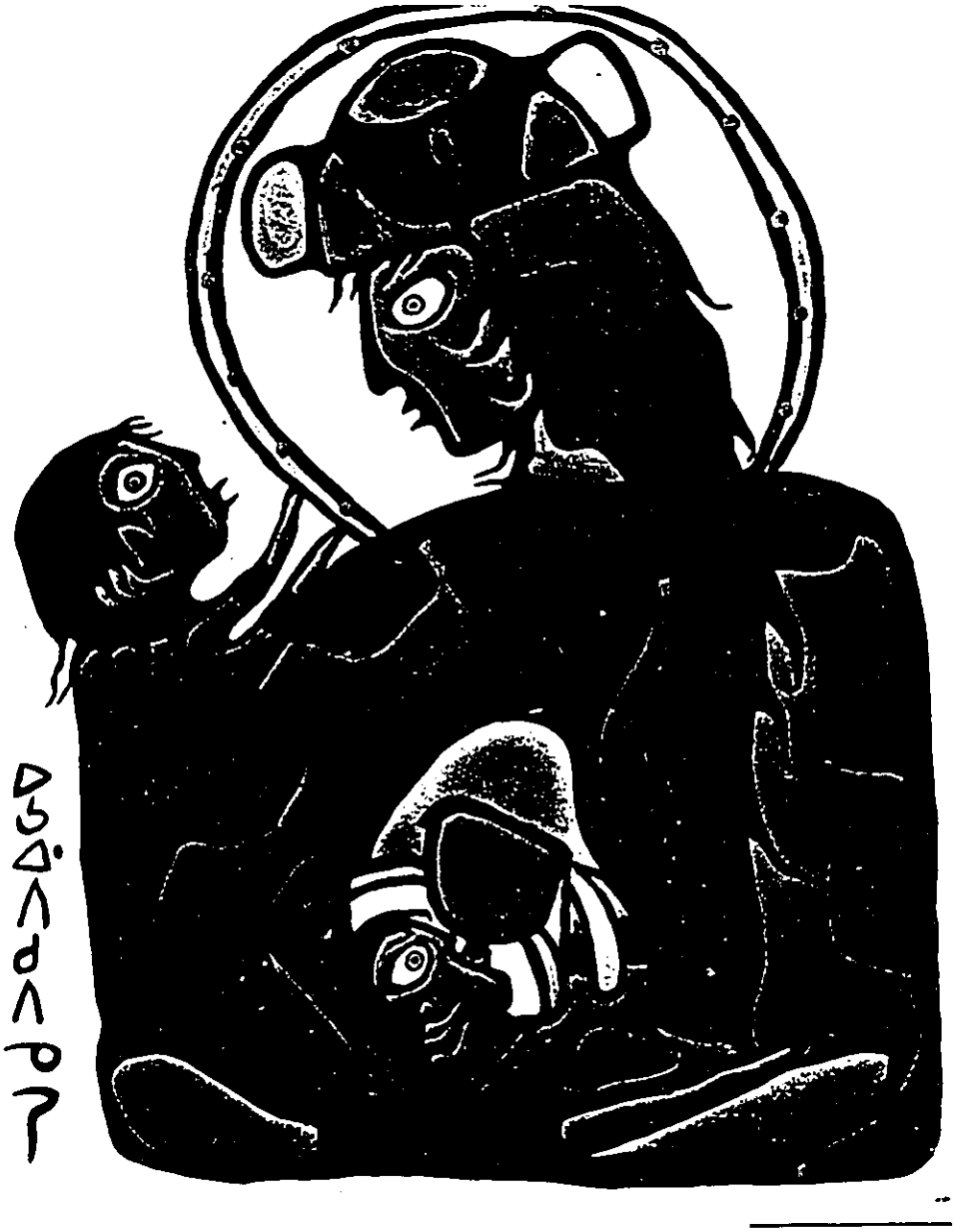

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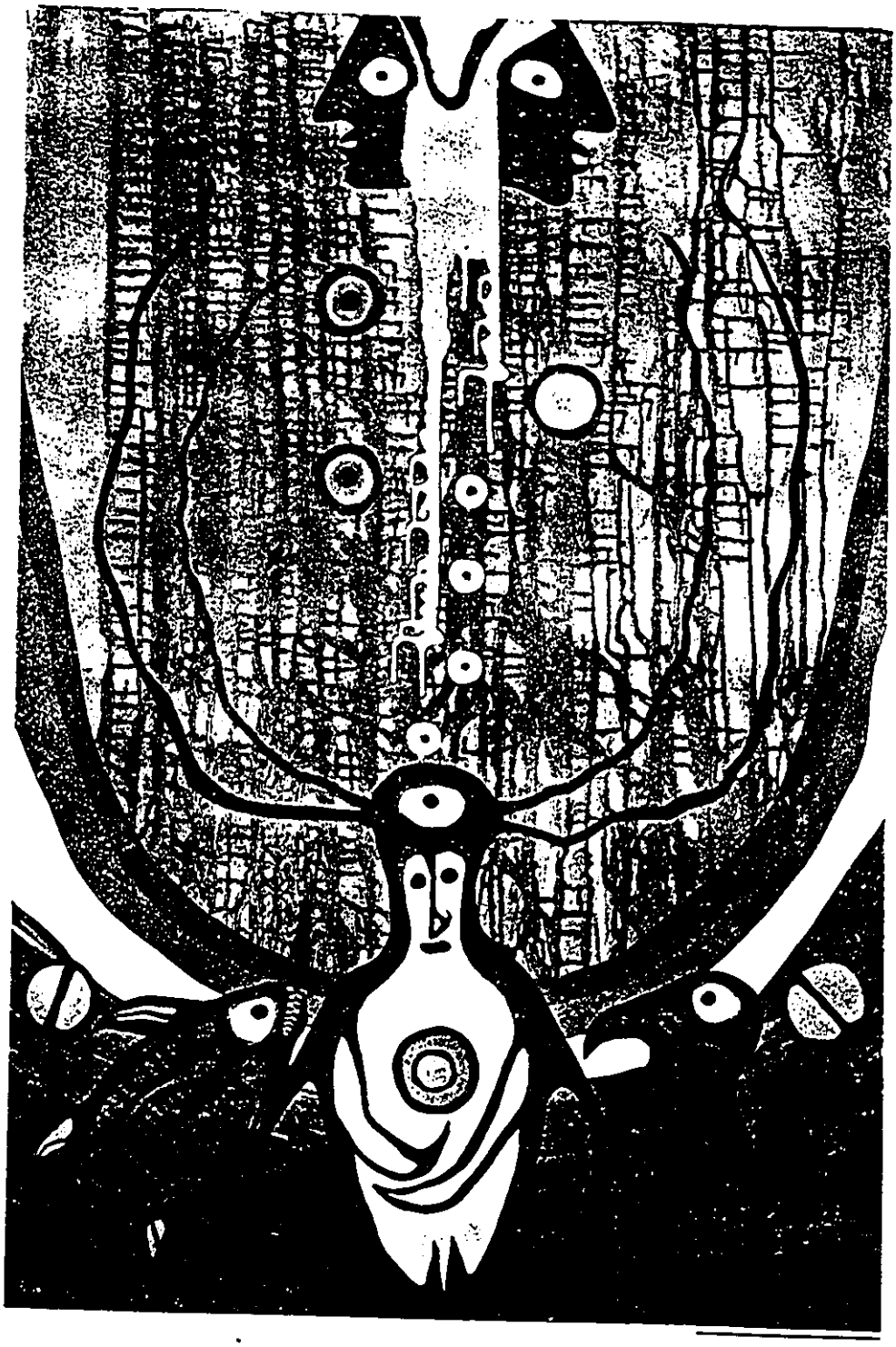

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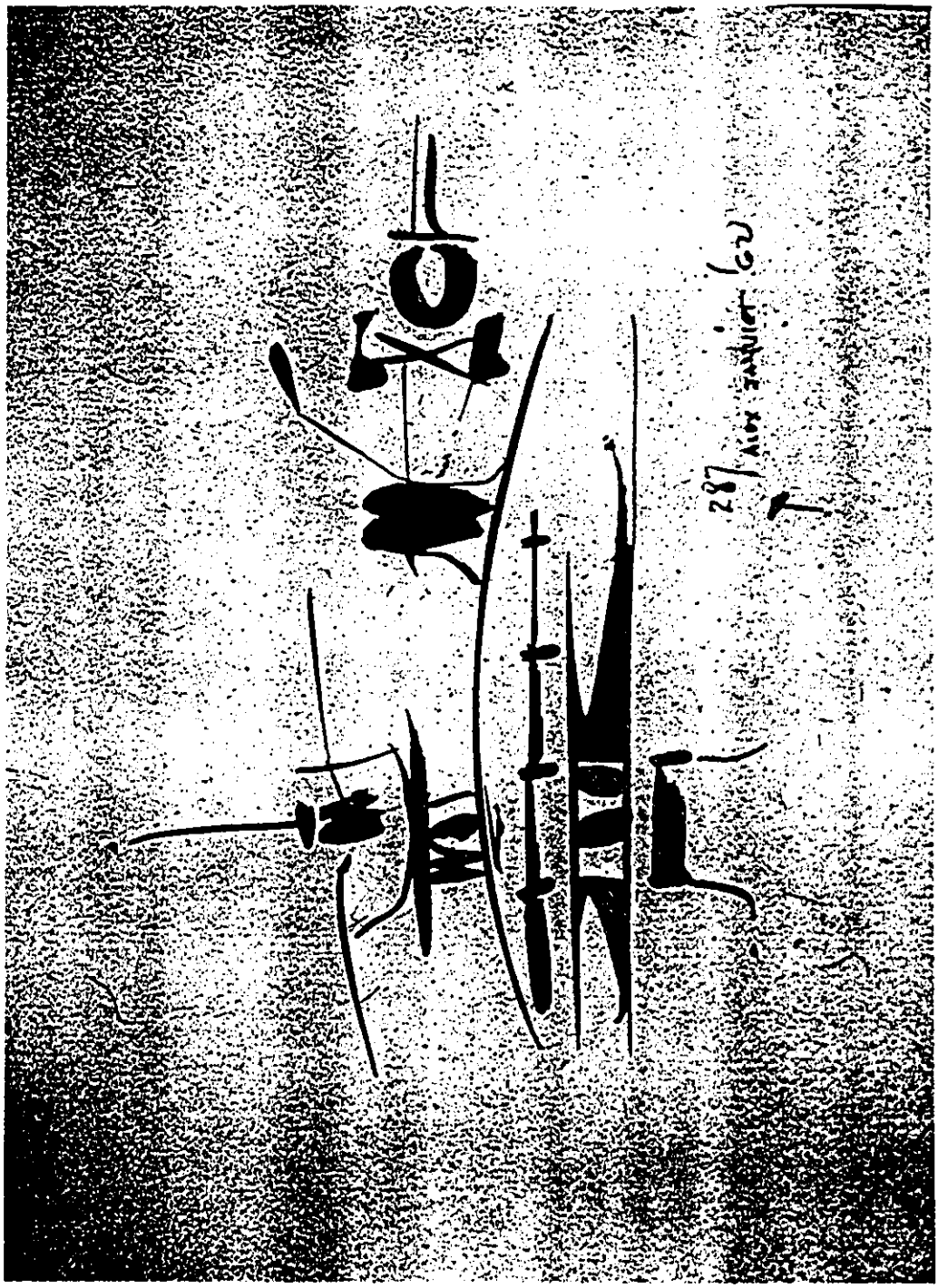
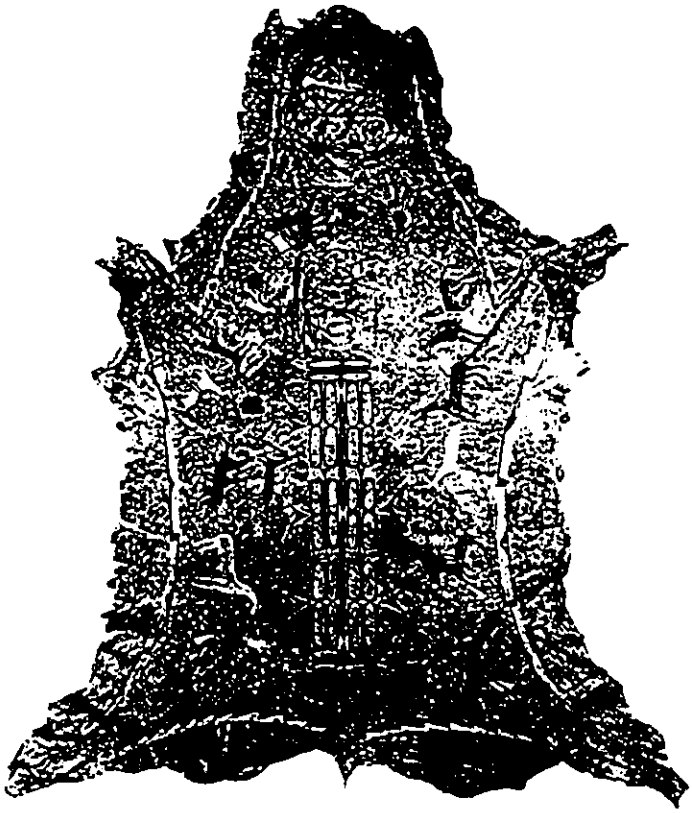


figure 6

figure 7



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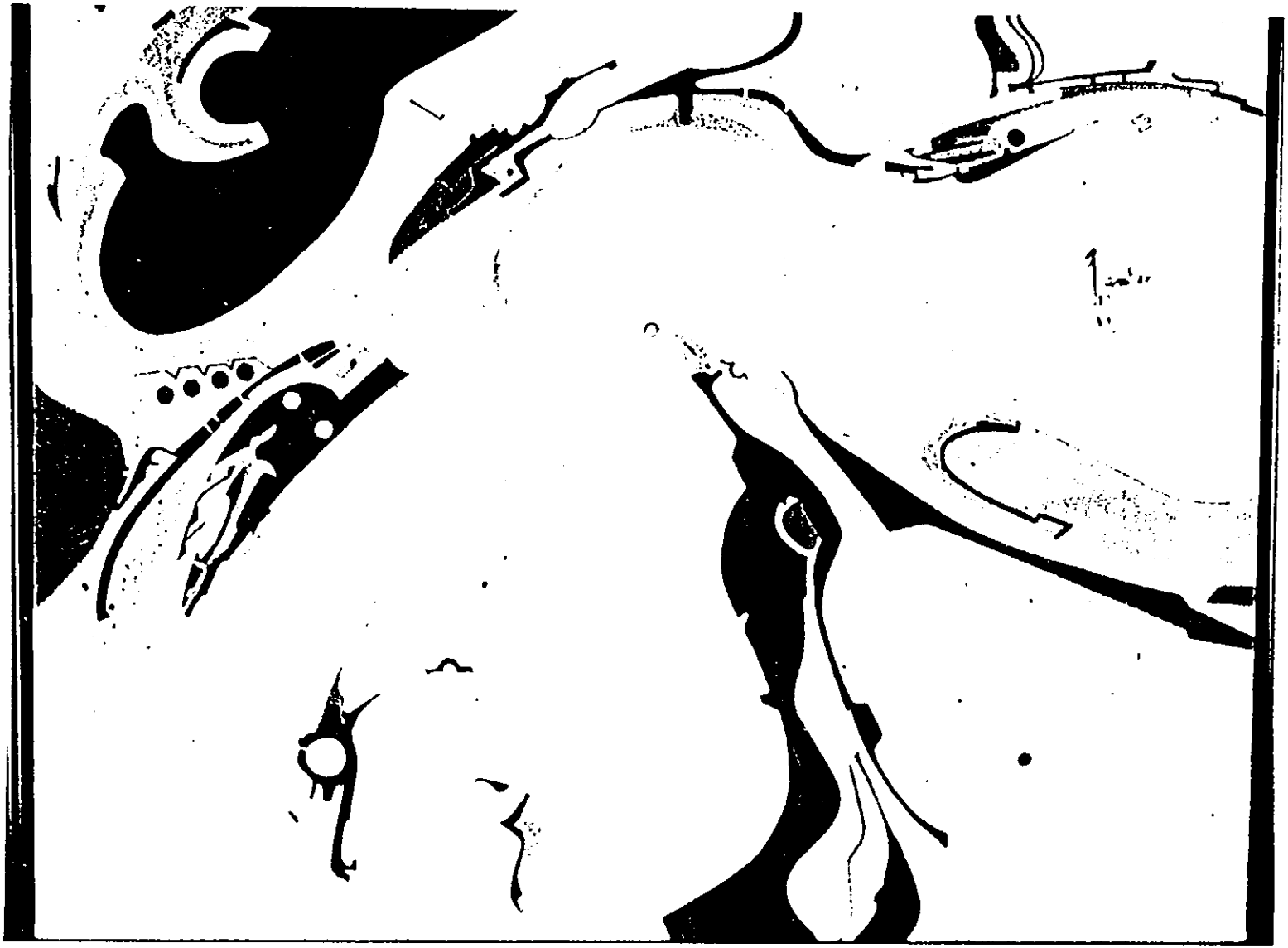

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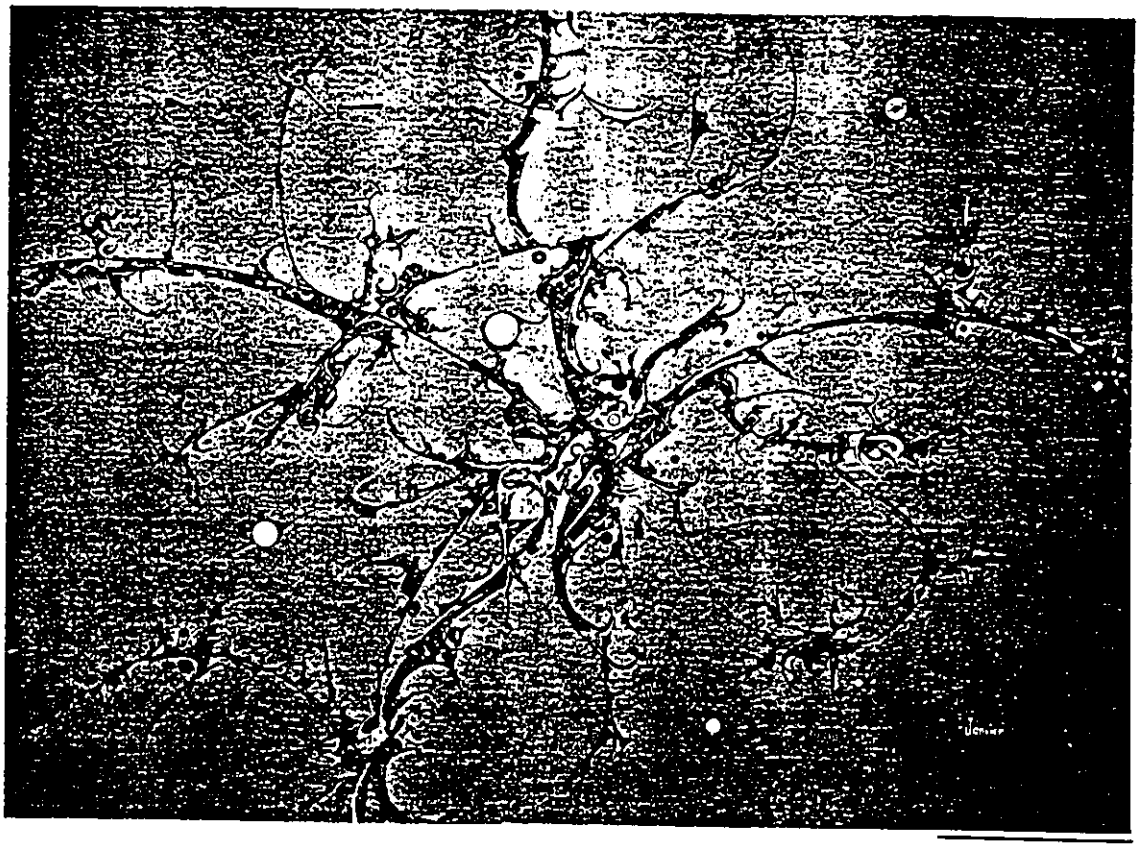

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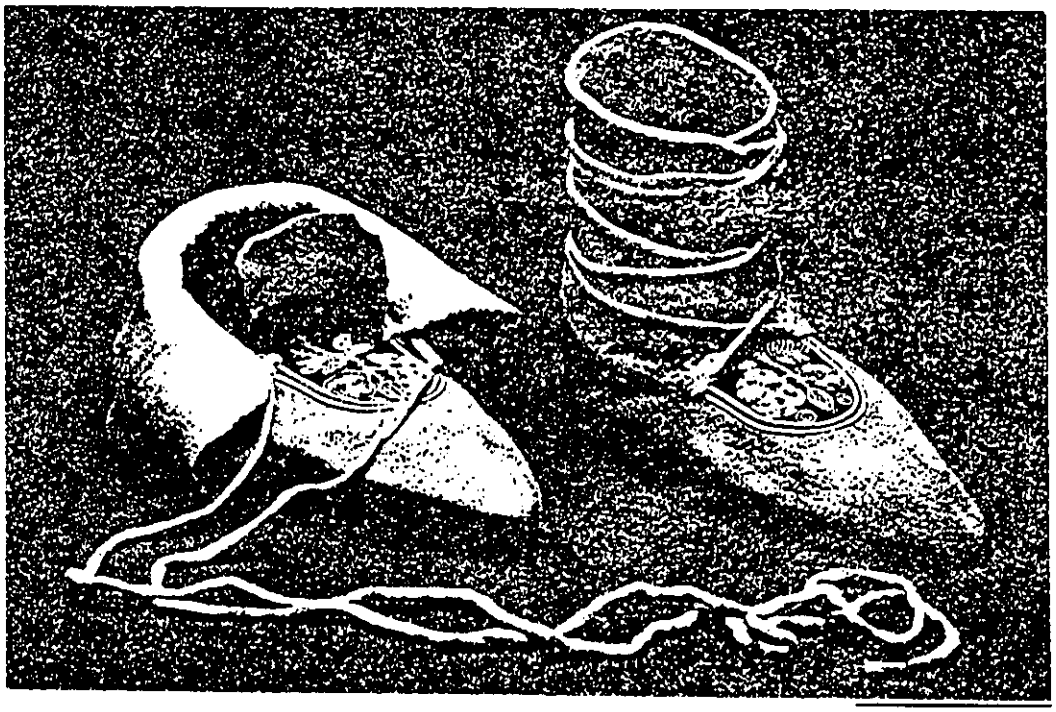

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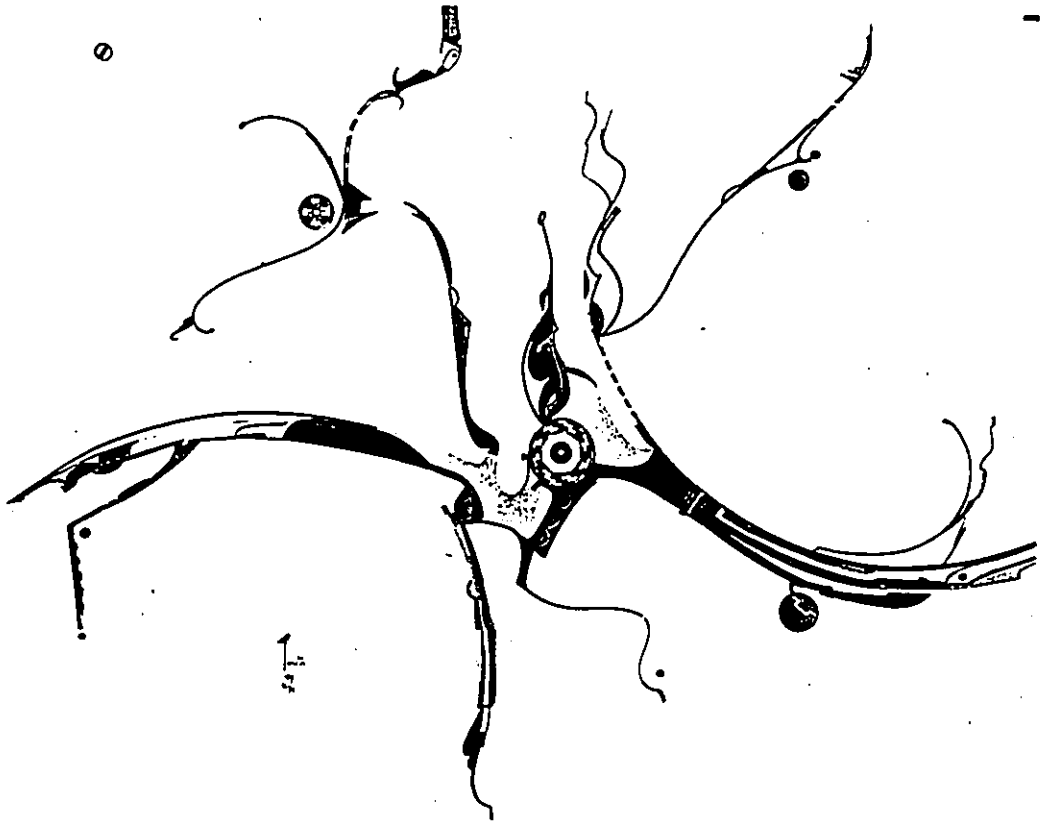
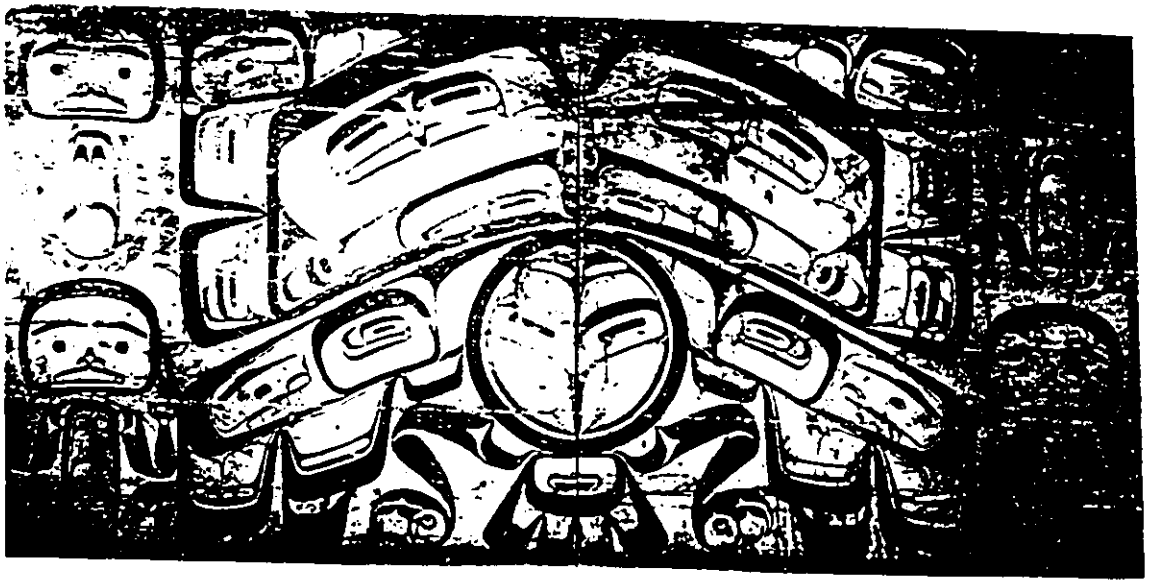


figure 12

figure 13

figure 14



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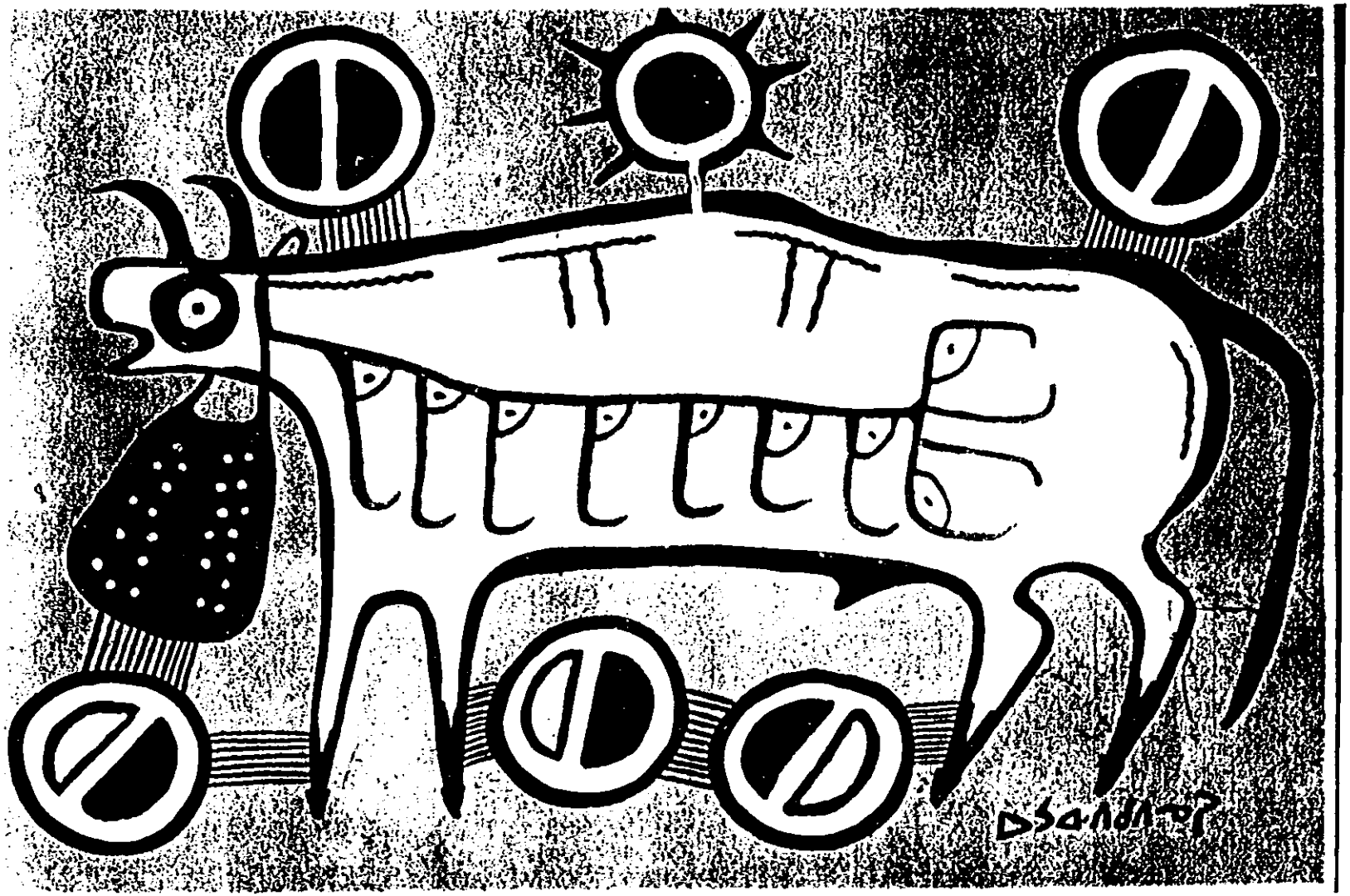


figure 16

figure 17

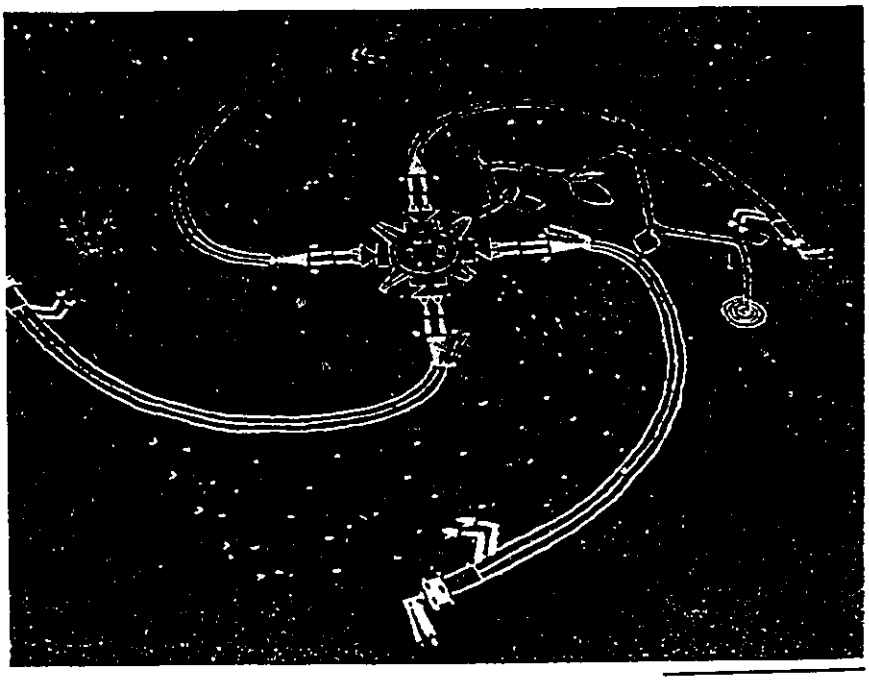
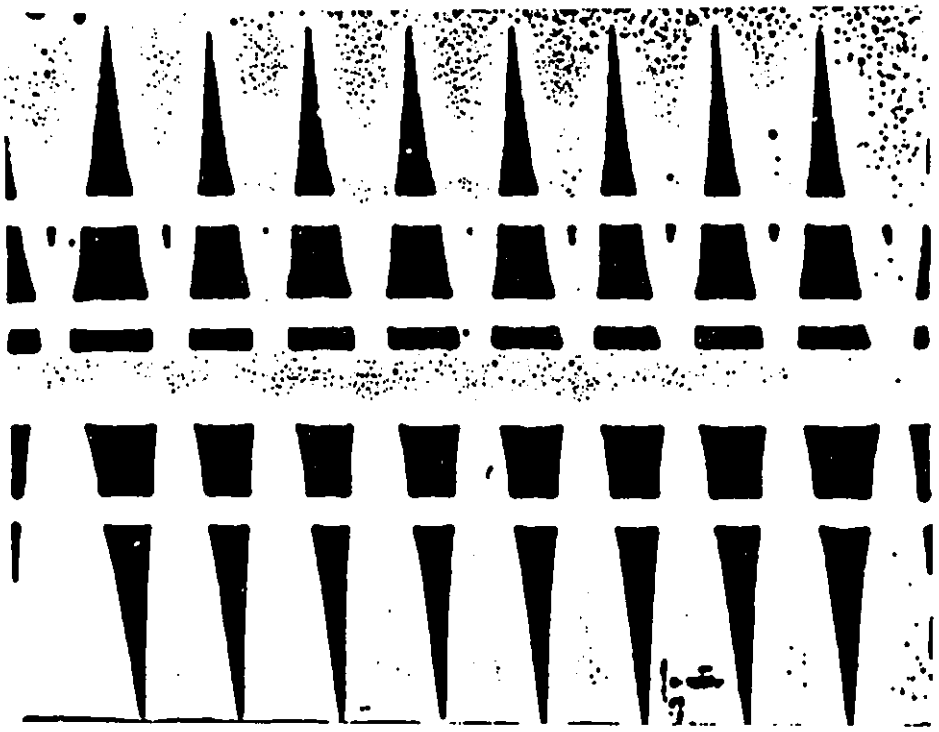


figure 18

figure 19



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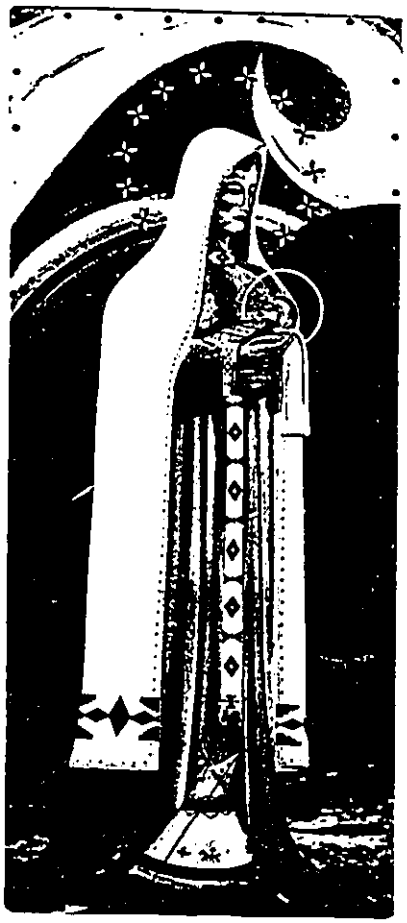
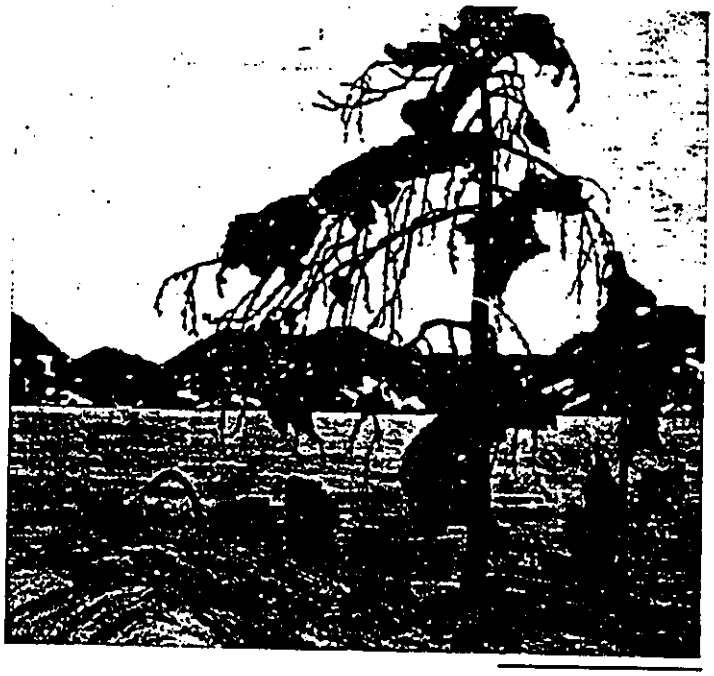


figure 21

figure 22

figure 23

figure 24



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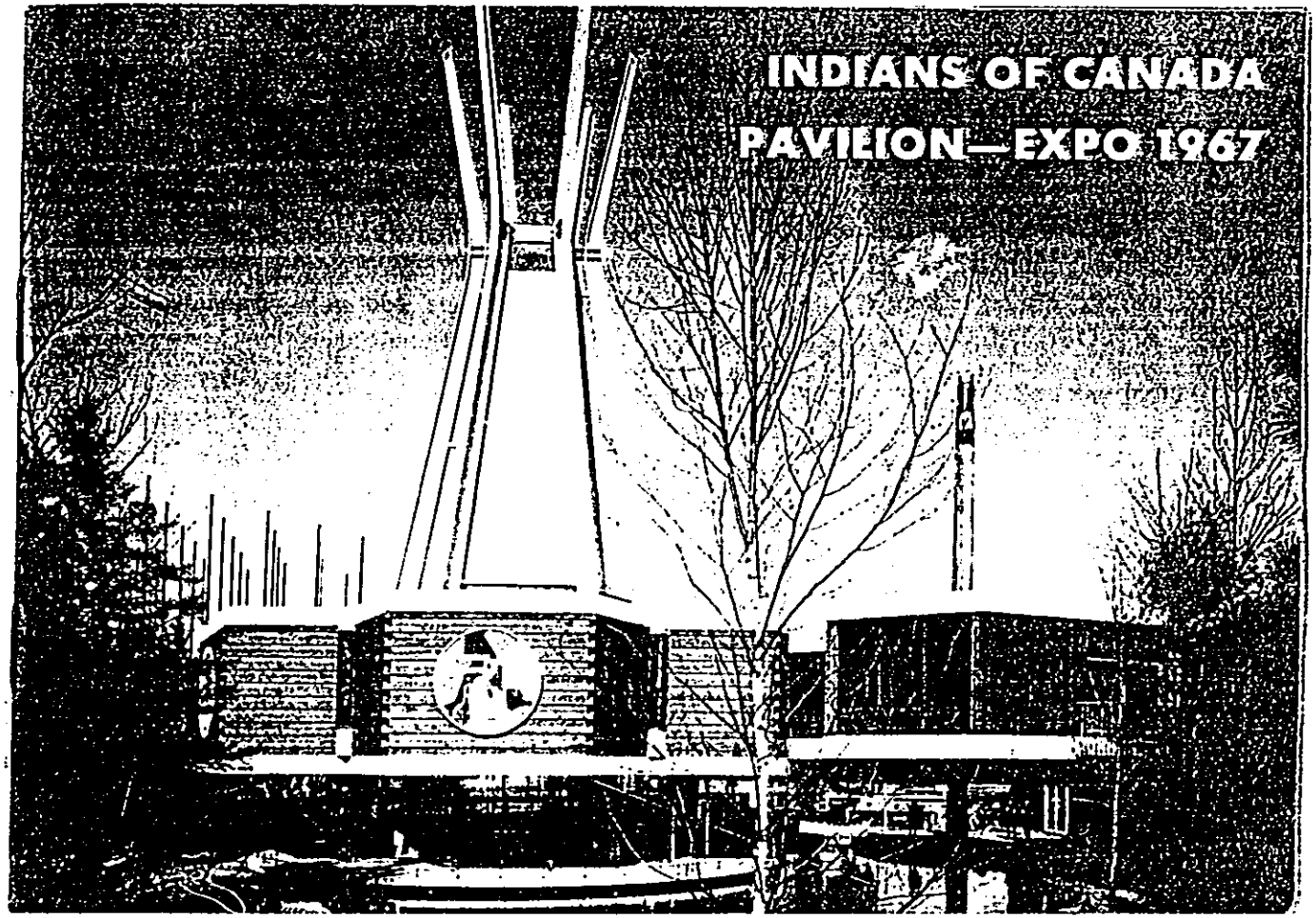

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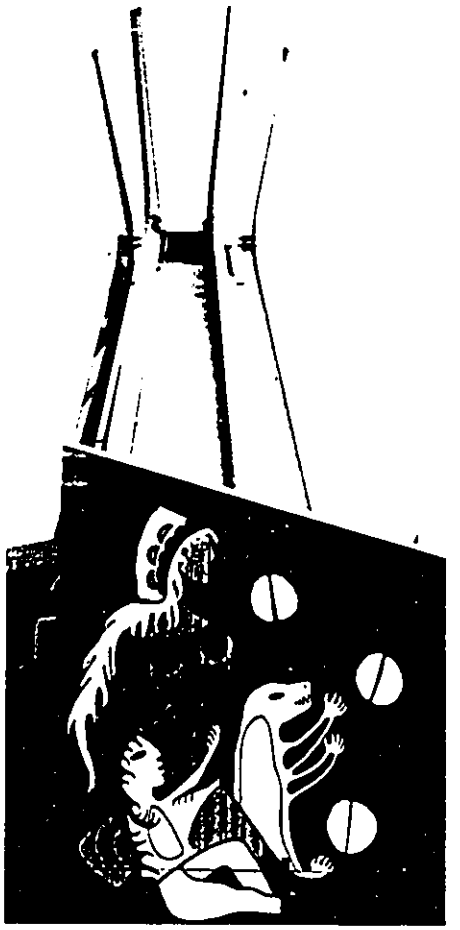

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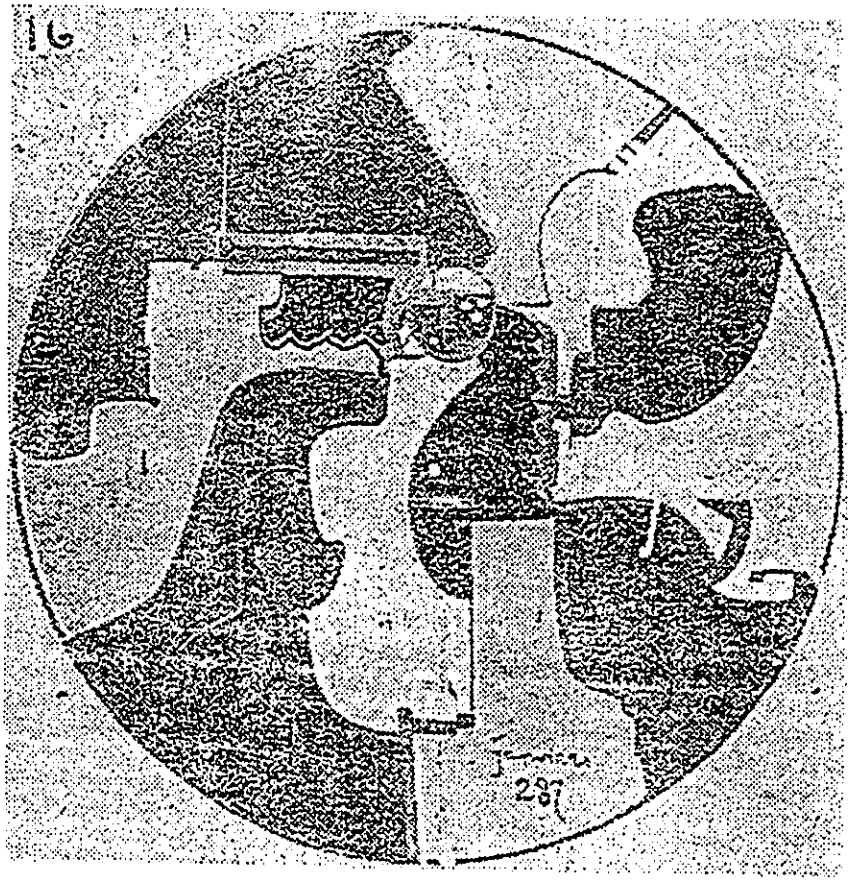

figure 28

figure 29

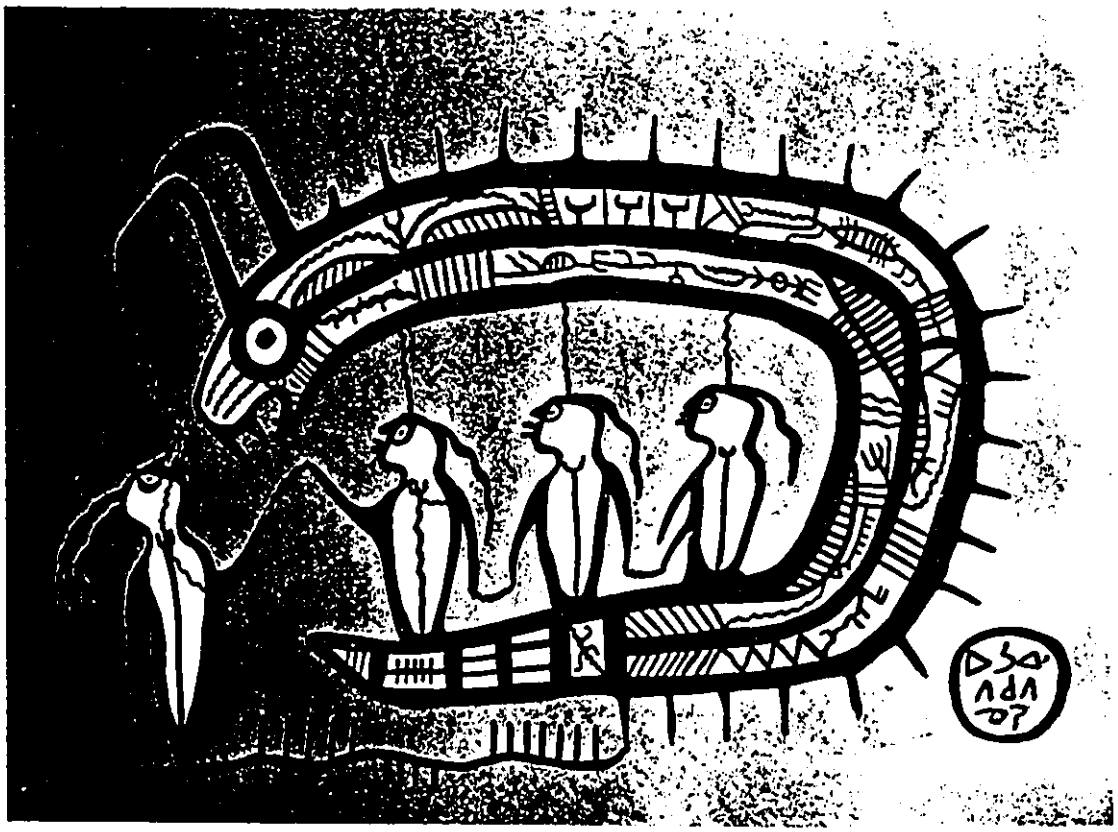

figure 30

figure 31