The Virtual Coe  

Being together while being apart....

November 13, 2020

Superman?

This particular work, *Superman Emblem* from 1993 by Marcus Amerman (Choctaw, b. 1959), was commissioned by Ted Coe after he had been struck by Amerman’s full Superman-style tanned leather jacket at the 1992 Santa Fe Indian Market. While Ted could not afford the jacket at the time, he was so enamored by the riff on the iconic superhero imagery that he immediately reached out to Amerman to see if he would make an emblem for his collection.

This small panel of intense beadwork is powerfully evocative. The psychedelic colors and patterns of background draw you in as if you are looking through a kaleidoscope onto a desert sunset. The simple red “S” superimposed over the field of bold yellow of Superman’s so-familiar logo has taken a trip here, into Amerman’s vision of a contemporary American hero deeply rooted in Native America. The “S” has become an iconic Buffalo skull (a nod not only to the inestimable power of the buffalo across Native North America, but also Amerman’s own alter-ego “Buffalo Man” who features in much of his performance and visual art) surmounted by a sky-blue butterfly caught mid-flight.

Watch two videos about this artist [then and now](#), as well as learn about this piece [here](#).
In creating this comb, the maker Stanley Hill (Mohawk, of the Turtle Clan; 1921-2003) chose to share the Haudenosaunee origin narrative. It is the story of Earth Grasper or Woman Who Fell From the Sky; one epoch of a long and complex story of how the world as we know it today came into being; it is a long, complex story, one of those meta-narratives in which people make sense of their existence. It articulates where their ceremonies came from, where the clans came from, where the nations came from, and why. It is the Haudenosaunee vision of humankind’s role in the universe. This is a narrative of the peopling of the world.

This carving seems to stand for the second epoch of the Creation of the Haudenosaunee, the creation of the world on Turtle’s back. Sitting on top of the comb is Sky Woman, a loon, and a fox. Loon helps first people survive ordeals serving to prove their worthiness to occupy the land world. Loon helps create a solid land on the back of Turtle on which people might live. Fox is one of the forms the father of twins born to Sky Woman took, the first children born into the newly created world. The Matriarch, as Sky Woman is also known, sits between these powerful beings.

Learn more about this artist and this piece here.

Stanley Hill (Mohawk, Grand Island, NY; 1921-2003), Comb, 1983. Moose antler, 2.75 x 3 in. NA0039
This unique pictorial belt made by Lemuel Harrison (Diné) measures depicts colored train cars along a mountainous landscape under a cold night sky. The bright colored yarn interwoven with the natural wool creates a glowing effect on the trains.

“Night Train” was inspired on a snowy day in Durango while Lemuel was on break from work. “I sat outside while the train went by as it did every day,” Lemuel stated. During the mid-90s, Lemuel wove about eighty pictorial belts. It takes Lemuel three weeks to complete a pictorial belt, which includes prepping the wool and yarn.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began and slowly but surely interfered with our daily work and personal lives, it ironically has allowed for some people to be more creative and try something new or maybe complete projects that have been on the back burner. For Lemuel, this time has meant weaving more—from sash belts to Navajo rugs, Lemuel has been producing stunning weavings during an uncertain and challenging time.

To learn more, click here.

Lemuel Harrison (Diné), Night Train, n.d. Wool and yarn, 105 x 5 in. NA1271.