

**“Rendezvous
of Fact
and Visions”
Retrospective
of Works by
T. C. Cannon**



As a special highlight of the Southern Plains Indian Museum's (SPIM) continuing commitment to actively promote American Indian artists and their work, it is with great pride that we exhibit a selection of paintings and works on paper by the legendary T. C. Cannon. Through this retrospective, the museum honors the legacy of the local artist and poet, who was destined to be one of the most influential and distinctive American Indian artists of the 1960s and 1970s.

"I dream of a great breadth of Indian art to develop that ranges through the whole region of our past, present, and future."

T. C. Cannon

In 1968, while he was still in Vietnam, the SPIM's curator, Rosemary Ellison, wrote Cannon to commission drawings to be part of a large traveling exhibition the museum was sponsoring.

This was an important turning point in Cannon's life, and he was pleased with the museum's recognition of the importance of his art.

While he had sold various works to the Oklahoma Indian Arts and Crafts Cooperative, located in the museum, since the age of sixteen, he had not previously been asked to participate in a museum exhibition. In February 1969, *Eagle Man Receives a Vision*, one of Cannon's three commissioned works, and a text panel devoted to Cannon, were included in the SPIM's "Contemporary Southern Plains Indian Art" exhibition. This exhibition premiered at the Oklahoma Art Center in Oklahoma City, and toured for over three years.

Recognizing Cannon's remarkable talent, the SPIM offered Cannon, upon his return to the United States, his first one-man exhibition. Having been influenced during his youth by the Indian art and artists in the Anadarko area, including the collections of the SPIM, Cannon was very committed to having a show at the museum. In letters written to Curator Rosemary Ellison in 1970, Cannon described the works he would provide for the exhibit.

*Mine Eyes
Have Seen
The Glory,
1971*

*Cross the
Powder and
It Is War!
1970*

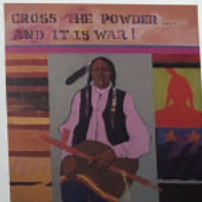
While in Santa Fe, Cannon's work concentrated on "Indian" subjects and traditions, which was not uncommon. His work, however, also uniquely incorporated modern themes and issues. While vividly adapting mainstream 20th century art styles to Indian images, he experimented with flat and intense color, dynamic composition, decorative motifs, and themes of intellect and social conscience. His work evolved into truly groundbreaking art as it made passionate, and often humorous and political, statements about being an American Indian in the 20th century. In doing so, he has been credited with the introduction of "Pop" Indian painting, incorporating words and multiple images on canvases.

In 1966, Cannon received a scholarship to study at the San Francisco Art Institute. After only two months at the Institute, he left to follow the Kiowa warrior tradition by enlisting in the United States Army to serve his country in the Vietnam War. As a member of the 101st Air Cavalry, he earned two Bronze Stars and two citations of meritorious achievement.

"Contemporary-Indian painting is an ever-expanding field full of infinite directions and countless rewards and dreams. In these few works I have tried to align myself along the lines and codes of my ethnic background. I have not shut out my tradition nor have I attempted to sacrifice or negate the traditional idiom from where I started."

The SPIM exhibition, "Paintings and Graphics by T. C. Cannon," opened in 1971, while Cannon was attending Central State University in Edmond, Oklahoma. The exposure provided widespread publicity for Cannon and his work and introduced him to a host of national and international markets. The accompanying exhibition brochure, includes the following statement.

"My finished works are the aftermath of a loving struggle with brush and surface - a heated exchange of ideas and a rendezvous of fact and visions, placed side by side, comprise a view of man from a vantage point that few of us have tried to induce so far."





Tommy Wayne Cannon was born on September 27, 1946 in Lawton, Oklahoma, to Mamie and Walter Cannon. Caddo and Kiowa, and given the Kiowa name Pai-doung-u-day, meaning "Standing in the Sun." For the majority of his youth, Cannon resided within the rural counties of Kiowa and Caddo, before his family relocated to Anadarko. He later attended school in Gracemont, Oklahoma.

In 1964, Cannon enrolled in the newly established Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico, under the leadership of Art Director Lloyd Kiva New; then Commissioner of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, and later Chairman of the Board. It was in this same year that Cannon adopted the name T. C. Cannon, and began to thrive in his new environment, to challenge the parameters of traditional "Indian" art, and to influence an entire generation of artists.

Who Shot
the Arrow
Who Killed
the Sparrow?
1970



When It's Peach
Pickin' Time in
Georgia, It's
Apple Pickin'
Time in the BIA.
1975

Portrait of
T.C. Cannon
Painting.

Front Cover:
Andrew Myrick-
Let Em Eat
Grass.
1970



Cannon's third exhibition with the SPIM, "Contemporary Southern Plains Indian Painting," opened at the museum in July 1972, and toured until 1974. The cover of the exhibition catalog featured Cannon's *When It's Peach Pickin' Time in Georgia, It's Apple Pickin' Time in the BIA*, and the show featured outstanding works by Cannon and other talented Oklahoma Indian artists.

While in the forefront of the contemporary American Indian art movement, Cannon's life was abruptly ended on May 8, 1978, at the age of 31, in a car accident near Santa Fe, New Mexico. Cannon left behind a legacy of an artist with unprecedented talent and progressive social consciousness, who rose above the boundaries of traditional American Indian art through his strong reflective style. Cannon's work challenged the existing attitudes towards not only American Indian art, but also American Indians, and continues to influence contemporary Indian and non-Indian artists.

The SPIM remains proud of its role in helping to launch the career of Cannon, known as one of the leading artists in the "New Indian Art Movement."

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U.S. Department of the Interior
Indian Arts and Crafts Board

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