

## Glossary

### Color Field/Gestural Painting

Students Earl Eder (Yanktonai Sioux) and Hank Gobin (Tulalip/Snohomish) created paintings partly inspired by Color Field, a style characterized by large fields of color, and gestural abstraction, a painting style where paint is spontaneously applied. Unlike Abstract Expressionist painters such as Mark Rothko or Barnett Newman, who expressed abstract ideas of Native influences in their works, Eder and Gobin often directly referenced Native American concepts and designs. Eder attended IAIA from 1962 to 1965. In an early student quote Eder stated, "...I find myself in two cultures; in this I find my art. I try to incorporate different old Sioux artifacts and things that the Indian valued, into new modern ideas. Also, I draw sources from poetry, myths, and Indian folklore. Now being exposed to new modern concepts I can express myself. As a contemporary painter I feel this is a new moving type of Indian Art."<sup>1</sup>

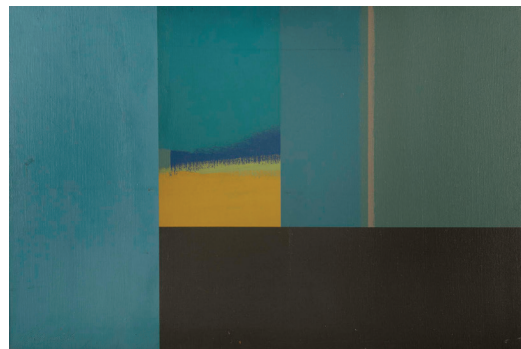


Eder's *Forms in Beadwork* conveys a personal, yet unique influence from his Northern Plains heritage. Another artist, Henry Hank Gobin (Tulalip/Snohomish), who traveled from Washington state to attend IAIA from 1962 to 1965, created paintings and works on paper using Northwest Coast imagery from a personal perception. In Gobin's 1966 painting *Northwest Design*, the image used is reminiscent of the often-stylized, highly executed Native designs of the Northwest Coast. However, this piece is rendered less precisely and makes use of its large planes of color with a subtle hand-written poem on the image, "Two Faces to his eyes, And A Tear Well Fall...To Make Way

For the Hands of Happiness, A Road For him to Follow This Way Too!"<sup>2</sup> Both artists embraced art influences from their own heritage and from modern art movements, which allowed them to liberate themselves from stereotypical expectations regarding Native art and to self-express themselves as modern and Native in the twentieth century.

### Hard-edge Painting

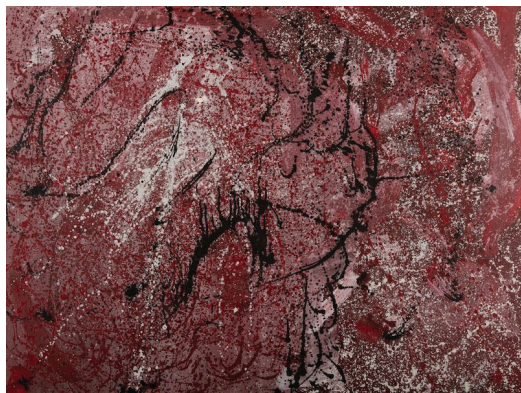
Hard-edge painting is closely related to Color Field painting; however, unlike the more painterly Color Field works, Hard-edge is known for its impersonal execution and smooth surface planes. Of the most notable IAIA instructors who worked in this style is Neil Parsons (Piikani), who taught painting from 1964 to 1967 after completing his MFA in painting at Montana State University. Parsons was about twenty-six years old at the time and was fascinated with the work of Hard-edge painter Kenneth Noland.<sup>3</sup> Parsons took to this style to try to incorporate parfleche painting into large-scale contemporary works. He also experimented with abstracting the New Mexico landscape, in particular Taos Pueblo. For example, *Pueblo Form #2* is an abstracted reference to the blue doors, dark blue mountains, yellow grass, and turquoise skies of Taos and Taos Pueblo.



Of the student artists, Redstar Price (formerly Connie Red Star Price) (Crow), who attended the IAIA from 1964 to 1968, painted exclusively in the Hard-edge style. Her interest and talent for painting was observed very early by her instructors, Scholder and Parsons, who broke from customs that forced students to first learn perspective and realism, acknowledging students who showed an aptitude for abstraction. These students were allowed to bypass introductory training to an advanced level in the studio arts where the instructor's encouraged self-discovery and experimentation. Redstar Price states, "I (had) just started (at IAIA), Fritz (Scholder) taught advanced painting where students had their own studios/cubicles. Parsons brought Fritz to look at my work and then moved me to Fritz's advanced painting class."<sup>4</sup> Redstar Price combines the geometric designs of her Absolooka (Crow) heritage into her canvases. Using the clean, flat lines and bold colors of the distinctive graphic style of Crow designs (also characteristic of Hard-edge painting), Redstar Price stated that "parfleche designs just came to her," and that she later learned that her great-grandmother did parfleche designs.<sup>5</sup> Her color palette often reflected more earthy colors, which she mixed herself.

### Action Painting

Action painting (or gestural abstraction) was a style that emphasized the energy of the painter's mark. Inspired by the physical activity of Abstract Expressionism's new techniques of applying paint, including dripping, throwing, and squirting, Native artists such as Alice (Ackley) Loiselle (Chippewa, IAIA 1967-1969) approached their canvases in a direct, intuitive, and spontaneous way. Loiselle attended IAIA in the post-graduate studies program right after



graduating high school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She had contracted polio at a young age; however, this did not debilitate her. She was one of the few female artists who experimented with painting, and later was among a few women artists to work on large canvases.

Experimentation was a common element of most of these students' early work. As a result, the paintings and drawings are very intense, and several of the works seem to express the artists' personal emotions. A painterly quality and a rough-and-ready look is part of the intentional aesthetic and reflects the artists' interest in experimentation with the material properties of their chosen media.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Eder, Earl, *American Indian Performing Arts Exhibition*, page 28, IAIA Artist File, IAIA Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Hank Gobin used unconventional spelling in his inscription. The text should read “Two Faces to His Eyes, And A Tear Will Fall... To Make Way for the Hands of Happiness, A Road for Him to Follow This Way Too!”

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Noland (American, 1924–2010) was best known for his Hard-edge, Color Field works featuring symmetrical images of circles, chevrons, and stripes. He also pioneered the use of shaped canvases.

<sup>4</sup> Redstar Price, in discussion with the author, 2016, notes in the Institute of American Indian Arts Museum Collection Object Records, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

<sup>5</sup> Parfleche designs come from rawhide containers created by Plains tribes, often featuring geometric designs; in the Crow tradition only the women were taught the designs and could paint them.