

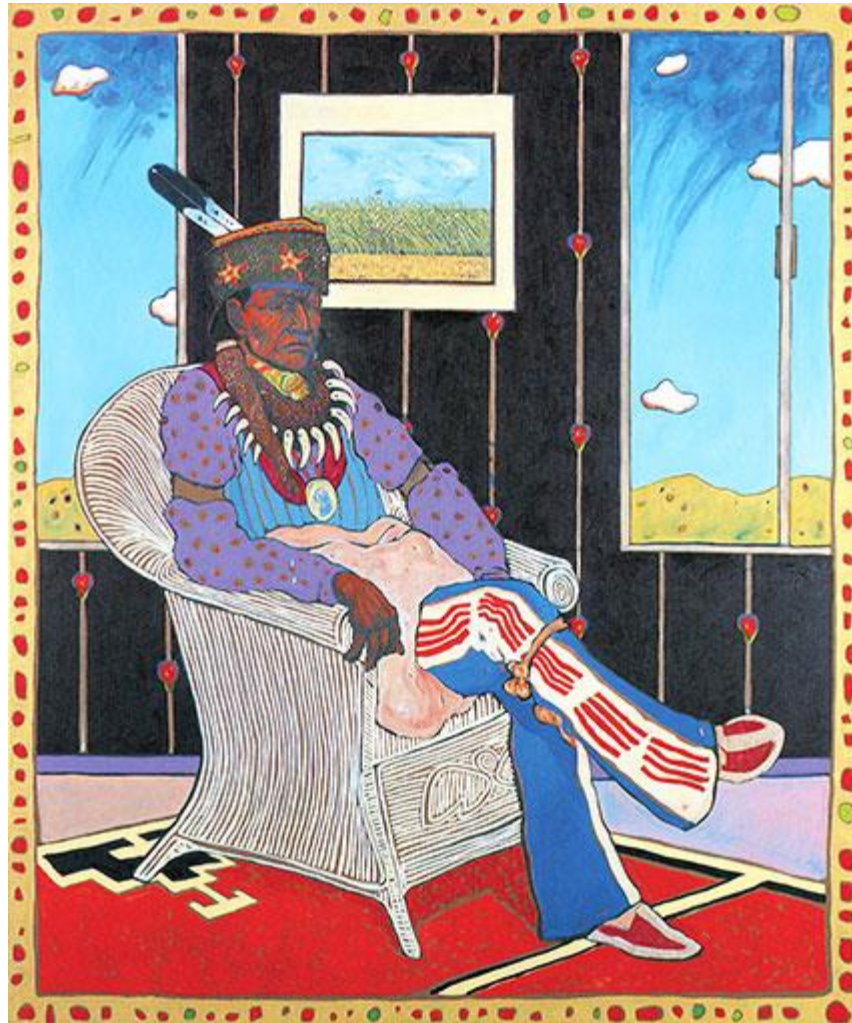
Indeterminate Beauty—T.C. Cannon

Indeterminate Beauty presents a brief yet bold selection of works by influential Kiowa/Caddo artist T.C. Cannon (1946-1978). His artistic motivations were ignited by the turbulent sociopolitical atmosphere of America during the mid-20th century. As the social climate erupted, Cannon enrolled at the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1964. His work in figuration critically engaged the distortions of Native American history and the misrepresentation of Indigeneity in visual culture, juxtaposed with lively, saturated colors, patterns and textures. Cannon's influences were multifaceted and ever changing—he was inspired by the Post-Impressionists, Pop Art and popular culture. Cannon forged a reputation that has since established him as an artist who traversed borders and refused to define his work and himself within a static, determinate identity.

The exhibition features a lesser-known work, *Moon and Stars over Taos*, as well as five woodcut prints that highlight the breadth of Cannon's oeuvre. These works emphasize Cannon's passion to expand into new media during the later years of his life. The woodcut prints were produced between 1975 and 1979 in collaboration with Japanese engraver Master Maeda and printer Master Uchikawa, adapting five of Cannon's original paintings to woodcut prints. The woodcuts utilize metallic gold ink, resulting in an extraordinary depth and richness. *Collector #5* and *Hopi with Manta* bear T.C. Cannon's signature, while *Woman at Window*, *Two Guns Arikara* and *His Hair Flows Like a River* are stamped with Cannon's signature and also bear the signature of Walter Cannon, who officiated the prints after his son's death in May 1978.

Edited by Deb Paddison, 3/28/23

Collector #5, 1977
Woodcut print, 56/200



Collector #5 references a photographic portrait of Chief Petaleshoro of the Skidi Pawnee Nation, Wolf Clan, taken by Julian Vannerson and Samuel A. Cohner in 1858. *Collector #5* disrupts the legacy of staid photographic portraits of Native dignitaries popularized in the 19th and 20th centuries with vibrancy and contemporaneous references to Western and Native American art. Cannon illustrates a posed figure in the foreground adorned with rich textiles and cultural regalia. The interior room is carefully curated with a Navajo textile and a Victorian-era white wicker chair. The landscape breaks through the large windows, imposing upon *Wheatfield with Partridge* (1887) by Vincent van Gogh, the painting just above the figure's head.



Man and Chief, Petalesharo, 1797-1858. Chief, Skidi Pawnee Nation, Wolf Clan. Portrait by Julian Vannerson and Samuel A. Cohner, 1858. Photo courtesy of Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 2004.1.125.26.

Hopi with Manta, 1977
Woodcut print, 56/200



Hopi with Manta depicts a Hopi woman wearing her hair fashioned in a young maiden's hairstyle also known as "squash blossom whorls" or "butterfly whorls." Cannon builds the composition with layers of texture through the yellow and white stripes in the background and the figure's shawl. The vertical border on either side of the figure breaks the consistent horizontality with amorphous red forms on top of a rich gold ground.

Woman at Window, 1977
Woodcut print, 56/200

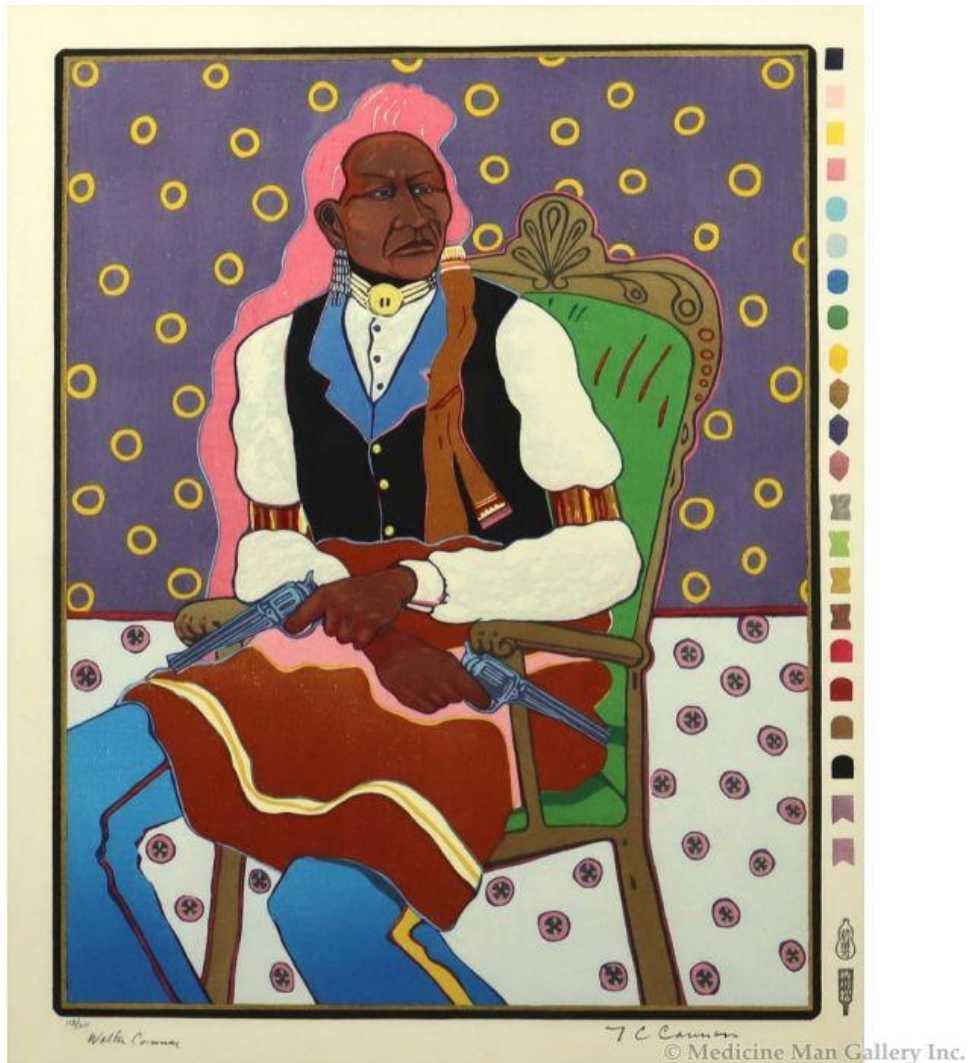


Woman at Window illustrates a Native woman deliberately confronting the objectifying gaze of the viewer. The perimeter of her face is adorned with red paint. In Northern Plains cultures, the use of red paint is a symbol of strength and is associated with ceremony and religious practices. The red color carries onto her Northern Plains-style dress decorated with stars, dots, and a crucifix. Cannon engaged in a variety of artistic practices, including poetry and songwriting. Many of his works are paired with prose, including this one. In the poem here, what do think the relationship is between the figure and the artist? Are there dynamics of power present between the sitter, the artist and the viewer?

Woman at Window

isn't it just too damn surreal, dear lady?
to sit in this studio,
of the hairy faced white man,
of the one who catches the shadows on the glass?
"i feel much too afraid to smile."

Two Guns Arikara, 1977
Woodcut print, 56/200



Two Guns Arikara carries severity depicted on the furrowed brow and the two blue pistols held lightly, crossed over the figure's lap. Cannon layers two polka-dot fields in the background against the burnt-orange blanket and the ornate forest-green Victorian chair. The figure's composure disturbs the lively atmosphere. Cannon served in the Vietnam War from 1967 to 1968 and reflects upon the historical and ongoing relationship between imperial powers and Native communities.

His Hair Flows Like a River, 1977
Woodcut print, 56/200



His Hair Flows Like a River is a close-up portrait with the figure posed in profile with red and white paint adorning his face. He is seen in a 19th century-style waistcoat with blue lapels and gold trim. The look is further styled with a white hornpipe choker and a tied floral scarf. A wolf skin drapes down the back of the figure's body, concealing his flowing purple hair. Portrait photography in the 19th century produced highly staged ethnographic imaginings of Indigeneity that would become instilled in the American consciousness. Is Cannon referencing the importance of the wolf skin in Native American hunting practices? Or has it become a stereotypical symbol associated with Indigeneity that has disseminated across visual culture?

Moon and Stars over Taos, 1974
Acrylic and metallic paint on paper



Moon and Stars over Taos portrays a scene in Taos, New Mexico. The darkened, dotted sky appears luminously over two figures wrapped tightly in striped blankets and a palette of purple and silver suggest a cool winter evening. The outline of the pueblo is captured in the distance, with glowing yellow light on the façade. This work on paper emerges from a lesser-known body of Cannon's work in which he explored minimal compositions on colored paper with integrations of gold and silver metallic color.

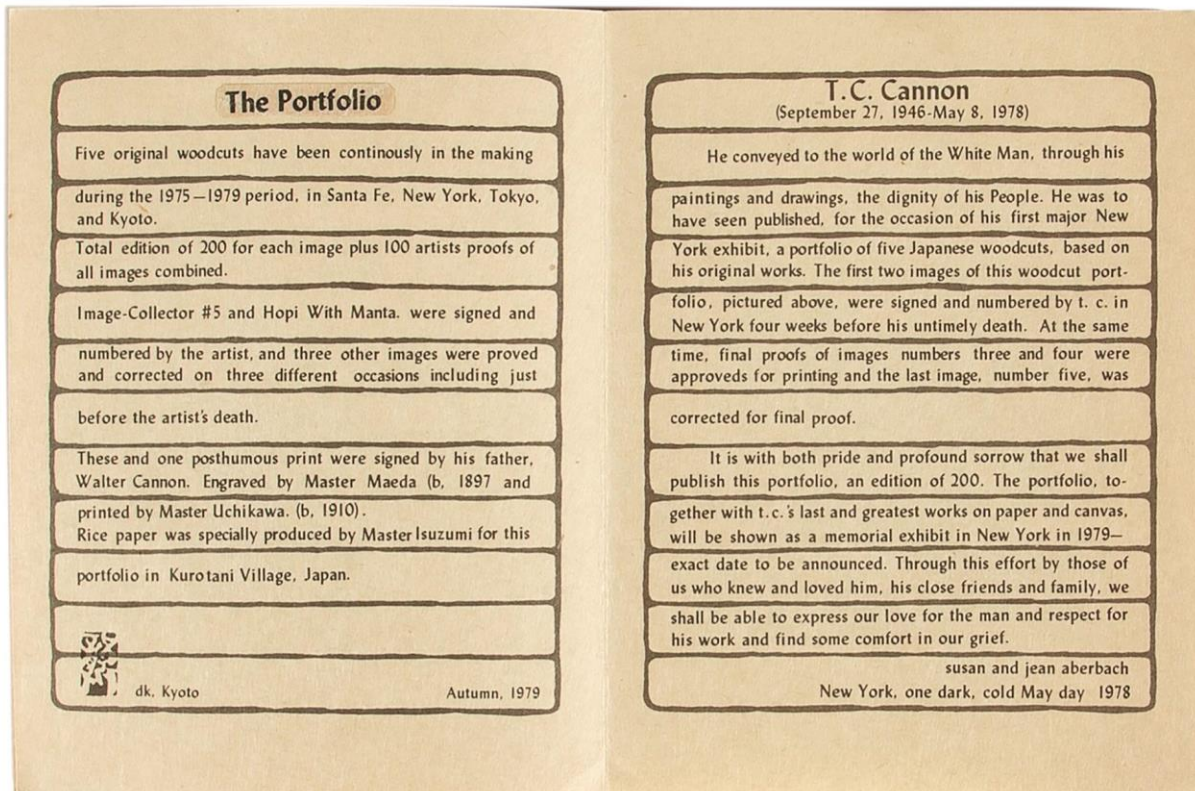
Cannon captures the grandeur of the New Mexico sky in this poetic reflection:

if you look close
you'll see that moons
ride on carpets like glass and ice,

ride on moon beams,
looking closely you'll see yourself a
part
of a moon adventure
riding thru asteroids and
likewise
carpet weaver, dreams
out there,
out there,
where,
none before have dared venture
out there beyond mortal gentleness,
oh yes,
beyond gentleness of a Taos summer
and soft feathered Santa Fe autumn.

if you look close
you'll see yourself
wishin and thinkin about gliding moons
and dancing stars
out there
beyond mortal adventures
and lastly above you and yourself.

Portraits of the Brave Heart People, 1979
Book, edition of 200



Joachim “Jean” Aberbach and his wife Susan opened their New York gallery Aberbach Fine Art in 1973. Aberbach became T.C. Cannon’s gallerist and major collector. The gallery was preparing for a solo exhibition featuring works by Cannon in October 1978; however, he passed away in May 1978, five months before the opening. This portfolio was published in conjunction with that exhibition, renamed *T.C. Cannon: A Memorial Exhibition*, at Aberbach Fine Art in December 1979.