

Library

NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
WASHINGTON, D. C.

FOR RELEASE: Sunday Papers,
November 8.

"CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN INDIAN PAINTING"
EXHIBITION TO OPEN NOVEMBER 8
AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, November 7: David E. Finley, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announces the opening of an exhibition of Contemporary American Indian Painting at the National Gallery on Sunday, November 8th at 2 o'clock, to continue through December 6th.

The exhibition, which includes 115 paintings by 59 American Indian artists, is the most comprehensive showing of its kind ever to be held in the eastern United States. It has been organized with the cooperation of Miss Dorothy Dunn, Founder of the Department of Painting, United States Indian School, Santa Fe, New Mexico, who has written the introduction to the catalogue.

National Gallery of Art

Miss Dunn writes that "the paintings in this exhibition by artists of the Southwestern, Plains, and Woodland Indian tribes of the United States are examples of the Modern School of American Indian painting. Although contemporary in general appearance and individually inventive, these works derive from the oldest painting traditions in America... their predominant style — linear pattern painted in definite areas of flat, opaque water color — has been characteristic of American Indian painting for centuries."

The Southwestern paintings include works of the Pueblo, Navaho, and Apache artists of New Mexico and Arizona. Pueblo subjects include scenes of hunting and occupations of field and home, as well as graphic representations of supernatural beings and ceremonial dances. The Navaho offer adaptations of their classic sandpainting designs and glimpses of their great healing ceremonial, the Yeibičai. The Apache, direct and dynamic in their painting as in their spectacular dances, portray warriors, rituals, and the formidable guardians of the springs — the "Devil," "Crown," or "Fire Dancers."

Paintings of the Plains artists are represented by works of the Sioux, Kiowà, Comanche, and Cheyenne and are frequently reminiscent of the virile paintings done on

National Gallery of Art

buffalo hides in the 19th century — spirited scenes of horsemen in contest or ceremony, depictions of various phases of the animal Sun Dance, and symbolic emblems of Plains mythology.

Woodland artists of such tribes as the Cherokee, Creek, and Onandaga are the most recent exponents of the Modern School. Their paintings usually emphasize decorative qualities, with the symmetry, stylization, and color so highly developed by the Woodland craftsmen.

"The artists who made these paintings," Miss Dunn points out, "are not the Indians popularly known through historical account and sentimental folklore. Neither are they the Indians of anthropological record. Most of them have been well educated in American schools and colleges. Very few have taken regular art courses, although the majority have participated in creative Indian art developments in an Indian school." Some artists have chosen to remain on the tribal reservations while others move in the general stream of American life, retaining at the same time a knowledge and appreciation of their distinctive cultural heritage. They offer to American art contributions that are uniquely their own and which would otherwise be lost forever.

The following private collectors and museums have

National Gallery of Art

lent paintings from their collections: Mr. and Mrs. William Leslie Van Ness Denman, San Francisco; Mrs. Charles H. Dietrich, Santa Fe, New Mexico; Miss Dorothy Dunn, State College, New Mexico; Mr. and Mrs. Charles de Young Elkus, San Francisco; Mr. David E. Finley, Washington; Mrs. Pablita Velarde Hardin, Albuquerque, New Mexico; Dr. Max Kramer, State College, New Mexico; Mr. Frank Patania, Santa Fe, New Mexico; The Millicent A. Rogers Collection, Taos, New Mexico; Mr. Andrew Tsahnahjinnie, Scottsdale, Arizona; Indian Arts Fund, Santa Fe, New Mexico; Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe, New Mexico; The Philbrook Art Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma; and the Southwest Museum, Los Angeles.

† End