

# Oscar Howe: His Impact and Legacy

Oscar Howe's (Yanktonai Dakota) influence in the Native American art world is both profound and enduring. Throughout his own career as an artist, he pushed the boundaries of what was defined as "Indian Art," incorporating new techniques and elements of abstraction that had not been seen before in Native American art. As both an artist and educator, Howe was in a unique position to inspire future generations of young artists and influence the direction of Native American art.

An important milestone in Howe's career came in 1957, when he joined the faculty of the University of South Dakota as an Assistant Professor of Art. Howe would spend the next 25 years at the University of South Dakota. During his time at the University, Oscar Howe founded a summer institute, with the goal of providing mentorship and guidance for young Native American artists. Among his students first students were Arthur Amiotte, Donald Montileaux, Herman Red Elk, and Robert Penn. Although the Institute entered a hiatus with Howe's declining health, it was revived by Robert Penn. Oscar Howe's work continues to educate and inspire future generations of young artists to this day. Many of the artists mentored by Howe in the early years of the Institute have returned later as instructors themselves, carrying on the educational tradition of Oscar Howe.

In addition to those artists who studied directly under Howe, numerous other artists have been influenced by his work. Oscar Howe was a prolific artist, producing hundreds of works during his lifetime that were exhibited throughout South Dakota. This gave many aspiring artists the opportunity to see his work. Just as Oscar Howe developed his own unique style over the course of his career, the artists featured in this exhibition have explored innovative styles and techniques. The pioneering work of Oscar Howe has clearly left its legacy on several generations of Native artists.



Donald Montileaux, Oglala Lakota, *Medicine Man*, ©1970



Oscar Howe, Yankton Sioux (Yanktonai), *Council*, ©1950

Words of Oscar Howe:

*"What I hope I have done through my art is to visually represent and portray those forces that brought about change but also that people made positive changes, they adapted yes, but in addition they managed to preserve the ancient and profound beliefs."*