

George F. Thompson Publishing, L.L.C.
217 Oak Ridge Circle
Staunton, VA 24401-3511, U.S.A.
www.gftbooks.com

BOOK INFORMATION SHEET (12.22.20)

Author: Dwayne Wilcox

Editor: Karen Miller Nearburg

Title: *Visual/Language*

Subtitle: *The Ledger Drawings of Dwayne Wilcox*

Contributor: edited and introduced by Karen Miller Nearburg

Partner: Published in association with the Center for the Study of Place

Book pages: 136

Number and type of illustrations: 64 illustrations as follows: 53 color ledger drawings by the author, 3 historic ledger drawings, 7 historic black-and-white family photographs, and 1 color catalog cover

Trim size: 11.0" x 9.0"

List price: \$40.00

Discount: Trade

ISBN (book): 978-1-938086-84-7

ISBNs (electronic): TC

Edition: Hardcover

E-book? Yes.

Interactive e-book? N.A.

Jacket: No: using a belly flap insert instead

Edition size: 1,000

Publication date: 31 May 2021

Advances due: 30 April 2021

To warehouse: 15 May 2021

Printed in: Singapore

Distributor: Casemate/IPM

Bookstore categories (list three): Art/Native American Studies

Audience: Those who admire or collect Native American ledger art (and who follow Dwayne Wilcox's career) will flock to this book, as will anyone interested in contemporary Native American art, culture, and humor.

Selling points (list three): (1) Ledger art is very popular, and there is no more acclaimed contemporary ledger artist than Dwayne Wilcox whose 53 drawings from this book were purchased by Yale University; (2) anyone interested in contemporary understandings of Lakota and Native art, culture, and life; (3) readers who appreciate humor as rendered in art.

Tagline: The first book to feature Dwayne Wilcox’s incredible ledger drawings of Native life.

Description of the work:

Native American ledger art grew out of the Plains Indian tradition of recording and chronicling through art important tribal events, among them images of war and hunting, that would adorn tipis and animal hides. These were seen as pivotal historical markers.

But Native life on the Great Plains underwent tremendous change following the American Civil War, when the American conquest of the West was in full gear. In just a few decades, access to the hides of diminishing herds of bison, antelope, deer, sheep, and elk became more difficult and eventually impossible with reservation life. So Native people creatively turned to the easily available ledger books of settlers, traders, and military men for their new canvases.

The ledger art drawings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are thus revered today for their depiction of Native life during the difficult transition from freedom on the Plains to life on the reservation. Ledger drawings became an even more important way for Native artists not only to preserve tribal events, but to serve as a new kind of personal socio-political expression.

Dwayne Wilcox, who grew up on the Pine Ridge Reservation and is a member of the Oglala Lakota Nation, became interested in ledger art at an early age. He was influenced by the work of Lakota ledger artists such as Amos Bad Heart Bull (1869-1913), but he always sought to defy stereotypical notions and perceptions of Native life and culture and create his own artistic vision. Dwayne eventually focused on humor as *his* way to comment on the objectification of Native Americans.

Skilled as an artist beyond measure, Dwayne’s ledger art drawings win major prizes and are sought by museums and collectors who see in him a true artist. In 2020, all of Dwayne’s drawings from *Visual/Language* were purchased by Yale University’s Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Visual/Language: The Ledger Drawings of Dwayne Wilcox is a collaborative effort with curator Karen Miller Nearburg, who provides an enlightening introduction to Lakota ledger art and Dwayne’s journey as a Native artist. As she writes: “The ‘real art’ of Dwayne Wilcox reveals his life experiences as a window into life on the Pine Ridge Reservation.”

Blurbs:

“Like William Hogarth or Bill Mauldin, Dwayne Wilcox depicts personal experience in ways that broaden and reshape our understanding of the world we share. That Dwayne is Lakota means everything and nothing. Funny, poignant, or pointed, his ledger drawings invite us to enter his life and consider the challenges, appreciate the humor, and respect the enduring presence of Lakota people in twenty-first century America.”

—George Miles, William Robertson Coe Curator of the Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University

“Dwayne Wilcox’s ledger drawings are compelling, beautifully executed, and laugh-out-loud humorous in the way they poke fun at both white and Native cultures. Beneath the initial layer of an amusing story, however, is a complex world drawn from personal experience and his Lakota culture’s deep history. In *Visual/Language*, Wilcox provides a resolved, well-rounded narrative that has much to say about life in today’s Native world.”

—Stephen Glueckert, Senior Curator Emeritus, Missoula Art Museum

“Dwayne Wilcox’s *Visual/Language* has a level of respect for his subjects: his own Lakota people. He works tirelessly to be true to the challenges of reservation life while supporting cultural traditions, defending a way of life yet being honest throughout with the reality that none of us are perfect. We are all struggling along life’s journey. The drawing style Dwayne uses intentionally removes individuality. At the same time his captions point out social significance while his personal narrative offers an unfolding life story, acknowledging his own vulnerability. At each step, Dwayne balances the desire to be honest and respectful of us all, both Native and non-Native, forgiving our flaws, if he even sees them as flaws rather than the reality of us all trying to learn the lessons needed on our journey. He does so pointedly, calling out actions yet without any individual being blamed. Dwayne’s skillful use of direct Lakota humor—cutting-edge, burst-out-loud-laughing humor—is filled with compassion for the Lakota people and all First Nation’s people in their struggle to hold onto cultural beliefs amidst a dominating society surrounding them and attempting to stifle their ways relentlessly for hundreds of years now at every turn.

“Dwayne’s use of the Lakota tradition of ledger art to tell his stories could not be more fitting. The ledger art tradition itself grew from the early days of Indian reservations being used to control his Native people. As the white people overseeing the reservation’s allotment of goods filled their ledger books, they cast them aside to the Native artists, the visual storytellers, who sadly had been allocated to live a restricted lifestyle in their own land where they then had no access to the more traditional animal hides to paint their visual narratives on. Earlier the hides were gathered from the tribe’s hunting and gathering harvest. As with all aspects of life, the animals hunted were used with every portion having a purpose, with nothing being cast aside in waste. This was done always in respect, honor, and gratitude for all life and the sacrifices made from one life form to another in contribution to the sacred circle of existence.

“Dwayne’s masterful storytelling and humility are a generous offering to all. Any reader will have the opportunity to be reminded of the value of all living things within this work while laughing hard and at times crying equally as hard. I am grateful to have been introduced to Dwayne and his work many years ago. Through it he has continually reminded me of what around us is truly worthy of valuing. This book and the work within it should be shared with people from all walks of life.”

—John Willis, author of *Views from the Reservation: A New Edition* and *Mni Wiconi / Water Is Life: Honoring*

the Water Protectors at Standing Rock and Everywhere in the Ongoing Struggle for Indigenous Sovereignty

[TC]

—Jonathan Bachin, Director Emeritus, Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian

About the Author:

Dwayne Wilcox was born in 1957 in Kadoka, South Dakota, grew up on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, and is a member of the Oglala Lakota Nation. He has been a full-time artist since 1987 but a life-long producer of art. Wilcox's work has been widely exhibited and is in the collections of institutions throughout the United States, including the Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian, Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College, Peabody Museum at Harvard University, Museum of Nebraska Art, Charles M. Russell Museum, and National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum. And all 53 drawings from *Visual/Language* were purchased by Yale University. His drawings have received numerous awards from the Santa Fe Indian Market, Heard Museum's Indian Art Market, and South Dakota Governor's Award in the Art for Distinction in Creative Achievement, and he has received a Joan Mitchell Foundation Fellowship and a Bush Artist Fellowship. He resides in Rapid City, South Dakota.

About the Editor:

Karen Miller Nearburg was born in 1960 and grew up in Hanover, New Hampshire. She earned her B.A. in fine arts and child development from Tufts University, her Ed.M. from Harvard University, and her M.A. in art history from the University of Maryland, College Park. Karen spent 15 years in Alaska and wrote her M.A. thesis on the work of contemporary Inupiat sculptor Susie Qimmiqsak Bevins. Since then, she has worked in museums and galleries and was Assistant Curator at the Hood Museum at Dartmouth College, where she curated *Contemporary Native American Ledger Art: Drawing on Tradition* (2010), and coordinated *Native American Ledger Drawings from the Hood Museum of Art: The Mark Lansburgh Collection* (2010), as well as *Native American Art at Dartmouth: Highlights from the Hood Museum of Art* (2011–2012). In 2019, she also curated *Dwayne Wilcox: Visual/Language* at the Museum of Contemporary Native Art at the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe, among other exhibitions. She resides in Dallas, Texas.