

George Morrison's Surrealism

W. Jackson Rushing III
University of Oklahoma

The art historical analysis of the influence of so-called primitive art on modernism in general and on Surrealism in particular is well established. And if it is not exactly a closed sequence in the Kublerian sense, for some readers at least it may lack the critical urgency it once had.¹ Less well known or understood in some quarters is the history of the conscious absorption and subsequent transformation of modernist principles and aesthetic strategies by indigenous artists. While this was a global phenomenon, my training and interests have been focused on modern and contemporary indigenous art produced in the United States and Canada. In this instance I am concerned with Surrealism in particular.

To the best of my knowledge, the first Native American artist to respond to Surrealism was the celebrated Chippewa modernist George Morrison, who was born in 1919 in Chippewa City, a now vanished Indian fishing village along the north shore of Lake Superior.² After a long and fruitful career as a teacher and practicing artist, he died in 2000 at Red Rock, the home and studio he and his second wife, the artist Hazel Belvo, built on the Grand Portage Reservation, overlooking the lake. As a child he spoke only his Native language until he began grade school at age six. During a yearlong recovery from hip surgery while attending an Indian boarding school in his youth, he took up reading, drawing, and carving, and was supported subsequently by appreciative teachers.³ After graduating from high school, he attended the Minneapolis School of Art (now the Minneapolis College of Art and Design) on a scholarship from 1938-1943, where he began his career making Regionalist images, as did both Allan Houser (Chiricahua Apache) and Jackson Pollock. In 1941, however, Morrison was impressed with a Pablo Picasso

W. Jackson Rushing III: jackson_rushing@ou.edu

Copyright © 2013 (W. Jackson Rushing III). Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 Unported License. Available at <http://jsa.asu.edu/>

retrospective at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts; he later recalled that he “had a tendency to like more modern concepts.”⁴

From 1943 to 1946 Morrison studied at the Art Students League (hereafter, ASL) in New York City, where his “conversion” to a modernism that synthesized Cubism, Expressionism, and Surrealism was swift and complete. He was also aware of the influence of non-Western traditions on modernist primitivism, recalling with specificity the impact of African, Polynesian, Eskimo, and American Indian art on “modern painters, particularly the cubists.”⁵ His fellow students at the ASL included Peter Busa and Helen DeMott, who formed part of New York’s so-called Indian Space Painters, a group of White artists who were quite clear about their debt to Native American forms, images, and plastic principles.⁶ But we see precious little overt primitivism of the tribal kind in Morrison’s own work in this period. With a couple of notable exceptions, he didn’t use *overtly* totemic forms for decades; and yet, images or figures didn’t need a direct tribal correspondence in order for him to conceive of them as totemic. In 1960, looking back on the 1940s, he stated that the “content, stemming from my initial stimulus” included “totemic images of animate objects.”⁷ Even so, the rarity of primitivist imagery in his work testifies to the fact that Morrison was not interested in either veristic or ethnographic Surrealism. He identified instead with the productive radicality of Surrealism’s creative principles, especially its idea of creating out of the subconscious via psychic automatism and frottage. For example, expressionist figuration and linear energy are especially intriguing in *Three Figures* (1945, Fig. 1), one of several psychologically charged pictures about a wartime love triangle in which he was involved. Morrison remembered that the work emerged out of the process of drawing and painting, and that “it was all very subconscious,” with a “dreamlike Surrealism creeping in.”⁸ Similarly, an untitled ink on paper drawing from 1945 (Fig. 2) reveals just how thoroughly he understood the strain of Surrealism issuing from André Masson, Joan Miró, and Arshile Gorky. Transparent washes of ink generate an atmospheric chiaroscuro, which is layered over with intensely crosshatched circular forms implying weight and density. We also see aquatic ribbons and filaments, a pictographic figure with upraised arms in the top center and a wine cup, perhaps, at top left. Characterized by intuitive freedom and aesthetic resolution, it represents a sophisticated engagement with abstract Surrealism. Morrison’s response to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, *Dream of Calamity* (1945), shown in the Walker Art Center’s First Biennial Exhibition in 1947, is similarly *au courant* in terms of international style. Indeed, during the war years Morrison haunted the 57th Street galleries, where he encountered the Surrealism and Expressionism of the émigré artists he admired.⁹



Fig. 1. George Morrison, *Three Figures*, 1945, gouache, ink, and pencil on paper, 11 3/8 x 8 1/2 in. Collection Minnesota Museum of American Art, gift of George Morrison

Like his friend the Dutch-born American Abstract Expressionist Willem de Kooning, Morrison had his first solo show in Manhattan in 1948, which included *Whalebone* (1948), a compelling and intriguing still life. As an adolescent artist exploring the interstitial zone between woodland and water, Morrison had harvested found objects along the shoreline of Lake Superior, including driftwood, bones, and other organic materials, so he accepted easily the Surrealist practice of cognitively



Fig. 2. George Morrison, *Untitled*, 1945, ink on paper, 7 5/8 x 5 in. Collection Dr. Robert and Frances Leff

dissonant juxtapositions. Thus *Whalebone*, whose intense color remains as fresh and vivid as the day it was made, is perhaps, with the exception of his *Starfish* (c. 1943-45), the only School-of-Paris-style still life in captivity to feature whalebone. The wine bottle, the driftwood, and the whalebone—which reads as a sculptural *objet d'art*—are situated ambiguously in a cubist space generated by oil-rich, planar patches of color in the background.

From the mid-1940s onward, Morrison made numerous works on paper featuring surrealist landscapes that reflect an awareness of the art of both Arshile Gorky and Adolph Gottlieb. In later years he recalled that he felt “charged” being in New York in this transitional moment, when Cubism and Surrealism were shifting into Abstract Expressionism (as in Gottlieb’s work).¹⁰ His watercolor *Abstract Composition* is dated 1950, but in terms of form and content it clearly belongs to what Robert Rosenblum called the surrealist phase of Abstract Expressionism, or even better, what Lawrence Alloway called the “biomorphic ‘40s.”¹¹ According to Alloway, one of the primary sources for the importance of biomorphism in New York painting in the mid-‘40s (when Morrison was enrolled in the ASL) was the Surrealism of such artists as Masson and Miró. Biomorph art “emerged in New York,” Alloway wrote, “as the result of a cluster of ideas about nature, automatism... and the unconscious.”¹² The primacy for Morrison of these subjects, sources, and processes—that is, nature, the unconscious, and automatism, is demonstrated by his near constant reference to them over six decades in interviews, artist statements, and in his memoir, *Turning The Feather Around* (1998). The jam-packed (or “manic”) cluster of organic shapes in *Abstract Composition* is generated freely and then structured loosely by a linear web, evoking the vertical face of a rocky shoreline or the earth’s strata. Again, Alloway has observed, “Crowded and manic biomorphism is directly linked to automatism, which was cultivated by the Surrealists as a means of direct access to the Unconscious mind. The ideal of direct action was most clearly recognized in drawing...”¹³ And Morrison himself noted of this period in his work, “Surreal elements, images from the subconscious, began to appear in my drawings and paintings.”¹⁴ Vital, irregular, and elemental, *Abstract Composition*, with its pleasing interplay of colors, including lemon yellow, pale plum, and rusty brown, reminds us that modernist primitivism can be biological as well as tribal.

Morrison’s awareness of European modernism deepened when a Fulbright Fellowship in 1952-53 enabled him to study, work, and exhibit in Paris (at Galerie Jeanne Bucher) and in the south of France, where he made numerous small works on paper that often started with automatic drawing. He observed, however, that the work became “more formal in the end. Not haphazard; it’s all organized making little cubistic sections.”¹⁵ *Black and White Patterned Forms* (1952, Fig. 3),



Fig. 3. George Morrison, *Black and White Patterned Forms*, 1952, ink on paper, 10 ³/₄ x 8 ³/₈ in. Collection Minnesota Museum of American Art, gift of George Morrison

a synthetic cubist pen and ink drawing made in Paris, has a sharp, flat clarity that suggests a cognizance of Henri Matisse's cut outs (originally published in 1947), and of the Surrealists' fascination with the "decorative" patterns they admired in Oceanic relief sculpture.¹⁶ Overall, these images are abstract and play with positive and negative space in a provocative way, even as their flatness is akin to that of a decal. Stacked vertically, the configurations, especially the central one, hint at totemic art; they may reflect the inspiration modernist primitivism found in African sculpture. In this, *Black and White Patterned Forms* has a curated or collected quality,

and explains why we cannot identify any particular model, either ethnographic or modern, that it emulates specifically. Robert Goldwater, who authored the first scholarly study of modernist primitivism in 1938, discussed this phenomenon in terms of African art and the primitivist sculptures of Constantin Brancusi, and his conclusions are instructive in the context of Morrison's mysterious drawing.

According to Goldwater, an African sculpture might gather together in visual form the idea, notion, or memory of a human or divine ancestor or a god of some sort. Searching for a *single* discursive referent (narrative prompt for object- or image-making) is pointless because "these overlapping meanings inherent in the African sculpture exist simultaneously and thereby give the sculpture its total significance." Goldwater was convinced that Brancusi appreciated this "collecting of meanings [in an object], some of which can be determined because . . . they are the reason for its creation, whereas other meanings cannot be traced because they come into being with the fact of its creation."¹⁷ Thus although we can relate *Black and White Patterned Forms* indirectly to examples of African, Oceanic, and modern art, its overriding originality—the filtering of collected meanings through Morrison's consciousness—allows us to accept our inability to "pin down any precise formal derivation," even as we recognize the production of new meaning in its totality. To borrow from Goldwater, we understand *Black and White Patterned Forms* as a "symbolic object that is at once allusive and self-sufficient."¹⁸ Similarly, the curious menagerie of pictographs and pictorial fragments seen in a related work, *Geometric Vertical Forms* (1952), drawn at Cap d'Antibes, recalls Morrison's explanation that in imaginative studio art "you let your subconscious suggest."¹⁹

Given its overt primitivism, Morrison's drawing *New York* (1954) is a singular anomaly in his oeuvre. The totemic *personnages* are atypical for Morrison and they may suggest an interest not only in the sharp, jagged, violent forms of certain Surrealists of the late 1940s (e.g., the Chilean Matta and the Cuban Wifredo Lam), but also in Louise Bourgeois' totemic sculptures, such as *The Winged Figure* (1948).²⁰ Bourgeois was married to Goldwater, New York's leading authority at mid-century on tribal art and modernist primitivism. Morrison might have seen *The Winged Figure* installed at the Peridot Gallery in Manhattan in 1950, or, given that he was living in Duluth in 1954 and exhibiting in Minneapolis, perhaps he saw her *personnages* in the Walker Art Center's 1954 exhibition, "Reality and Fantasy, 1900-1954."²¹ In an artist statement published by the Walker in *Design Quarterly* (1954), Bourgeois described works such as *The Winged Figure* in terms that are applicable to Morrison's *New York*: "The look of my figures is abstract, and to the spectator they may not appear to be figures at all. They are the expression, in abstract terms, of emotions and states of awareness..." Given the mix of sex and violence—or at least the potential for both—in his *New*

York, perhaps Morrison understood and appreciated what Bourgeois meant when she wrote, “my sculptures might be called ‘confrontation pieces.’”²² The one-off quality of *New York* and the time and place of its creation affirm the likelihood that it is an homage to Bourgeois, even as its dense hatching, crosshatching, and linear entanglements link it to his earlier surrealist explorations.

Morrison came of age artistically in the emergent Abstract Expressionist milieu of New York in the mid-1940s. By the mid-1950s his paintings often consisted of spontaneously generated, thickly impastoed, scintillating surfaces that synthesize action/gestural and color field painting. In terms of style, subject matter—the existential act of painting—and aesthetic results, his work was a constituent element of the diverse yet unified community known as The New York School. Furthermore, if we apply the three criteria of intentionality, process and quality that are most often used in judging the merits of artwork, Morrison’s painting should never be excluded from serious, substantive discourse on Abstract Expressionism. Morrison was only three and four years younger, respectively, than first generation Abstract Expressionists Richard Pousette-Dart and Robert Motherwell. He was six years older than Joan Mitchell, whose first solo exhibition in 1950 at what is now the Minnesota Museum of American Art came two years after Morrison’s (and de Kooning’s) in 1948. Although such first and second-generation nomenclature is somewhat artificial, it has had staying power, and I rehearse this fragment of lineage to underscore, as Ann Gibson has done, that canon formation is shaped, intentionally or otherwise, by ethnicity (“race”), gender, and sexual orientation.²³ In short, quality alone cannot account for Morrison’s exclusion from major exhibitions and books that survey Abstract Expressionism, especially since contemporaneous critical reviews of his art were typically laudatory.

Like many of the other New York School artists with whom he socialized and occasionally exhibited—Franz Kline in particular—in Morrison’s hands surrealist automatic drawing evolved into the freely improvised gestures of so-called action painting. Even modestly scaled works on paper could embody the exuberance, exhilaration, and openness of this method of working. Indeed, it was his contention “that even a small drawing can be an important work of art.”²⁴ The existential and autonomous quality of each studio encounter with process and materials comprised an aspect of the Abstract Expressionist ethos; this partly explains the variety of moods and effects Morrison was able to generate with his jazz-like improvisations. This could result in intimate works on paper, such as *Grey, Black and White Lines* (1959, Fig. 4), created in Provincetown on the Atlantic shore, where he often spent the summer. Brushy, open, and linear, the work hints at Chinese calligraphy and the bold, black-white-grey dramas he admired in the work of his friend Franz Kline.



Fig. 4. George Morrison, *Grey, Black and White Lines*, 1959, gouache and ink on paper, 14 x 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. Collection Minnesota Museum of American Art, gift of George Morrison

In such works Morrison sought to capture an “inner thing”: “That was part of the Action Painting school, where you begin with the act of painting itself, then images began to emerge. Almost like subconscious painting.”²⁵

Along with the Horizon Series paintings and drawings he started in the 1980s, Morrison is perhaps best known for a series of monumental wood collages, including *Cumulated Landscape* (1976, Fig. 5). Puzzled together from found objects harvested on the beach at Provincetown, he made the first of them in the summer of 1965. Although they are gridded—like Gottlieb’s Pictographs—and have a latent cubist structure, he made them intuitively, without preparatory drawings. I am tempted to call them the sculptural equivalent of automatic drawings, but Morrison described them as “paintings in wood,” “derived from nature, based on landscape.” And even if the first of them was made on the Atlantic shore, he recognized that the collages “may have been inspired subconsciously by the rock formations on the North shore” of Lake Superior.²⁶ Indeed, his award-winning wood collages symbolize the whole of Morrison’s career, in which memories of specific places are realized in a visual language based on mastery of the paradigms of the international avant-garde.

The grand wood collages were time and labor intensive, so Morrison extrapolated their aesthetic principles in numerous exhibitions of drawings, rubbings,

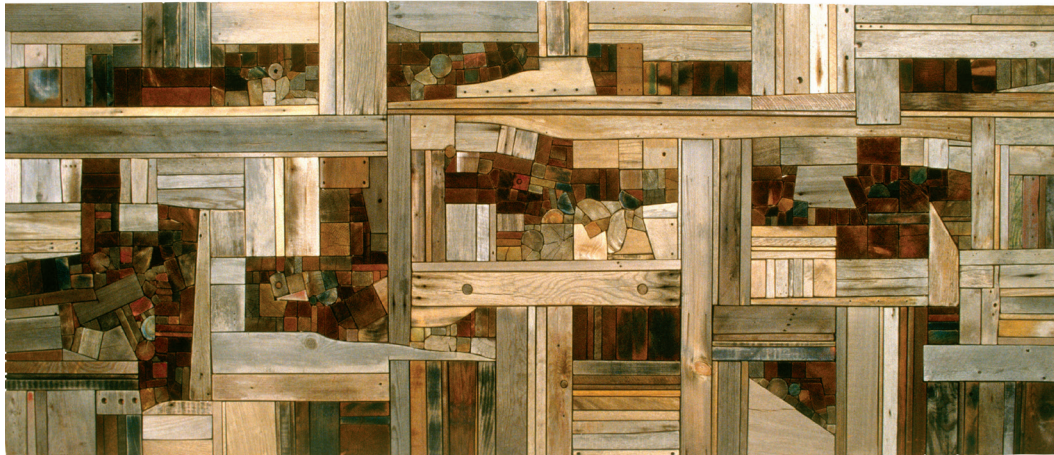


Fig. 5. George Morrison, *Cumulated Landscape*, 1976, wood, 48 x 120 x 3 in. Collection Minnesota Museum of American Art, gift of Honeywell, Inc.

and lithographs. Two such drawings from 1982 are especially interesting in the context of Surrealism. *Brown and Black Textured Squares* (1982, Fig. 6) is inscribed in Morrison's hand: "Brown and Black Textured Squares—Started By Placing At Random—Changing In Shape & Direction As Progression To End—Landscape—Minneapolis-11-14-82." A perhaps unfinished drawing, *9 Black Squares, 11 Brown Squares* (1982), also has its process documented at the bottom: "9 Black Squares, 11 Brown Squares—Partly Frottage—After Arp—MPLS- 8-25-82." Morrison's



Fig. 6. George Morrison, *Brown and Black Textured Squares*, 1982, ink on paper, 12 3/8 x 9 1/4 in. Collection Minnesota Museum of American Art, gift of George Morrison

admiration for the surrealist Jean Arp is revealed elsewhere in his sketches as well. In the latter part of his career in particular Morrison was given to detailed inscriptions on his drawings, not only dating them, but also indicating where they were produced, sometimes commenting on the process, and frequently using such words as Surrealism, automatism, and frottage. In doing so he balanced improvisation and abstraction, which signal the subconscious, with the specificity of place and archival documentation, which suggest order and structure. When drawings similar to these two were exhibited at the University of Minnesota in 1983, he emphasized their immediacy: "Drawing became an intimate source of personal expression—first as a means of social narration and place description, then progressing towards a probing of the subconscious through surrealist automatic techniques to record an inner solitude and loneliness."²⁷

Morrison had long been a conflicted expatriate yearning to go home. After teaching at the Rhode Island School of Design from 1963-1970, he returned to Minnesota and his Native roots in 1970, when he joined the University of Minnesota to teach studio art and American Indian Studies. This homecoming only intensified his commitment to nature, automatism, and the unconscious, as in seen in *Surrealist Landscape*, a mixed media work on paper (1985). The abstracted landforms, water, and high horizon line visible in this large, quirky drawing are essential components of Morrison's iconography of the north shore of Lake Superior. The spontaneous linear entanglements witnessed here are explicated by his comment that much of his work "emerged out of scribbles," which he related to French automatic drawing "influenced by the associative thinking deriving from psychoanalysis."²⁸ These image-producing scribbles, he explained, combined frottage and automatic drawing and resulted in arbitrary patterns.

Poor health from the mid-1980s onward generally, although not exclusively, kept Morrison from working at a large scale, and many of his most poignant objects from that period are intimate and prismatic drawings that are proof positive of his unwavering commitment to a surrealist process/content. In an untitled drawing from 1994 (Fig. 7), he worked with a range of values and hues that are reminiscent of Wassily Kandinsky's influence on Gorky, situating flat, clear shapes onto a variable field of rubbed-on color. The clarity, intensity, and purity of his vision is realized in elemental terms appropriate to the symphony of nature he absorbed from the vantage point of his studio above the lake. Similarly, in an untitled drawing from 1995 (Fig. 8) the three bands of a hard-edged color field do double-duty as the abstraction of land, water, and sky, on top of which float totemic, biomorphic, surrealist forms. Their glyph-like character reminds us of Morrison's keen interest, documented many times in his sketchbooks, in Pre-Columbian relief sculpture. The



Fig. 7. George Morrison, *Untitled*, 1995, colored pencil on paper, 15 x 17 in. Collection Hazel Belvo

shapes seen in yet another untitled drawing from 1995 (Fig. 9) might be parts of a cryptic alphabet, the abstraction of elemental biological critters, or the liberated fragments of a visionary map. And the clarity of the shapes fails to mask their thematic and organic connection to the biomorphic '40s. Indeed, Mark Rothko's 1947 description of his multiforms seems appropriate to Morrison's own here:

They are unique elements in a unique situation.

They are organisms with volition and a passion for self-assertion.

They move with eternal freedom, and without need to conform with or to violate what is probable in the familiar world.

They have no direct association with any particular visible experience, but in them one recognizes the principle and passion of organisms.²⁹

In 2004, the Anishinabe literary critic Gerald Vizenor proposed that the quirky shapes in drawings such as these might refer to the spirits of Chippewa cosmology, such as Mishapishoo, the Underwater Panther³⁰ (also the subject of a Woodlands-themed mosaic Morrison created for the Daybreak Star Center in Seattle, 1977). The artist had indicated as much in 1998 when he noted,

Individual titles often use the idea of spirit forms. All those shapes and things



Fig. 8. George Morrison, *Untitled*, 1995, colored pencil on paper, 17 x 15 in. Collection Hazel Belvo

that come from the images...can relate to spirits. The shapes might suggest objects in the lake coming out of the water. Often they're irregular, shaped like an amoeba—organic forms that relate to clouds or puddles.³¹

In using the underwater panther as a sculptural theme to represent Woodlands culture, and in referring to spirit forms rising up out of the lake, Morrison interlaced (modernist) artistic practice with oral traditions. He believed that the “original meaning of Indian art begins with tribal meanings” and that many Native

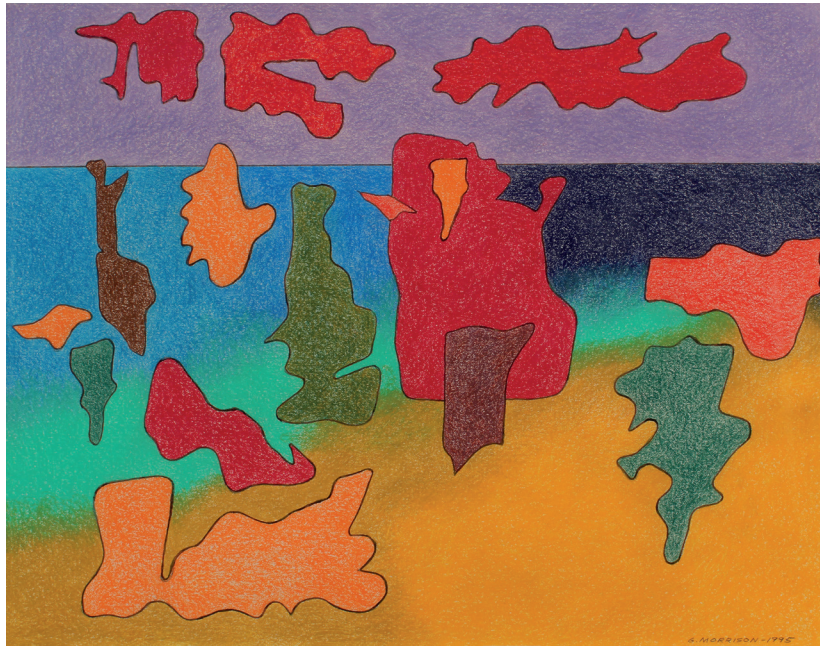


Fig. 9. George Morrison, *Untitled*, 1995, colored pencil on paper, 10 5/8 x 13 5/8 in. Collection Dr. Robert and Frances Leff

“sculptures had a religious or spiritual meaning.”³² In discussing Morrison’s Native modernism, the art historian Bill Anthes has invoked the philosopher Scott Pratt’s idea of emplacement, in which the indigenous homeland is the fundamental ground out of which oral traditions derive their meaning.³³ For Morrison, emplacement meant “a natural attraction to where you were born, your locale. Like the lake or woods for me.” Building a home and studio at Red Rock was to be re-rooted in his place of origin, the literal ground of his Chippewanness: “The lake has certain magical qualities for me in the sense that I like to be near it. To be part of it.”³⁴ The constant reiteration of land, shoreline, water, horizon, and sky at Red Rock in the Horizon series paintings and related drawings such as the three considered above gave form to an indivisible bond between self and place. Because he made so many of them over two decades, they function collectively like a visual mantra: *I am home again, I am home again, I am home again.*

At the time of his death in 2000 Morrison was a much-celebrated artist with a compelling exhibition history that included a dozen solo shows in New York City. In 1990 he had been the subject of “Standing in Northern Lights,” a retrospective

organized by the Tweed Museum of Art and the Minnesota Museum of American Art, also shown at the Plains Art Museum (then located in Moorhead, Minnesota). The title of the exhibition is an English translation of *Wab Wab The Go Nay Ga Bo*, a name dreamed for Morrison by his cousin, Walter Caribou, an elder of the Grand Portage Chippewa, as part of a healing ceremony.³⁵ As he struggled with illness in the late 1980s Morrison longed for such an exhibition. He was pleased with the results: sixty-seven works in a wide variety of media spanning forty-four years of artistic practice. He had also been claimed by a younger generation of Native artists as a founding father of Native modernism and was thus featured prominently in several important group exhibitions, including “Our Land/Our Selves: American Indian Contemporary Artists,” an exhibition of three hundred seventy-five works of art by thirty artists representing thirty-one tribes. Curated by Jaune Quick-to-See Smith and organized by Nancy Liddle for the University Art Gallery of the University of Albany, the show had a dozen venues (1991-1993). In 1999 Morrison was named the inaugural Master Artist in the new Fellowship for Native American Fine Art, established by the Eiteljorg Museum in Indianapolis. When in 2004 he was honored posthumously with the two person exhibition (with Allan Houser) that helped inaugurate the new National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C., founding director W. Richard West, Jr. wrote that Morrison had proven that it was “possible to be a major American artist and Indian artist at the same time.”³⁶

Part of what makes these accolades and achievements so compelling is that they are prompted by a lifetime of artworks that never made any concessions to the clichés of a market-driven Native “style.” Because of his unwavering commitment to a surrealist process that he practiced for almost sixty years, authenticity and integrity are the twin characteristics that unify Morrison’s diverse creations. As a card-carrying modernist inspired by the natural world to probe the subconscious, he made abstract equivalents for a synthesis of perception, conception, feeling, and memory. As such his personal aesthetic philosophy was a poetic one: “I always see the horizon as the edge of the world. And then you go beyond that, and then you see the phenomenon of the sky and that goes beyond also, so therefore I always imagine, in a certain surrealist world, that I am there, that I would like to imagine for myself that it is real.”³⁷

This essay is based in part on a lengthier one in W. Jackson Rushing III and Kristin Makhholm, *Modern Spirit: The Art of George Morrison* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, in cooperation with the Minnesota Museum of American Art, 2013), 11-62.

1 See, for example, the enlarged edition of Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1986); Elizabeth Cowling, "The Eskimos, the American Indians, and the Surrealists," *Art History* (December, 1978): 484-499; Evan Maurer, "Dada and Surrealism," in William Rubin, Ed., "*Primitivism*" in *20th Century Art*, Vol. II (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 535-593; Susan Hiller, Ed., *The Myth of Primitivism: Perspectives on Art* (London: Routledge, 1991); W. Jackson Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde: A History of Cultural Primitivism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); Jack Flam, Ed., *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); and Dawn Ades, Ed., *The Color of My Dreams: The Surrealist Revolution in Art* (Vancouver Art Gallery, 2011).

2 Although many Great Lakes indigenous peoples now refer to themselves as either Ojibway, or Anishinabe, many still self-designate as did Morrison, as Chippewa. He was an enrolled member of the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa.

3 Recalling his days as a boarding school student in Wisconsin, Morrison stated: "I had always worked with my hands—drawing, copying, inventing—and was interested in commercial art. I began reading history and art history, architecture, sculpture and music." Quoted in Jane B. Katz, Ed., *This Song Remembers: Self-Portraits of Native Americans in the Arts* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980), 56.

4 George Morrison [as told to Margot Fortunato Gault], *Turning The Feather Around: My Life in Art* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1998), 50, where he recalls seeing a Picasso exhibition in 1939. However, the records of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts suggest that Morrison was likely thinking of "Picasso: Forty Years of His Art," organized by Alfred H. Barr for the Museum of Modern Art in New York (1939), which was on view in Minneapolis February 1-March 2, 1941. Stephanie Kays, email to the author, June 4, 2012.

5 Quoted in Katz, *This Song Remembers*, 56.

6 For Indian Space, see Ann Gibson, "Painting Outside the Paradigm: Indian Space," *Arts Magazine* 57 (February 1983), 98-104; Sandra Kraskin, et al., *The Indian Space Painters: Native American Sources for American Abstract Art*, exh. cat. (New York: The Baruch College Gallery, 1991); and Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde*, 137-156.

7 George Morrison, artist statement, Dayton Art Institute (1960), Ryerson Library Pamphlet File, Art Institute of Chicago.

8 *Turning the Feather Around*, 63.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*, 59, 63.

11 Robert Rosenblum, *Mark Rothko: Notes on Rothko's Surrealist Years*, exh. cat. (New York: The Pace Gallery, 1981), 5-9 and Lawrence Alloway, "The Biomorphs 40's," *Artforum* IV (September 1965): 18-22; reprinted in *idem*, *Topics in American Art Since 1945* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1975), 17-25.

12 Alloway, "Biomorphic," 20.

13 *Ibid.*, 18.

14 Quoted in Katz, *This Song Remembers*, 58.

- 15 *Turning the Feather Around*, 90.
- 16 For Matisse's cut outs, see especially Henri Matisse, *Jazz* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1985). On Surrealism and Oceanic art, see Evan Maurer, "Dada and Surrealism," in Rubin, "Primitivism," 546-57 and passim; and Rosalind Krauss, "Giacometti," 517-19, in *ibid.*
- 17 Robert Goldwater, "'Judgments of Primitive Art,'" which appeared first in Daniel Biebuyck, Ed., *Tradition and Creativity in Tribal Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 24-41; reprinted in Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art* (1986), 293.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 *Turning the Feather Around*, 79.
- 20 For the primitivism of Matta and Wifredo Lam, see Maurer, "Dada and Surrealism," 582, 585.
- 21 See Josef Helfenstein, *Louise Bourgeois, The Early Work* (Urbana Champaign: Krannert Art Museum, 2002), 30, 143.
- 22 Louise Bourgeois, "Artist's Statement," *Design Quarterly*, no. 30: 18; quoted in *ibid.*, 34.
- 23 Ann Eden Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism: Other Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 59.
- 24 Morrison, *Turning the Feather Around*, 99.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 111-112.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 128.
- 27 George Morrison, "The Artist's Statement," in Lyndel King, *George Morrison: Entries in An Artist's Journal* (Minneapolis: University Art Gallery, 1983), n.p.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 99.
- 29 Mark Rothko, "The Romantics Were Prompted," *Possibilities I* (Winter 1947-48); reprinted in David Shapiro and Cecile Shapiro, Eds., *Abstract Expressionism: A Critical Record* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 398.
- 30 Gerald Vizenor, "George Morrison: Anishinabe Expressionism at Red Rock," in Truman T. Lowe, Ed., *Native Modernism: The Art of George Morrison and Allan Houser* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, 2004), 45.
- 31 Morrison, *Turning the Feather Around*, 173.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 154.
- 33 Bill Anthes, *Native Moderns: American Indian Painting, 1940-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 90.
- 34 Morrison, *Turning the Feather Around*, 150, 149.
- 35 The other name Caribou dreamed for him was "Turning the Feather Around"; see *ibid.*, 167.
- 36 W. Richard West, Jr., "The Art of Contradiction," in Lowe, *Native Modernism*, 8.
- 37 Morrison, *Turning the Feather Around*, 173.