

A ledger art exhibit of this caliber has not been done before. In January 2014 the Paris Gibson Square Museum in Great Falls MT will host an exhibit deserving of great accolades. "Conflict, Courtship, Ceremony, and the Chase: Renowned Ledger Artists From Across the Nation" highlights an elite group of award winning contemporary Native American ledger artists, while serving as a platform to showcase a transitional era in Native American art and history. The objective is to educate the general public to the evolution of indigenous tribes and this era of self expression. "I know these artists were inspired by the traditional drawings of the warrior societies of the past and have used this style to record and document events that they have participated in or seen in their own lives", Emil Her Many Horses, curator of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, shares. On one side of the buffalo nickel, this Native American art form reflects an Indigenous Warrior Renaissance and on the flip side, a dark era for the First Peoples.

A changing world; a vision of growth by European settlers didn't include the indigenous inhabitants that already occupied them. Within a newly formed government, a bounty was set on buffalo hides and tongues. Killed by the millions, the life source of indigenous people was struck. Their goal: eradication, subjugation and dependency on the U.S government. Men, women and children were forced onto reservations- the assimilation process began. No longer were they allowed to be stewards of the land they held a deep gratitude and respect for. The surface of the buffalo hides used to create Winter Counts, their pictographic tribal records, were no longer available. As an innovative expressive response to the invasion of a new kind of people to their lands, and their cultural need to record important events, such as their greatest feats, ceremony and courtship, ledger art was born.

The history of ledger art dates back to the 1800's and the materials used were paper, colored pencil and marker. The introduction of 19 century ledger drawings by Northern and Southern Plains Warriors marked a transition of Indigenous lifestyle and artistic expression. Historically, ledger Art was a man's craft or rite- they drew figurative drawings whereas the illustrations of the female were geometrical and floral design orientated. Today, Native female artists have stepped up to assure that the traditions of ledger art and the memories of their ancestors remain as vivid depictions of their culture for future generations to admire.

Monte Yellow Bird, guest curator and artist shares, "I've had a vision to assemble a show of this magnitude for quite some time. I'm very honored to be connected with a gathering of such reputable ledger artists that are maintaining the traditions and culture of their ancestors through art. This display of ledger works come from the source, the true heartbeat of our people, and the quality cannot be surpassed". Just a few of the tribes represented are Dakota, Navajo, Arikara, Hidatsa, Osage, Yakui, Blackfeet, Chippewa, Caddo and Winnebago. A Father of contemporary ledger art, the late George Flett, will be featured. Following are nationally acclaimed male artists Terrance Gaurdipe, Thomas Haukas, Michael Horse, Don Montileaux, Dwayne Wilcox, Chris Pappan, Monte Yellow Bird/ Black Pinto Horse, Darryl Growing Thunder, Dallin Maybee, John Pepion, Jim Yellow Hawk and Paris Bread. The ladies also bring their talent, Linda Haukaus, Dolores Purdy, Sheridan MacKnight, Lauren Good Day Giago, Avis Charley and Alaina Buffalo Spirit. Her Many Horses states, "The female ledger artists you have included document historical and contemporary roles of native women in society, ceremony and warfare. You truly have a great line up of artists."

The exhibit runs from January 8- April 3 with a reception on January 24 from 5:30-7:30. For more information please contact Laura Cotton, curator of Paris Gibson Square Museum @ 406.727.8255 and Monte Yellow Bird, guest curator and artist, 406.578.2187, blackpintohorse@hotmail.com.