Native American Chic: The Marketing Of Native Americans In New York Between The World Wars

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Abstract
Focusing on four key figures - Morris de Camp Crawford, John Sloan, Amelia Elizabeth White, and René d'Harnoncourt - this dissertation analyzes museum and gallery exhibitions of Native American art mounted in the United States, particularly New York City, during the interwar period, and documents the immediate and lasting impact these shows and their promotion had on the emergence of "Indian Chic" in women's fashion and interior design.

In the late 1910s, Crawford, a research editor for Women's Wear and honorary research associate at the American Museum of Natural History, mounted a campaign encouraging Euro-American designers to seek inspiration in museum collections, particularly Native American production. Crawford's efforts led to the AMNH's 1919 Exhibition of Industrial Art in Textiles and Costumes; a series of exhibitions at the Brooklyn Museum in the 1920s; and Mallinson Fabrics' 1928 "American Indian Series." Meantime, Sloan bolstered awareness of Native American art through exhibitions of Pueblo watercolors at the Society of Independent Artists exhibitions in the 1920s, and the groundbreaking Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts in 1931. White, a New York socialite living in Santa Fe, joined Sloan in his efforts, financing the EITA and promoting the incorporation of Native American art into modern Euro-American décor through her New York City gallery and exhibitions of her personal collection. In the mid-1930s, Indian Chic received government backing with the creation of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board. As its general manager, D'Harnoncourt promoted Indian art's suitability as inspiration for modern Euro-American design in two landmark exhibitions: the Indian Court at San Francisco's Golden Gate Exposition in 1939 and Indian Art of the United States at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1941.

These exhibitions created a sensation that was widely reported in the popular press, and U.S. consumers responded enthusiastically to Indian-inflected and -inspired clothing, accessories, footwear, cosmetics, and household goods and accent pieces. The notion of Native American Chic, created in the 1910s by Crawford and promoted by Sloan, White, and d'Harnoncourt throughout the interwar period, endures today.

Recommended Citation
The first meetings between settlers and Native Americans would follow the same course in almost every European settlement along the East Coast. The two groups would meet as friends. They would begin by trading for food and other goods. They would strongly influence relations between the European settlers and the American Indians in all areas of the new country. These clashes of cultures would continue as more and more Europeans arrived. The Puritans from England landed in Massachusetts. The Dutch settled what would become New York State. And the Quakers, unwelcome in England, settled in Pennsylvania. That will be our story next week. You can find our series online with transcripts, MP3s, podcasts and pictures at voaspecialenglish.com. (See Classification of Native Americans.) While many Native American groups retained a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle through the time of European occupation of the New World, in some regions, specifically in the Mississippi River valley of the United States, in Mexico, Central America, the Andes of South America, they built advanced civilizations with monumental architecture and large-scale organization into cities and states. Other ideas have been rediscovered, some with growing acceptance, as to the ultimate origin of Native Americans. The first reported case of white men scalping Native Americans took place in New Hampshire colony on February 20, 1725. Four Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy sided with the British and the Tories in the American Revolutionary War.