

INDIAN AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT LIBRARY
BIBLIOTHÈQUE DES AFFAIRES INDIENNES ET DU NORD CANADIEN

REPORT
AN INDUSTRIAL DESIGN STUDY BASED ON
TRADITIONAL IROQUOIAN ART AND FORMS

A preliminary study of the arts and crafts of historic and pre-historic Iroquoian culture and its practical application to contemporary crafts.

Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development
Indian Affairs Branch
Resources and Industrial Division
Ottawa

February 1969

E99
.17
D63
c.2

REPORT
AN INDUSTRIAL DESIGN STUDY BASED ON
TRADITIONAL IROQUOIAN ART AND FORMS

Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development
Indian Affairs Branch
Resources and Industrial Division
Ottawa

PREFACE

In December, 1967, I entered into a research project with the Resources and Industrial Division of the Department of Indian Affairs to research and document Iroquoian art. In conjunction with this project I was charged with designing products that pertained to the cultural background and tradition of the Iroquoian people.

In addition to this I was charged with providing recommendations and illustrating products of a contemporary or traditional design.

The purpose of the study and this report is to identify product designs which may serve as guidelines to Indian artists and craftsmen who wish to produce and market distinctive Iroquoian art and craft forms.

I have the honour of submitting my findings, recommendations and illustrations concerning the practical application of these traditional art forms to contemporary crafts.

John Dockstader

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Carry out an industrial design study and provide illustrative and explanatory documentation of such designs based on traditional designs of the Iroquois.
2. Provide recommendations for the use of such designs in the production of both traditional and contemporary products of distinction and fine quality and include a list of product possibilities.
3. From the foregoing, select and illustrate a minimum of six products which indicate favourable market potential and which may be readily produced by Indian people.
4. For each product proposed, provide recommendations on methods for production, identify the skills required, and suggest the raw materials and production equipment required.
5. Provide a broad indication of the number of craft industries which may be established by the Indian people who choose to produce the products identified in the study and indicate the number of people who may obtain employment from such industries.

Introduction

Having been exposed to the native culture of my own Iroquoian ancestry, its beauty of philosophy, symbolism, drama in ceremony and richness of metaphoric phrases, I have long been aware of a lack of visual art expression. More to the point, art which was unique and peculiar to the Iroquoian people.

Over the years I have read many publications dealing with Indian Art; most dealt with Iroquoian ceremonial masks or the floral beaded designs. After viewing some collections, I began to see symbolic expression in the beaded designs and the silverwork. While of an introduced media, nonetheless, the designs were of a native origin. Since these were historic, the natural tendency would be to seek out something of a pre-historic nature. I was convinced that a culture so rich in pageantry and poetic speech must have had some form of art or self-expression. Since art is the manifestation of self-expression and these people are the accepted masters of vocal expression, then surely they had other forms of exhibiting their emotions.

While in Ottawa, pursuing another matter, I chanced to offer this theory to the Indian Affairs Branch. Officers saw "industrial implications" in my theory and a possibility of introducing new products from the Six Nations craftsmen. After the necessary laying of ground rules and negotiations we entered into a short term research contract.

Albeit only a cursory research, it now has indicated a need for a further in-depth study. That it has borne fruition can be evidenced by the available documents. This then is not the happy ending but the happy start. Since this research was of such short duration, it is not to be considered complete. It merely serves the original requirement, that is, research upon which to base an industrial design study and to design products with existing substantiating evidence from a cultural background as documented by archeologists, anthropologists, and ethnologists.

Of the thirteen weeks allotted to the entire project, seven weeks were involved in research. This centered around gathering opinions of experts in marketing, sales, management and manufacturing, the viewing of the largest collections and the gathering of all available visual evidence.

Some amount of discretion was required, in order to avoid controversy; especially where those forms had not been produced for two or three generations. What was gathered then were documents on articles that the ancient people had manufactured and decorated for their own personal use, or more simply, "This is what my Iroquoian ancestors did".

A QUICK GLANCE AT IROQUOIAN ART

Art

Art forms that are no longer produced or self evident are considered lost. Carvings in stone, earthenware products uniquely decorated, weaving from wood fibres, decorations by quill or moose hair and the associated denying processes have almost been forgotten.

There is a new awareness by leading ethnologists that in the hurried search for other fields of cultural exploration, much of the Iroquoian art forms were overlooked. Since the Iroquois were among the first to be exposed to European culture, their art forms underwent a transition. One may even say they have deteriorated not only in style but in media as well.

The Iroquoian people have long been associated with the curvilinear motifs. It would appear, however, that this was introduced by the early French traders and missionaries who usually preceded the soldiers. The simplest analysis would bear this out, at least for the present. Before contact, quills were used for decorative purposes and when flattened for working into designs, tended to be more geometric in overall pattern. Burden straps woven of elm or basswood fibres are naturally grid oriented. This grid pattern would be more receptive to recti-linear decoration than curvi-linear. Most of the pottery decorations have engraved geometric designs and if anywhere curvilinear designs appear because of compatibility of design and medium. This is the area one would expect to find it. However, it does not appear. Viewing photographs of collections dating back to the earliest seventeenth century, rectilinear designs predominate. Curvilinear appears more frequently after the arrival of Europeans.

Pipes carved of various stones and those modelled from clay indicate a high degree of imaginative use of mass, form and planes. The effigies of man, bird, or animal were reduced to their simplest forms into surrealist works of art.

Combs were developed to a high degree of art. The forms are pierced relief and usually bi-laterally symmetrical using stylized effigies of man, bird or animal.

After examining all available material it would appear that a whole new field of art forms has been opened up for exploration and has only been lying dormant.¹

This could have tremendous potential both economically and culturally. This would also indicate the creative and ingenious nature of the Iroquoian people. From this, we may deduct many other possibilities and implications.

The image of the Iroquoian people has long been associated with law, peace, oratory or the completely ridiculous extreme. As Dr. Fenton has stated, "No people have had more ink spilled over them, than the Iroquoian people", but still their art forms have been ignored. Beauchamp, Morgan, Parker, Speck, were the most prolific. However Beauchamp's works are the best known, in spite of being out of print. Not until 1935, when the Works Progress Administration (WPA) agreed to underwrite the cost, in conjunction with and at the instigation of the Rochester Museum of Arts and Science, was any action taken to receive or preserve Iroquoian art forms.

¹Ltr. to Social Programmes, I.A.B. (Dockstader to Fraser)
Ltr. to Canadian Collector, Sept. 7, Vol 2, No. 9, P5 (A. Laing to M. Davis)

The art field of the Iroquoian people is yet virtually untapped. This field and its socio-economic development is still awaiting revitalization by the very people it involves. Only they can breathe life into it again and thereby contribute to their own cultural gain. A culture survives only if it has some validity. The Indian culture has survived for four hundred centuries. This art must be "requickenened" and it can only be done by those people of Iroquoian ancestry.

PATHWAY TO INDUSTRY (ABSTRACT)

Crafts

A product must be well designed, have some useful function, be pleasureable to the eye and well presented to meet today's stringent market and consumer reaction. The ideal product is in short supply and much in demand and is found only in the best retail outlets in Canada, the United States or Europe.

The product based on ethnic lines should have some deep rooted history in its cultural background. Originality should be self evident in its design, strong emphasis being placed on function, simplicity and it should be a pleasure to behold. Function, integrity and quality should be the first considerations. Basing the product upon the concept of function as a prime factor, quality and ethnic decoration can only enhance the consumer reaction and sales potential.

When, inherently, the required manual dexterity indicates a high potential for innumerable crafts products that have some direct cultural connection, quality will surely follow. In order that the resultant quality be maintained large scale quotas should not be set or encouraged. If production is the sole criteria, encouragement should be directed to production of a greater variety of products and exploration of latent talents.

In order that the transition from craftsman to manufacturer be realized, a crafts program should be considered only as the first step in this direction. After an appreciable interval of involvement in a crafts program, followup action should take place with the view to evolving new and better products that require more expertise. Over a period of several years the activity may take on the aspects of industrial orientation.

A program having the proper guidance and encouragement should produce a number of highly skilled artisans and possible manufacturers. The product, if quality is stressed, should in time become synonymous with exceptional good taste and unique design. The craftsmen, through reputation and acceptance of the resulting product, would create a veritable monopoly. To compete against mass production as an individual is folly and this leads to the alternative. The alternative is to produce and design items of such high quality and ingenuity that they cannot be produced in masse. This limits the quantity but commands a greater monetary return in keeping with the cost of labour and materials. This class of consumer market is conditioned to pay more for a product that is produced with these concepts.

Crafts as an industry, depending upon the extent of development, cannot be overlooked as a socio-economic feasibility. The end product bring about the oft quoted phrase, "By your works shall you be known". Product function, quality, design and monetary return all play an important and related part in the overall picture of the craftsmen.

The overstress of crafts of one type would create an undesirable picture of the craftsman and his talent potential and have him compete against the impossible odds of mass production. However, if, for comparison, the program is encouraged to follow along the lines of the Scandinavian and Swiss crafts industries, and the craftsmen design, produce and export products that are of much high quality and in much demand, then a new impression of this craftsman as a person is created. This course of action could ultimately become the basis of socio-economic solvency.

Arts and crafts of the North American natives were part of their everyday existence and were integrally tied to their everyday life. Products were manufactured for their personal use, function being the first consideration. They went beyond function and converted utilitarian objects into works of art. When trade goods became more easily obtainable and in some cases more practical, the native crafts began their demise. Other factors arose to help bring this about more rapidly and completely. These were exploitation by traders, mass production, a misplaced sense of art appreciation, low returns for labour and products, a lack of communications and the resulting image of Indian craftsmen. All seem to go hand in hand.

Who is at fault? This is subject to conjecture and long drawn out debate. What is evident is that Canada lags in providing legislative protection for the Indian craftsman and his products. This can be verified by an overall glance at Canadian industries as a whole. Any product labelled as "Canadian made" is protected by trade agreement with their foreign competitors. If there are no agreements, then total embargo or subsidy for the Canadian product enables it to compete on the market.

This is generalizing, of course, and many exceptions can be found by the pickers of minutiae. However, the astute and knowledgeable will find much merit in the statement. The real factor that should be considered and given priority in protection is the cultural aspect. Infringement upon a culture is distasteful at best but to ignore this action, while in the possession of facilities to discourage this action, is not only bigotted but borders on cultural genocide.

Markets

1. The Collector:

This market is open to those craftsmen having the necessary skills to produce traditional products without the use of contemporary methods or materials and having knowledge of the ancient forms. This market is limited but would support a number of craftsmen through sales to collectors or museum gift shops throughout Canada and the United States.

2. The Consumer:

This market is by far the most wide open. The possible manufacture of products that are functional, utilitarian and of high quality is practically endless. In addition, almost all the skills and traditional crafts could be manufactured and/or modified to meet demands. This would include the manufacture of traditional or contemporary pottery, clothing, jewellery, textiles, art objects, etc.

Since today's society is influenced by the collection of status symbols, oneupmanship or the development of ultra-sophisticated tastes, it would appear that the native craftsman could only benefit by creating art forms that tantalize the consumer.

3. *The Tourist:*

This market cannot be overlooked. This is the market of volume sales produced at low cost and skill. The competition stems from areas that are capable of mass production at a price that the individual cannot match either in quantity or initial investment for materials. Competing in this market helps to create an erroneous image of mass production and lowers the monetary returns to the craftsman. If analyzed, the finished product yields frequently less than the original cost of labour and material to the craftsman. Only if the material is free can he hope to profit.

Conclusion

Many surveys have been undertaken at great expense, to determine the direction the crafts industry should take, but nothing ever appears to trickle down to the most important person of all, the craftsman. He is not aware of the tremendous potential of more lucrative returns in the larger cities or for that matter foreign markets. If he is, he is not aware of the methods of making use of these markets and is left to the mercy of the unscrupulous buyer or dealer. He is given no encouragement to upgrade or develop new products that have a higher sales potential. He receives no guidance in pricing or market presentation. The advantages of advertising, salesmanship or central marketing are not made available.

A carver, for instance, should be encouraged or perhaps commissioned to create original work and thus be motivated to explore his own latent creativeness and to realize some above normal monetary incentive for his originality of concept and ability. This is probably true of other crafts as well.

The revival and ultimate development of native arts and crafts to an economic and social reality will depend upon many factors but mainly on a closer relationship with the Federal and provincial governments, more rapport with the craftsmen, Federal protection of products, consulting services and proper guidance by persons trained in all fields related to the crafts. From the craftsman are required, products of quality, integrity and creativity.

**IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES
RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON RESEARCH**

Dec. 1, 1967 – Feb. 29, 1968.

Pre-Historic

Pottery
Pipe Manufacture
Weaving
Sewing
Leathercraft
Horn and Bone
Woodworking

Quillwork
Dyed hair embroidery
Basketry
Lacrosse stick manufacture
Snowshoe Manufacture
Dollmaking
Stone Carvings

Historic

Beadwork
Silversmithing

Copper
Blockprinting

Contemporary

Ceramics a. Industrial (Architectural)
 b. Functional
 c. Art objects
Wood a. Utensils
 b. Carvings
 c. Prints
Weaving a. Textiles
 b. Rugs
 c. Clothing
 d. Accessories (purses, handbags)
Rug hooking
Garment Manufacture
Furniture a. plastic
 b. wood
Silk Screen Process
 a. Fabrics and draperies
Knitting
Jewellery a. silver
 b. horn and bone
 c. lapidary
 d. copper enamelled
 e. combinations of above
Art objects – (traditional and contemporary)
 a. stone
 b. paintings (all media)
 c. wood
 d. terra cotta

Conclusion

These recommendations are based on research and the cultural background of the people, collections and documents available. Further study could in all likelihood produce an endless variety of products. Using many of the combinations of identified opportunities, practically any new product could be designed for consumer markets.

The number of people who would gain employment can only be estimated at this time. Interest, monetary requirements, craftsman skills and incentives must all be taken into consideration. According to Indian Affairs Branch reports, it would appear that income from crafts is increasing. The growth from \$590,000 in 1960-61 to \$1,444,094 in 1966-67 indicates growth. Of this total, the Six Nations Band have produced \$51,000 in 1967. Sales at the Craft Centre in Ottawa have increased from \$22,410 in 62-63 to \$80,895 in '66-67.

Since no effort has been made to ascertain the number of craftsmen, full or part time, there is no accurate figure on the number of interested or available people. However, it would be fair to estimate that a minimum of two people could be involved in those main categories of opportunities identified. This would indicate that approximately sixty people could be directly involved in fine crafts. This does not include fields that are related, such as sales, management etc.

Alternatively, a ceramics industry using local clay, producing industrial as well as functional and decorative articles, properly managed, staffed with necessary personnel to see the product from raw material to market place, could employ thirty people initially. This indication would be subject to variations as to initial expenditure, product demand, and growth potential.

In addition, industries using wood in cabinet making, furniture, custom cut timber, or involved in weaving of exclusive textiles for clothing manufacture, could well absorb a number of people in each category, using all the inherent skills and with the necessary proper related staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Revival of Iroquoian Arts and Crafts

1. A program should be undertaken to revive Iroquoian arts and crafts by establishing a museum upon the Reserve in question and by hiring local craftsmen, under direction, to reproduce these items and to create original works. When accepted and purchased, they would be housed in the museum as part of a permanent collection. A project of this type would have many accomplishments but mainly it would create interest in the revival of all but forgotten crafts. It could create a collection of inestimable value in terms of a cultural gap and display its own potential. Since there is a growing interest and fascination for Canadian Indian culture throughout the world, it would provide visual evidence of the Iroquoian culture and artistic heritage. It would further help to create a common ground for relations with the non-Indian in an uncommon setting, an Indian museum stocked with Indian artifacts on an Indian reserve.

2. A research project should be initiated to collect and/or document the arts and crafts and their methods of manufacture.

3. Action should be taken to locate and have re-printed, so they will be available to interested persons, out-of-print publications dealing with Iroquoian arts and crafts.
4. Expertise should be made available to interested craftsmen on modern methods of craft production.
5. A Six Nations Crafts Guild should be established and affiliated with Canadian and American Handicrafters Guild.
6. A craft or art centre, centrally located, properly equipped and services of a central marketing agent and design consultant should be made available to interested craftsmen on the reserves.
7. Closer liaison should be established between local craftsmen and the central marketing agency through the use of information services, promulgation of bulletins, advice on marketing, pricing and product demand or development.
8. Further feasibility studies should be conducted to identify the inherent skills and resource potential for beneficial exploitation. In conjunction with this, Federal and Provincial participation and involvement should be encouraged to bring this to fruition.
9. Federal and Provincial involvement through legislative protection of native crafts products.
10. Management and training.
11. Establishment of a grants policy.
12. A more realistic approach and attitude to the crafts, at all levels, in terms of financial assistance is a necessity.

Illustrations of crafts taken from the list of identified opportunities with possible markets recommended.

1. Pottery and Pipes: (Collectors)

Methods:	hand finished — open air firing
Skills:	pottery
Raw materials:	local clay
Equipment:	open air kiln

2. Ceramics: (Industrial-Consumer)

Methods:	mold casting and hand thrown
Skills:	casting and pottery
Raw materials:	local clay
Equipment:	casting molds — potter's wheel and kiln

3. Weaving (Industrial — Consumer)

Methods:	hand woven
Skills:	weaving
Raw materials:	skeins of wool, cotton or synthetics

4. Wood (Consumer and collector)

Methods:	hand
Skills:	carving and finishing

Raw materials:	native wood
Equipment	chisels-rasps-files

5. Horn and bone (Consumer and collector)

Methods:	hand
Skills:	carving
Raw materials:	horn or bone
Equipment:	jeweller's tools – saws – dremel tools.

6. Jewellery (Consumer and Collector)

Methods:	handicraft or casting
skills:	silverworking or casting
raw materials:	silver
equipment:	jeweller's tools, heating device, molding material, sand, wax, assorted files.

++ illustrations in appendix (a)

SOURCES OF REFERENCE

National Museum of Canada	Ottawa
Royal Ontario Museum	Toronto
Historic Society	Buffalo, N.Y.
Museum of Science	Buffalo, N.Y.
Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences	Rochester, N.Y.
N.Y. State Museum and Science Service...	Albany, N.Y.
Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation	New York, N.Y.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- I.A.B. Education Division Letter #20 Aug. 15, 1967
- Indian Affairs Branch
Statement for the Federal-Provincial Conference on Poverty
- Iroquois Masks
Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences
- Iroquois History, Culture, and Pre-History
University of the State of New York
- Museum Service Vol. XI, No. 8, Oct. 16, '38 p. 72
- Museum Service Vol. 14, No. 9, Nov. '41 p. 31
- Museum Service Vol. 29, No. 1, Jan. '56 p. 67
- Report to the Senate and House of Commons
Sat. July 8, 1961
- Science on the March
Vol. 47, No. 4, Dec. '67, p. 52-55
- Beauchamp, W.K.
Earthenware of the New York Aborigines
Vol. 5, No. 22, Oct. 1898
- Polished Stone Articles
Vol. 4, No. 18, Nov. 1897
- Horn and Bone Implements of the New York Indian
Bulletin #50, March 1902
- Aboriginal use of Wood
Bulletin #89, Archeology 11
- Channen, E.R. & Clarke, N.D.
The Copeland Site
- Converse, H.M.
The Iroquois Silver Brooches 1902
- Emerson, J.N.
The Payne Site Bulletin #206
- Fenton, W.N.
Ethnohistory Vo. 13, No. 1-2 1966
- Iroquois Anthropology at Mid-Century
- The Iroquois Confederacy in the 20th Century
- The Maple and Passenger Pigeon in Iroquois Indian Life
- This Land, on the Turtle's Back
- The Hiawatha Wampum Belt of the Iroquois League for Peace, A Symbol for the International Congress of Anthropology

- Hawthorne, H.B.
A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada 1966 Vol. 1
- Jamieson, N.E.
Indian Arts and Crafts, Six Nations Indians Yesterday and Today 1942 Agric. Soc.
- Lenig, D.
The Oak Hill Horizon
- Lyford, C.
Iroquois Crafts
- Morgan, L.H.
Report on the Fabrics, Inventions, Implements and Utensils of the Iroquois 1951
- MacNeish, R.S.
Iroquois Pottery Types Bulletin 124 Nat. Museum
- Orchard, W.C.
The Technique of Porcupine-Quill Decorations Among the American Indians Vol. IV,
No. 1, 1916
a. Beads and Beadwork of the American Indians 1929
b. Mohawk Burden Straps Ind. Notes Vol. VI
- Parker, A.C.
The Origin of Iroquois Silversmithing
Vol. 12, No. 3, 1910
Additional Notes on Silversmithing
Vol. XIII, No. 2, 1911
- Pendergast, J.F.
The Berry Site Nat. Mus. Bull. 206
The Payne Site Nat. Mus. Bull. 193
- Rheaume, G.
Indians and the Law Aug. 1967, p. 16-17
- Ritchie, W.A.
Dutch Hollow N.Y. S. Arch. Assoc. 1955
Pre-Iroquoian Cultures Ed. Leaf. #6
The Iroquoian Tribes Ed. Leaf #7
Indian History of New York State Ed. Leaf. #8
- Speck, F.G.
Eastern Algonkian Block Stamp Decoration
June '47
The Iroquois
Cranbrook Institute of Science 1945
- Rogers, E.S.
False Face Society of the Iroquois
R C M 1966

Turner, G.

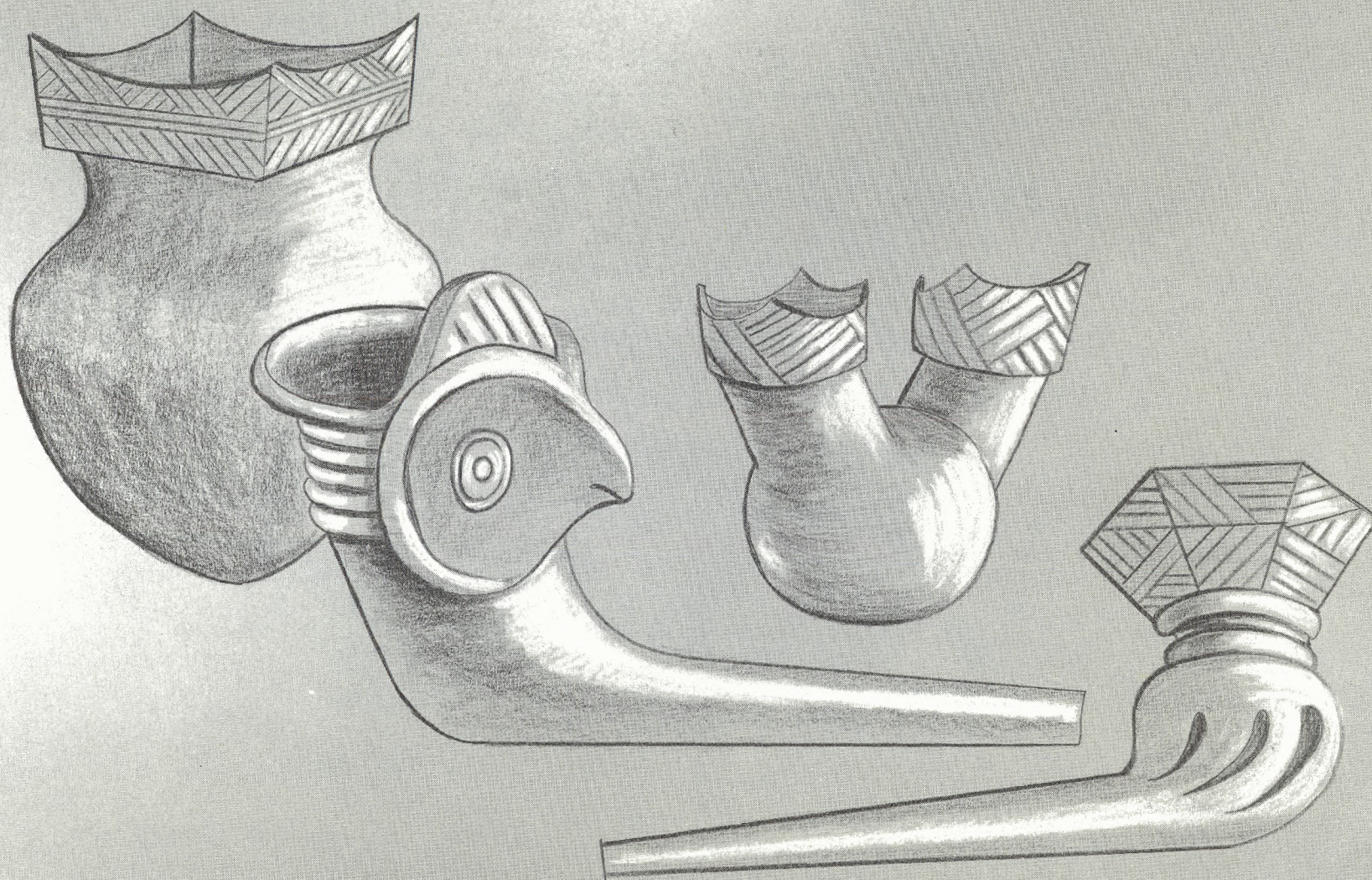
Hair Embroidery in Siberia and N. America
University of Oxford

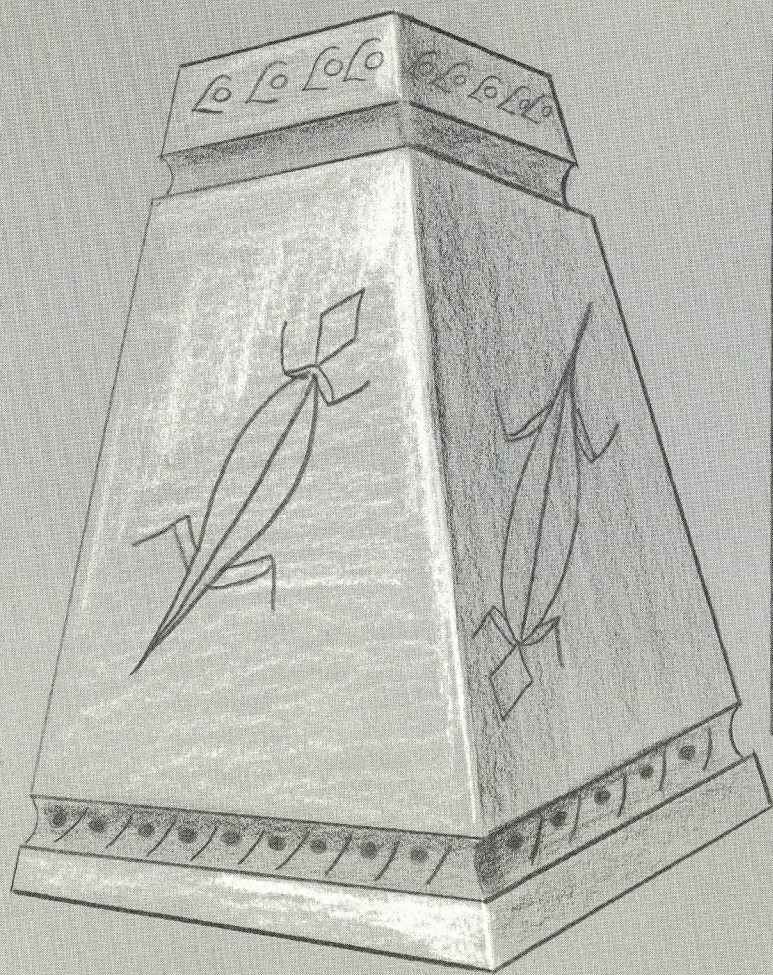
Wallace, P.A.

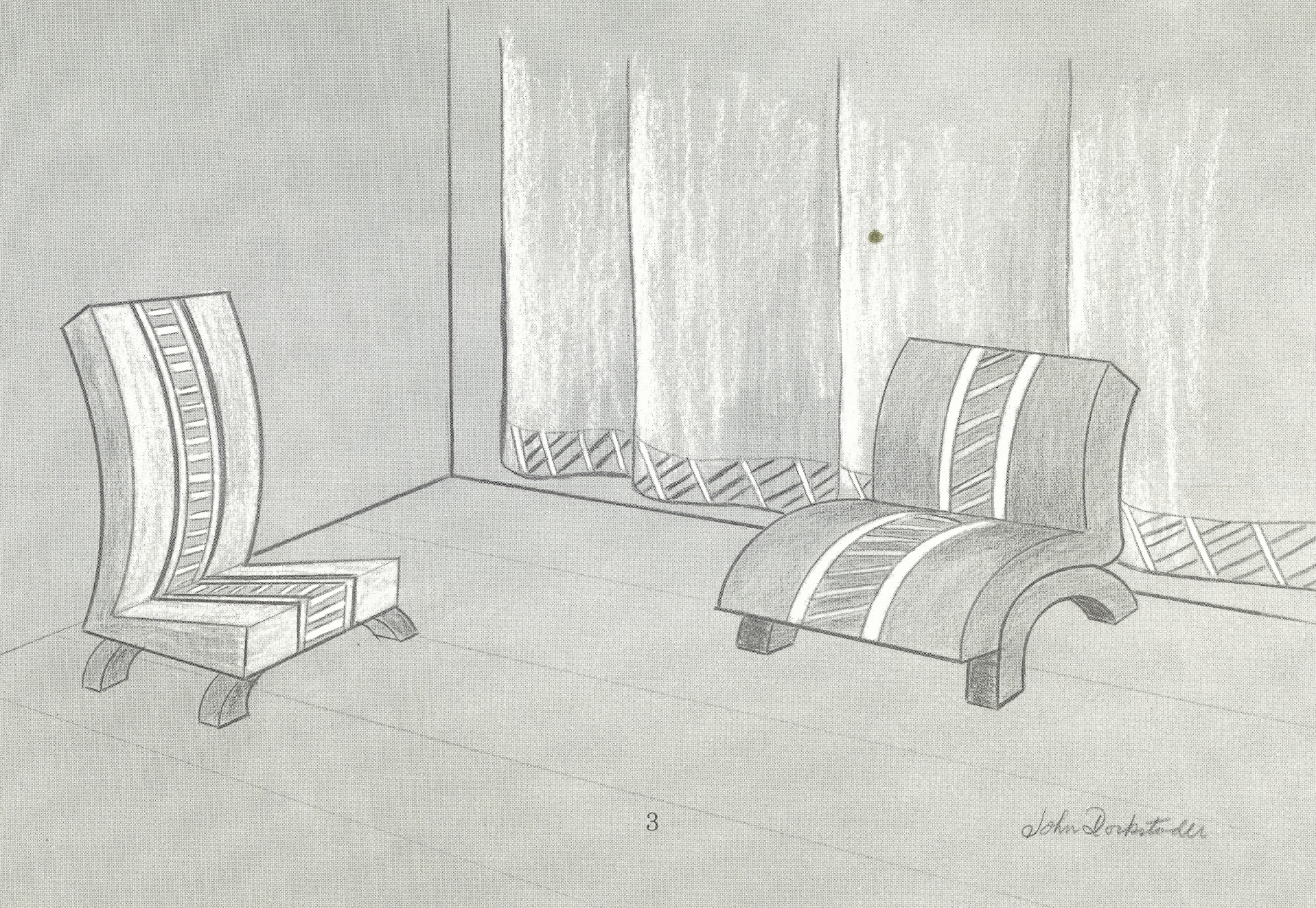
The White Roots of Peace
University of Penna. Press 1946

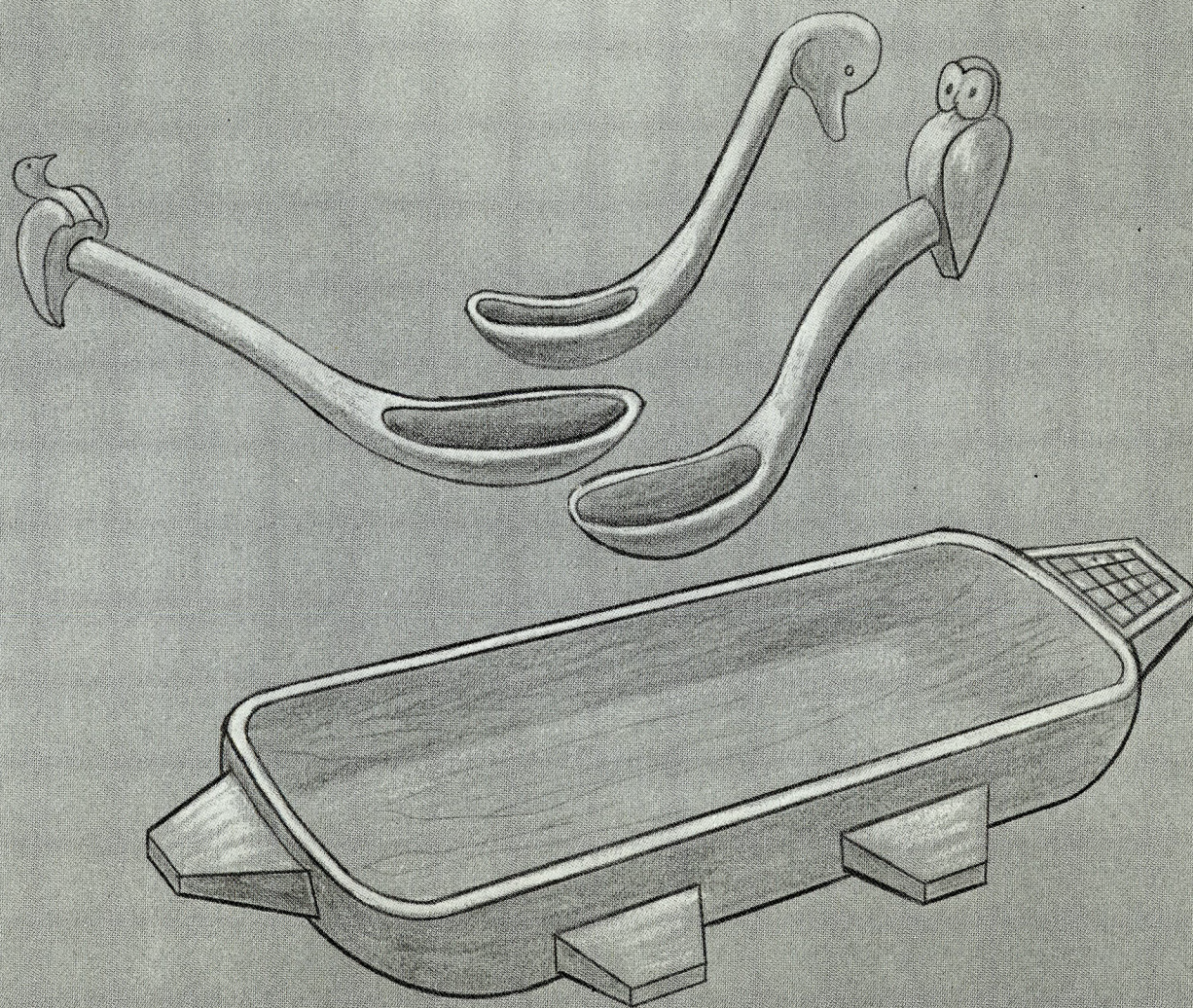
Wray, C.F.

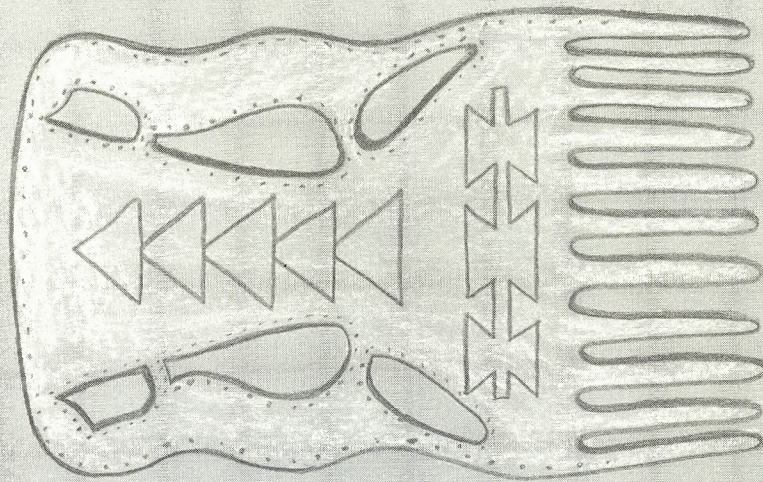
Ornamental Hair Combs of the Seneca Iroquois
July 1963





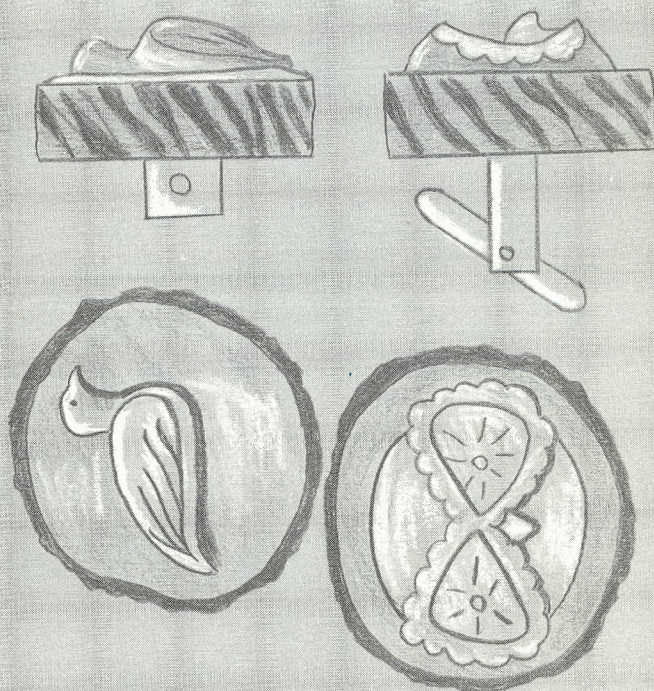


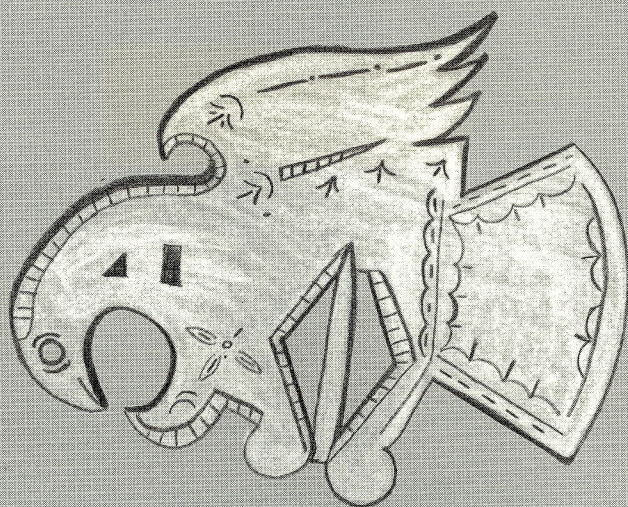




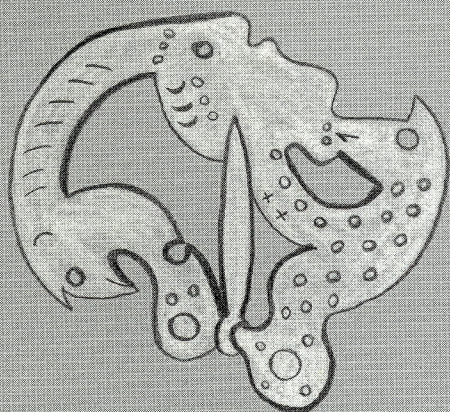
John D. Dockett

5





John B. Kistner



6

