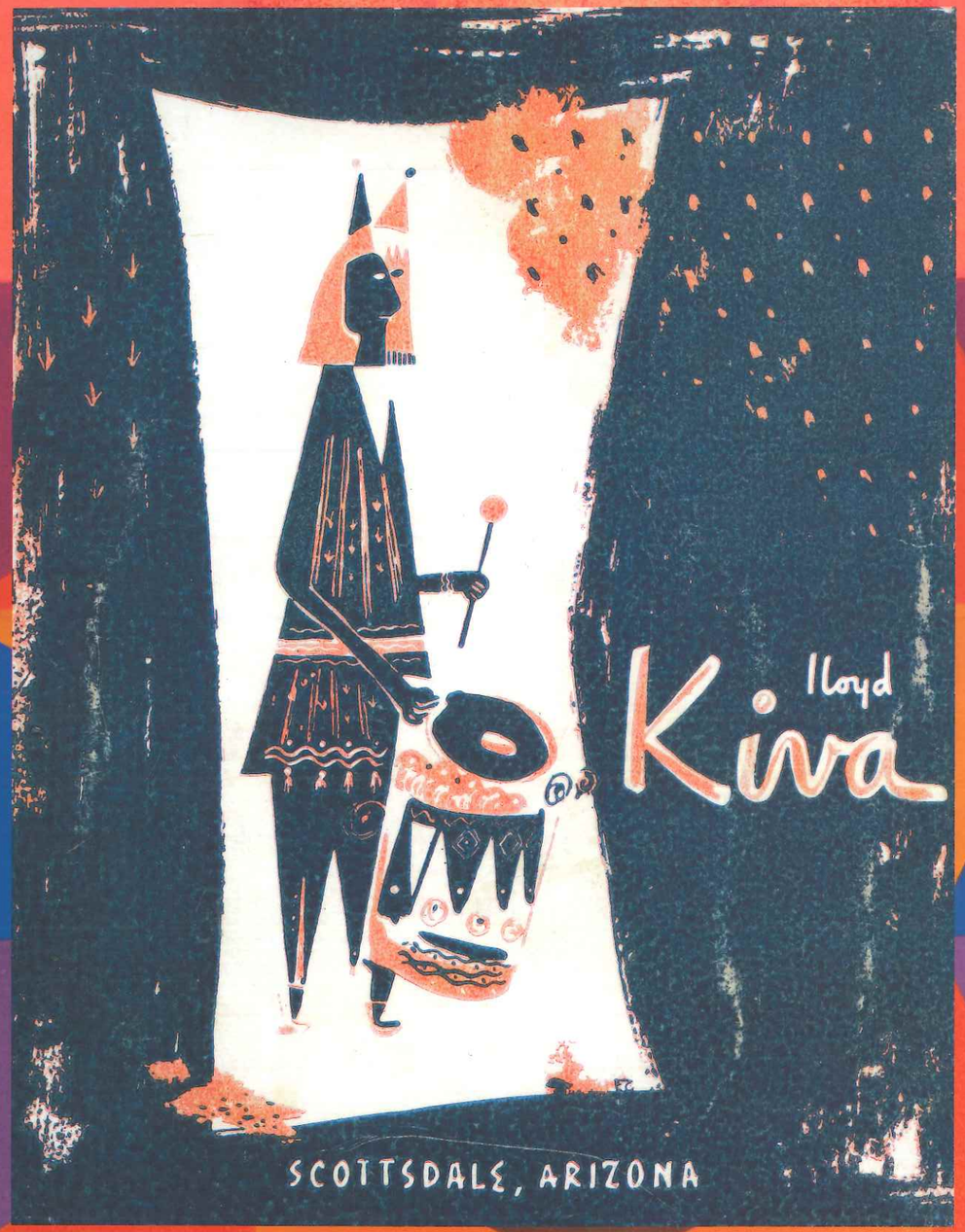

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Lloyd Kiva New
A New Century

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The Life and Legacy of Cherokee Artist and Educator Lloyd Kiva New

Art Gallery Press

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The Life and Legacy of Cherokee Artist and Educator Lloyd Kiva New

Lloyd Henri New and a New Century
By Tony R. Chavarria, Curator of Ethnology
Museum of Indian Arts and Culture/Laboratory of Anthropology

Lloyd Kiva New: Art, Design, and Influence
By Ryan S. Flahive, IAIA Archivist; Rose Marie Cutropia, Independent Curator, and Tatiana Lomahaftewa-Singer, Curator of Collections, IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts.

Finding a Contemporary Voice: The Legacy of Lloyd Kiva New and IAIA
By Carmen Vendelin, Curator of Art
New Mexico Museum of Art

Jhane Myers, Project Director
Museum of Indian Arts and Culture/Laboratory of Anthropology

Art Guild Press

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On the cover: Lloyd Kiva New, *Indian Beadwork*. Photo by Jason S. Ordaz.

Inside: Lloyd Kiva New, fabric printed with Cherokee syllabary. Coutesy of Aysen New Collection. Photo by Walter Bigbee.

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Afterword

By Nancy Marie Mithlo, Ph.D. (Chiricahua Apache)

I remember the first time I spoke with Lloyd New over thirty years ago. I called from a heavy beige landline phone that sat under an old-fashioned reading lamp. On the desk was hand-made sign warning students of a strict five minute call limit. It is certain that I spoke too fast. I had a habit of doing that when I was nervous. A museum studies student at the Institute of American Indian Arts, I was curious about New's archives and wanted to know more. On the phone, Lloyd had agreed to let me do an interview with him in another week and I was completely elated. I could not believe I had actually spoken with the man whose work I so admired. After placing the phone down, I remember looking out across the bare winter campus from those tall upstairs windows at the old IAIA Library, feeling that my life had somehow changed. I think Lloyd had that impact on a lot of people.

Now as a teacher and researcher, I often ask myself, "What would Lloyd do?" How would Mr. New interpret the latest Facebook news on cultural appropriations? Would he be angry that Bethany Yellowtail's designs from her Crow Pop Collection were ripped off? What quote would he provide for Indian Country Today's online news feed? What would Lloyd say about Project Runway or Beyoncé's Lemonade? Would he attend the Native American and Indigenous Studies meetings in

Hawaii this spring? Perhaps he would be too busy with his new 3-D printed jewelry line or his designer scarves. If Lloyd were a twenty year old again, at what museum would he have his "ah-ha" moment, if not the Art Institute of Chicago? Would it be Los Angeles County Museum of Art or perhaps the Tate Modern? Would he be shocked to learn that in 2016 American Indian professors represent less than 1% of faculty nationally? Would he author a paper on the 67% graduation rate of American Indian/Alaskan Native high school students, the lowest of any racial/ethnic group in the country?[1] Might he launch a new policy institute?

I wonder about all of this because as important as Lloyd's artistic influence was and continues to be, I believe it is his intellectual contribution that will serve to inform the next seven generations. How do we best describe this aspect of the man? Is it simply as he writes in "Using Cultural Difference as a Basis for Creative Expression" (1968) that "cultural differences are good"? And is this belief in the worth of cultural knowledge a methodology, an attitude, or a philosophy? How does New's legacy fit into his own cultural environment? What were the social and political realities of his lifetime?

In 1916 when Lloyd was born, the U.S. government had just passed yet another restrictive legal mandate supporting the national guardianship of Native nations in "The United States vs. Nice." Also in 1916, George Gustav Heye opened the Museum of the American Indian in New York City. Clearly, the schizophrenic U.S. policy of simultaneously destroying and preserving American Indian life and culture was still active in Mr. New's youth. His productive career in the arts spanned the length of two generations – years thought of now as the transformative post-war period of American modernity and achievement. And yet for American Indians, the second half of the last century were years of disenfranchisement and continued struggle for basic human rights such as adequate health care, education, housing, and cultural continuation dependent on access to land, language, and religion. Throughout this historic period, Lloyd would serve as a key architect in building progressive educational models, museum and arts programming, economic development initiatives, and psychological

1 2014 Native Youth Repport. Executive Office of the President, The White House. December 2014. www.whitehouse.cov/sites/default/files/docs/20141129nativeyouthreport_final.pdf.

health and well-being promotion in Native communities. He believed in the power of culture multiplied; his was an expansive vision that included both political and social dimensions.

I will draw from just two examples of how I experienced New's contributions. Lloyd was an early participant in discussions leading to the Venice Biennale art exhibits I have been a part of for the last twenty years. For the first edition in 1999, our group of artists, educators, and activists had considered asking the Phillip Morris corporation for funding to support the show. Members were concerned however about the corporation's reputation, its obvious health-related impacts on consumers of tobacco, and its questionable business practices. Lloyd held sway from his white couch in the front living room of his home where we so often met, "I'll be damned if we let them take tobacco from the Indians!" He wanted us to go forward with the grant request of course, because the original plant was ours to begin with and no one had ever taken our sacred medicine away. He advocated sovereignty before we even had the words to describe this approach.[2]

Lloyd's interpretation of culture was also affective in nature. He advanced his own brand of psychological well-being based on self-acceptance and love. Lloyd allowed us to consider the possibility of a life that was comfortable, fulfilling even, and without guilt. "I'm not going to apologize for living in a nice home or driving a nice car," he confidently advised me. Many of my generation, the baby boomers living with the trauma of our parent's boarding school experiences, still struggle with a type of "survivor syndrome." We were not imprisoned, we were not beaten, so what right do we have to a secure, contented life? In an era often defined as a period of self-doubt for Indian people, Lloyd offered the cool option. Like a classic black and white 1950s movie, in which everyone dresses splendidly, says, "swell," and refers to each other as "kids," Lloyd's world was upbeat and positive. The darkness of poverty, abuse, and despair was not apparent in Lloyd's approach to education and the arts. He was clearly aware of the often-harsh realities of Native communities, but he presented a different reality, one that was colorful, self-assured and importantly, educated.

2 Our collective was not successful in obtaining grant support from Phillip Morris, now the Altria Group.

Lloyd New's contributions to education continue to provoke and inspire. At the heart of the "cultural difference" philosophy is the question of training – Western and Indigenous. When New stepped into the role of co-directing the Southwest Indian Arts and Crafts Workshop in 1959, he faced long-standing core contradictions built on racial biases. Would Indian art be best served by an approach that encouraged deep engagement in historic forms or would Indian art students benefit from non-Native instruction, including immersion in non-Native art forms, materials, and instructors? The original Rockefeller proposal appears fairly straightforward in their agenda, which can only be interpreted as assimilationist in stating, "[I]f Southwestern Indian art is to survive, it must take new directions. Few believe that the force needed to produce this impetus could be generated wholly within Indian cultural circles. Clearly the future of Indian art hinges not on the talents and efforts of established Indian artists and craftsmen but on the direction in which the budding talent of younger Indians is guided." The report calls for the "relationship between young Indian artists and non-Indian professional groups capable of assisting the development of indigenous talent."[3]

This argument that Native art students must be immersed in the non-Indian world to succeed is of course flawed in several respects: A) the notion of Native arts as somehow disappearing (the field's "survival" at stake); B) the idea that established Indian artists are incapable of innovation, and; C) the proposal that only non-Native professionals can effectively educate Indian artists (the white savior narrative). This Western-centric approach clearly diminishes the power and worth of Indigenous knowledge.

New was cited in the Rockefeller proposal as a cultural advocate stating, "Let's be more concerned with the evolution of artists than of art products. Let's see that the young Indian realizes the value of his great and wonderful traditions as the springboard for his own personal creative ideas. Indian art of the future will be in new forms, produced in new media and with new technological methods. The end result will be as Indian as the Indian."[4] It is important to note here Lloyd's

3 The University of Arizona, "A Proposal for an Exploratory Workshop in Art for Talented Younger Indians." Submitted to the Rockefeller Foundation, October 15, 1959.

4 Ibid.

insistence that the art product (a commodity of sorts) should rightly be separated from the producer (contemporaneous American Indian communities). The evolution of the artist as a coeval human being, a person with dignity and worth, was the primary goal, not the value and investment in the product known as "Southwestern Indian art."

Problematically, New's words ("new forms," "new media," and "personal creative ideas") were apparently misinterpreted by government officials. His enthusiasm for freeing Indian artists from constricting commercial boundaries was interpreted as a need to discount the primacy of Native artists working in Native contexts. Clearly, the art product and the artisan were conflated in a rigid equation whereby what might be considered Modern art could only be taught by someone considered a modern person, meaning a non-Native instructor.

New struggled with what he called an apparent "lack of unanimity of opinion as to what the proper emphasis should be..." between Western and Native instruction – instruction both in terms of the instructor's ethnicity and the content of the curriculum. Declaring that "INDIAN ART, whatever its variations from ART…is the very core of this project," (capitalization here his own), New concluded, "the emphasis on all instructional procedure should be on laying a firm identification with each student in his own cultural accomplishments first."[5]

By the end of the first full year of the Southwest Indian Arts and Crafts Workshop in 1961, New was adamant, "While our stated purpose is to see how young Indian artists and craftsmen react to formal, instructional methods designed to help them discover individual creative powers, and to learn about art in its universal sense, are we not primarily interested in seeing how much of the resulting expression may be uniquely Indian, reflecting the particular qualities of a different culture? ... It worries me…that we sometimes take the attitude…that our first responsibility is to fit the Indian artist into the world of art in general, and the sooner he gets into the mainstream of the universality of art, the better off he will be…I sense this as the

5 Lloyd Kiva, July 28, 1960. IAIA Archives.

biggest unresolved difference of philosophy amongst the staff."[6]

I cite these documents at length to reflect on the very difficult task, that we are still struggling with, of instructing Native art students under opposing value systems.[7] I do not think these divergent standards have been adequately assessed to date in a meaningful fashion. We lack core resources, including image banks, graduate programs, definitive texts, academic journals, and professional organizations that can accurately articulate the complex realities of contemporary Native arts. We need academic resources that do not alienate Native art students by their use of chronological and regional constraints, that do not speak in the past tense and that recognize that American Indian artists have always been modern. The "biggest unresolved difference of philosophy" seems ever present.

What would Lloyd do?

I think Lloyd would articulate clearly his core belief in the reality of Native peoples as contemporaneous. Collectively, we can now confidently reaffirm that: A) Modernism as an art form (geometrics, non-linear figuration) is innately of Native manufacture; B) Modernism as a societal value (a belief in "science" and "progress") is innately counter to Indigenous values; and C) Native peoples engaged in Modernism as an art form are not inherently agreeing to the social values of Modernism (individualism, competition, capitalism). There, we said it. Again. Let's hope some folks listen well.

Lloyd, you were right of course, "Let's be more concerned with the evolution of artists than of art products." Our seventh generation awaits. Will we be ready?

6 Lloyd Kiva, "Comments on Southwest Indian Arts and Crafts Project, University of Arizona...2nd year, 1961." The culmination of this educational approach was summarized in New's manifesto "Using Cultural Difference as a Basis for Creative Expression," February 5, 1962.

7 For more reading on the conflicts of culturally-informed arts curriculum see Karen Kosadsa's 2002 dissertation "Critical Sights/Sites: Art Pedagogy and Settler Colonialism in Hawai'i." University of Rochester, Program in Visual and Cultural Studies.

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