

The Indigenous Group of Seven

Jackson Beardy (1944-1984)
Eddy Cobiness (1933-1996)
Alex Janvier (1935-)
Norval Morrisseau (1932-2007)
Daphne Odjig (1919-2016)
Carl Ray (1943-1978)
Joseph Sanchez (1948-1985)

I was so excited when I was given the opportunity to travel to Gallery Gevik in Toronto, to see original art work by the “Professional Native Indian Artists Inc.” I tried not to have any expectations knowing that I was going to see original art pieces.

I found it difficult to put my emotions into words. These pieces are true examples of how Indigenous spirituality is interpreted by the artist. These artists have given us another way to visualize our spirit language/our stories/our teachings with the swirl of a paint brush. We are all completely in debt to the Indigenous 7 for paving and leading the way for others to express themselves. As an Ojibwae anishinabekwe (woman), I am someone who is passionate about educating all those that come after me with the beauty and honesty of our Indigenous historical art movement, I was moved to tears.

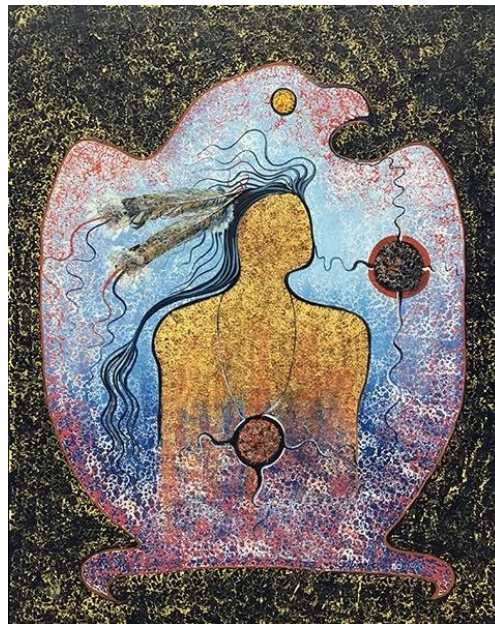


Daphne Odjig
At the Fair
1962
Acrylic on Canvas
26 x 32.25 inches



Norval Morrisseau
Fish
c. 1969-1974
Acrylic kraft paper
29 x 39.5 inches

I remember seeing Morrisseau standing on a street corner. He would go to St Clair where the Indian Affairs offices were. He would be selling original art works for like, forty dollars. It was so sad to me because I kept thinking that even as a people we were taking advantage of somebody. I kept thinking to myself, we need to pick him up. But then I read some of his books and his passages where he spoke about his artist's life struggle and he made these agreements before he came into creation so he already knew what his struggles were going to be. For a First Nations person to get to a place where they could put this on paper in colour is astronomical.



Eddy Cobiness
Thunderbird
1980
Mixed media on canvas
36 x 29 inches

Thunderbird tells the story of our Anishnawbe men, First Nations men, and how we always perceived them to be: strong, confident, and spiritually connected. The bird is representative of his strength and his beauty as well: the long flowing hair. The spiritual connection within the painting says what we have lost, and the tears that come to my eyes are because I feel there is a place that we need to work to get back to. We have become overtaken, unbalanced, disconnected. But this shows the original beauty of our men.



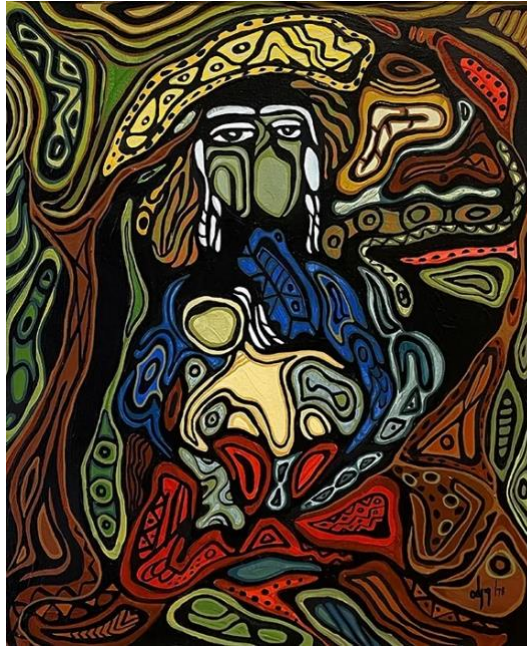
Carl Ray
Mother Earth
c. 1970
Acrylic on canvas
24 x 30 inches

Mother Earth shows her character and her love for all creatures in creation.



Carl Ray
*Thunderbird in
Human Form*
1972 acrylic on canvas
30 x 24 inches

This shows the balance between men and women, even though it is not aesthetically even, but it shows the harmony and the peace that the creator intended for human beings to live. It tells the original story, and the balance that we have distorted over the years between men and women.



Daphne Odjig
Oracle
1978
Oil on Canvas
24 x 20 inches

I have been intrigued by Daphne Odjig since the early nineties. I've seen how her work has transitioned from her early expressionist work to her more recent signature style. Her paintings have become more visionary. They are now her interpretations of her spirit understandings. The flow of her spirit work is very moving and tells an amazing story, almost a story within a story. Her work has mesmerized me and many of my peers over the years. Her more recent pieces have motivated a lot of young Indigenous artists today. In our way of being, imitation is a form of honouring. Miigwech for this honour.

Giiizhgondokwe (Cedar Women) Patricia Monague