The Iconographic Owl through the Eyes of American Artists: From Native Americans to Joseph Cornell

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The Iconographic Owl through the Eyes of American Artists:  
From Native Americans to Joseph Cornell

By

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B.A., Western Illinois University, 2007

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Art,  
With an Emphasis in Art History

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2012
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Abstract

The owl has been a symbol for the Americas, as well as the rest of the world since people could write. It is a symbol with many meanings to Native Americans, from guardian to an omen of approaching death; the owl’s presence could be both a blessing and a curse. As western society spread American artists used the owl as a symbol in folk and fine art. Artists like John James Audubon and Alexander Wilson depicted owls in their work to create a visual awareness and to promote the advancement of scientific understanding. During the twentieth century, Joseph Cornell and other artists thrust the owl’s image back into the public eye. This paper will compare the early works of owls by Native American Tribes, to that by some of the more recent American artists. The focus will be mainly on creating an understanding of the symbolism associated with the owl’s image through the work of North American artists and artisans.
Introduction

The owl is a mysterious creature that has become symbol used by many cultures around the world. For the ancient Greeks an owl was the symbol for Athena, the goddess of wisdom and warfare. The Mochica potters of ancient Peru made vessels that depicted their owl deity and his behaviors. The ancient Chinese would bury owl mingqi vessels with their dead to help sent messages to the afterlife. It is not surprising that the people of North America also had customs and traditions of storytelling and image making that surrounds this nocturnal bird. From early Native American artists to the contemporary artists practicing today this thesis will strive to analyze and describe the owl’s influence on the art of North America.

Despite books written on the subject of owls in art and literature, no work has been written specifically on the owl in North American art. Most books touch upon the obvious, such as the classical Greek symbol of the owl in terms of Athena the goddess of wisdom. However the owl was a subject for art in North America long before Europeans crossed the Atlantic. Some images we will examine, have been found in burial mounds. This images may help shine light on cultures long since forgotten since they have no written history. Other images will be connected to Native American stories, songs, dances, and folklore.

As we moved through the ages, European influences will also be examined through the art of North American artists. Owl art based on scientific
research, whimsy, and personal imagery will also be looked at and evaluated. As this thesis progresses from the distant past to contemporary times, the owl’s symbol evolves from the mysterious to the everyday. This transformation will be looked at through the media in which the owl image is being sold and displayed.

Due to the nature of the subject, this thesis will be pulling from multiple sources and trying to connect the images to that of the animal itself. By using pictures and information about the different species of owls that have inhabited North America, the reader will receive a better understanding of the behaviors of the birds. Understanding the anatomy of these birds help the reader in visually identifying key traits from the individual species. These traits serve to point out important aspects of the art being examined. Knowledge of the behavior patterns of certain owls will help to connect species of owls to stories and key symbols of owls in certain tribal areas.

This thesis will give the reader a chance to examine the owl’s artistic beginnings in North America. It will help the reader to understand why the owl has risen in popularity, as well as give an explanation for why the owl is constantly being used in art. In turn, it will assist the readers to build their own interpretations of the owl images they see today.
Chapter 1:

Review of the Literature

At this time there is not very much written about the owl as it pertains to art created in North America over the centuries. Many pieces of literature have been written about the symbols used in art but they are condensed and usually in a dictionary format. Some Native American writings focus on animals used as a symbol but they do not specifically relate it to art. Examples of this type of literature include collections of folklore, such as those from the Inuit and Zuni tribes, in which owls are referred to in several stories. There are books specifically related to the study of owls as they are used in literature and art however they are very vague in their details and cover the use of owls over the whole world. No literature has been written that focused solely on the evolution of the owl through art specifically in North America, instead it has been sprinkled in little stories and casually mentioned in the information previously published.

There are two books that focus on the owl as it is found in literature, Owls, Owls, fantastical fowls by Krystyna Weinstein and Owls: In folklore and Natural History by Virginia C. Holmgren. Weinstein’s pages draw the reader into a wonderful world of owl literature and art. The book is a collection of writings with stories about the owl accompanied by pictures of owls created in paintings, in drawings, and sculpture throughout history, she includes medieval manuscripts and Native American Tlingit artifacts. However, the text does little to comment
on or explain the visuals. The book is primarily intended as a compilation of stories she has gathered and related to one another. The arrangement of the book is by topic instead of and covers multiple continents. Weinstein does a superb job compiling the stories and other information on how the owls are seen throughout the world but this book is not organized for the person who wants to go in depth on a specific culture’s relationship to the bird.

In *Owls: In folklore and Natural History* by Virginia C. Holmgren, Holmgren dives into the layers of stories that have been collected and told in all areas of the world throughout the centuries. Particularly important to this paper is her chapter on “Owls of American Indian Legends”. Here she discusses the significance of the owl to the Native Americans. She then poses the question how can the owl not be important? It has the traits of a human-like face, the ability to see in the dark, a ghostly voice, and a soundless flight. Holmgren begins to connect these traits to specific tribal stories. She also writes about the owls of various regions and how they affect the tribes around it. The recounting of stories and songs help the reader to understand the significance of the bird to tribes like the Hopi Indians.

Unfortunately, this book lacks diversity in the number of tribes addressed. The chapter on “Owls of American Indian Legends”, gives the reader the impression that the many tribes will be talked about. Instead the reader is given a lot of information about the Pima and Hopi and a little about the Creek and Kiowa. This book also functions as a how and where to guide when watching for owls in North American supplying information on their ranges. Little owl
drawings add a break in text but no photographs of owls or owl art is included in the pages.

A slightly different approach than that of Holmgren and Weinstein is two works that were written to address the owls in legend as well as the artwork that accompanies them. The first is *Owls: Art, Legend, History* written by Elena Centzato and Fabio Santopietro. It is a small book at only one hundred and twelve pages that address a wide range of owl related facts and stories. The color photographs of owl artifacts from all over the world and owl memorabilia take up about fifty percent of the space in the book. Unfortunately, the book does not address the images on the pages with the text that is written next to it. There is a disconnection between the text and photographs which forces the reader to hunt for examples from specific cultures. Like *Owls, fantastical fowls* by Krystyna Weinstein, this book is organized with the traits of the owl and those of various cultures talked about on top of each other in the text.

Another book that incorporates owls in art with the information it provides is *Centuries of Owls: in Art and the Written Word* written by Faith Medlin. In my opinion, this book provides the most information and is the easiest to navigate. This work includes numerous figures in the form of black and white photographs, drawings of pottery, along with illustrations of clay effigies, whalebone carvings, paintings, bronze vessels, tapestries, woodcut engravings, and coins. These illustrations are the book’s best feature because Medlin has referenced in detail the size, location, dates, and material, under each image. The figures are clearly labeled and identified in the text to make finding information about a particular
piece simple. The book also provides a world map with page numbers so the reader can find references to specific cultures easily within the book.

Medlin’s text is informative and written in a way that is easily understood. Some of the information is vague and just scratches the surface concerning the concepts addressed, but it does link ideas to the images. Medlin has a firm grasp on the content she is presenting. She even includes charts on the different owl species and their families and sub-families. Some of the information provided is specific to North America and the research being conducted for this paper. She gives a brief description of the Hopewell Indians of Ohio and the tobacco pipes they created and then buried in their mounds. She goes on to write about the Zuni Indians and their owl effigy clay vessels which are still being created today. Medlin also recounts a Zuni folktale called “How the Coyote Joined the Dance of the Burrowing Owl”. Medlin discusses the Sioux, Inuit, and Tlingit tribes, giving examples of stories, artifacts, and information on how the owl was important to them. Despite the variety of the Indian/owl relationships provided, the information is brief only taking up only several pages of the book’s ninety three.

Along with representations from the North American Indians, Medlin introduces more mainstream, modern pieces of art in which owls are the focus. These pieces are displayed in a variety of media including lithograph, wood carvings, drawings, and metal works.

Unlike the comprehensive owl books talked about prior, the sources described below are more tailored to the tribe that is being investigated; *Animals*
of the Soul; Sacred Animals of the Oglala Sioux written by Joseph Epes Brown is a wonderful look into the how the Sioux view specific animals. The book is primarily focused on the bison, but a section is dedicated to birds, in which the owl is discussed. Even though the section is only a few paragraphs, it gives a good description of the owl’s relationship to the Oglala yuwipi men. The book also provides a table of animals at the end of the book. This table provides information on specific powers these animals are supposed to embody. Although Brown does not specifically refer to the art of the Sioux, this book gives specific beliefs related to the animal which allows for the reader to then take that information to aid in the translation of Sioux artifacts.

Where there are stories, there is probably art. This makes Far North Tales: Stories of the People of the Arctic Circle important for this research. This book is translated and retold in English by Bonnie C. Marshall and edited by Kira Van Deusen. In the book, two of the stories are vital to this research on owls. The first is an Inuit and Upper Yukon Dene tale called “Raven and Owl”. This story assigns characteristics to both the owl and the raven which clues us in on their importance to the tribe and how the animals are viewed. The second story is the Canadian Inuit and Alaskan Inupiat tale of “The Owl and The Siksik”. This book is a collection of legends and animal folklore, however the book is lacking in insight on these stories origin and meaning. Occasionally, the book gives definitions for Inuit words, like siksik which is their word for the Artic ground squirrel (Figure 1-1), and explains what the creature is like.
One of the most important resources for this thesis comes from an unlikely spot. *Animal Lore and Legend: Owls,* this book is a retelling of American Indian Legends specifically about owls. Vee Browne is a notable Navajo writer and educator. She is also noted for her children’s literature. This book, written for children contains owl folktales from the Inuit, Salish, Seneca, Hopi, Picuris, Cherokee, and Zuni. Additional text is written by Vic Warren who gives further explanations of the significance of the owl to the specific cultures mentioned above. Warren includes artifacts and owl representations from the different tribes. Despite being a children’s book, it is a comprehensive collection of owl art, owl tales, and explains the cultural significance of the creature.

Other resources used provide an understanding of owls living in North America and their migration patterns. These books include *Hawks and Owls of Eastern North America* by Donald S. Heintzelman, *North American Birds of Prey* by Scott Weidensaul, and *Owls of the World: Their Lives, Behavior, and Survival* by James R. Duncan. Donald Heintzelman’s book is about information on the owls of North America. It includes tidbits of information on food habits, distribution, migration, behavior, and nesting cycles. Heintzelman also gives twenty pages on where to find more in depth information about these topics raised in this book.

*North American Birds of Prey* by Scott Weidensaul is very similar to Heintzelman’s book in that it is also a collection of hawks and owls of North America. Weidensaul gives information on 20 species of Owls, separating the different varieties of some species like the Eastern and Western Screech Owls.
Unlike Heintzelman, Weidensaul provides color pictures and gives detailed descriptions of the owl’s plumage and noticeable characteristics. The more prominent species like the Great Horned Owl, Great Grey Owl, Barred Owl and the Snowy Owl get a full page close up photograph of the species. The appendix of this book contains information on conservatories and sanctuaries of North America.

The best book for scientific information on owls is James R. Duncan’s *Owls of the World: Their Lives, Behavior, and Survival*. Not only does it give information on the conservation status and a general distribution of the 205 species of Owl around the world, it talks about the nature, threats, and study of the owl. The most important part of this book is written by Bruce G. Marcot and David H. Johnson on “Owls in Mythology and Culture”. This section provides information on the importance of the owl to different cultures around the world including several examples from the North American Indians. The writers incorporate colorful pictures of American Indian artifacts including masks and clubs.

Duncan’s chapter on “Owls of the World, Their Global Conservation Status and General distribution” is a collection of all the species of owls in world. In this chapter, Duncan writes about the description, habitat, natural history, and conservation status of each owl. All the owls are accompanied by a global picture of their range and most are accompanied by a colored photo. Unfortunately, not all owls are accompanied by a photograph; these tend to be the obscure species that are only found on one or two islands in world. This book also gives insight of
how owls are studied by humans. Several people have written excerpts for this part of the book talking about their areas of expertise to shed light on the subject at hand. This section of the book helps the reader to understand all the different aspects that are included when looking at a specific species. Topics included are longevity, color variations, migration patterns and ideas on how to catch an owl. This section provides insight in what early Native Americans may have been looking for when viewing the species. Duncan does a remarkable job with bringing every possible aspect of the owl together in one book. With the help of other owl scientists, he has managed to bring together a beautiful photographic story, combining mythology and scientific information about the world’s owls to educate the public about these mysterious night creatures.

Several online resources are helpful, “The Owl Pages” at owlpages.com (Figure 1-2) is a collection of owl related art, papers, species guides, and legends. It provides papers along with some tidbits of information to inform the reader about every conceivable owl related fact. The website provides a plethora of information on the owl in mythology and legend, as well as, articles written about the owl. Included on this site is Deane P. Lewis’ several articles on owl mythology from around the world. He includes a list of countries and their views about the owl. Even a miniature art gallery is dedicated to owl inspired art. The website also features comprehensive links broken down into areas of information geared toward the following: children, research, sanctuaries, rehabilitation, and collectors.
Owling.com is also an important link for finding information on the owls of North America. This site is used by bird watchers and more specifically people who enjoy owling, (Figure 1-3) which is the act of going outside mostly at night or at dusk in order to see or even perform calls to attract owls. The site details all the species that are found in the North America. It has comprehensive information including pictures, field notes, and sounds of that particular species of owl. It also contains links to other owling pages for example Central American owl sites. Like the literature of Heintzelman, Duncan, and Weidensaul, this information aids in the identification of North America species and their habits.

Each of these resources brings a better understanding of the owl and its significance to the world and specifically to North America. Through these books the owl can be examined in both its scientific and cultural aspects to increase the researcher’s understanding. Although no book specifically addresses the art influenced by the owl in North America, all of these resources help shed light on these mystery creatures and how the owl is viewed by humans. This research will examine the connections of the owl to the people of North America through the artwork that has been produced.
Chapter 2:

A Brief Overview about the Owls of North America

With over two hundred and five species of owl in the world it is no wonder that many cultures have given them their attention. Like humans, they are found all over the globe, including some of the harshest climates on earth. Due to their nocturnal behaviors, the owl is one of the most poorly studied creatures on the planet. Despite this obstacle, the owl has been used widely as symbols of both good and bad omens, as well as spirits, messengers, magicians, and icons. In order to have a better understanding of the culture significance and artistic details of the information to follow, the reader must first develop a basic understanding of the owls of North America that have influenced these artists.

Currently there are nineteen species of owls in North American. All owls belong to the order strigiformes which is then broken up into two families. The tytonidae includes the barn and bay owls, the strigidae encompasses all other owls that do not fit into the other family (Cholewiak, 2003). The key to determining which of the two families an owl belongs to is through comparing several of their features the owl possesses. The first and most common way to tell the difference is to look at the owl’s facial disk. In tytonidae owls, their facial disks are distinctly heart shaped like the barn owl in Figure 2-1 which is unlike the round shaped head of the Great Grey Owl of Figure 2-2 which belongs to the strigidae family. The tytonidae also have longer heads and legs than strigidae typically do. Another
common difference is the ear tufts that some species of strigidae, for which the
great horned owl in Figure 2-3 are known. Tytonidae tend not to have these ear
tufts or they are very small.

Before discussing the differences between some of the nineteen different
species of owls in North America, it is important to understand the features that
make owls unique from other birds. According to James Duncan, these include
the owl’s feathers, plumage color, facial disks, ear tufts, and vision/neck structure.
The feathers of an owl make up one of the bird’s most interesting traits, their
structure impacts their sound or lack thereof during flight. The upper surface of
these feathers is made of a soft velvety pile that rubs quietly over one another
while the bird is in flight (2003). Although some species have bright yellow eyes,
most owls are very drab in color to be better camouflaged. Unlike most birds who
utilize bright colors for mating and courtship, owls are mainly nocturnal birds that
would not benefit from standout colors (2003). Some species have evolved into
different colors because of geographic location; their colors can also change as
they go through different phases of maturity.

This facial disk is special arrangement of feathers on the owl’s face which
helps sound travel to the owl’s ear openings. These feathers are usually dramatic
in coloring, shape, and size like in the picture of the short eared owl in Figure 2-4.
The facial disk of this owl is very apparent by the contrast of light and dark
feathers used around the eyes, as well as the band of white plumage that defines a
ring around the face. These feathers stretch out to the owl’s ear flaps or ear
opening, essentially making it easier for them to hear sounds. Duncan likens this
to cupping your hand around your ear to help you hear something far in the distance (2003).

When looking at owl inspired works of art one of the key components in identifying the species that is being represented is whether the owl has feathered ear tufts. In the owling world these are sometimes referred to as horns. Though it is not clear what the full purpose of an owl’s ear tufts are for, they do help give each owl species a unique silhouette. Some owls have very large horns, like the great horned (Figure 2-3) and the long eared owl (Figure 2-5). This is believed to help the owl communicate; much like a cat would with their ears¹. Some also believe that the horns help to break up the owl’s silhouette or even make it appear more cat-like. It is no surprise that the great horned owl is sometimes known as the “cat owl” (Axley 2001).

Another cat-like trait of the owl is their ability to see in the dark. While it cannot see in complete and total darkness, some species can see almost as well as a cat in low light settings. Owls tend to do most of their hunting close to sunrise and sunset in order to utilize the maximum the amount of sight they have (Duncan, 2003). For the size of their body, owls have extremely large eyes, some even larger than a human’s in a skull that is much, much smaller. When observing owls, viewers will notice there are two distinct types of eyes. The barn owl (Figure 2-1), barred owl (Figure 2-6), spotted owl (Figure 2-7), and flammulated owl (Figure 2-8) have dark brown eyes that are almost black. When looking at the

¹ Duncan explains that when looking after a Great Horned Owl, who could not be released back into the wild, he observed that the owl would lay its ear tufts down when it was irritated or frightened and would perk them up when it was alert or watching things in the distance (24).
other owl species, like the long eared owl in Figure 2-5, their eyes are brighter in shades from yellow-green, yellow, to near orange.

Like most birds, an owl’s eyes are basically immovable, which requires the owl to have a very flexible neck in order for it to see the things around it. Owls only have 14 vertebrae unlike other birds, which have 25, making their necks shorter than typical birds. The owl’s most quirky trait comes from its ability to turn its neck over 180 degrees from side to side, an owl can see anywhere around it without moving (Duncan, 2003). Another unique trait of the owl is the forward facing eyes which give the owl a wiser and more human appearing face. During the medieval ages, owls were given even more human-like characteristics in illuminated bestiaries, like the one pictured in Figure 2-9. Many American Indian legends are based upon the owl having human like qualities.

Before moving forward, it is important to be familiar with some of the most prevalent species that are found in North America and make their appearances in artworks. Some species span across the nation and have impact on various cultures, like the great horned, great gray, long eared, short eared, and northern saw-whet owl. Other owls, like the snowy, boreal, and burrowing owls have specific ranges that make them important to the people in those areas. The screech owl is an interesting example since there are three types of screech owls, between the western, eastern, and whiskered, they cover most of North America.

\(^2\) According to Miyazaki’s, *Misericord Owls and Medieval Anti-Semitism*, the owl was seen with a negative connotation because of it being used to represent the Jewish people (28).
The Great Horned owl is the most prevalent owl in North America (Figure 2-3). Weidensaul calls the bird, “the most successful predator” because it is found in every part of North America as well as the rain forests of Central America (74). At two feet tall with a five foot wingspan, these birds are big enough to eat possums and young raccoons. These owls are the first to breed each year, they seem to need this extra time to teach their owlings how to hunt and survive to the next breeding series. The call of the great horned owl is recognizable and very prevalent in Native America legends.

The great gray owl is the largest of all the North American owls (Figure 2-2). Despite being the tallest owl standing at a height of thirty inches; the great horned and snowy owls are heavier in weight. The gray owl stays mainly in the conifer forests of the north, with smaller groups in the Rockies, Cascades, and Sierras at the higher elevations (Weidensaul 1996). Due to the large facial disk for hearing and excellent eye sight of the great gray, the owl will actually gain weight in the winter months because of its ability to hunt in the snow. This owl’s unique features, like his huge head and large stature makes it unforgettable.

The long eared owl (Figure 2-5) and short eared owls (Figure 2-4) are common to the North American wilderness. Long eared owls are widely distributed across the United States. They are smaller and thinner in size but look similar to the great horned owl. Their most recognizable features are their tall feathery horns, orangey copper facial disk, and goldenrod eye color. Although these owls are found in many parts of North America and much of Europe, being

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3 The call of the great horned owl is a series of six or seven low hoots (Weidensaul, 74).
strongly active at night makes these birds a rarity to observe during the daylight hours. With their good camouflage and mostly silent behavior, when not in courting season; these birds disappear into their surroundings leaving owl pellets\(^4\) and white droppings as the only sign of their habitation (Wiedensaul 1996). This owl is an opportunistic hunter who will eat anything it can catch: mice, rats, squirrels, birds, even snakes and lizards (Heintzelman, 2004). Due to a downward trend in nesting over the past thirty years, the long eared owls have been placed on the “endangered” list in Illinois and is a “species of special concern” in Michigan, Wisconsin, and throughout New England.

The short eared owl (2-4) has several unique characteristics that make it stand out from most of its North American cousins. Two features make this owl recognizable immediately to bird watchers. The first is the small, dainty ear tuffs for which the short eared owl is named after. The second is the heavy black “mascara” that surrounds its eyes. This has led some Native American legends to link this species to a transformed woman. Like long eared owls, they are opportunistic eaters; however their diet consists of eating more bugs and birds. These creatures are crepuscular\(^5\) which is why people encounter them more often than their long eared cousins. Living in flat areas and grass lands, these owls have a peculiar habit of making their nests on the ground and its breeding success is tied to the rise and fall of the vole population (Weidensaul 1996).

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4 Owl pellets are coughed up by the owl, and contain the teeth, bones, fur, and exoskeletons of an animal that cannot be digested by the low acidic content of the gastric juices of the owl (Duncan, 53).

5 Crepuscular is when an animal begins being active at dusk or twilight and continues into the night with some activity curtailing around midnight (Heintzelman 157).
The northern saw-whet owl’s habitat stretches across the United States and up into Canada. Ancient Greek coins with owls placed upon them reflect the symbol of Athena, the saw-whet owl (Triefeldt 2008). It is a short, round owl, with a large head. It is extremely easy to recognize this little owl by the white “Y” shaped marking that runs down the between and over the eyes (Figure 2-10). Since this owl is only eight inches tall it is considered a mouser (Weidensaul 1996). There is another owl, the boreal owl (Figure 2-11) that is very similar to the saw-whet but tends to stay further north. The boreal owl is popular with the Inuit Indians. It has been known to make shelters in old igloos, but now since the practice of making ice shelters is rare this owl may not get that chance anymore (Weidensaul 1996). Some Inuit children have even been known to keep boreal owls as pets (Lewis, 1999).

Like the boreal owl, the snowy owl is important to the Inuit people. The beauty and unique shape of these owls has made it one of the most recognizable in earth’s history. The snowy owls (Figure 2-12) are considered the first birds ever recorded. The caves of Les Trois Frères contain images of snowy owls, recognizable by their small heads, relatively small eyes, and large body (Duncan, 2003). The adult male snowy owls are the brightest with an almost all white coat. The females and juvenile owl’s feathers have heavy markings of dark to dusky-brown. Unlike other owls, the facial disks of this owl have pure white feathers that make it blend in with the rest of the owl’s plumage. This owl has bright

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6 The cave at Trois Frères, cave in Ariège, France, containing an important group of Late Paleolithic paintings and engravings that date back to about 13,000 B.C. (Trois Freres, 2012).
yellow colored eyes making it diurnal\textsuperscript{7}, so it can take advantage of the limited daylight in the winter months of the north. The migratory habits of this bird are considerably affected by the population cycles of the lemmings and artic hares. In years were the cycles are low, young juvenile males have been forced as far south as Alabama and even Bermuda from their Arctic Circle homes (Weidensaul, 1996). Due to the limited contact that these owls have with humans they seem to fearless when they encounter one. With the size and heaviness of the great horned and grey owls, snowy owls are a presence that can inspire and intrigue. The snowy owl is enjoying a surge in popularity, largely brought about by the influence of Hedwig(Figure 2-13), a beautiful snowy owl and friend to the character Harry Potter, in the popular children’s series.

With none of the height of the snowy owl, the burrowing owl (Figure 2-14) is much smaller; it stands at a height of just nine to ten inches. This owl does have a more unique trait, it lives underground. In the desert many animals adapt themselves to a cooler underground climate, and this owl is no exception. With large families some have been known to make their homes in tunnels of other animals, like the prairie dog (Weidensaul, 1996). Its appearance is very unique. Its silhouette features a long torso, long legs, and a short, round, and tuff less head. The burrowing owls plumage is chestnut and white with barring\textsuperscript{8} on its underside and spotting on its back. This helps it to blend with the earth and the grasslands.

\textsuperscript{7} Owls’ eye color can give an indication of its hunting habits; very dark eyes is active at night (nocturnal), an owl with orange eyes is active at dawn and dusk (crepuscular) and an owl with yellow eyes is normally active during the day (diurnal) with some exceptions (Owls, 2006).

\textsuperscript{8} Barring is a striping that helps to camouflage the owl from predators, most prevalent in species like the Northern Hawk Owl and Barred Owl (Duncan, 2003).
around them. These owls are colonial making them easy to spot in the daylight when they are active. Despite living in the ground, these birds can fly, but often chose to hop, run, walk, and jump to find their meals (Heintzelman, 2004). The Burrowing owls are the stars of not only the pottery of the Zuni Indians, but also of a popular children’s book entitled *Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen.

In Mexico the Mayans believed that an owl hooting long and loud was a bad omen. The screech owl in particular represented *Mo An*\(^9\) and was an attendant to the Mayan death god *Yum Cimil* (Johnson & Marcot, 2003). It is not only in North America that the owl is recognized in both art and in stories. In Malawi, the owl is still viewed as an evil bird today. The Chinese saw the owl as both a good and a bad omen. The Han Dynasty utilized owl figurines as *mingqi*\(^10\). There was also a legend according to Johnson and Marcot, that in China it was believed that owlets plucked their mother’s eyes out. The legends of India depict the owl as a bad omen, a messenger of ill will, or a servant of the dead. Johnson and Marcot wrote that a foolish person in Pakistan and India will sometimes be called an “owl” (2003). In contrast, Blakiston’s fish owl was considered divine to the Ainu people of Japan. In Central Asia, a region east of the Caspian Sea, also see the owl positively. The Eurasian eagle owl feathers are used as amulets to protect children and livestock. Even the talons were once used to cure infertility and ward off disease.

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\(^9\) *Mo An* is the bird of death believed to be a screech owl (Johnson & Marcot, 2003).

\(^10\) *Mingqi* were used with other objects in a tomb to provide the deceased with comfort and satisfaction in the afterlife (Colburn Clydesdale, 2009).
The deep awareness and complex understandings derived from old and ancient civilizations of the world may help to better understand the species today. Many conservationists believe that it is imperative to communicate the positive heritage of the owl in order to save it. Even today in parts of rural England, owls are nailed to doors of barns in order to ward off lightning and the evil eye (Johnson & Marcot, 2003). The owl sits on a see-saw as a symbol of good and bad and its image seems to be stuck in a revolving door. It is important to remember, communicate, and explore both the positive and negative traditions associated with the owl before they too are gone along with the older cultures that respected and feared them. This report will try to open the reader’s eyes to the role the owl has played in shaping the artistic view in North America.
Chapter 3:

Native American Owl inspired Art Prior to the Nineteenth Century

When looking at the art inspired by the owl in North America, the first look will be at cultures that had been inspired by the creature and created artifacts. Our journey started at around 2200 B.C.E, in the late Archaic Period\textsuperscript{11}, and in the Lower Mississippi Valley Region of Louisiana. On a bluff overlooking the swamplands is the home of a pre-historical Native American settlement known as Poverty Point. This group of Native Americans is presumed to be the ancestors of the present day Creek, Choctaw, Shawnee, and Natchez tribes. This culture is known for the large and ancient earthworks they created\textsuperscript{12}. Many artifacts have been collected from this site including arrowheads, stone tools, beads, pendants, and animal figures including owls (Gibson, 1996). Susan Powers writes that at Poverty Point “early artists conceptualized and produced art with eloquent expression and technical sophistication” (15).

Large numbers of fat-bellied owl beads were found throughout many of the Poverty Point archeological sites. These beads (Figure 3-1) have some unique traits that make them very recognizable. The beads are primarily made of red jasper with a hole drilled into a side. In some parts of the world red jasper has traditionally been thought to protect against the hazards of the night. Jon Gibson,

\textsuperscript{11} The Archaic Period is from 8000BCE to 1000BCE; specifically the late Archaic Period is 3000BCE to 1000BCE.

\textsuperscript{12} This is about the same time that Stonehenge was being constructed and Hammurabi was in power (Gibson 1996).
a Poverty Point expert and writer of *Poverty Point: A Terminal Archaic Culture of the Lower Mississippi Valley*, writes about several things that those beads could have been used for. One of his first ideas is that the beads could have been used in trade. Gibson suggests that fat-bellied owl beads could have been used not as goods themselves, but as a representation of the idea of currency. This theory would make the real meaning behind them completely impossible to confirm. These beads have been found all over the south, including western Louisiana and central Florida. Another suggestion is that the owls were used in a religious fashion and traded for that purpose. There is also a “Fox-Man” design that appears at Poverty Point. It has special religious significance and is used on plummets and banner stones bearing engravings. Gibson believes that this is more likely a stylized horned owl, like a great horned or screech owl, than a man in a fox headdress (1996).

When examining these fat-bellied owl beads, there are several traits that make them unique. Most of the beads have two small feet and a tail in which a flat bottom is carved so they can stand erect. The faces of the owls are typically round and smaller than the bodies with a curved beak and drilled eye holes. It appears that the owl’s facial disc protrudes forward and joins the beak or stops right above it. A small hole is drilled through the sides of the owl bead’s neck or upper torso in order for the bead to be hung. They are most recognizable by their pudgy abdomens for which they get their “fat-bellied name”. Several other variations of this bead have been found. They include a bodiless owl’s head, a flat spot with
decorations on its head, and one owl bead that is suspended head down due to the hole being by its feet (Bullen, Lien, & Webb, 1974).

According to Powers, archaic artisans often emphasized quirky aspects of their subjects in order to create a signature element for their effigy pieces. In the case of the owl, this characteristic seems to be that the owl’s head is usually placed opposite of its feet, highlighting the owl’s ability to turn its neck at great angles (2004). Despite their small stature, standing only about an inch high, these pendants or beads appear recognizable based on their species, like the great horned (Figure 2-3), screech owl (Figure 3-2), were most likely the subject in the beads of Figure 11 or possibly the barred owl13 (Figure 2-6).

Other zoomorphic forms of owl were found dating back to the same time period as the fat-bellied owls of Poverty Point. One example is an owl pendant that were found in Hinds County, Mississippi. This owl is different from the fat-bellied beads; it is a representation of an eared owl sitting on a stump. The Hinds owl was also engraved with feathers and claws. Another region in Mississippi where owl artifacts were found was Coahoma County at the Humber site which dates back to the Late Mississippian Period14 (Gibson, 1996). Figure 3-3 illustrates an owl bowl found at the Humber site. The bowl depicts an eared owl face on the rim of the bowl, facing out from the bowl. The owl’s face is interesting because of its flat appearance, protruding eyes, small beak, and it

13 The Barred Owl is commonly known as the “Hoot” owl because of its recognizable cry of “oo-aw”s. In the figure, the owl is also facing towards its tail to emphasis this owl trait.
14 The Mississippian Period is considered between 1000-1500 CE.
appears to have a slit mouth. On the opposite side a tail stretches out from the bowl. Many bowls of similar appearance were found at this site.

The Native American tribes that claim ancestry in the Mississippian Culture within present day Louisiana and Mississippi are the Creek, Choctaw, and Chickasaw. The Choctaw and the Creek both have a horned owl dance that could refer to any of the four varieties of horned owls that are in the area; the screech owl (Figure 3-2), great horned (Figure 2-3), long eared (Figure 2-5) and short eared (Figure 2-4) owl. According to Gibson, the Choctaw both fear and respect the owl. He states that members of the Choctaw tribes of today do not even like to talk about the owl and when they hear one they will call a shaman to make sure it is only an owl and not a witch. Gibson goes on to explain that the modern word for witch is the old word for war prophet. In Choctaw legend, the war prophets were powerful and respected and carried stuffed owls around with them (1996).

But before there was the Humber Site in Mississippi another culture was thriving during the Middle Woodland Period another culture was thriving during the Middle Woodland Period farther to the North. The Hopewell Culture also found inspiration in the form of an owl.

Throughout the Ohio River Valley, including Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio, another group of Native American’s thrived and traded from about 100 B.C. to 500 A.D in an era known as the Middle Woodland Period. Not knowing the name of the culture, archeologists called them after the person who owned the Hopewell Mound Group in Chillicothe, Ohio (Hopewell Culture, 2005). The Hopewell

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15 The Woodland Period was from about 1000BCE to 1000 CE. The Middle Woodland was from 1-500CE.
culture created large earthworks or mounds that they used to bury and honor the dead. Many objects were uncovered when they began to excavate the mounds of the Hopewell. These objects gave great insight into their habits and skills. Archeologists maintain they are known for their explosion of art and the materials used to create it. The Hopewell lived in small villages that were scattered through the Ohio River Valley. This suggests that the earthworks may have also served as places for these dispersed groups to gather periodically to renew friendships and socialize.

The Hopewell Culture was known for their animal effigy pipes, particular their owls. These pipes were found mainly at the sites of Mound City and Tremper Mound, which led archaeologists to believe they could have been used in ceremonial manners. The catlinite effigy pipes were carved very delicately and with great detail. It had previously been believed that the Hopewell used Ohio pipestone to construct their pieces however after testing it was found that much of the pipestone came from quarries in Illinois. This suggests the trading of different materials since both the Tremper Mound and Mound City are in Ohio.

Many animals are depicted in the Hopewell Pipes; however owls were very common in the pipes that have been found. All the pipes however showed a similar construction and style; a flat body that has a place where a piece of wood would be placed to hold the pipe. The flat body would then hold an animal on top of it, in this case an owl (Figure 3-4). The owl would then have a bowl shape carved out of its back to hold the material. What makes some of these owls unique
is that unlike the other animal pipes which face the smoker, the owl pipe’s bodies face away while their head turns towards the smoker. Archeologists have suggested that these pipes could have been used by a shaman to induce a trance state which would assist in rituals of healing (Woodland Animal Effigy Pipes, 2005).

These pipes were carved in such detail that the viewer could identify the specific owl species. In Figure 3-5 the Hopewell pipe resembles the small frame and the large eyes of the Saw-Whet owl (Figure 2-10) that is native to the Ohio River Valley. By comparing Figure 3-5 and Figure 2-10, the photograph of the northern saw-whet owl it is apparent that there are similarities in posture, eye placement, and the signature heart-shaped face. The owl in Figure 15 is easily identifiable as a great horned (Figure 2-3) owl by the ear tuffs and the strong upright vertical posture of the animal. The pipe of Figure 3-6 is most likely a barred owl and is a good example of the owl facing the smoker much like the barred owl in the photograph of Figure 2-6. This is one of the owl’s most common traits and is seen often in owl art The viewer can see the detail in the wings very clearly, unlike the one on the saw-whet owl pipe.

Despite their accuracy in carving the different species in realistic detail, there was no writing system to let us know what the owl meant to the Hopewell just like that of Wickliffe Mound people of Kentucky who also used the owl in their art work and ceremonies. It could have been a clan or family name or maybe a symbolic protector. Faith Medlin author of Centuries of Owls in Art and The
Written Word suggests the idea that the Hopewell shaman might use the pipes and so the owl would be associated with magic and with being a seer, which is very similar to what other tribes do today. Many of these pipes are broken as well, suggesting that the pipe might have been broken as part of a burial ceremony (1967).

Much like the pipes of the Hopewell Culture, the owl continued to influence the Native American tribes well into the Mississippian Time Period in the same region. By moving down the Ohio River to where it meets the Mississippi River there are the mounds at Wickliffe, Kentucky, where around 900 years ago sat a Mississippian Culture village. Upon excavation of these mounds many styles of ceramics pottery had been uncovered, including several vessels and pendants in the shape of owls. Archaeologists discovered bones of a short eared owl, snowy owl, and barred owl from the mound sites. These bones were most likely used as tools, ornamentation, and decoration. The Wickliffe Mound Research Center has even chosen a hooded owl vessel as the logo (Wesler, 2001).

The major owl pieces found at the Wickliffe Mounds site include a large hooded owl effigy vessel, several owl faces that had are believed to have broken off similar effigy vessels, and miniature owl effigy vessels/pendants. The large owl vessel (Figure 3-7) is only available to view as a replica because the original was stolen in 1988 along with other pieces from the site and has never been recovered. Many characteristics of this vessel make it unique and undoubtedly an owl. The ceramic owl’s face is flat with protruding front facing eyes that are encompassed by a circle shape, possibly mimicking an owl’s feathered, facial
disks. The beak is centrally located and hooks down and flat unlike the vessels horns. The owl’s ear horns stick up and out on the top of its head. Right behind the ear tuffs or horns is the opening to the bottle. The owl’s long neck connects to a round, robust body which is held up by two legs and it’s tail in a tripod fashion. According to the information given at the Wickliffe Mounds site, the original vessel had traces of both white and black paint on it. This vessel would have been placed next to the dead for burial purposes. Figure 3-8 recreates how the burial spaces were uncovered using plastic skeletons.

The owl faces recovered from the site are very similar to that of the large owl vessel. They vary in size and tend to be larger than the face on the 1988 stolen vessel. This is presumed why the smaller vessel survived the 900 years since their creation, whereas the larger vessels may have cracked under the pressure. The smaller owl vessels are also made of clay and have recognizable owl traits, primarily ear tuffs, and an upright stance like in Figures 3-9 and 3-10. Figure 3-9 appears to have lost details over time but the horns and beak still remain. Figure 3-10 is a photograph of a replica of a small owl clay effigy found at Wickliffe Mounds. The original was reburied on June 8, 2012 by Murray State University. These were considered burial goods and were placed back into the burial mounds. This owl is identifiable once again by its upright stance and ear tuffs. The wings of the owl are pushed back in a shell like manner in order to make room in the front for a small cavity. The wings also act as the third leg in the tripod form to help support the little effigy.
Upon visiting several Native American Mississippian Period Mound sites, it seems that certain animals or motifs are more common at some sites than others. For example, Chucalissa Mounds at the C.H. Nash Museum in Memphis, uses an intertwining two snake motif. The Choctaw and the Chickasaw tribes of the South both claim the Chucalissa Mounds as being home to the ancestors from which their tribes sprang. The Wickliffe Mounds people may have been the ancestors to the Cherokee Tribes; however there is no way to prove that claim. According Kit Wesler, author *Excavations at Wickliffe Mounds*, both the Cherokee and the Chickasaw had encounters in the area around Wickliffe later on in the centuries but neither considered the area their homeland. There is also a theory called the Vacant Quarter Hypothesis in which the area where the Ohio River meets the Mississippi was abandoned during the 1400-1500’s. This idea is based on the absence of graves and artifacts being found in these areas. There are many theories that surround what could have happened to the people in these areas but right now it is uncertain (2001).

The reasoning for the creation of the owls at Wickliffe is still unknown. Due to the Vacant Quarter hypothesis and no official ancestry, archaeologist can only speculate what these vessels were used for and what the owl represented to this culture. Based on some of the beliefs of the possible ancestors of this particular culture, the owl effigies could have had several possible purposes. The first is that the owl, in many Native American cultures, has strong ties with death and darkness so it would not be a stretch they would have been used in burial ceremonies. Another strong possibility is that because the Mississippian Indians
were corn farmers and stored grain, owls were a positive symbol because they would kill the rodents and mice that would eat the grain (Hildebrand 2002). Either way there is no positive answer to this mystery but it is evident that the owl played a role in the lives of the Mississippian Indians that occupied the Ohio River Valley at Wickliffe.
Chapter 4:

Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Practices and Art of the Owl in Native American Society

As time moved on, the Native American tribes that we know today began to develop their own stories and beliefs about the owl. These stories demonstrate their strong cultural ties to the owl; including the Inuit, Tlingit, and Yup’ik of the Far North, the Sioux from the central plains, the Cherokee of the southeast, and the Zuni and Hopi Indians of the southwest. The owl shows up in folklore as warrior aids, shaman advisors, teaching tools, and even magic makers.

The owl served the Great Spirit and aided his people in some of their endeavors. It is no wonder that Native Americans found a strong fascination with the creature. The owl has seemingly an almost human face, magic is seen in its dark eyes, and it is silent when swooping in on its prey; all of these traits combined to catch the attention of many tribes. The great horned owl (Figure 2-3) and the screech owl (Figure 3-2) are two of the most common owls seen in North America. Both of these species and their subspecies are adorned with feathers or ear tuffs that stick straight up from the top of its head. Feathers sticking straight up from the head are images commonly associated with Native Americans headdresses and for many, owls are symbols of power. The snowy owl (Figure 2-12) also made a huge impact on the tribes of the north, as well as tribes from
many of the lower forty eight states as it makes its way south in winter to search for food.

The Cherokee tribes of the North Carolina seemed to have two differing views of the owl. One has it linked to magic and that it could be a witch in disguise. On the other hand, the owl was seen as a tool to help the warriors of the Cherokee and a division of the organization of their warriors. Either way the owl is prevalent in their folklore and the art of the Cherokee. The story of the "The First Fire", tells the story of how the Cherokee received fire with the aid of animals. The story goes that three owls try and fail at recovering fire from a sycamore tree. The little screech owl known as Wahuhu, said it would go but the fire burnt his eyes and turned them red which they still remain today. Then the hooting or barred owl known as Uguku and the great horned owl known as Tskuli tried but by the time they got to the hollow tree the fire was burning so fiercely that the smoke nearly blinded them. The ashes carried up by the wind made white rings about their eyes which they still carry with them today despite all their rubbing. Despite their helpful nature in the story the owl was sometimes viewed as an evil omen.

The Cherokee shamans value the owl especially the eastern screech owls (Figure 3-2) as consultants. Most viewed owls as witches that could bring on sickness as punishment (Lewis, 2005). Their cries were often considered an evil omen and would require a shaman to determine if it was an owl or a witch. Due to these magical connections the owl was not consumed. Cherokees often feared the “witch owl” because it was thought that they could read a person’s mind and
transform into the guise of a purple ball of fire, a wolf, a raven, a cat. The owl is considered to be a form of the witch because of the owl’s activity at night. To appease the old woman, the Cherokee believed lived in the sun or scared fire, they would feed a portion of their food to the woman for fear she would come in the night disguised as an owl or whippoorwill to take vengeance (Oukah and Ross MacDonald, L, 2001).

According to “When Cherokees were Cherokee” the way in which the Cherokee organized their warriors gave the owl recognition for its special talents making in one of the most distinguished position within the warrior ranks(2001). There were three ranks for war scouts, fox, owl, and wolf. The owl would go to the right while the fox would rear and the wolf would go to the left. The “owl” warriors would wear owl skins around their neck and make owl calls to communicate when he would encounter an enemy. (Gilbert, 1943) Making the owl one of their highest ranked positions was probably due to the owl’s ability to be silent as well as their ability to see in the dark which would help the scouts in their tasks.

The art work of the Cherokee seems to have a strong emphasis on sculpture. Figure 4-1 depicts a carved owl effigy piece from the Cherokee artist, Freeman Owle, a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee. She was born in 1946; this piece was probably made in the later 20th century. The steatite owl is a stylized owl with a smooth body and a rotated neck making the owl appear to be facing the viewer from the side. They eyes are large and front facing allowing for lines to be drawn to indicate the owl’s facial disk. It is likely a barred owl (Figure
2-6) as many refer to the hooting owl that is indigenous to the southeastern areas of the United States. It sits atop a branch or rock also carved from the same piece of steatite as the owl itself.

Wood carving seems to be the most abundant sculpture tradition for the Cherokee Indians. Many sculptures of owls are found to be made of wood like Figure 4-2. This Cherokee Wood Owl Carving, by woodcarver Virgil Ledford, was made on the Cherokee Indian Reservation in North Carolina during the mid-20th century. Its shape resembles the steatite sculpture of Figure 4-1, with a side facing glance the owl sits atop a ledge with talons clasping. The wings are sleek and extend into the birds tail. Once again this is probably a barred owl, where the facial disk holes and earless head are apparent.

Photographs also help to preserve the importance of the owl to the Cherokee Indians. Figure 4-3 shows a photograph of Ethel Bigmeat from the 1940’s. The picture shows the pottery maker carving while exhibiting some of her wares at the Cherokee Lodge, in Cherokee, North Carolina. On the steps she is sitting on, owl effigies in the form of pottery and sculpture sit next to her almost staring at the camera. If the owl were not important it would not be made into vessels to display or sell.

“Owl Man” Figure 4-4 is an interesting carving with a unique tale. The story of “Owl Man” or “The Strange Husband” is a story told while the artisans sit around and carve their wood sculptures. In the tale, a woman goes to her husband and asks him why he does not bring home deer meat or fish like the other
hunters, but instead brings home mice and snakes. So one day the wife follows her husband and discovers that he transforms himself into an owl during the day to hunt and back to a man at night (Goshorn, S., Duncan, B. R., and Arch, D., 2008). The carving in Figure 4-4 represents the “Owl Man” in wood, paint, and varnish. It was carved in 1985-86 by Sammy Cucumber who is also part of Eastern Band of Cherokee in North Carolina. The piece is varnished with a heart like facial disc upon which a human face is represented. Black paint is used to create the pupils of the man and draw attention to the inset eyes. The owl is once again positioned sitting sideways with its talons clutching a pedestal. The body is pudgy and simplified with only a slight protruding of wings.

Similar to the Cherokee, The Plains Indians also associated a shaman and his magical powers with the owls. The Oglala Sioux, one of the seven Lakota tribes of the Plains Indians, believe that the owl outranks all other because of their ability to see in the dark.

“The medicine-man gets his power through dreams at night and believes that his dream is clear, like the owl's sight... so he promises that he will never harm an owl. If he did so, his power would leave him. For this reason some medicine-men wear owl feathers. The medicine-man also regards the owl as having very soft, gentle ways, and when he begins to treat the persons he is supposed to treat them gently” (Walker, 1917).
The Oglala Sioux medicine-men are called yuwipi men. A better known yuwipi was Little Warrior who was known for his gentle "owl" nature and curing powers. Among his animal helpers was an owl. This "owl spirit" from which he got his powers would help him see in the dark when the ceremonies took place. Using the owl's ability to see in the night, the yuwipi could find things that could not normally be seen (Brown, 1991).

The Sioux warriors of the central plains saw shields as being important part of protection when they shot arrows at the enemy. They also believed that whatever was painted on the shield would help the warrior in battle. Most shields were made of buffalo-hide and an elk-skin shell. The shields would also offer protection with the items attached to them. The images of owls would be painted on the hide and owl feathers would be hung from the shield. The owl medicine/spirit would help the warrior to be silent and see what is unseen (Medlin, 1967). For the Sioux, the owl was regarded highly by several factions of their society including their warriors.

In the 1890's, the Ghost Dance religion tried to rally the Plains Indians to save their land from the white settlers. A Ghost Dance shield (Figure 4-5) made from muslin from the Sioux Indian Nation. Ghost Dancers would wear muslin "ghost shirts" and carried muslin shields depicting owls. Dancers would stomp and shuffle, representing a great earth shaker who would swoop down and remove the white men, leaving only Indians. The Sioux also believed that these shirts and shields were bullet proof (Medlin, 1967). The Ghost Shield in Figure 26 is 18
Inches in diameter and made for the ghost dances of the Sioux. It has what appears to be a Snowy Owl sitting erect on a hill painted on the muslin. The shield also has feathers attached to its side. The dancer/warrior would be embodied with the unique characteristics of the owl.

The Oglala Sioux regarded the snowy owl (Figure 2-14) quite highly. Any warrior who had proven themselves brave in combat was given a cap made from the feathers of owls as a symbol of that bravery. There was also an old time society of the Sioux called the Owl Lodge. This society believed that those who wore owl feathers would be favored with increased vision because the owl was a creature that had special powers not found in other animals (McGaa, 2000).

The Native American tribes of the North also find the snowy owl very important and prevalent in their artwork. The Tlingit reside along the northwestern parts of the Canadian Coast and up into the southern parts of Alaska. They are known for their rich ties to art and spirituality. The Tlingit society is divided into two moieties, the Raven and the Eagle. The moieties are then divided furtherer into subdivisions of lineage and house groups. These groups have heraldic crests that are displayed on totem poles, canoes, feast dishes, house posts, weavings, jewelry, and other art forms (Pritzker, 2000). The owl house or great horned owl house, also called Tsisk’w Hít, is one of the Tlingit houses featuring the owl used as a motif in their art. This even extends to everyday objects like spoons, storage boxes, and even bowls, like the bowl represented in Figure 4-6.
This bowl (Figure 4-6) is made from mountain goat horn and dates back to the 1850’s. Each handle of the bowl has the face of an owl carved into it. The carving continues down the outside of the bowl, where the owl extends its wings around the base of the bowl. The owl face is identifiable by the large forward facing eyes and the hooked nose that protrudes from the bowl handles. The mouth is interesting because it sits under the beak. While the owl appears to have eyebrows, this is probably a representation of the owl’s facial disk.

The Tlingit Indians of the Pacific Northwest Coasts found strength in their warriors through the owl’s spirit. They would rush into battle making the calls and hooting sounds that the owl’s native to their lands make. This would give the warriors an adrenaline rush and boost their confidence when facing their enemies. It would also strike fear into the hearts of those enemies because the owl is feared in some Native American societies (Weinstein, 1985). The owl could also be terrifying to the Tlingit as well. Women would scare children with threats that an owl would take them away if they cried too much. They also saw owls as a bad omen, a messenger to warn against misfortune. They are said to have predicted the Good Friday earthquake in south central Alaska in 1964.

Not only was the owl used by the warriors of the Tlingit, it was also used by the shaman in their folklore, stories, and memorials to the dead. In a memorial figure of a man (Figure 4-7), who according to the Tlingit Indians of Icy Bay, was impaled by a tree. After being killed by the tree the man was then attacked by crows (Medlin, 1967). This image is said to be made from the same tree that killed the man. It is made from wood, pigment, along with human hair which is
attached to the top of the “owl man’s” head. The carving itself is of a man who is displayed with an owl-like beak, human face, and an owl’s body. In pigments of blue, red, yellow, and white, the body of the “owl man” is shown to be sitting on a crow. This could be to show the man’s dominance over the crows that attacked his corpse after his death. A carving like this would sit at the head of the table to commemorate the deceased.

Like the Cherokee, the Tlingit do associate the owl with magic and with their shaman. Owls and eagles were used as “yeks” or spirits of the Tlingit medicine men. Shaman would cut the tongues out of the animals and birds he would use to gain their powers. Parts of their bodies were then used to create amulets and other important equipment for the shaman. The “yek” in the shape of an owl or eagle would then be represented on the shaman’s masks and rattle, like the rattle in Figure 4-8. This figure is an example of a frog, hawk, and owl motif carved into a hardwood rattle of a shaman. The owl is set on top of the rattle with large front facing eyes and a down turned beak. Once again the beak is turned down to indicate the owl and a mouth is then drawn in a frowned face under the beak. The frog appears on the lower part of the rattle as if resting on a lily pad.

The Tlingit were also known for their totems which sometimes utilized owls. In the middle 1800's this tribe’s woodwork became very important. Totems were erected at a festival called a potlatch to distribute wealth, tell stories, or mark historic events. The totems would serve as a coat of arms for specific clans. Most birds looked similar in totems, except for the owl totem, whose beak was short and took a short downward turn, like in Figure 4-9 (Medlin, 1967).
The Yup’ik tribe of west central Alaska also uses wood to pay homage to the owls through the art of mask making. The Yup’ik of the northwest coast of Alaska have a ceremony called the Agayuyaraq, which translates into the "way, or process, of requesting". This final winter ceremony has elaborate singing and there are masks for dancers to please the animal's yuit or persons. The preparation of the ceremony is directed by a shaman or medicine-man. The shaman would seek the guidance of an animal spirit to help them complete the preparations. In most cases this spirit would be an owl. The owl spirit is considered both helpful and dangerous (Fienup-Riordan 1996).

Many of the masks created for the Agayuyaraq contained feathers of the snowy owl. Like in Figure 4-10, five snowy owl feathers stick out of an owl mask. The artist chooses his colors for the mask to add additional meaning. In most cases red would symbolize life or protection, white would represent the living or winter, and black would symbolize the afterlife. Figure 4-11 is another Yup’ik mask known as an inua or animal helper spirit mask. The mask would infuse the wearer with the powers of that particular animal’s abilities. The mask has large crescent shaped eyes and a beak nose. The crescent shaped mouth blends into the black and white spotted mask. One dominant feather remains from the original three feathers. It follows the same color scheme as the Figure 4-10 and the colors we saw with the Tlingit’s shaman raddle.

Moving farther north up the Alaskan plains and coast live the Inuit people of the Artic. The Inuit is a name given to a group of tribes that make their home in the Arctic regions of Greenland, Canada, the United States, and Russia. These
tribes are culturally similar and so they are often categorized together. In North America, the term Eskimo is often used to describe the Inuit people in Alaska and Canada; however it is not the proper term. The Inuit people utilized many different media to create their owl related art, including wood, ivory, stone, and print. They also have many stories within their folklore that helps artist draw inspiration from this feathery bird of prey.

The legends of the owl are plentiful and varied within the Inuit. One tale known as the “Raven and Owl”, tells the story of how the snowy owl got its spots and how the raven became all black. In this tale the raven asks the owl if they can paint spots on each other. The owl was meticulous while the raven was impatient and kept asking if the owl was done. The owl finally could not take his impatience any longer or in another version the owl is envious of how beautiful the raven was and dumps the paint over his head and that is why the raven is black. Another story is that the short eared owl was once a young woman who became magically transformed into an owl. This owl had a long beak and beautiful face however it became so frightened that it flew into the side of a house squashing its beak and flattening its face to become the short eared owl (Lewis, 2005). It is no wonder that the short eared owl (Figure 2-4) could be considered a women, it has a stunning, dainty face, with startling dark outlined eyes.

Due to their nomadic traditions small sculptures became the typical art form of the Inuit people. With raw material scarce, it was important to utilize

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16 "Eskimo" is commonly used in Alaska to refer to all Inuit and Yupik people of the world, this name is considered derogatory in many other places because it was given by non-Inuit people and was said to mean "eater of raw meat." (Kaplan, 2011).
what one could find to sculpt from. Materials like driftwood, soapstone, antlers, walrus tusks and bones were often some of the few materials the Inuit could find (Medlin, 1967). The yellow cedar wood sculpture depicted in Figure 4-12 shows the attention to the form of the owl by an Inuit artist. Despite the lack of detail the snowy owl attributes begin to emerge from the wood. No ear tufts are visible, but the facial disk and the talons of the owl are the main focus. The feet of the snowy owl are large and fluffy allowing the owl to walk on snow. This carving shows the enlarged feet indicative of the snowy owl.

Figures 4-13 and 4-14 show the small size that would be preferred by the nomadic Inuit, allowing them to be transported easily from home to home. Figure 4-13 is made from steatite/soapstone body, jasper base, with turquoise inlaid eyes. It depicts the owl once again without ear tufts. It could easily be a boreal owl (Figure 2-11) which is also known as "the blind one", because of its tameness during daylight. It is even said that Inuit children make pets of boreal owls (Lewis, 2005). Several linear marks are used to give the pudgy owl stylized wings on the smooth soapstone body.

Figure 4-14 is a small ivory sculpture of an owl. It is probably made from the ivory tusks of a walrus or narwhal that are hunted by the Inuit for food. The owl is sculpted in an upright stance with wings, feet, and tail. The owl has black painted eyes on either side of its down turned beak. This owl is more representative of a snowy owl due to the lack of ear tufts as well as the triangle like indentations that are carved into the body and head of the owl. As a snowy owl matures the black barring or pattern spots of the owl begin to appear in its
snowy white coat. These marking are evident in the snowy owl photograph in Figure 2-12.

In the past, carvings like these were used for amulets, ceremonies, and burial goods. However as time passes, many artists seem to have begun transitioning into making art as “fine art”. As more resources become available to the Inuit people, stone prints and drawing begin to take shape. Figure 4-15 is a stonecut print made by an Inuit Artist of Cape Dorset, Canada in 1960. The image shows a stylized owl with long head, tail, and body feathers, it could also be light rays coming out from the owl. The artist would create this from a dream or memory, not by looking at an owl specimen. This motif is common in Inuit art, because most of the art is created to represent animal and legends (Medlin 1967). The drawing is given to the viewers to decide what it represents while the artist is required to be modest about their work. Owls were not only a symbol to the Native American Tribes of north, southeast, and plains but also to the tribes of the southwest, especially the Hopi and Zuni Indians of Arizona and New Mexico.

The kachina doll is the most recognized piece of Hopi artwork. Despite being called dolls these pieces are not toys. They are the sacred spirits of animals that befriended the ancestors of the tribe long ago when the humans and animals shared each other’s lives. The Hopis believed that even though the spirits now live apart, their spirits could come back as invisible ghosts to offer guidance. Worthy men would be chosen to impersonate these spirits and wear the kachina outfit and take on the animal’s identity. These ceremonies were also opportunities to teach children about safety (Holmgren, 1998).
The Hopis respected the great horned owl (Figure 2-3) the most, calling it Monwu. They also respected Hotsko and Salak, the Screech Owl (3-2) and Flammulated Owl (Figure 2-8) (Wright, 1973). These owls would whisper their secrets of silence to ensure good hunting and safety for the hunters. Owl feathered masks would be worn by men or women to teach the children about maintaining the silence and keeping safe. Raiding parties were common in the olden days so the children and women would have to flee the village to hide among the rocks. In order to teach the children how to remain quiet at festivals the kachinas would play a game to help learn this skill. A women would lead the village children to form a circle in front of the villagers and the owl kachinas hiding somewhere nearby would then begin hooting. The women would then say:

“Owls are coming! Owls are coming!

Quick, now! Quiet Now! Run and Hide!

Quick, before big owl eyes see you!

Quiet lest sharp owl ears hear you!

Owls are coming! Owls! Owls! Owls!”

The owl kachinas would then come out hooting, stomping, and stepping rhythmically. They would begin shaking their rattles and searching for the children under and behind things. Then the chorus would start up:

“If we hear you, we can find you,

If we find you, we will eat you,
Eat you up all in one bite,

Just one bit and you’ll be gone!”

The children would remain quiet and the “owls” would soon lose interest. They would dance and wander away to the animals in the pasture. When the woman would hear hooting in the distance, she would then call to the children that it was safe to come out and praise them for remaining so quiet. The villagers would praise the children too. Each child would then be presented with an owl kachina, like in Figure 4-16, to remember the importance of silence (Holmgren 1988). Children were also encouraged to look for owls and observe them in the secret of being silent. The kachina doll in Figure 4-16 is a statue of a man dressed in leggings and traditional dance clothes with an owl mask. The mask has tuffs of feathers or wings protruding from the sides. It also has owl feathers attached to the head and rattles on its ankles and feet to symbolize the ceremonial dance.

Another tribe in the southwestern United States is the Zuni Pueblo of New Mexico. The owl was not used just as a magic maker or warrior aid, but for healing. The Zuni Pueblo people of the southwest see the owl as a healer and a teacher, but appreciated the creature for similar reasons. The bird is in the stories passed on from generation to generation. Owls are also in their motherly warnings, dance costumes, prayer sticks, and vessels of religious significance. Most of all, the owl is prevalent in their artwork. Some of this artwork is still being made and sold today at auctions, museums, and Zuni stores (Medlin 1967).
The idea that the owl can see what cannot be “seen” is why the owl is often connected to healing. Owl Medicine reminds us of the importance of the two worlds of the seen and unseen or the physical and spiritual. The Zuni Pueblo Indians refer to the owl as the “Night Grandfather” because he works at night to assist their people. The term grandfather is given to show the wisdom of the owl. The owl is able to uncover deception with his clairvoyant thinking or once again being able to see an unseen path.

The wisdom of the owl is apparent in the Zuni story “The Prairie Dogs ask Owl to Stop the Rain”. In the story, the prairie dogs are forced to ask “Grandfather Burrowing Owl” for help in stopping the rain from flooding their fields. Grandfather Burrowing Owl hatches an elaborate plan involving getting the stink from a bug who ate too many beans and forcing the bad smell up to the rain gods to get them to move on, away from the prairie dogs’ homes (Browne, Magnusson, and Warren, 1995). When the prairie dogs were stuck with no solution they went to see Grandfather Burrowing Owl for answers and to lead them onto the correct path.

Zuni Pueblo artisans are known for animal effigy vessels and carved material fetishes. James Stevenson a trained archeologist and ethnologist traveled to Zuni, New Mexico in the 1880s. There, he found many owl effigy vessels like the one in Figure 4-17. Made from ceramics, Stevenson classified these vessels as sacred jars with religious significance. The vessels usually depict an owl in a more stylized manner. The owls tend to have large plump bodies and rounded heads with small beaks and large eyes. In most cases eyelashes appear next to the
eyes. The wings are usually small and thin, or sometimes will be seen holding objects like owlets (Figure 4-18). The legs of the vessels are typically long with large talons on the feet. The vessels are often white wear with decorations rendered in color. Some of the larger vessels have a large opening in the top while most have a small opening in the beak area.

Due to the Zunis placing a high regard on privacy, not much is known about these vessels. Some historians link them to fertility because they are placed in the home and some are created with owlets or baby owls being held onto by the owl. It is even said that some Zuni mothers place an owl feather next to a baby to help it sleep. Some Zuni families are even known to keep owls as pets (Medlin 1967).

The Zuni Pueblo people also carve owls from stone and other materials called fetishes. These fetishes are carved to honor the animal and its spirit. It’s considered a special kind of medicine that takes the traits from that animal and instills them in the human host. It is like a connection from the animal spirit to the person. Some carry fetishes to be reminded of their connection to nature as well. The Zuni feel that the fetish itself is not the thing of value but instead the spirit is what is important. The Zuni also have ceremonial fetishes whose forms are carefully dictated and monitored by strict guidelines.

Figure 4-19 depicts a non-ceremonial Zuni owl fetish. This particular fetish is made from bone and jade with inlaid red eyes and an antler tree stump and a nest with six turquoise eggs. The owl’s ear tuffs are erect and the owl faces
forward standing tall at attention. The owl this is created to resemble is probably a great horned owl (Figure 2-3) which is found all over the United States and Canada, another likely possibility is a western screech owl which is very similar to the eastern screech owl shown in Figure 3-2. A fetish figure like this would be placed in the home as a protector. It is also said that owls are believed to carry prayers to the clouds and sky, asking for rain and blessings.

These creatures were also seen as a teacher to the children of the Zuni Pueblo tribes and the Hopi tribes of Arizona, with lessons taught to small children through dance ceremonies and dolls. The Zuni Pueblo parents also used the owl as a teaching tool for their very young children. A mother might frighten her child with the threat of an owl coming and clawing out their eyes or carrying them away (Medlin 1967). This shows that the owl was not only respected as a healer and protector of the home, but is respected for their power and strength.

The ways the owl was portrayed through the folklore and art of the Native Americans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is different than the way other American artists at the time did. New ways influenced by scientific discoveries and European trends shifted the view of the owl in North America. Instead of magic makers, story tellers, warriors, and healers, the owl is taken in hand by new artists with a different perspective, new skills, and new purpose.
Chapter 5:

Nineteenth and Twentieth Century American Artist’s Interpretation of the Owl

The beginning of bird art in America began with the scientific studies of birds by Alexander Wilson and subsequently John James Audubon. Wilson began his journey to document the birds of North America in the early eighteen hundreds. Already a published poet, Wilson changed his focus to birds while he was teaching in the United States. The famous naturalist, William Bartram became a mentor for Wilson and ended up directing him to ornithology. Over his short career, Wilson put together eight volumes of “American Ornithology” (Haven).

The scientific drawings that Alexander Wilson began to compile were created not to be decorative but to be informational. This allowed the viewer to examine in detail the birds that Wilson was documenting. Over his career he illustrated 268 species including rendering of ten owl species. If Alexander Wilson was the start of the new scientific movement to document natural history, John James Audubon was the star, creating drawings of 497 bird species, fourteen of which are owls.

Audubon, since a young age, found drawing and bird watching much more interesting than his school and naval studies. He preferred being outdoors looking at birds and adventuring. Upon arriving in the United States, Audubon began

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17 Alexander Wilson took sick with dysentery in mid-August of 1813, and died ten days later. He worked on his volumes of American Ornithology from 1803-1813 (Haven).
developing a new way to hone his skills. He found that by inserting wire into the bird he had killed he was able to capture more realistic, dramatic positions. This led to more interesting compositions when creating his famous work, "The Birds of America". He would kill hundreds of birds in order to find good specimens. He referred to himself as a two legged monster armed with a gun that walks into a scene and destroys it in the hopes of creating another scene that was life-like.

He worked in a two-dimensional plane, where he would pin a dead bird to a board with a grid system. He would stretch the birds to assume life-like mannerisms and dynamic positions. Then he would work meticulously to accurately draw and then watercolor his creation onto paper. This method of working is a contradiction of the popular conception of the name Audubon, in the present day it is known for conservation and preservation of nature, when in reality he was killing many birds to create his paintings.

Alexander Wilson visited Audubon in Louisville, while he was canvassing for subscribers to the first American Ornithological book. Before Audubon had a chance to subscribe to Wilson's book, his friend and business partner, Rozier told him, in French so Wilson would not understand, not to because his drawings were better than Wilson's. This did not sit well with Wilson, so he asked to see Audubon's work. He pulled out a full color portfolio to show Wilson his whole collection. Wilson was surprised and astonished by what he saw, he had no idea that anyone else was taking on similar work (John James Audubon: Drawn from Nature).
In comparison Wilson’s work (Figure 5-1) when compared to Audubon’s looks almost cartoonish. When one looks at the Snowy Owl by Wilson, it is reminiscent of the bubo owl seen in medieval manuscripts (Figure 2-9). The snowy owl (Figure 5-1) stands erect with eyes placed under large hooded brows. When looking at a photograph of a snowy owl (Figure 2-12, the owl stands hunched over with the body slanted at about a forty five degree angle over the feet, with the head standing at ninety degrees to the front of the body, much like other birds. Audubon’s depiction of the Snowy Owls (Figure 5-2), finds the birds in a much more believable position. Audubon’s drawing also has a maturity of background and setting that Wilson’s does not. Wilson’s Owl is perched on a branch that he appears to be about to slip off of. There is an eagle or hawk in the background, which is typical of the Wilson style to place several birds on one page, whereas Audubon usually dedicates a whole painting for each species. Audubon’s Snowy Owls, is also one of the few night scenes that he creates, which lends his approach to be more true to the owl’s behavior.

Audubon and Wilson both led the way for birds in general and the owl in particular to find a place in American Art. As America began to mature so did its artwork. Just like some of the Native American tribes began creating art for tourism and for pure aesthetics, American artist began creating artwork for decoration. Due to the Owl’s association with Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and with the revival of classical ideas about art during the nineteenth and twentieth century in Europe and North American, the owl becomes a known symbol of knowledge and wisdom.
Minnesota native, Paul Manship displayed these neoclassic tendencies in his sculptures throughout the twentieth century. Best known for *Prometheus*\(^{18}\) in Rockefeller Plaza in New York City, Manship art often showed large figures that emulated mythical characters and stories. These figures were generally stylized and exaggerated. This method was carried into the sculpture of animals, something that Manship cherished in his later years and finally mastered (Morley, 2011). His owl sculptures, despite being smaller than his famous works, display the whimsy and attention to detail that Manship is known for in his work.

Two of Paul Manship’s owls reside at the Smithsonian Institute’s American Art Museum. Both owls are distinctly different but reflect the intimate nature of the work. Manship gives the birds a stylized and exaggerated presence which seems to bring the owls to life, giving them their own personalities. This is particularly evident in *Owl #1* (Figure 5-3) where the gilded bronze edges catch the light giving a voice to every carved line of the owl. Because they were carved with lots of details Harry Rand, author of *Paul-Manship*, describes the feathers as “a hint of archaism resounds in the bird’s plumage, which Manship treated as a repeated pattern whose regularity recalls classical imbrication\(^{19}\) (the overlapping of tiles or shingles)” (Rand, H., Manship, P., & National Museum of American Art (U.S.) 1989). This owl is most reminiscent of a great horned owl (Figure 3) by the ear tuffs sitting erect on the head as well as the large body and upright posture. The large eyes and facial disk are deep set and demand the attention of the viewer.

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\(^{18}\) Prometheus was a Greek Titan who brought fire to mankind. Paul Manship’s *Prometheus* is bronze gilded statue that is displayed in the sunken plaza at the front of 30 Rockefeller Plaza.

\(^{19}\) Imbrication is an overlapping especially of successive layers of tissue in the surgical closure of a wound.
This owl looks regal in both posture and color. The owl does not stare at the viewer directly but glances nonchalantly over its shoulder. Large, sharp talons are also displayed resting on top of a tree stump base. Rand also writes he “places the bird in a quasi-landscape setting as replete as an Audubon study” (Rand, H., Manship, P., & National Museum of American Art (U.S.). 1989).

Paul Manship’s *Owl #2* (Figure 5-4) is distinctly different than *Owl #1* (Figure 43). Made in 1961 almost 30 years after the first, *Owl #2* is a bronze statue on a marble base. It shows a softer more playful side of Manship’s work. The owl, most likely a barred owl or snowy owl because of the absence of ear tuffs, would be common in Minnesota where Manship is originally from. The owl has much detailed feathers than *Owl #1* (Figure 5-3). The owl appears much less stern, and is even said to be comical and wearing a smile (Morley, 2011). Rand describes *Owl #2* as it “demonstrates the liability Manship faced when he returned to the regalia of mythology with none of its faith . . . all of the mysterious self-containment of the earlier owl seems exhausted by the later work, which altogether lacks the brilliant counterpoise of small decorative elements with a fresh overall conception” (Rand, H., Manship, P., & National Museum of American Art (U.S.). 1989). The owl’s wings seem to have an art deco line quality while his posture seems silly and playful, almost dance like. Like *Owl #1*, *Owl #2* sits upon an object; however the ball that it balances on seems unstable. This allows the owl to appear to be shuffling its feet to keep its balance or even showing off that ability. The bronze patina also adds to the whimsical nature of
the owl by making it appear more natural and ancient, like the Greek God Athena who regarded them highly for their tie to wisdom.

Many of Manship’s animal sculptures were originally created for other bigger projects, like the gates of New York’s Bronx Zoo. Another artist working at the time of Paul Manship that found the owl fascinating was Joseph Cornell. Cornell also worked in three dimensions to convey his artist expression. His art however was not neoclassic or art deco in nature but surrealistic. He was one of the pioneers and most celebrated exponent of assemblage and the owl in his work became a symbol of the artist himself.

Joseph Cornell made boxes that were draped in fantasy, seduction, and mystery using only bric-a-brac, memorabilia, and ordinary construction materials. His work became a way of expression through the use of symbolism and in this case, birds. In his Avian Series, Cornell created a subset that consists of a large amount of owl assemblages. These boxes, most often, appear more natural then his other bird boxes, which display cages and destruction. In his house, Cornell kept a box labeled "owl cut-outs". This box contained a variety of objects owl related including “ornithological illustrations of owls, along with an owl's nest, boxes of moss and fungi, and a quote from Thoreau on the value of owls that apparently inspired Cornell” (Glueck, 1983).

Cornell’s “owl boxes” date from the mid 1940’s and are probably inspired by his many trips from Queens to the countryside. There he would gather natural materials like bark, wood, moss, grasses, and bird’s nests (Waldman, 2002). In his
diary, Cornell wrote, “the many trips made by bicycle… these final siftings were used for the habitat (imaginative) boxes of birds, primary owls”. The owl being a nocturnal bird is sometimes equated with spirits and souls. It is also equated with wisdom in both the Chinese and Greek cultures (Cenzato, 1991). The boxes that Cornell creates capture both a sense of wonder and enchantment as well as stand as a homage to the beauty of the mysteries of nature (Waldman, 2002).

Cornell found inspiration in the Long Island Woods and the dioramas at the New York Natural History Museum where he loved to go. On his trips to the woods he would have chance encounters with owls and then write about their ability to be the stars of nature's living display. In Figure 5-5, Untitled (Great Horned Owl With Full Moon), from 1942, Cornell creates a stunning natural environment where the owl becomes the centerpiece courtesy of an engraving from Alexander Wilson's American Ornithology (Hartigan, 2007). The bright, golden moon shines behind the owl's head mimicking the wide penetrating eyes of the pensive owl.

Cornell linked nature with creativity when he created the habitat boxes that his owls sit in (Schaffner, 2003). The artist begins to add light to illuminate his nocturnal birds in a luminescent moonlight. In Untitled (Blue Owl Box) (Figure 5-6), from 1950, Cornell uses interior electrical to make his owl glow in the dim light. Originally his poetic sight wanted to have the lights be on for an extended period of time. Unfortunately his electrical skills were not up to par with his intention and the lights that he added cannot be left on for long or they would damage the assemblages (Hartigan, 2007).
Cornell associated himself with the owl. His nocturnal behaviors of working late in his basement lead him to make the owl a symbol of his creative identity. From April 15, 1946 through September 2, 1947, Cornell writes in his diary entries about his owl boxes, like "discovery for the owl box in progress a particularly fine example of rotted tree from which a piece of bark and clinging trailing shrubbery branches had fallen" and "moonlight in kitchen illuminating objects with an ineffable softness - enhanced by being reflected from snow", and finally "owls — crystal patterns on garage windows — owl box glass patterns". Cornell creates these habitats of fantasy and wonder while describing his creative process in his diary.

In Figure 5-7, *Untitled (Owl Box)* from 1946-48, Cornell weaves fantasy through lighting and glass effects. The front of the box is covered with one clear glass pane and one inside that is a blue rippled glass pane. Inside the owl cutout is being held up by a piece of wood that has gold paint dusted and dripped onto it, blending the natural with the whimsy. Cornell also attached a rubber spider and a rubber lizard to the dried clumps of woods at the bottom of this box. They help to reveal the secret world of nature surrounding the owl in the undergrowth. The habitat is only visible when the light is turned on inside Cornell’s creation. Due to the blue diffused glass the box takes on a shimmering glowing effect in which the yellow eyes of the owl stand out stunningly.

Cornell’s attachment to the owl appears to be several fold. He may relate himself to the solitary, nocturnal bird. Like the owl he works at night to create his world of blending nature and fantasy. Cornell's owl boxes were very different that
the other boxes in his avian series. The owl subset combines Cornell's love of whimsy and nature to bring these magnificent creatures to life in a stunning array of artistic skill.

Like Joseph Cornell, another American artist who shared the whimsical and surreal vision of the owl was William Crutchfield. Born in 1932, this artist is still practicing today and is noted for his lithographs and drawings. Crutchfield's animal prints are noted for their beauty and organic curved features. A 1971 lithograph called "Snowy Owl" (Figure 5-8) is a prime example of detailed lines to create an accurate rendition of a snowy owl. The white ink on black paper make the owl appear ready to jump off the page as it stares at it viewer. The black peeking through the white gives the owls its spots. Its feathery feet appear heavy and weight bearing as it stands relaxed but ready to move.

In the 1975, Crutchfield published a small book filled with drawings of little creatures he called "Owl Feathers". In the book, forty three prints are introduced to the public along with a few words from the artist to accompany his owls as they transform into other objects. According to the introduction, the book is a merging of Crutchfield's two genres of his art, wildlife and technological subjects, like trains, planes, and ships (Crutchfield, 1975). It is as if Crutchfield looked at anything in the world, other animals, landscapes, building, and even musical equipment, to see if he could see an owl in it.

A drawing (Figure 5-9), is one of the subtle owl prints that Crutchfield placed into this book. A short, stubby owl stands with his back to us as his wings
are replaced with small butterfly wings to create an owl-butterfly mutt with multiple lines to create texture and a smidgen of yellow to create visual interest, the wings seem small and inadequate for the job of lifting the pudgy owl off the ground. Next to every picture the owl, Crutchfield writes a few words for his imagery, this one reads "swallowtail" (Crutchfield, 1975).

As the book continues, the owls transform into even more imaginative and unlikely creations. Another drawing (Figure 5-10), is an owl that "gives night interviews" as it become half owl and half rocking chair. The yellow owl head becomes the headrest of the chair as its wings extend down towards the base to take on the role of the arm rests. Its eyes and beak remain white to draw attention to the owl's best features. The shadow that Crutchfield adds gives the space depth as well as a feeling of warmth, as if the owl was sitting across the viewer in front of a warm fire telling stories. The hatching work of the feathers are done loosely but adds details that give the owl just enough texture to create the soft fluffy feeling.

These forty three owls of Crutchfield's pay homage to the owl's popularity from the nineteen seventies. Today the owl image has experienced a renaissance of sorts as the owls begins to appear in clothing, baggage, and household objects like candle holders, trivets, baby bedding, and even band aids. The artists of today take part in the rebirth of the owl as it once again captures the heart of North Americans.
Chapter 6:

A Look at the Owl in Today’s Society and Contemporary Art

During the twenty-first century the owl continues to be a theme in the world of fine arts. They can be found in contemporary art museums as well as galleries and shops all over North America, but the owl has become much more than that. It has evolved to be more than just a piece of decorative art to be placed on a mantle. It has become a motif that can be found on almost anything, from bags to band-aids, from folders to pillows. The owl's rise in popularity has lead to a renewed interest in the animal and a new source of revenue for the Native Americans who seemed to have always had a place in their art for the nocturnal creature. There are a plethora of images to chose from that utilize a mixture of different mediums.

The Museum of Inuit Art in Cape Dorset located on Baffin Island, Canada, is constantly adding art from today's artists to enhance their collection. Many Inuit artists also sell their art through the museum. The stone sculpture by Joanasie Manning called "Owl & Chick" (Figure 6-1) is a stunning example of the owl still being recognized as an important bird celebrated in the Inuit culture. The theme of baby and protective mother is a universal recognized concept that would relate well to anyone. The stylized bodies of the owl from the outstretched wings and pudgy bodies are beautifully captured by the artist. The facial disk and horns are apparent, making it easily recognizable as an owl. The whitish-yellow stone
that has been inlaid in the eyes gives a nod to the brilliant eyes of the owl in the little statuettes.

Stone is not the only material being utilized by today's Inuit artists. Prints like etchings and lithographs have found a home among the Inuit artists practicing today. Figures 6-2, 6-3, and 6-4 are all examples of owl prints made in the last few years. Despite the obvious differences in their appearance, these pieces are images honoring the owl for its beauty and mystery. The first "Owls in Moonlight" (Figure 6-2) made in 2007 by Ningeokuluk Teevee, is a stunning example of layering images as well as texture. The hornless owls, probably Snowy (Figure 2-12), is a common image among the northern Native American tribes. Snowy owls are known for their light coats which gradually becomes more speckled with black spots as they age. These owls stare intently at the viewer emphasizing their most recognizable feature, their eyes. The lowest owl is winking an eye, a trait often seen when observing these creatures. For example, "Winking Owl" (Figure 6-5) is a photograph of a barred owl exhibiting this behavior. The colors are cool and calming reminiscent of the night that the owls call home.

"Vigilant Owl" (Figure 6-3) completed in 2007 by Kenojuak Ashevak has a more traditional look. Resembling the art of the Inuit artists from the 1960's, this example is bright with hues of red, blue, and green. The texture of the blue and green adds to the image by creating visual interest and a nod to the rustic. The tiny lines representing the owl numerous feathers. Similar to the last owl we looked at, this one stares the viewer down from its regal pose. Unlike "Owls in the Moonlight" (Figure 6-2), this artist emphasizes another great attribute of the owl,
its hearing. The ears are large and rabbit like making it clear that the hearing of an owl is an important part of its mystique. The red and black designs that sprout from the owl’s body and tail are reminiscent of "Enchanted Owl (green tail)" (Figure 4-15) a stone cut made by Kenojuak Ashevak in 1960. Both owls display these appendages that twist out and away from the body, they almost resemble light emanating from the owl. This owl print is a fresh take on a classic design.

Unlike “Vigilant Owl” (Figure 6-3), “Owl Incognito” (Figure 6-4) is completely different that what we have seen so far. This 2008 etching and aquatint made by Ohotaq Mikkigak called "Owl Incognito" has a completely different look at the owls through the eyes of an Inuit artist. This owl has smaller eyes compared to the previous two figures discussed thus far. These eyes appear small and beady, almost swallowed up by the beak. The body is also different with a distinct appearance that is oddly trapezoidal. The coloring of the piece is also unique in that it fades from purple to blue to yellow, like the dawn appearing on the snow. On top of the gradation the artist has added half circle lines to create feathers on the wings and body, reminiscent of a young snowy owl catching the light reflecting off the ice. There are some odd features that are also associated with this image, including the dark color that comprises the outer frame of its trapezoidal body. Inside the dark coloring lots of hatched lines appear add depth and texture to the shape, the same texture appears to radiate down to the owl's talons. Upon examination, this texture seems to closely resemble fur more than it does feathers. An obvious oddness is the antlers that the owl is adorned with making the title "Owl Incognito" appropriate. The combination of the antlers and
the fur like designs of the darkly shaded area make it plausible that this owl is wearing a costume or that it is in disguise. Perhaps it is like the stories of other Native American tribes where the owl is known as a witch or shaman that disguises itself as other animals to spy on people. It might also reference the owl's ability to hide and hunt unseen and silent, highlighting another one of the owl's fantastic abilities.

In the southwest United States, the Zuni continue to make fetishes and other artwork. Gallery spaces and online websites make shopping for Zuni creations easy. The Zuni still see the owl as a protector of the home and children, so those images remain popular. The marble fetish in Figure 6-6 is an excellent example recently made by Hudson Sandy. The owl with tall, almost touching ear tuffs, is most likely a long eared owl (Figure 2-5). Its eyes stand out due to the turquoise the artist has inlaid into them. The veins of the marble enhance the feather lines that have been incised into the piece to create the detail of the wings, face, and perch.

Another material the Zuni artists of today work with is metal. Jewelry pieces have become popular among Native American artists and collectors and the Zuni are no exception. Figure 6-7 is a handcrafted sterling silver pendant that has been inlayed with mother of pearl, jet, red coral, turquoise, and shell by the artist, Pipken Natewa. Its body is a mosaic of elements that add to its interest and beauty. The owl is stylized with simple features, that include a short stocky body with one noticeably long wing, a long slender beak, ear tuffs that lay flat, and pin point eyes. The turquoise and coral enhance the piece by adding wonderful, eye
catching pops of colors. The owl appears to be moving in a sideways motion as it walks through a field of stylized turquoise flowers.

A beaded owl image created by the artist Anna Saransino, (Figure 6-8) also includes a touch of bright color to capture the viewer’s attention. This owl stands erect holding its wings out to both sides. Yellow beads outline the wing tips and yellow dotted lines repeat the body shape on the wings themselves. More yellow dots line the body and the head, not only breaking up the blue beading but effectively creating the owls barred marking or spots. The white facial disk is common among owl species like the barred, snowy, saw whet, and barn owls. The eyes are perfect with the dark centers and yellow irises. The ear tuffs resemble the rest of the body in blue with yellow polka dots. No talons are visible but the owl seems to teeter on a small base, almost like its arms are out stretched to balance it.

The Zuni are not the only ones that praise the owl for its wisdom, calling it "The Night Grandfather" and as an aid in seeing the truth. Many schools and even sororities use the owl as a symbol of wisdom and knowledge even today. Temple University which started off as a night school uses the owl as its mascot (Figure 6-9). Chi Omega the largest women's fraternal organization also claims the owl as it mascot ("Quick facts About Chi Omega").

By browsing the Chi Omega website, chiomega.com, you will find references to the owl, especially in the shopping section called Chi O Creations. Owls cover the pages of Chi O Creation in nearly every section. Figure 6-10 is a screen shot of their "Hot New Items" page. By looking down the images everything is owl related from vases to mugs, bookends to hooks. This image only
gives a glimpse of all of the owl art that is collected and loved by Chi Omegas.

The most important owl symbol is visible on Figure 6-11. Every initiated member of Chi Omega receives a pin to symbolize their pledge to live fully as a Chi Omega.

The owl is not just for universities but also for the youngest children today. In the 1980's, the book "Owl Moon" created by Jane Yolen and John Schoenherr, is a beautiful example of a book made to help intrigue and recognize owls to young readers. Figure 6-12 is a watercolor illustration of the great horned owl the characters in the book see while they are out one winter night owling. The loosely applied color and luminescent qualities of the layers add depth to the owl, who appears large and heavy on a tree branch. Books like this have influenced the men and woman who have been entering the professional fields, perhaps inspiring them to create based on the owl and in turn bringing back its popularity.

In the last ten years, many more children's book have been written and illustrated about the owl. Their audience range in age from one year olds to teens. The owl does not seem to have an age range to limit it. Written in 2011, "Little Owl" by L. Rigo is a board book that tells the story of a baby owl and its mother, describing in very simple language how the mother owl keeps her baby from getting into trouble. The cover (Figure 6-13) is an image of baby owls covered in the soft fluffy down feathers they are born with. The book is even owl shaped to match the owl on the front of the book. The little owl is illustrated softly with light stokes to give texture to the creature. The barred stripes of the little owl are apparent in brown contrasting the white of the feathers and the facial disk. Its little talons are foreshortened and bring interest and depth to the cover. By making the
Baby goods manufacturing companies are also noticed the popularity of the owl. Dwell Studio is a reputable company that makes home decor and are known for their baby products like bedding (Figure 6-14) and nursery furniture. The owl collection by Dwell Studios makes creating an owl nursery easy by providing anything a new parent would need. Rugs, bedding, curtains, picture frames, and storage bins are only a few of the owl adorned objects perfect for a little one.

Dwell Studios has even created a line of nursery books to accompany some of their baby series like "Goodnight, OWL" shown in Figure 6-15. This book is a beautiful example of a lift-the-flap story, in which a wise old owl flies around forest as he bids goodnight to woodland creatures finding cozy places to sleep. Written for younger readers around the age of two, the simple creatures and bright colors are perfect for the little audience. Figure 6-15 displays a blue and brown owl asleep in a tree as the sunrises and the other animals begin their day.

Another piece of children's literature is the story of "Owl Howl" by Paul Friester and Philippe Goosens written in 2011. In the book a little owl keeps on howling for no clear reason. Many of the other animals in the forest try to find out why she is howling and they try to comfort her. When her mother finally arrives, the owl cannot remember why it was howling in the first place. The cover of the book, Figure 6-16, is a fun big eyed owl with very small pupils sitting on a branch of a tree. The owl also has an interestingly tiny beak and far spread ear tuffs which when combined with the circular eyes give him an oddly geometric shape with a
square body, circle eyes, and triangular beak. His body is sparsely adorned with simplified feather shapes face to add visual interest to the little owl. All these traits combine to help small children learn to distinguish an owl from other birds as they see that big eyes set in the front is how to identify an owl.

Figure 6-17 also plays on those same ideas. The cover of "Hoot" written by Carl Hiaasen in 2005 is a prime example of the easily recognized characteristics of the owl. A story of a Florida teen that decides to help another teen save a group of endangered burrowing owls from the construction of a pancake house. The book gives factual information about the sub-species of burrowing owls (Figure 2-14) that is native to Florida. "Hoot" gives a chance for pre-teens and teens to form connections to the little birds as well as explain the ideas of why it is important to preserve their habitats and therefore their lives. Owls in this book become a symbol of the idea that anyone can make a difference in wildlife conservation. The cover is simple with a blue background and bright colors. The eyes are nothing more than black circles inside of white circles. The beak is simple as a little orange triangle. With books like "Goodnight, OWL" and "Owl Howl" our brains have been programmed to recognize this simple arrangement of shapes mean owls. We know large eyes close together represent an owl, like a headlight breaking out from inside a tree in the night.

One does not have to be a trained artist in order to create and enjoy the owl as a subject matter. Websites like Etsy.com (Figure 6-18) bring together the trained and folk artists in order to share and sell their works of art, handmade and vintage artifacts. When a search for "owl art" is performed thousands of items are
returned for examination. The screen shot of Figure 6-18 is only a glimpse at all of the artwork that the search returned. From paintings, jewelry, and sculptures, textiles and even dolls, the website shows thousands of different interpretations of the nocturnal creature.

A watercolor painting of what appears to be a snowy owl (Figure 2-12), titled Green Owl (Figure 6-19) is a prime example of the contemporary artwork that is being produced by etsy.com artists today. The loosely painted green owl is attentive as it stares down the viewers with its orange eyes. The eyes draw the viewer’s attention from the cool greens and blues of the head and body up to meet its gaze. The blue, gray, and black spots give the snowy owl its textured appearance and aids in visual interest. Overall this image is colorful and dreamy give the owl a softer side.

The necklace in Figure 6-20 is also a great example from etsy.com as the owl is also part of the jewelry. Winter Owl Art Pendant Necklace is a small painting that is then added to a antiqued bronze pendant and chain. The owl inside represents a barred owl (Figure 2-6) that is set in a blue background of falling snow. The stylized owl once again faces the viewers with eyes bright and intense. This owl looks sweet as it colorful coat seems to shine under the glazed coating of the pendant. The antique design of the pendant seems to add to the owl’s timelessness.

Unlike Etsy.com, a popular culture social networking site caused Pinterest is a website that is not for the selling and purchasing of art but is instead for the
collector in all of us. With the creation of art boards the user may create customized boards in order to create inspiration or one's own visual collection. Figure 6-21 is a screen shot from the website when the word "owls" is searched. Both photographs and graphics are combined to display hundreds of results of owl related art. Members also get a chance to add their own images called "pins" as well as comment on and follow other people's boards and pins.

One of the most common forms of art today that is often displayed on Pinterest is tattoos. With the rise in popularity of the owl over the past several years, owl tattoos have become popular in today's society. From the semi-realistic like Figure 6-22 to the simple and playful like Figure 6-23, the owl theme prevails. Figure 6-22 is a colorful arm tattoo yet anatomically accurate rendering of a common barn owl (Figure 2-1). The tattoo seems to glow as if rendered in watercolor, with vibrant colors overlaid on top of the tawny and white colors of the real owl. The heart shaped facial disk faces the viewer as the body twist a little to the right. The spots on the belly and the hatching effect of the face gives the owl the light feathery effect of its real life counterpart. The talons sit balanced on the branch ready to spring into action.

On the other hand Figure 6-23 is completely different take on rendering an owl. It is like a doll in that the eyes are drawn to resemble buttons attached to a plush body. The owl sits erect on a branch however it is lacking wings. The body of the owl appears to have floral pattern shapes like a textile one might find in a fabric store. Owl tattoos may be symbols for one’s youth or an organization they are affiliated with at some point in their life. It could be a
libby mcarthur

the iconographic owl through the eyes of american artists

memorial for someone, because they are associated with the afterlife. however
the owl has been seen so much lately, it may have desensitized its audience and
now it is nothing more than a cute creature that people have been brought up to
love.

no matter the reason, owls are not just for north american's to use in
their art. a recent article in the huffington post displayed an interesting way to
create an owl. the unnamed united kingdom artist decided to create an owl in his
coffee. due to internet media, the resulting artwork (figure 6-24) has gone viral
making its way into millions of homes. using what looks like a straw and a potato
snack called "hula hoops", the artist creates a detailed face of an owl in their cup
of coffee ("artist creates image of bird of prey in coffee cup with an
unexpected tool", 2012). the owl appears to gaze back at the viewer with its
unusual potato snack eyes. the light frothy top of the coffee lends itself well to
the creation of the feathered lines facial disk of the owl. the use of bubbles to
make a dark space between the eyes creates a perfect color change for a beak. the
coffee’s tawny, white, and brown colors are perfect to depict the face of this bird
of prey. although this artwork is temporary, it is a beautiful homage to the
mysterious creature.

in almost every store and every house depictions of the owl will continue
to be part of the life of each american. whether as a child or adult, through
movies, books, commercials, company logos, the internet, and more, images of
owls will continue to bombard us throughout our lives. even though the
popularity of the owl may rise and fall over the years, it will always have been a
symbol of wisdom, magic, messenger, and death. However now each of us is able
to make our own connection to the creature and in turn will create new symbolic
niches for the owl to fill.
Conclusion

The owl has captivated North America for as long as people have been able to craft images. This bird has been recognized for all of the traits that make it unique to the avian world: its silent flight, nocturnal behavior, and curious features. Many have tried to interpret the bird’s existence and meaning in order to better understand the world around them. From the earliest known Native Americans to the artists of today, people have created images of owls to help define and enhance their understanding.

Long before the written history introduced by Europeans, Native Americans found the owl important enough to include in their crafts. Pots from the Wickcliffe Mounds, beads from Poverty Point, and Pipes from the Hopewell Mound builders all display the owl in its frontal style with eyes wide and facing front. More recent Native Americans have discovered owl messages in: legends like the Cherokee and Inuit, through shaman like the Yupik and the Sioux, in healing like the Zuni, and through songs and lessons like the Hopi. A variety of materials: stone, wood, beads, feathers, and pottery allowed these cultures to create visual images to convey the messages and meanings of the owls. Bowls, rattles, shields, totems, effigies, fetishes, memorials, and many other items where crafted to create a worldly connection to this bird of the night. Seen as many things to many tribes, it is no surprised that the owl image and symbols have been picked up by the artists from Europe that began settling in North America.
Alexander Wilson and John James Audubon both decided that studying birds for scientific inquiry and reference was vital to understanding the nature around them. Both men created scientific rendering of birds, including the owls to broaden the world’s knowledge. Audubon went as far as posing his subjects to help communicate some of their behaviors. Despite very static and scientific depictions of their birds, these two artist were key in drawing America’s attention towards the trees.

As time passed, other fine artists during the twentieth century picked up the owl image as a source of inspiration for their work. Paul Manship saw his owl statues as a symbol for his home in Minnesota. His owl sculptures were a tool to convey nostalgia and whimsy, a creation for the creator to enjoy. Collage / assemblage artist and “surrealist”, Joseph Cornell found a connection between the owl and himself. Like an owl, Cornell worked at night. He would often go on hikes to collect owl feathers and listen to the owls by his home. He made a series of owl boxes to pay homage to the bird that was so like himself. The artist, William Crutchfield liked the owl so much he created a book of prints that was solely devoted to the this bird. His goal was to find an owl in everything, from the simple egg or feather to the rocking chair and even a train. Artist like Cornell and Crutchfield helped the owl image to grow and become a more common symbol.

Today, Native Americans and many other people in North America continue to see and create owl imagery. Whether as a tourist trinket or a modern day interpretation of older ideas, the Inuit, and Zuni Indians are still creating prints, sculptures, fetishes, and much more devoted to the owl. Schools,
sororities, and children books still see the owl as a teacher and a symbol of wisdom and knowledge. Tattoos, bedding, shirts, posters, cards, pillows, cookie jars, and other household items depicting owls have become very popular. Two of the best known with the owl playing a major part of the books are the “Harry Potter” series by J.K. Rowlings and “Hoot” by Carl Hiaasen. The owl has been transformed into a symbol of fantasy and fun by today’s contemporary references.

The mysterious night owl’s image has evolved from generation to generation, jumping back and forth between good and bad meanings. To many people, the owl is a representation of their experience. If one grows up as a Zuni Indian chances are one will see the owl as the wise grandfather, a healer and a symbol of knowledge. If one grows up reading about the adventures of Harry Potter and his snowy owl, Hedwig, one will see owls as part of a world of fantasy where owls are smart creatures with tons of personality. As a Chi Omega, the owl represents what one strives to be “to be womanly always; to be discouraged never; in a word, to be loyal under any and all circumstances” (Switzer Howard, 1904). To every person, the owl represents a different idea and a culmination of their education and upbringing. What is apparent is that even in modern society the owl remains an important positive symbol.
Figures

Chapter 1

Figure 1-1

Siksik

Photograph

December 2007

Retrieved on October 20, 2012 from

http://www.carolannbassett.com/gallery/v/canada/Sik-sik+_ground+squirrel_.jpg.html
Screen shot from the website: The Owl Pages

Retrieved on October 20, 2012 from

http://www.owlpages.com/
Figure 1-3

Screen shot from the website: Owling.com

Retrieved on October 20, 2012 from

www.owling.com
Chapter 2

Figure 2-1

Barn Owl Tyto Alba

Photograph taken by Scott Linstead

Alice, Texas

Great Gray Owl in Falling Snow

Photograph by Tim Grams

January 2012

Figure 2-3

Great Horned Owl

Photograph by Cindy Lindow

February 2012

Figure 2- 4

Short Eared Owl Photograph

Photograph by John Hyde – Printscapes

November 2010 in Colorado

Figure 2-5

Long-eared Owl Portrait Photograph

Photography by Mircea Costina Photography

March 2012

Figure 2-6

Barred Owl

Photograph by Christina Rollo

June 2012

Retrieved on July 14, 2012 from

http://fineartamerica.com/featured/barred-owl-christina-rollo.html
Figure 2-7

Spotted Owl

Don Ryan/Associated Press Photography

2007

Retrieved on October 20, 2012 from

Flammulated Owl

Debi Boucher Photography

2009

Retrieved on October 20, 2012 from

http://activerain.com/blogsview/1144190/wordless-wednesday-flammulated-owls
Figure 2-9

Harley MS 4751

Folio 47r

British Library

Northern Saw-whet Owl

Photograph by Dave Welling

March 2012 in Central Colorado

Retrieved on July 3, 2012 from

Figure 2-11

Boreal Owl

Photography by Jean Chateauvert

Quebec, Canada

Retrieved on July 5, 2012 from

Figure 2-12

Snowy owls of Boundary bay

Photograph by Pierre Leclerc

December 2011, Boundary Bay in Washington

Retrieved on July 5, 2012 from

http://www.google.com/search?um=1&hl=en&bav=on.2,or_r_gc.r_pw.r_qf.,cf.osb
&biw=1280&bih=676&wrapid=tlifl34150541729311&q=boundary%20bay%20
&ie=UTF-8&sa=N&tab=iw&ei=_831T7kRosTaBbH3iNUG
Figure 2-13

Harry Potter (Daniel Radcliffe) with owl Hedwig

Screen Shot from "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone"

2001

Retrieved on October 20, 2012 from

Figure 2-14

Burrowing Owl Photograph

Photograph by Susan Candelario

March 2012

Retrieved on July 5, 2012 from

http://fineartamerica.com/featured/burrowing-owl-susan-candelario.html
Chapter 3

Figure 3-1

Poverty Point Owl Beads

2200BCE-700BCE

Red Jasper

Photograph by Robert Rickertt

Retrieved on July 9, 2012 from

http://www.crt.state.la.us/archaeology/ppwhi/
Eastern Screech Owl

Photograph by Julien Brisson

March 2012

Retrieved on July 15, 2012 from

C-92 — Owl Effigy Vessel

Humber/McWilliams Site - Farrell, MS

Late Mississippian — 1400-1700 A.D.

Museum of the Mississippi Delta Collection, Greenwood, MS

Photograph by Lonnie Looper
Figure 3-4

Platform Great Horned Owl Effigy Pipe

Catlinite

93 mm long, 36 mm wide

Retrieved on July 17, 2012 from

http://www.ohiomemory.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p133201ccp2/id/1078/rec/3
Platform Saw-Whet Owl Effigy Pipe

Catlinite, Pearls

Platform: 72 mm long, 28 mm wide

Retrieved on July 17, 2012 from

http://www.ohiomemory.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p133201ccp2/id/22/rec/17
Figure 3-6

Platform Barred Owl Effigy Pipe

Catlinite, Pearls

Platform: 72 mm long, 28 mm wide

Retrieved on July 17, 2012 from

Figure 3-7

Owl Effigy Vessel

Wickliffe Mounds Site, Kentucky

Postcard/Photograph of Original Vessel (which was stolen in 1988)

Retrieved on July 17, 2012, from

http://postcards.delcampe.com/page/item/id,163308155,var,Painted-Owl-Effigy-Water-Bottle-King-Mounds-Ancient-Buried-City-Wickliffe-Kentucky-40-60s,language,E.html
Figure 3-8

Burial recreation of the Wickliffe Mounds Burial Site

Photograph Courtesy of Saint Louis Community College

Retrieved on July 17, 2012 from

http://users.stlcc.edu/mfuller/wickliffe/Wickliffeburials.html
Figure 3-9

Miniature Clay Owl Effigy

Wickliffe Mounds, Kentucky

Photography courtesy of Saint Louis Community College

Replica of Miniature Clay Owl Effigy

Original was reburied on June 8, 2012

Wickliffe Mounds, Kentucky

Photograph taken by Libby McArthur
Chapter 4

Figure 4-1

Cherokee Owl Effigy

Freeman Owle, a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

Date Unknown

Steatite

Cherokee Indian Reservation, N.C.

Figure 4-2

Cherokee Wood Owl Carving

Cherokee woodcarver Virgil Ledford

Made in Mid-20th Century

Cherokee Indian Reservation, N.C.

Retrieved on July 20, 2012 from

http://wcudigitalcollection.cdmhost.com/cdm/singleitem/collection/p4008coll2/id/6338/rec/6
Ethel Bigmeat and Owl Effigies

1940’s

Cherokee Lodge

Photograph courtesy of UNC-Chapel Hill

Owl man

Sammy Cucumber

1985-1986

Wood, paint, varnish

Eastern Band of Cherokee, North Carolina

National Museum of the American Indian
Figure 4-5

Owl Ghost Shield

Sioux Indians

19th Century

18 inches

Museum of the American Indian
Figure 4-6

Bowl/Dish with owl design

1850-1870

Mountain sheep horn

Tlingit

Retrieved on July 20, 2012 from
http://www.americanindian.si.edu/searchcollections/item.aspx?irn=12590&objmatspec=Mountain sheep horn
Figure 4-7

Owl Man figure

1890

Wood, human hair, pigment

Tlingit

Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon
Figure 4-8

Shaman's rattle with hawk, frog, and owl designs

1860-1900

Hardwood, pigment/pigments

Tlingit

National Museum of the American Indian
Figure 4-9

Owl Totem

Tlingit

1940

Height of owl, 7' 7"

Sitka National Monument
Owl Mask

1892

Wood, pigment, snowy owl feather

Yup'ik

25.4 cm

J.H. Turner Collection
Figure 4-11

Inua Owl Mask

1880

Wood, pigment, snowy owl feathers

Yupik

E.W. Nelson Collection
Figure 4-12

Owl Sculpture

1965-1968

Melvin Olanna,

American Inuit

Yellow Cedar

National Museum of the American Indian
Figure 4-13

Owl Sculpture

1968

Steatite/soapstone, jasper, turquoise

Melvin Olanna, Inupiaq (Alaskan Inuit)

National Museum of the American Indian
Figure 4-14

Owl Figure

1973-1980

Ivory, Paint

Alaskan Inuit

National Museum of the American Indian
Figure 4-15

Enchanted Owl (green tail)

Kenojuak Ashevak

1960

Stonecut Print

The Museum of Inuit Art
Figure 4-16

Mongwu (Owl Kachina)

1967

Hopi

Carved and painted cottonwood with attached feathers and buckskin

Southwest Museum of the American Indian Collection
Figure 4-17

Polychrome Owl
Late 19th century
Ceramic, Paint
Zuni culture
11 cm x W. 12 cm x H. 19 cm,

Ralph Foster Museum Collection #75.756.3
Figure 4-18

Owl Effigy Vessel

1962-1964

Pottery, paint

A:shiwi (Zuni)

New Mexico, Zuni Peublo

National Museum of the American Indian
Figure 4-19

Owl Fetishes

1981

Antler; bone; turquoise

Zuni

Southwest Museum of the American Indian Collection
Plate: 32  Snowy Owl, Sparrow Hawk

"American Ornithology"

Alexander Wilson

1810

Original Hand-colored Engravings
Figure 5-2

*Birds of America: Snowy Owl*

John James Audubon & Robert Havell

1827-38

Hand-colored aquatint, etching and line engraving.

Dimensions: 25 7/8 inches x 36 1/2 inches
Figure 5-3

Owl (#1)

1932

Paul Manship

gilded bronze

9 1/4 x 3 in. (23.4 x 7.7 cm)

Smithsonian American Art Museum
Owl (#2)

Paul Manship

1961

bronze on marble base

10 x 9 1/2 x 4 1/8 in. (25.4 x 24.1 x 10.4 cm)

Smithsonian American Art Museum
Figure 5-5

Untitled (Great Horned Owl with Harvest Moon)

Joseph Cornell

1942

Box construction

22 3/4 x 13 1/8 x 6 in. (57.8 x 33.3 x 15.2 cm)

The Robert Lehrman Art Trust, Courtesy Aimee and Robert Lehrman,

Washington, D.C.
Figure 5-6

*Untitled (Blue Owl Box)*

Joseph Cornell

1950

wooden box containing glass, tree bark, reproduction on paper, sawdust.

14 1/2 in. x 10 7/8 in. x 4 in. (36.83 cm x 27.62 cm x 10.16 cm);

Collection SFMOMA
Figure 5-7

Untitled (Owl box)

Joseph Cornell

1946-48

box construction 36.2 h x 29.2 w x 16.5 d cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Figure 5-8

Snow Owl

William Crutchfield

1971

Lithograph on black wove paper

556 x 683 mm (sheet)

Art Institute of Chicago
Butterfly Owl from book "Owl Feathers"

William Crutchfield

W. Ritchie Press; Revised edition (1975)
Figure 5-10

Rocking Chair Owl from book "Owl Feathers"

William Crutchfield

W. Ritchie Press; Revised edition (1975)
Chapter 6

Figure 6-1

Owl & Chick
Joanasie Manning
2008
Stone & Stone inlay
Cape Dorset
The Museum of Inuit Art
Figure 6-2

Owls in Moonlight

Ningeokuluk Teevee

2007

Etching & Aquatint/Notecard Set

Museum of Inuit Art, Cape Dorset
Figure 6-3

Vigilant Owl
Kenojuak Ashevak
2007
lithograph/ Note card Set
Museum of Inuit Art, Cape Dorset
Figure 6-4

Owl Incognito

Ohotaq Mikkigak

2008

Etching & Aquatint

Gallery Phillips, Toronto, Ontario
Figure 6-5

Winking Owl

Jeff Turner

2012

Winner of Second Annual Photography Exhibition

Plymouth Center for the Arts
Figure 6-6

Picasso Marble Owl Fetish

Hudson Sandy

2012

Picasso marble with turquoise inlaid eyes

3" tall- 1 1/4" wide- 7/8" deep

http://www.turquoisevillage.com/
Zuni Inlaid Owl Pin/Pendant

Pipken Natewa

Date unknown

from sterling silver, mother of pearl, jet, red coral, turquoise & shell

1 1/2" tall- 1 1/4" wide

http://www.turquoisevillage.com/
Figure 6-8

Zuni Native American Beaded Owl

Anna Saransino

Date unknown

Beadwork

6 1/4" tall - 1 3/4" wide(base) - 2 1/4" deep

http://www.turquoisевillage.com/
Figure 6-9

Temple Owl Mascot

Image Retrieved on October 23, 2012 from

http://www.sportslogos.net/logos/view/2648/Temple_Owls/1996/Primary_Logo
Figure 6-10

Screen Shot

Retrieved 9-30-2012

https://shop.chiomega.com/departments.aspx?DepartmentID=1
Figure 6-11

Chi Omega Initiation Pin

Gold and white gold, diamond or pearls


nCategory_ID=579
Figure 6-12

Page from Owl Moon

Jane Yolen and John Schoenherr

1987

Age range: 4 - 8 Years

Penguin Group (USA) Incorporated
Cover for the "Little Owl"

L. Rigo

2011

Age range: 1 - 4 Years

Publisher: Barron's Educational Series, Incorporated
Figure 6-14

Owl Nursery Collection

Dwell Studios

Retrieved on October 23, 2012 from

Figure 6-15

Page from Dwell Studio: Goodnight, Owl

Dwell Studio

2011

Age range: 2 years

Blue Apple Books
Figure 6-16

Cover of "Owl Howl" Tuff Book
Paul Friester & Philippe Goosens
2011
Age range: 2 - 5 Years
North-South Books, Inc.
Figure 6-17

Cover of "Hoot"

Carl Hiaasen

2005

Age Range 9-12 yrs

Random House Children's Books
Figure 6-18

Screen Shot of Esty.com

Search "Owl Art"

Retrieved on 9/30/2012 from

http://www.etsy.com/search?q=owl%20art&view_type=gallery&ship_to=ZZ&mi

n=0&max=0
Figure 6-19

Green Owl art print
Courtney Oquist
2012
watercolor painting on watercolor paper
8.5 x 11 inches
Retrieved on October 20, 2012 from
http://www.etsy.com/listing/94030589/green-owl-art-print-archival-fine-art?ref=sr_gallery_6&ga_search_query=owl+art&ga_view_type=gallery&ga_ship_to=US&ga_search_type=all
Figure 6-20

Winter Owl Art Pendant Necklace (Barred Owl Illustration)

Heather Hitchman

2012

2 x 1.5 inches in size, and is attached to a 19 inch antiqued bronze chain

Retrieved on October 20, 2012 from

http://www.etsy.com/listing/66726858/winter-owl-art-pendant-necklace?ref=sr_gallery_34&ga_search_query=owl+art&ga_view_type=galler

y&ga_ship_to=US&ga_page=4&ga_search_type=all
Screen Shot from Pinterest.com

Search "Owls"

Retrieved on 9/30/2012 from

http://pinterest.com/search/?q=owls
Figure 6-22

Barn owl Tattoo

Unknown Artist

Ink on Skin

Pinterest.com

Retrieved on 9/30/2012 from http://pinterest.com/search/?q=owl+tattoos
Figure 6-23

Sewn Owl Tattoo

Unknown Artist

Ink on Skin

Pinterest.com

Retrieved on 9/30/2012 from http://pinterest.com/search/?q=owl+tattoos
Figure 6-24

Owl Coffee

Created by an anonymous friend of artist Stuart Rutherford

United Kingdom

Coffee and Potato snacks called "Hula Hoops"

Works Cited

"Artist Creates Image Of Bird Of Prey In Coffee Cup With An Unexpected Tool"


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