
If you are a serious collector, amateur archaeologist, art historian, or committed undergraduate in archaeology, everyone wonders about the human behavior archaeologists seek to understand. This book is unique in its approach to understanding human activity. The authors describe the art of the ancient peoples of the Midwest and South and the ways in which they created and used these artifacts. The book includes numerous illustrations and detailed descriptions of the artifacts, providing insight into the lives and cultures of these peoples.

The catalog for the exhibition *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand: American Indian Art of the Ancient Midwest and South* is a comprehensive guide to the art of the prehistoric peoples of the Midwest and South. The authors, Richard F. Townsend and others, provide an in-depth analysis of the artifacts, including their cultural and historical significance. The catalog includes numerous illustrations and detailed descriptions of the artifacts, providing insight into the lives and cultures of these peoples.

By Duane Esarey
important artifacts have been seldom illustrated and were greatly in need of a high-quality exposition. That has been done. And a few of the artifacts... well, a few of them are even stop a jaded old anthropologist like me in his tracks - because he’s never seen one of them. But here they are: magnificent photographs of them. Take note of the visual statistics - 250 pages contain 440 illustrations - and 320 of the illustrations are color photos. This is not merely a favorable ratio of color plates - this is unprecedented, as is the quality of the photos.

As far as the effect this book will have on Southeastern and Midwestern archaeology, let’s briefly consider past standard "artifactual boxes." San Circles and Human Hands introduced two generations to the best artifactual compendium that Eastern North American archaeology had to offer in the 1950s: that the images are mostly small and all are grey scale. More to the point, consider Ancient Art of the American Woodland Indians, published in 1955 as part of a black-and-white display of 133 artifacts ordered by the Detroit Institute of Arts. More than any other influence, the "Detroit handbook" (nicknamed for the 2000-year-old micaceous hand on its cover) played the ground that this magnificent crop of scholarship and exposition in Chicago has now grown upon. And then, to complete the pattern, consider The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex: Artifacts and Analysis, a scholarly exhibit and conference paper compendium. That volume, better known as "Ceremonial," was published in 1988 and gives a survey level of access to over 350 spectacular artifacts.

We have a progression of more than illustrative titleshere. San Circles and Human Hands supplied a flood of images, but Flinders and Foreman’s text and captions weren't essays so much as excerpts. The images, but not the text, were cited in mainstream archaeological literature. The "Detroit book" changed that. The perspectives in its essays exploded into mainstream literature citations and formed the views of the "bigpicture" of many budding archaeologists during these last two decades. The "Ceremonial" illustrations were more varied, but small gray scale images caused fine-grain scholarship to hold firm sway over the artifacts’ inherent vocality. Hero Hawk, and Open Hand is not only the latest culmination of this trend. It is a powerhouse of content at both realms - a masterpiece of powerful balance for the genre.

The essays will become mainstay in citations. The illustrations will show up for decades - used everywhere from academic lectures to pirate websites. This book is here to stay, and we may well witness a further paradigm shift as some archaeologists lift their heads above their data sets to consider the themes set out in the volume.

I conclude here, I cordially invite you to the 19 chapters and the strong healthy mix of art, archaeology, history, and traditional culture subjects the 17 authors address. But even an overview of the content would seem endless. I could tell you that this exhibit has over 300 artifacts compared to the Detroit exhibit's 132; I could even pick a few bits, which would seem ungrateful considering the bouquet that has been spread before us. It would also be pointless, because you have to buy this book no matter what. Go to the Art Institute’s website for details http://www.artinstitutechicago.org/herohawk.html, or search the words "Hero Hawk Open Hand" at http://jailpress.us/hero hawk.html. You can even get a break on the hard cover version at Amazon.com. My message to you is the first thought that flashed through me when I laid eyes on “Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand... I’ve got to buy this book!” And that is what