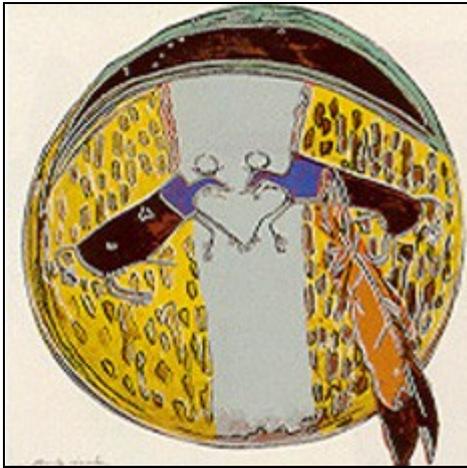


PLAINS Indian Shield



Andy Warhol, *Plains Indian Shield*
Screen print, 1986, 36 x 36 inches

Historical Background:

In the days before high-powered rifles, the War Shield was the Plains Indian's most prized possession. Being rather small— from 16 to 20 inches in diameter- it could be easily handled and was strapped on the same arm that held his bow, so he had his hands free to shoot arrows or other weapons.

The best shields were made from the rawhide of the buffalo's hump (the hump was the toughest part of the buffalo's hide). The shield was also made from the chest or hip area of the buffalo. When the buffalo became scarce, they were made from raw cowhide. A good shield could stop an arrow and some round musket balls or bullets from old muzzle-loading rifles.

However the symbols and animals painted on the shield were more important. The idea for the design to paint on the shield came to the Indian in a dream. It was believed that the shield had great spiritual power and could protect the Indian in battle. Eagle feathers were sometimes attached to the shield.

Other types of shields used were ceremonial shields that were made from the skins of animals like deer and beavers. Ceremonial shields were decorated with feathers and designs and were used during celebrations, dancing, spiritual protection and to bring good fortune to the Indian Tribe or individual.

Supply List:

Paper plates
Beige paint
Brush

Die cut animals:

horse, buffalo, thunderbird, bear

Die cut geometric designs:

circle, triangle, oval, rectangle

Glue

Feathers

Beads

Yarn

Hole Punch

Scissors to cut yarn

Markers

Sample of Shield

Procedure:

Prior to the activity, paint the paper plates with beige paint, make die-cuts of animals and geometric designs for the students, collect supplies needed and make a sample Plains Indian shield to show the students.

Show the students the sample shield. Explain why the Native American Indians carried shields into battle and that the design or animal chosen for the shield came to them in a dream.

Ask students to glue an animal in the center of the shield, then decorate the shield with geometric shapes. If they do not want to use the die-cut animals and designs, have them use markers to draw their own animal and designs. Punch two holes in the top and thread yarn through them to hang the shield. Punch several holes along the bottom of the shield and thread yarn through them. String beads on the yarn and place a feather into the center of the beads. Tie a knot in the yarn so the beads and feather will not come out. Display the shields in the classroom.