

Denver Muslin

White Swan. Crow. Pictograph War Record, c. 1890. Muslin, graphite, ink, and watercolor, 35 x 87 inches. Courtesy of the Denver Art Museum Collection: Museum Purchase August 7, 1968, catalog number 1968.336

According to the collection file, the painting was first noted in the Robert S. Ellison Collection of the Cliff Dwellings at Manitou Springs, Colorado. It then was in the Jack Miller Collection of Denver, Colorado who sold it to the Denver Art Museum in 1968.

First exhibited in the Whitney Art Museum, New York, November 16, 1971, to January 9, 1972, as "Pictographic painting—Sioux. 2' 11" high x 7' 3" wide. The painting on muslin depicts the war exploits of a single man. Collection of the Denver Art Museum."

Frederick E. Hoxie used this painting in *The Crow*, a book in the D'Arcy McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian, Newberry Library "Indians of North America" Series. Shown on page 42, the caption read "A narrative painting on muslin of a Crow warrior fighting enemy Indians. The headdress on the Crow, who is pictured in various stages of battle, identifies him as a member of the Lumpwood warrior Society." There is no indication in the Denver Art Museum files of when and by whom the correct White Swan attribution was made.

Paul Dyck's notes indicate that sometime between the 1971 exhibit and 1981, when David Cowles was preparing his article for *American Indian Art Magazine*, White Swan was identified as the artist. As late as 1979, Richard Conn, then Curator of Native Arts of the Denver Art Museum published a black and white image of the painting and identified the artist as "Probably Crow." Dyck doesn't say specifically, but by this time he was certain as to White Swan's style and could readily identify White Swan's works. In 1982, Dyck knew of only the Seton drawings, the NSHS hide, the MPI hide, and four muslins – Southwest, Denver, his, and the "Colonel Moore" that eventually would end up in the Heard Museum. The 1890 date appears based on the Ewers dating of the Autry muslin. White Swan "signed" it in the lower left corner.

Like the Arkansas muslin, there are six events shown in this painting and all six are about the Little Big Horn battle. In a unique construction, the events take place in columns on the edges of the painting with the village in the middle. The right column is the "LBH Crow's Nest," "LBH Travois," and "LBH Coup 2." The left column, while shown on three lines, encapsulates "LBH Coup 2" and "LBH Coup 3 Encircled" in one larger scene. Brave Bear is shown attacking White Swan directly from the front. White Swan shows his right arm in a sling, but the leg bandaging is not shown in this version.