Bob Haozous descends from the Warm Springs band of Chiricahua Apache who were prisoners of war housed at Fort Sill Military reserve in Oklahoma. Haozous's legally designated tribal affiliation is Warm Springs/Chiricahua Apache and federally designated Chiricahua Apache/Warm Springs Fort Sill Apache Tribe. His great-great-grandfather was Mangas Coloradas and his grandfather Sam Haozous was Geronimo's nephew and translator (Rushing and Houser 2004). Haozous's father was sculptor Allan Houser (b.1914, d.1994).

Haozous (b.1943) began painting commercial signs under his father's instruction around 1958. After high school, he entered Utah State University in Logan, where he majored in commercial art but did not graduate. After leaving school, Haozous moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he and one of his brothers spent a summer working at the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) on the building crew. Like so many young Indian men of the time, he entered the military service as a way "to break some kind of negative cycle" (Haozous 2004). He joined the United States Navy in 1963 and served...
as a machinist’s mate for four years on the U.S.S. Frank Knox. After his discharge from the navy, Haozous entered the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland. Haozous majored in painting, drawing and sculpture, though he studied various other media, including photography, ceramics and jewelry. In 1971 he graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in sculpture and moved to Santa Fe.

Early in his career, Haozous worked mainly in various types of wood, such as black walnut, mahogany, oak and pine. He also used stone, including alabaster, soapstone and African wonder stone. The themes prevalent in his sculptures from the 1970s are often the same ones he addresses today, and include the disrupted balance of nature; the loss of traditional male/female roles and balance between the sexes; and the discord in Native American culture. One example of thematic imagery in his work from 1976, The Masterpiece, is a flat panel of mahogany depicting three tribal dancers performing for a non-Native audience; above the dancers, in imagination or perhaps a vision, are the ancestors (Fig. 3). Haozous states that this is a reference to Native American people directing their focus and arts outward (2005a).

During the 1970s Haozous participated extensively in various shows and juried competitions, taking top prizes at the Southwestern Association for Indian Arts (SWAIA) Indian Market in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In fact, the year he graduated from college, 1971, he won a first prize at the SWAIA Indian Market. He also took top prizes at the juried fairs at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona. This was a career-building period for Haozous, and his first major publication was in Guy and Doris Monthan’s Art and Indian Individualists: The Art of Seventeen Contemporary Southwestern Artists and Craftsmen (1975). Out of school for only four years, Haozous was included in this book with such established artists as his father. In discussing Haozous, the Monthans stated, “the span between the time his work was first introduced to the public and the present has been so short that he seems to have erupted on the art scene as a mature sculptor” (Monthan and Monthan 1975:58).

In the mid-1970s Haozous moved from creating small sculptures to making large-scale works, and the theme of Mother Earth first appeared in his repertoire, symbolized by his use of the nude female form. By the late 1970s Haozous had begun to work primarily in marble and alabaster, though he sporadically produced smaller pieces in different media. One example of his stonework, Grandfather’s Dream, depicts a male figure in cowboy attire with his head to one side, perhaps sad or perhaps sleeping, but most certainly marked for death, as symbolized by the white owl on his shoulder (Fig. 7). Other works from this time used imagery that ranged from stylized animal forms, like buffalo and the bear, to abstract pieces, like the Zen Form series. Some of these pieces included bullet holes, seemingly contradicting the works’ pleasant romanticized images — which was exactly his point.

Haozous began creating larger stone pieces in the 1980s, and by the end of the decade he was using steel almost exclusively. As his media became harder so did the themes he addressed in his work. Skull, a limestone piece from the Love and Death series, shows a skull in the body of a woman with a serene face (Fig. 2). Throughout the 1980s Haozous’s pieces continued to grow larger and taller, and he stopped painting them in order to accelerate the natural process of rust. The steel piece Apache Spirit, done in 1987, perfectly exemplifies Haozous’s visual language, including the use of airplanes and larger-than-life figures.1 In this decade, Haozous’s production and public profile increased. He won again at SWAIA’s Indian Market in 1982 for a piece of jewelry as opposed to a monumental work — and took Best of Show for a collaborative piece with Santa Clara potter Jody Folwell. In 1983 the Heard Museum presented an exhibit of his and his father’s work, titled House and Haozous: A Sculptural Retrospective. Haozous’s pieces in the exhibit included both conceptual figures and works that embodied the social commentary for which Haozous is now known. Images still included animal forms and female nudes representing Mother Earth, but Haozous also introduced utilitarian structures such as chairs, beds and tables. His works often exaggerated the familiar, making objects larger than in life and using nontraditional material such as steel. In 1989 Haozous served as artist-in-residence at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire.

As the 1980s ended, Haozous had successfully created his own recognizable style.2 Haozous participated in international shows and exhibitions during this decade, including the 1990 exhibition Muerte/Amor, at the Galería Universitaria Aríostos at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in Mexico City; the 1992 exhibition Apfelbaum-Sacred Images at the Peiper-Riegraf Gallery in Frankfurt, Germany, where he was the artist-in-residence; and the 1999 Venice Biennial Exhibition in Italy. Between 1990 and 1995 Haozous averaged two to three solo exhibitions per year and participated in many group exhibitions.

Although his work in the 1990s was primarily in steel, Haozous continued to challenge himself in different media, including photography, videos, monotypes, pen and ink, chrome and gold, as well as combinations of these materials, and by doing both larger commissions and smaller pieces, including jewelry. During this time both his subject matter and style became even harder
The Discoverer is representative of Haozous’s distinct visual language; it depicts Spanish conquistador Don Juan de Oñate riding triumphantly over the hand-prints and bodies of Native Americans (Fig. 10). In 1599 Oñate attempted to colonize the residents of Acoma Pueblo. According to Haozous, “[Oñate] was resisted at Acoma and after he overcame the village he cut off the hands and feet of anyone who could hold a weapon. They were then thrown off the mesa, consequently the floating hands” (2005a). Another work demonstrating Haozous’s social commentary is Artificial Cloud (Fig. 4). This piece shows a single cloud made of rusty steel perched atop a spire. Haozous has said that the work refers to a future in which humans will no longer be able to exist without protection, with the cloud symbolizing the nature that humans envision but have destroyed (Haozous 2005a).

In 1995 the University of New Mexico (UNM) and the City of Albuquerque commissioned Haozous to create a monumental steel work for the UNM campus. The furor surrounding Cultural Crossroads of the Americas changed Haozous’s career. Arguably his best-known work, Cultural Crossroads was installed in 1996 on the UNM campus in Albuquerque (Fig. 11). Controversy erupted the next day, when it was found that the piece was different from the model that Haozous had previously submitted to a committee, and which the committee had approved. The UNM refused to accept the work or pay Haozous because of an aesthetic change he had made, which consisted of adding some razor wire to the work. (Haozous felt that this addition would draw the eye of the viewer out of the now enclosed space.) Despite overwhelming public support and extensive mediation, in 2000 a court ruled that Haozous had violated his contract by adding the wire, and although the work remains on the UNM campus, the razor wire has been removed from it. Haozous commented that these actions amount to “cultural censorship.” When asked if he would do it again, he replied, “Of course, it’s my responsibility…cultural censorship is wrong” (Haozous 2004).

Haozous uses visual, symbolic and actual language in his work: clouds symbolizing the environment; words that say nothing or “gibberish,” as he calls it;3 entire textual images; and popular culture symbols, such as the M for McDonalds, the dollar sign and the Christian cross. He also uses simplified forms of airplanes, hands, and figures of humans and animals, such as the buffalo or bear. In Haozous’s gibberish, words become symbols, subverting language yet creating dialogue. The repeated use of razor wire creates a biting social commentary in his work, as the material has many inferences, including borders, death, isolation, crime and animals, rendering the pieces politically and ideologically charged. Another repeated image in Haozous’s work is the female nude. Haozous explains that she represents Mother Earth, the sacred feminine (Morris-Carlsten 2005). It is interesting to note the use of gender in Haozous’s work,
with the female nude frequently shown in monumental size and the masculine represented negatively by technology, commodity, buildings, steel and razor wire.

In a recent interview, Haozous commented on a higher purpose in Indian art, stating that most Indian artists are "interior decorators":

I think native art is only the tip of a philosophical iceberg that has to do with returning the earth to balance. That's all. The arts are only a tool for communication. Indian art participates in a dialogue on returning the earth to balance. Part of this earth-based dialogue is acknowledging that the earth is diseased, our place in that destruction, our relationship with the earth, and finally our responsibility to the earth and to future generations. It is not the answers that that dialogue seeks; it is the questions that are most important.

In regards to this there are a number of tools or stimuli to provoke that dialogue; catalysts for change. These tools are part of an Indigenous Cultural Language. The tools of this Indigenous Cultural Language include words, language and images. Words can be literal or gibberish, when they lack common sense. Language can be symbolic, cultural, or visual and in any combination, used in order to stimulate the dialogue. This cultural language makes great use of humor, ridicule and criticism but all are tempered by wisdom. Art, religion, and spirituality make great tools as well, and all make use of the cultural language as catalysts for change (Haozous 2004).

Haozous states that language and images are tools of what he calls an "Indigenous Cultural Dialogue," a concept that provides a critical language with which to discuss Native American art crossculturally. The recognizable element that can be used in this critical discussion or examination is the Trickster — not the Trickster in corporeal form, but in subtle uses of humor and irony.

The Trickster as a Theoretical Construct

Conceptual attributes of the Trickster or Trickster signs include: irony; humor; multiple meanings; subversion of meaning; transgression of cultural boundaries; hybrid or syncretic acts; controversial images; ambiguous meanings; absurd or grotesque meanings; acts of play, teasing or satire; double images that mean two things at once or double acts, like Native artists who use broken English to sell the image when speaking with a possible customer. In short, Trickster signs are everywhere in the language, literature, oral traditions, and the art of peoples who survive colonialism with a sense of humor. Humor and irony in native art may be obvious or subtle, but they are often there; whether the viewer recognizes them, however, is a different matter.

Scholar Barbara Babcock explains that the Trickster is a necessity in society, because in disordering the world the Trickster makes humanity aware of the correct order of things (2004). The Trickster plays with boundaries, transgresses the lines and borders, using humor and irony and clowning. Babcock calls these actions "symbolic inversion," which she defines as "any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to community held cultural codes, values, and norms be they linguistic, literary or artistic, religious or social and political." Furthermore, "symbolic inversion is central to the literary notions of irony, parody, and paradox" (1977:14, 16). Contemporary Native American artists like Jimmie Durham call this phenomenon "turning around,"...
stating that “irony, humor, and subversion are the most common guises and disguises of those artists leaping out of the melting pot and into the fire. They hold mirrors up to the dominant culture, slyly infiltrating the mainstream art with alternative experiences — inverse, reverse, perverse. These strategies are forms of Tricksterism, or Ni’ Go Tlunh A Doh Ka’ — Cherokee for ‘We are always turning around…on purpose’” (Durham 1986:5).

The Trickster in Haozous’s Work

Haozous’s work, and the images contained within, can certainly be seen as a conscious act of “symbolic inversion.” His art is critical of the categorization of Native American art, and he uses humorous and ironic images to draw attention to the boundaries that his work transgresses.

A striking example of the Trickster signature in Haozous’s work is the image of the father and daughter barbequing over the corpse of Chief Bigfoot, seen in Defining the Great Mystery (Fig. 6). Instead of using his customary visual language, Haozous uses words as the background for the images: row after row of neatly underlined, handwritten text scrawls across the paper. The words seem to have been written so quickly that there are no corrections of spelling or grammar. The text forms the background of the image and outlines the four figures depicted in a diamond-shaped arrangement.

At the top of the image stands a nude woman, alone and on her own ground level, separate from the rest. She looks directly at the viewer and is surrounded by a circle of white, blank space, as though she is in the spotlight. This figure appears to represent Mother Earth. Directly beneath the female figure lies the image of a frozen corpse in a red scarf, the only swatch of color in the entire piece. Depicted on a separate level and at the forefront of the image, the male figure is a highly detailed and precise rendering of a well-known photograph of Chief Bigfoot lying in the snow at the Wounded Knee, South Dakota massacre site in 1890. On a separate plane, between the female figure and the corpse of Bigfoot, are two obviously Anglo figures who are engaged with each other but not with the other figures in the work, as delineated by their relationship to the ground. On the right is an adult male with a chef’s hat, apron and an oven mitt on one hand, a spatula holding a hamburger in the other. The figure on the left is a girl, as denoted by her smaller height and her hair — nearly white and in pigtails — holding out a plate, ready to receive the hamburger. Each of the figures casts a very long shadow that goes to the left, which would indicate that the sun is setting.

This provocative work draws the viewer in via the gaze of the adult female. Centered in the frame of the image, she is looking down and directly at the viewer. She is the only one of the four figures that is nude. Furthermore, she stands on a plane above the other figures, and in the spotlight, as if to emphasize her importance. Her gaze depicts no emotion. Her ethnicity
is difficult to determine; her hair is dark, her skin is
darker than that of the two Anglo figures and her fea-
tures reveal nothing recognizably ethnic — which is
Haozous’s intention.

In *Defining the Great Mystery*, the two Anglo fig-
ures seem out of place, and stand motionless and stiff.
The mundane act of exchanging meat suggests their
separation from nature, and their separate plane in the
image indicates that they are cut off from nature. These
two figures may represent the American way of life as
symbolized by a Sunday barbeque. What is most evoca-
tive about the painting is the general atmosphere. With
the background of the text, the images seem cold and
grey; this is emphasized by the image of the frozen
corpse of Bigfoot. However, the long shadows that all the
figures cast and the barbeque scene suggest a summer
sunset. Perhaps this is meant to signify that the sun will
set on humankind if we do not reconnect with Mother
Earth. The fact that the seasons are seemingly at odds in
this image may refer to temporal differences: the lack of
connection between the generations and/or the nonlin-
erar nature of time.

*Defining the Great Mystery* is a politically charged,
nondecorative portrait of Native and non-Native cultures.

This work functions as cultural criticism and as a piece to
stimulate dialogue. The underlying ideological considera-
tion of the image is the assimilation of Indians in terms of
language, culture, religion and identity, resulting in what
Haozous refers to in the text of the image as “Red White
People,” “bound to Euro-American linear concepts of iden-
tity.” This work, like most of Haozous’s pieces, is liminal.
The referents are marginalized peoples, marginalized his-
tories and disconnections from the earth and each other.
Haozous uses the image of Bigfoot to draw attention to
the tragic nature of history, with the corpse representing
Indian history, in a precise rendering of the infamous pho-
tograph from the Wounded Knee massacre.

*Defining the Great Mystery* is also a work of dia-
logue, which is a tricky act. The idea of using text as the
background of a two-dimensional work is not new; how-
ever, filling the entire background space with subver-
sive text is an obvious transgression of the boundaries of
art and literature and is an act of the Trickster. While all
artists use a visual language that is particular to their
repertoire, few use actual text in the form of a dialogue.
Even more intriguing is the type of critical discourse that
this text participates in and creates, as the following pas-
sages demonstrate. One section of the dialogue reads,
“The paradox of indigenous man allows for two choices:
either become contemporary white or remain historical
and pretty.” A later section reads, “To us the importance
of the cultural identity through oral history became
romance and entertainment. Most of the information
available to us was from the outside perspective of non-
indigenous writers whose guidelines to ‘indigene’ were
based on theory,” or “the forced removal of our tribal
identities...The elders in many cases had less under-
standing of the purpose of the ritual (than we) and were
forced to disguise this ignorance with the ritual of the
dance. Our knowledge of western man’s bible, lan-
guage, history, mathematics and economics was hun-
dreds of times more comprehensive than even the most
basic of indigenous man’s concepts. Our identity had
become powwow, Mother Earth, fry bread and old pho-
tographs that as photos do, only picked up the visual
identities of our history.” Finally, the text reads, “If we
seek to portray ourselves we would have to consider
the title of ‘Red White People.’” These comments are the
mark of the Trickster: they epitomize the act of resistance, and they transgress the boundaries of what is considered politically correct to say about Indians or for Indians to say about themselves. Haozous’s purpose is to stimulate dialogue.

Another two-dimensional work by Haozous that uses image, text and dialogue is the work Bi duy’ e (subtitled The New Age Apache; Fig. 5). This work portrays a lone male figure seated in an Eastern-style meditation pose, with legs crossed and fingers linked. The man is nearly nude with the exception of what appears to be a loincloth and one moccasin. His hair is cut short in mourning style. He recedes behind handwritten words, and the entire image is in sepia tones.

The composition of the work is balanced, with four clouds situated above the seated figure, the clouds on the outside corresponding with the figure’s knees, the two inner clouds in line with his torso. The atmosphere of the work appears hazy, in part because of the darkening effect of the text over the image. However, the seated male is brightly lit, almost washed out on the right side, and casting a long shadow on the left side. The figure appears to be floating, having little figure-to-ground relationship; the shadow is the only reference point to the ground. According to Haozous, “Bi duy’ e’s pose is a reference to our picking and choosing what image we wish for those of our past. The New Age Apache (subtitle of work) title is my clue to the thought that our contemporary Apache people are more related to New Agers than the actual people that we claim to have birthright ownership to” (2005a).

Bi duy’ e is the Apache name of the historic figure Victorio, an Apache leader who is usually shown in photographs with long hair. Depicted in a spiritual pose, and with short hair, Bi duy’ e is clearly in mourning in Haozous’s image. Despite this, Bi duy’ e’s body is muscular and toned, “the body of a White man, certainly not Apache,” says Haozous (2005a). Just as the female figure in Defining the Great Mystery draws the viewer into the image via her gaze, so too does the male figure of Bi duy’ e in this work, as he stares intently into the viewer’s eyes. The female figure in the former work represents Mother Earth, which suggests that the male figure of Bi duy’ e may have similar spiritual meaning and traits. Bi duy’ e’s short hair draws attention to how his long hair was romanticized by writers; Haozous states that some writers claimed Bi duy’ e’s long hair blew in the wind in the streets of Mexico when they triumphantly paraded his remains (Haozous 2005a). Finally, the use of text as a part of the image is seen in both Defining the Great Mystery and Bi duy’ e. However, in the former, the text neatly contours and outlines the figures, whereas in the latter, the words are over the image, suggesting that the words are more important than the image. The figure in Bi duy’ e serves only to draw the viewer into the dialogue. Given that Bi duy’ e was an Apache leader, teaching via dialogue would have been one of his roles. In doing the same, Haozous continues Bi duy’ e’s legacy.

The dialogue in Bi duy’ e is no less tricky, subversive or politically incorrect than that in Defining the Great Mystery. Haozous criticizes current methods of determining Indian identity, writing that “we are guaranteeing the extinction of our people because of bloodline royalty and ethnic purity self definitions without also demanding or requiring certain levels of cultural responsibility and cultural participation.” Haozous touches on diminishing cultural knowledge, writing, “Now that we have no traditional land base or true cultural ceremonies to enable us to have a direct reference to our Native American identity we have little else than our history, bloodline or number to rely on.” Haozous goes on to tell us about the need for an honest assessment of tribal values. “Unfortunately the superficial cultural roles that now define our fictitious Native American cultural identity may be the most honest reflection of our tribe as contemporary Apaches and will undoubtedly remain so until we can create change and demand a more honest description of ourselves.” This work reads like an open letter to the artist’s and other tribes, inviting dialogue, honest assessment and change.

In a striking divergence from Haozous’s typical stone- and steelwork, these two-dimensional works are perhaps his strongest social statements. Other recent two-dimensional works include Immigrant, Eaten by Coyotes and Sacred Springs of the Geronimo Apache, all of which incorporate representational human figures and text (Figs. 1, 9, 8). Haozous seeks to extend this dialogue into Indian country by making these works reproducible and therefore more accessible to Native
As part of a Native American critical theory, Indigenous Cultural Dialogue provides a starting place for analysis that is rooted in the commonalities rather than the differences of Native American culture, and goes beyond colonial structures of Western theoretical approaches. While the Trickster may facilitate the dialogue, there are specific tools used in an Indigenous Cultural Dialogue — a dialogue based on the “commonality in humans” (Morris-Carlsen 2005). Some of these tools are words, language, images, gibberish and common sense. Art stimulates the dialogue via symbolic language. Art is a dialogue, containing the questions; and as Haozous notes (Morris-Carlsen 2005), “it’s the questions, not the answers [that matter].”

Footnotes
1See cover illustration.
3Haozous often uses what he calls gibberish words or words that mean nothing “more basic than language. I think it is a reference to our transformation from an Earth language to a human based focus and language” (2004).
4The term “Indigenous Cultural Dialogue” is Haozous’s and is used with permission.
5Footnotes from an Earth language to a human based focus and language” (2004).
7The quotes from this entire paragraph are excerpted from the text in the work "Bi duy'Ya:"
8In a recent interview, Haozous stated that when he goes to the reservations, many if not most inhabitants do not know his or his father’s work. He added that many Native Americans have not seen some of the most famous Native American art. This indicates that contemporary Native American art is primarily produced for Anglo collectors and is not relevant to reservation communities. Haozous hopes to reproduce some of these two-dimensional works and get them into these areas to stimulate dialogue, especially about identity, among Native Americans. His main concern is how to get Native Americans talking about issues that concern them. Furthermore, he believes that his drawings are a “reference to a loss of cultural essence that is replaced by the physical, non-philosophical and easily obtainable pretense of being Indian, by both white, black, brown, yellow and Indians of Western Man” (2005b).
9Both are titled Lodge; however, neither is meant to reference a sweat lodge. Figure 12 is based on a wikup.
10For an extensive discussion of Haozous and his work, see Morris-Carlsen (2005).