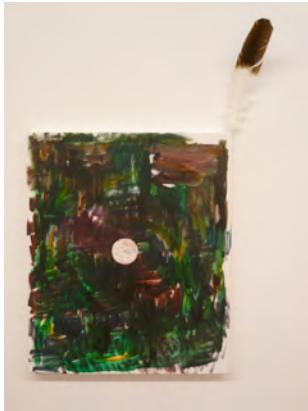


Celestial Telegraph Paintings: Spiritualism, Technology and American Indians

“Ghost Train”, 2008. The return of ancestors is a common element connecting New Guinean Cargo Cults to the North American Indian Ghost Dance religion. While Cargo Cults have been documented as maintaining a belief that manufactured products and technology are gifts from ancestor spirits, any relationship among the Ghost Dance participants between technology and ancestral return is undocumented and untheorized (though it should be noted that Native Americans, for the most part, had a far more gradual exposure and less distinct acculturation to Euro-American technology than the more isolated WWII-era Papuans). Given that the major revered elements of the New Guinean phenomenon were information technology (radios), preservation technology (canned goods – vacuum preservation technologies having been invented, by the way, through spirit communications by Amanda Theodocia Jones) and transport technology (airplanes), one can't help but wonder what influence the popularization of telegraphic communication, the distribution of canned rations to starving native populations and the appearance of a rail line in nearby Mason Valley in 1883 had on the emergence of the Ghost Dance 6 years later. – see Lamont Lindstrom, “Cargo Cult: Strange Stories of Desire from Melanesia and Beyond”



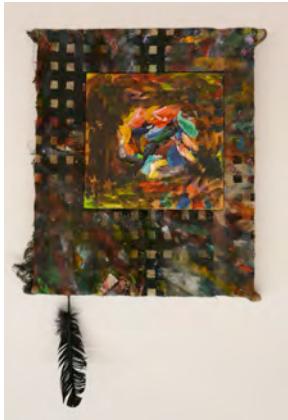
“Dear Mr President / Weather Doctor”, 2008. “Though he was ill, Jack Wilson used his weather-doctor power to end the (earth) tremors and bring back the sun (after a solar eclipse). ... He caused ice to fall from the sky in July, he transplanted a tree during a fierce rain without getting wet, he lighted a pipe by simply pointing it toward the sun, he made water appear in an empty container during a drought, he ended the drought of 1889 in October and caused heavy rains from then to the following April.” – Alice Beck Kehoe, “The Ghost Dance: Ethnohistory and Revitalization”



"Jack Wilson's Raincloud / Medicine", 2008. "Jack Wilson went to the regional Indian agency at Pyramid Lake and asked one of the employees to prepare and mail a letter to the President of the United States, explaining the Paiute doctor's holy mission and suggesting that if the United States government would send him a small regular salary, he would convey God's message to all the people of Nevada and, into the bargain, make it rain whenever they wished". –Kehoe, "The Ghost Dance"



"Little Pinkfeather", 2008. Kwiwishdi (or Quewishty as the name was spelled by missionaries) was a young Zuni recently taken to wearing women's clothing and setting up house with a young man from his tribe. Miss Dissette, the protestant missionary and teacher for the area, knew of the transvestite tradition within the Zuni but had never seen a full transition from boy to lhamana. When she asked Kwiwishdi the reason he had abandoned the Christian teachings and chose to live a life of sodomy and effeminacy, he replied that it was because he enjoyed doing women's work. "But I often do a man's work myself," she responded, "and don't put on men's clothes to do it." Kwiwishdi, after some hesitation, told the teacher, "Kwiwishdi loves all peoples in the world. Not same for teacher. If teacher can love all peoples maybe teacher can someday wear opposite clothes." Unphased, Miss Dissette concluded, "This accounts for the kind of spiritual arrogance that is peculiar to these creatures." – adapted from Will Roscoe, "Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America"



"Bad Medicine", 2008. To the Plains Indians, the disappearance of the buffalo could not be corrected by the supplementary subsistence provided by the U.S. government and the conversion to an agricultural lifestyle. The demise of a revered resource broke down an economy of efficiency in which everything from the buffalo was put to use, not only as food but also clothing, housing, decoration, currency, ritual and even a sense of agency since animal and human spirits were seen as irrevocably connected.



"Snakeoil / Bulletproof", 2008. "...the Teton Sioux (Lakota) leader Kicking Bear in the spring of 1890 introduced to his fellow western Sioux a special shirt about which he claimed 'the bullets will not go through'. ... James Mooney suggested that the Arapaho with whom Kicking Bear had danced may have copied the idea of holy dresses from Mormons who used an 'endowment robe' of white muslin ornamented with symbols of their faith. Many Mormons of Mooney's time believed that wearing these dresses protected them from dangers, including bullets". – Kehoe, "The Ghost Dance"



"Electrical current / Etherium Univercoelum", 2008. The latter two terms were invented by the Spiritualist Andrew Jackson Davis to express the ultimate interconnectedness through invisible forces that allowed communication with the spirit world. Similar to Villiers de Lisle-Adam in his novel "Tomorrow's Eve", Jackson's ideas and terminology were influenced by the promise of progress initiated in the years preceding the commercial generation and increasingly wider distribution of electrical current. – for information on Davis, see John DeSalvo, "Andrew Jackson Davis, The First American Prophet and Clairvoyant"



"Transcontinental Spirit Battery", 2008. A spirit battery to 19th C Spiritualists consisted of a table around which were gathered enough people to represent the alternating metals found in an electrical battery. It was believed that enough spiritual charge could be produced to open up communication with the Other Side.

Richard Hawkins, Los Angeles 2008