

**Judith Lowry: Indians and Irony**  
**Collection CAE2304**

**Introduction/Abstract**

The archive *Judith Lowry: Indians and Irony*, contains ephemera collected by Judith Lowry during her lifetime that exploits inaccurate and culturally insensitive images of Native Americans.

**Biographical Note: Judith Lowry**

Lowry was born in 1948, earned her B.A. in fine art from Humboldt State University, and her M.A. in painting and drawing from Chico State University. She has exhibited at the Crocker Museum in Sacramento; the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian in Santa Fe, New Mexico; the C.N. Gorman Museum in Davis, California; the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona; and the George Gustav Heye Center in New York City. Her paintings are in the collections of major museums throughout the United States.

**Scope and Content**

The archive *Judith Lowry: Indians and Irony*, contains ephemera collected by Judith Lowry during her lifetime that exploits inaccurate and culturally insensitive images of Native Americans. From sports team mascots and household food products to classic Western films and children’s cartoons, Native American images and names remain popular—and controversial—reference points in American culture. During her lifetime, Judith Lowry has amassed a vast collection of merchandising labels and popular kitsch memorabilia dedicated to stereotyped representations of Indigenous people in American culture. These items reveal the many ways that Native American imagery has been embedded in unexpected ways in the history, pop culture, and identity of the United States.

Lowry’s collection includes hundreds of figurines, product labels, movie posters, costumes, liquor bottles, book covers, fruit crate labels, and costumes that exploit inaccurate and culturally insensitive images of Native Americans. While Lowry calls most of it kitsch, or knickknacks, taken together the collection represents an important snapshot into the cultural production of American artifacts from a time when it was permissible to exploit the cultures of oppressed people as a marketing strategy. In recent years, Lowry’s collection has been presented in gallery exhibitions with the title, *Indians and Irony*.

There is a growing community of scholars across the Americas who are researching and publishing on this genre of visual culture; a recent example being the exhibition titled, *Americans*, at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC. While the content of Lowry’s archive collection is worthy of scholarly research and study, Lowry admits that it is also a lighthearted collection suitable for exhibition, and that humor can help to open complicated dialogues about the everyday visual culture that surrounds us. “It can hurt people,” Lowry said of the materials. “Especially at a time when Indian people didn’t have a voice. But Indian people have become more articulate, vocal and educated, and now they can fend for themselves. I’m an Indian person, and I’m educated, and [I have this collection] to give people a lighthearted look at a serious subject. I want them to have fun and I want it to be thought-provoking,” she has said.

Materials include printed ephemera, dolls, figurines, toys, posters, blankets & fabric, costumes, bottles, glasses, plates, trays, books, magazines, posters, dream catchers, food product labels, and many other items.

**This archive is currently in process.**

Date – Date

**Bulk Dates**

Date – Date

**Quantity / Extent**

6 cubic feet

**Language**

English

**Arrangement**

The archive Judith Lowry: Indians and Irony is arranged into ??? folders organized by subject and arranged alphabetically.

**Related Archive Collections**

CAE1906: *Great Basin Native Artists*

**Related Publications**

LaPena, Frank R., *When I Remember, I See Red: American Indian Art and Activism in California*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019.

**Container Listing:**

**CAE2304: Folders 1-?, Date – Date**

**CAE Box 342**

- 1 American Spirit Ephemera
- 2 Books & Magazines
- 3 Costumes
- 4 Dolls
- 5 Dream Catchers
- 6 Figurines
- 7 Music
- 8 Pocahontas Ephemera
- 9 Printed Ephemera
- 10 Serving Ware
- 11 Textiles
- 12 Toys

**CAE2304: Additional Materials**

**CAE Box 346: Objects**

?#? Item name (Italicize if a title), Type of Object (if applicable), Year

**CAE Box ?: Small Objects**

?#? Item name (Italicize if a title), Type of Object (if applicable), Year

**CAE Box ?: Oversized Objects**

?#? Item name (Italicize if a title), Type of Object (if applicable), Year

**CAE S-Box 65**

7#? *Indian Love Call, Made Easy for Piano*, Sheet Music, Not dated

7#? *Indian Love Call, Arthur Hammerstein Presents Rose Marie*, Sheet Music, 1924

**Tube Rack: Oversized Items**

?#? Item name (Italicize if a title), Type of Object (if applicable), Year

**CAE Flat File F10: Oversized Items**

?#? Captain John Smith and Pocahontas, Poster, 1953 (38½ x 25¾)