

THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

The culture of the American Indian, his way of life, has been properly evaluated and appreciated by all too few white Americans. The National Gallery of the American Indian will be a center for the exhibition of the finest examples of the Indian's arts, past and present, and will make possible their circulation throughout the United States; it will serve to acquaint the white people with the Indian, his arts and crafts and his philosophy, his design for living, the richness of his culture and its value to all who inhabit this continent.

The world's best artists have in recent decades begun to fully understand and give due recognition to the primitive and "folk" art of the hitherto despised "backward" peoples of Africa, Asia, and other areas which have not been completely transformed economically and culturally by our "machine age" civilization. None of these primitive cultures is more interesting than that of our own American Indian. With amazing tenacity he has held to his own life-pattern and his arts have persisted, despite the influence of an alien civilization surrounding him, for centuries since pre-Columbian days. His unbroken aesthetic traditions are extraordinarily vital and unique; they are both classic and modern.

Today as in centuries long past, the Indians are producing pottery, paintings, basketry, blankets and other textiles, jewelry, beadwork, quillwork, sculpture, costumes, embroidery, and other objects of art, that deserve wider appreciation--as well as "junk" - souvenirs for the indiscriminating tourist trade. The National Gallery of the American Indian will seek to win for the finest Indian art this wider recognition and appreciation. It will help to foster a greater demand for the Indian's finest work and thus aid him in developing his art.