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After the Buffalo Were Gone: The Louis Warren Hill, Sr., Collection of Indian Art.

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This catalogue of the Louis W. Hill Collection of Indian art and crafts, evenly divided between the Museum of the Plains Indians in Browning, Montana, and the Science Museum of Minnesota in St. Paul, makes available to specialists and general readers a visual portrait of a notable collection. While nearly 170 of the
The book’s 256 pages consist of brief descriptions alongside black-and-white illustrations of items contained in the Hill collection, the volume also includes an account of Louis W. Hill, Glacier Park, and the gathering of the Hill collection by Ann T. Walton; a very brief essay by noted ethnologist John C. Ewers on his personal and scholarly reactions to the collection; and a discussion by Royal Hassrick, well-known authority on western Indians and art, of arts and crafts among northern plains Indians.

Unfortunately, not all the textual sections are of equal value. Walton has difficulty presenting her material in a well-organized fashion and needs to provide more context for her discussions of tourism, cultural trends, and reactions to the West during the era from 1880 to 1940. Some of this needed cultural context is set forth in Ewer’s illuminating but abbreviated comments. The piece by Hassrick is more extended and includes several specific illustrations of the impacts the loss of the buffalo and a war-based society had on the artistic endeavors of these northern Indian groups. He notes the shaping influences of these transitions on individual Indians as well as on those who were leaders in the tribes.

All the book is physically attractive, however. Twenty well-produced color plates, an artistically laid-out text and black-and-white photographs, and the utilization of paintings by such artists as George Catlin and Winold Reiss increase one’s appreciation for and understanding of the Hill collection. The most extensive sections of the catalogue are those dealing with moccasins, men’s shirts and leggings, women’s attire, storage bags, horse gear, and pipes and smoking equipment.

Overall, then, After the Buffalo Were Gone achieves its major purpose of calling attention to the Hill collection, noting its ethnological and artistic importance and providing visual images of its contents.

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