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Review of *Identity by Design: Tradition, Change, and Celebration in Native Women's Dresses* Edited by Emil Her Many Horses

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*Identity by Design: Tradition, Change, and Celebration in Native Women's Dresses*. Edited by Emil Her Many Horses. New York: HarperCollins, in association with the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 2007. 160 pp. Map, illustrations, photographs, index. \$24.95.

The National Museum of the American Indian published this book in conjunction with a 2007 exhibition of the same title. The book and the exhibition focus on women's dresses and related clothing and accessories from the North American Plains, Plateau, and Great Basin regions dating from the 1830s to the present, although the majority of the clothing and writing relates to the Plains.

After a foreword by then NMAI director W. Richard West Jr., exhibition curator and book editor Emil Her Many Horses provides an introductory chapter addressing the familial and spiritual significance of women's decorated dresses and describing basic designs and materials used in creating such beautiful attire. Lakota artist Colleen Cutschall, who served as co-curator of the exhibition, writes on some of the historical and contemporary social and ceremonial contexts in which women created and wore decorated dresses. Interestingly, this section includes one example from the White Mountain Apache of the Southwest accompanied by a description of the Jicarilla Apache Keesda Ceremony, presented within a very general discussion of Plains puberty ceremonies and the Plains Sun Dance. Janet Catherine Berlo's essay on women's creativity and aesthetics deals with many of the same topics as the first two chapters, with an emphasis on materials obtained through Native and Euro-American trade networks. Quotations from contemporary Native dressmakers and beadworkers are included in each of the chapters and in a concluding page titled "Women's Work is Never Done."

The volume's profuse photographs of the dresses, moccasins, blankets, robes, and accessories along with historical and contemporary photographs of women in exquisite attire are spectacular. Like the exhibition itself and the Smithsonian Institution Web site of the same name, the book's authors briefly address several

subjects related to the clothing's societal, familial, historical, and spiritual contexts. Depth, however, is largely lacking in the discussions of such culturally complex traditions as women's societies, events such as the Ghost Dance movement, or even contemporary powwows—the major venues for the wearing of such decorated clothing today. Although the book includes dresses and accessories from four regions, cross-cultural comparisons are difficult given its brief length and its limited examples from regions other than the Plains.

For those interested in Plains arts exemplified in women's creative artistry from the nineteenth century to the present, *Identity by Design* provides a visual feast, but also an appetite for additional examples as well as deeper, more comprehensive discussions and interpretations of the subject.

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