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Review of *The Life and Death of Jerome Tiger: War to Peace, Death to Life* By Peggy Tiger and Molly Babcock

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Seminole) during the 1960s. Under the guidance of Muskogee entrepreneur Nettie Wheeler, he rose to prominence in the highly circumscribed world of Native American painting. In 1967, when Tiger was twenty-six years old and on the eve of commercial success, he died from an accidental, self-inflicted gunshot on the parking lot of a Muskogee cafe.

His widow, Peggy, and cousin, Molly Babcock, pay him tribute in this lavishly illustrated book. A high-school dropout, Tiger served in the Navy, fought his way as an amateur boxer to the middleweight title of Oklahoma, studied at the Cooper Institute in Cleveland, and managed through his art to provide for his wife and three children, as well as for a host of relatives, friends, and even total strangers. The authors' accounts of his warrior-style machismo, generosity, tenderness, and driving ambition are presented with a refreshing lack of apology or self-consciousness.

Tributes by Nettie Wheeler, Creek-Potawatomini artist Woody Crumbo, Gilcrease Institute curator Jean Snodgrass, and others indicate the high regard Tiger commanded within the Native American art establishment. It was Wheeler who directed Tiger to the work of Native American painters Acee Blue Eagle, Harrison Begay, Allan Houser, Oscar Howe, Al Momaday, and Richard West at all-Indian exhibitions at the Philbrook Art Center in Tulsa. From these men he learned the "official" style of Native American painting that had developed in the federal art programs for Indians of the 1930s. Phrased in kind of a latter-day *arts decoratifs*, their painting dealt with tribal history, legend, and everyday life, and was meant to be instructional as well as decorative.

Depending upon each artist's ingenuity, these first-generation painters deviated from the official style as they developed more personal expressions. The same became true of Tiger shortly before his death. In his late work, figures were presented with little or no indication of place on flat-toned backgrounds or color fields. He never abandoned naturalism in the human figure; in fact, his figures were more academically naturalistic than those in

The Life and Death of Jerome Tiger: War to Peace, Death to Life. By Peggy Tiger and Molly Babcock. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980. Illustrations, index. xv + 285 pp. \$39.95.

Jerome Tiger, a Creek-Seminole painter of Muskogee, Oklahoma, produced what amounts to a visual history of the Five Civilized Tribes (Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and

the work of his predecessors.

How Tiger will fare in the critical sense over time is difficult to estimate. Like most Native American painters, he rarely participated in any but all-Indian competitions, and his work has seldom been subjected to the kind of critical analysis given non-Indian painters.

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