

# Basic Detail Report



**Title: The Arts of Life in America: Indian Arts**

Date: 1932

Primary Maker: com.gallerysystems.emuseum.core.entities.RecordXPerson@3dd9f

Medium: Egg tempera and oil glaze on linen

Description: With Indian Arts Benton acknowledged the significant role Native-Americans played in the creative history of the nation. By the 1950s, Native-Americans had been marginalized. The inclusion of the panel was politically daring and consistent with the major emphasis given to African-Americans in the Arts of the South. Benton was acutely aware of the cultural contribution to both races.

# Basic Detail Report

Nevertheless, Benton confessed his ignorance of Native-American culture. He admitted that he had never seen Native-Americans dancing, singing, weaving, preparing skins, invoking the great spirits, or hunting buffalo. Benton acknowledged that he based his images on accounts he read in popular novels, and from his study of James Fennimore Cooper, author of *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), as well as from attending the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show. Thus, while the other panels benefited from his actual eyewitness observations, *Indian Arts* is a highly romantic, even fanciful confection. His composition is, as usual, elaborately balanced. The enormous dancer on the right, his sinews clearly exaggerated, is juxtaposed with the smaller figure of the crouching drummer. In order to remedy this unbalance, Benton has included the two women and the hunter on the left to help outweigh the figure on the right. Both the ground on which the main figures stand and the amorphous billow of smoke afforded Benton an opportunity to indulge in his predilection for swirls of blues, pinks, greens, yellows, and oranges, a vestige of his earlier commitment to abstract equivalents in music. As a young student in Paris, Benton studied the theories of the Orphists, Robert and Sonia Delaunay, whose paintings were inspired by music. They embraced an original form of Cubism in which musical notes were given different geometric shapes and colors.

Dimensions: 93 3/4 x 84 in. (238.1 x 213.4 cm)