

DRUM BEATS

by Bret Wright

Drums beat across the plains, not echoing so much as rolling with the pulse of wind over grasses and aromatic sage. The sound is carried along on a current that is wholly spiritual. It mixes with the rustle and buzz that is the natural din of the prairie, and then settles into the earth. Its memory, ancient and vibrant, folds gently into the soil, mixing with other beats from antiquity. The gathering pulse of the earth blends perfectly with human song chanting through the ages. These voices sing in slow, deliberate tongues, unchanged but for a few modern additions. They belong to the Native American, and though the language may differ from voice to voice, beat to beat, they all refrain with a soft “Remember... remember me.”



This music – these drum beats past and present – speaks to artists Mari Bolen, Mike Larsen, Paddi Moyer, Teri Sodd, and Ken Sullivan differently, but it falls on ears that hear and remember. From the mists of pre-contact to the present, the voices of Native Americans sing to these artists about honor, courage, pride, and tradition. This is the music of a culture still alive and vibrant that will not allow the influence of modern life to subdue its rich history and promising future. These artists speak of a calling to record the music of the Native American soul.

“I feel them,” says Paddi Moyer. “It’s their spiritual aspects that attract me.” Her art, she says, is a highly spiritual thing for her. Working in Desert Stone, a water-based clay of her own creation, she has the opportunity to connect to the earth in a way that armatures won’t allow. For Moyer, the spirit of her subject resides within the medium and is waiting to emerge.

Teri Sodd, who captures her subjects in pastel, says, “There’s a softness of

“My scientific background demands accuracy. I’ve got to find three sources that agree before I depict it. Oh, I become a pest at museums.”

Mari Bolen

Sundances by Paddi Moyer
23” x 13” x 13”
bronze

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