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| [Enter your biography] | | | |
| Santa Clara University | | | |

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| **Your article** |
| Morrison, George (1919-2000) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| George Morrison was a Native American (Chippewa) painter who played an active role in the formation of Abstract Expressionism. Morrison attended the Art Students League in New York City from 1943-1946, and was considered a member of the New York School, exhibiting alongside Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning, Ad Reinhardt, Louise Bourgeois, Mark Rothko, and others. Morrison’s paintings rarely contained overtly Indian signifiers, yet his early interest in nature and the unconscious, as well as his engagement with Surrealist practices such as automatism, made him an ally of modern primitivism. His experimentation with non-figural and biomorphic forms led him to develop a mature style of abstraction that combined colour field and gestural approaches: he is best known for large-scale paintings, drawings, and wood collages that convey rhythmic and tactile sensations of the urban and natural environments. From 1970 to 1983 Morrison was a member of the faculty of Studio Arts at the University of Minnesota, and from 1983 until his death in 2000 he lived and worked on the Grand Portage Indian Reservation on the shore of Lake Superior. In 2004, Morrison was one of two artists featured in the inaugural exhibition of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. |
| George Morrison was a Native American (Chippewa) painter who played an active role in the formation of Abstract Expressionism. Morrison attended the Art Students League in New York City from 1943-1946, and was considered a member of the New York School, exhibiting alongside Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning, Ad Reinhardt, Louise Bourgeois, Mark Rothko, and others. Morrison’s paintings rarely contained overtly Indian signifiers, yet his early interest in nature and the unconscious, as well as his engagement with Surrealist practices such as automatism, made him an ally of modern primitivism. His experimentation with non-figural and biomorphic forms led him to develop a mature style of abstraction that combined colour field and gestural approaches: he is best known for large-scale paintings, drawings, and wood collages that convey rhythmic and tactile sensations of the urban and natural environments. From 1970 to 1983 Morrison was a member of the faculty of Studio Arts at the University of Minnesota, and from 1983 until his death in 2000 he lived and worked on the Grand Portage Indian Reservation on the shore of Lake Superior. In 2004, Morrison was one of two artists featured in the inaugural exhibition of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian.  Morrison was born and raised near the Grand Portage Indian Reservation in Chippewa City, Minnesota. After attending a Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school and public high school, he earned a Bachelor’s of Fine Arts in painting at the Minneapolis School of Art. From the mid-1940s through to the early 1960s, Morrison split his time primarily between New York City and Provincetown, Massachusetts, with a year-long interlude spent in Paris and Aix-en-Provence on a Fulbright fellowship in 1952. In 1965, while acting as a member of the faculty of the Rhode Island School of Design, Morrison began to construct collages from driftwood found on the beaches of Cape Cod. These constructions, which the artist referred to as ‘paintings in wood,’ were likely inspired by Morrison’s friend Louise Nevelson, with whom he exhibited at Grand Central Moderns Gallery in New York. Whereas Nevelson’s wood structures were often oriented vertically and incorporated spaces between elements, Morrison’s are densely packed mosaics arranged in resolutely horizontal compositions. Morrison’s appreciation of the natural colour, texture, and grain of his materials inspired him to leave the works unpainted, underscoring their reference to the landscape and the forces of nature. Following his retirement and move back to the reservation in 1983, Morison began work on a series of acrylic paintings known as the *Red Rock Variations* or, simply, the *Horizon* paintings. Each abstract landscape features a luminous horizon line placed high in the composition, which both animates and calms the turbulent washes of colour that flow across the surface of the canvas.  File: Morrison\_New\_England\_Landscape\_II.jpg  Figure 1: *New England Landscape II* (1967). Wood, 48 x 120 x 3’. Collection: Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas. Accession number 1968.273.  File: Morrison\_Lake\_Superior\_Landscape.jpg  Figure 2: *Spirit Path, New Day, Red Rock Variation: Lake Superior Landscape* (1990). Acrylic and pastel on paper, 22.5 x 30’. Collection: Minnesota Museum of American Art. Accession number 99.04.02.03. |
| Further reading:  (Lowe)  (Rushing and Makholm) |