

Images and Descriptions

The following works of art are engravings with aquatint, hand-colored, after Karl Bodmer (Swiss, 1809-1893), from a twentieth-century edition owned by Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska.

Each image by Bodmer is identified by a title and a Vignette or Tableau number from Prince Maximilian's original publication. Vignettes are smaller images (average plate size is 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 9") originally intended to illustrate chapters in Maximilian's text. Tableaux are larger images (plate sizes range from 16" x 12" to 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 16") that were issued separately. For a description of the printmaking process used in the original printing plates and the new edition created from them, please see the section called Printmaking Process.

Journey Through the East – July 9, 1832 – October 19, 1832

Shortly after arriving in Boston on July 4, 1832, Maximilian and Bodmer traveled on to New York. While Bodmer stayed in New York to wait on the late arrival of their luggage, Maximilian continued on to New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Bodmer rejoined the Prince in the small town of Bordentown, New Jersey, where they stayed briefly, before traveling on to the countryside of eastern Pennsylvania. Bodmer and Maximilian stayed in the town of Bethlehem, in eastern Pennsylvania, for several weeks.

View of the Delaware near Bordentown

Vignette II

After a few days in Philadelphia, Maximilian traveled back to Bordentown where he spent time documenting the native plants and animals of the region in the extensive gardens of the nearby 300 acre estate of Joseph Bonaparte, Napoleon's older brother. Bodmer joined Maximilian in Bordentown on July 22 and, the following day, he and the Prince took a walking tour along the Delaware where he made watercolor studies of the landscape. One of these watercolors was later reproduced as View on the Delaware near Bordentown.



When Bodmer first met Prince Maximilian in Europe, he was working as a landscape artist in Koblenz, Germany, along the Rhine. The area was popular among artists because of the stately ruins and castles on lofty heights, the rolling green hills, vineyards, and quaint towns. Artists from all over Europe came to paint these romantic scenes which were made into prints and sold as souvenirs to tourists visiting the area. Bodmer's depiction of Bordentown, a popular tourist destination in the 1830s, reflects his earlier work as a landscape painter. The foreground includes many details, from the steamer in the river to the stagecoaches and horses arriving at the dock to carry passengers into town. Bodmer beautifully surrounds this scene of activity with the picturesque countryside along the Delaware River.

Discussion:

What do you see in this print?

What state is Bordentown in? Identify, on a map of the United States, the location of this town.

What part of the United States is this?

Do you think this scene is near a small town or big city?

Why do you think the stagecoaches and horses are gathering near the river? How many different kinds of transportation can you find in this picture? Describe them.

How does this compare to the ways we travel, today?

Describe the topography of the area. During what month and year did Bodmer and Maximilian visit this town? Can you tell that it is summer by looking at the print? Why or why not?

Where do you think Bodmer was standing when he painted this scene?

How does Bodmer create the feeling that there is a lot of activity going on?

Identify areas in the print that include a lot of detail. What do these details tell us?

What body of water is shown in the print?

Sojourn in Indiana – October 19, 1832 – March 16, 1833

In late summer of 1832, Maximilian and Bodmer began to journey west through Ohio and into Indiana. While spending several months in the science-focused community of New Harmony, Indiana, the two explorers made frequent excursions to the nearby Fox and Wabash Rivers.

Cutoff-River, Branch of the Wabash

Vignette VIII

During the months of November and December, while staying in the small town of New Harmony, Indiana, Maximilian and Bodmer went almost daily to explore along the Fox and Wabash Rivers in search of zoological specimens. Maximilian took detailed notes, Bodmer documented the area through sketches and watercolors, and they both spent time collecting specimens of plants and animals along the rivers.

Cutoff-River, Branch of the Wabash reveals Bodmer's love of nature and his ability to accurately document while also capturing the beauty of a region. Bodmer places the viewer amid the densely forested riverbank, looking out onto the winding Cutoff. The smooth reflective surface of the water mirrors the trees lining the banks, creating a visual line that leads the eye to the center of the work. In the background, the glow of the sun creates dramatic areas of light and shadow; the illumination of a steep embankment provides a strong contrast for the dark, twisted trees in the foreground.



Discussion:

Describe what you see. Does this look like a place you have visited before?

What animal do you see in the work? What other animals could be hidden in the water or in the woods?

What time of year is it? What time of day is it? How does Bodmer show us this?

Do you think the water is moving fast or slow? Why?

What sounds do you think you would hear if you were sitting by the water; what smells?

Where do you think Bodmer was sitting when he painted this scene?

How does Bodmer create the impression that the viewer is beside the water?

What areas of the work are dark? What areas are light? What effect does this have on the overall tone of the work? Where is the light source in this work? Describe how Bodmer has used the light to create drama.

How does Bodmer create depth in the work? How does he reveal that the river has many turns in it?

What does Bodmer do to make this picture a work of art as well as a document of the environment?

St. Louis to Fort Union, April 10-July 6, 1833

On March 18, 1833, Maximilian and Bodmer left New Harmony, Indiana, and traveled by steamer to St. Louis, Missouri. In St. Louis, Maximilian and Bodmer arranged to travel with John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company, a successful trading operation transporting trade goods up and down the Missouri River. During the following spring and summer of 1833, the explorers journeyed by steamboat upriver from St. Louis to Fur Company posts—Fort Pierre, Fort Clark, and Fort Union.

The Steamer Yellow-Stone, on the 19th April, 1833

Tableau 4

On the afternoon of April 18, while traveling up the Missouri River, the steamboat Yellow-Stone encountered a stretch of water so densely packed with snags that it could not proceed any further under its own power. Maximilian recorded in his journal for this day, “again we lay still for a long time....then 26 men were put on a sand bank on the left to pull the steamboat.” At around two o'clock the steamer was under way, but again ran aground in less than half an hour on a large sand bank. Here it remained overnight. The next morning a flatboat from Fort Osage, located some three and a half miles upstream, arrived to unload part of the ship's cargo to lighten it so it could float free. Bodmer waded ashore and from a distant bank made a sketch of the steamer. Maximilian observed in his journal for April 19, “Mr. Bodmer had made from shore this morning a pretty sketch of the ship as it was unloaded, but the wind was so unpleasant and stirred up so much sand, that he could not paint.” This print is based on the drawings Bodmer made that day.



The steamboat, as described by historian Louis Hunter, was “the chief technological means by which the wilderness was conquered and the frontier advanced.” The Yellow-Stone, built to carry goods up and downriver for the American Fur Company, was the first steam-powered boat to travel up to the far reaches of the Missouri. The passengers on her maiden voyage in March of 1832 included the artist George Catlin who went up the Missouri to paint the Native Americans living in the area. The following year, Maximilian and Bodmer boarded the Yellow-Stone in April to begin their own journey upriver.

Discussion:

Can you find the steamboat in this picture? What about the flatboat?

What is a steamboat? Why was a steamboat the best way to travel up the Missouri River?

What are the three men in the flatboat doing? Why are the three men on shore pulling the flatboat by a rope?

Do you think the current is swift or slow? How does the artist show this?

Why would they need to take things off of the large steamboat?

Why were boats the best mode of transportation? What other forms of transportation could they have used?

Who owned this steamboat? Why did they have steamboats traveling up and down the Missouri River?

Why were Maximilian and Bodmer traveling on their boat?

Snags (Sunken Trees) On the Missouri

Tableau 6

The steamboat, as described by historian Louis Hunter, was “the chief technological means by which the wilderness was conquered and the frontier advanced.” The Yellow-Stone, built to carry goods up and down the river for the American Fur Company, was the first steam-powered boat to travel to the far reaches of the Missouri. The passengers on her maiden voyage in March of 1832 included the artist George Catlin, who went up the Missouri to paint the Native Americans living in the area. The following year, Maximilian and Bodmer boarded the Yellow-Stone in April to begin their own journey.



Steamboat travel on the Missouri at this time was quite treacherous. Hidden sand banks, swift currents, and drifting tree trunks were among the dangers travelers faced. As the Yellow-Stone made its way toward the mouth of the Platte River, the explorers came upon many areas filled with sunken tree trunks. Bodmer’s watercolors of such scenes later became the basis for the print *Snags (Sunken Trees) On the Missouri*. In this work, Bodmer dramatically depicts the steamboat moving up the river among the sunken trees that fill the foreground.

Discussion:

Describe what you see.

What river is the steamboat traveling on?

Who is traveling on this steamboat? Where are they going?

What is floating in the water close to the boat? What could have caused the tree trunks to sink into the water? How could the floating trees endanger the boat and travelers on board?

How does Bodmer show that the boat may be in a hazardous situation?

What does Bodmer’s choice of composition tell us? How would the work have changed if Bodmer had placed the steamboat in the foreground?

The passage from St. Louis to Fort Pierre (in central South Dakota) took nine weeks. While on route to Fort Pierre, Maximilian and Bodmer visited the Bellevue Post of Major Dougherty.

Bellevue, Mr. Dougherty's Agency on the Missouri

Vignette XXXI

At the time of Maximilian and Bodmer's expedition across the United States in 1832, the U.S. Government was very involved with the expanding fur trade in the West. Government outposts were established along the Missouri River to preserve the country's economic interest and maintain peace between Indian groups and American traders. Government officials, called Indian agents, were appointed to enforce trade laws, and later, to promote frontier expansion through the sale of Indian lands. At Bellevue (near present-day Omaha and Bellevue, Nebraska), Major Dougherty was the Indian Agent to tribes native to Nebraska and Southwest Iowa, which includes the Osos, Omahas, Pawnees, and Iowas. His outpost, like many of the commercial and government outposts along the Missouri, was a center for cultural as well as material exchange between Euro-Americans and Native Americans.



Maximilian and Bodmer arrived at Major Dougherty's post in Bellevue on May 3, 1833. According to Maximilian, Bellevue was formerly a trading post of the Missouri Fur Company, and later sold to the government which appointed it the agency to the Osos, Omahas, Pawnees, and Iowas. The main agency buildings, located near the river, are in the center of the print with a horse-drawn wagon and people outside. On the hilltop are additional agency buildings; smaller huts were located by the river. Today, only scattered foundation stones in Bellevue's Fontenelle Forest mark the location of Dougherty's post.

Discussion:

Where is Bellevue? Who owned this post?

Who was Major Dougherty? What was Dougherty's job in Bellevue? What Native American Groups did Dougherty work with?

When did Maximilian and Bodmer stop at Bellevue?

Why did the U.S. government set up posts along the Missouri?

Where are the government buildings in this picture? Do they look like government buildings you may have seen before? Why or why not?

What group or groups of people lived in the area first? What impact did American settlers have on American Indians living in the Plains? (Also see *River* theme).

Why do you think the government was so interested in the economic development of the West?

What were some of the government's techniques to establish good relationships with Native Americans? (see information about the next image, and the peace medal worn by Wahnk-tä-ge-li in *Wahnk-tä-ge-li, a Sioux Warrior*).

During their week-long stay at Fort Pierre, Bodmer created portraits and scenes of everyday life among the Sioux tribe.

Wahk-tä-ge-li, a Sioux Warrior

Tableau 8

Maximilian recorded much information about the subject of this portrait, Wahk-tä-ge-li, whose Sioux name means “Gallant Warrior.” Called Big Soldier by the Americans, he was an impressive man, nearly six and one-half feet tall. Gallant Warrior was about sixty years old when he posed for Bodmer at the Sioux agency in May of 1833. His moccasins, leggings, and shirt are embroidered with bands of brightly dyed porcupine quills. The fringe on his shirt sleeve is human hair, said to have been taken from a Mandan foe. The feathers bound to his head with strips of red cloth represent enemies slain in battle. In his ears he wears long strings of blue glass beads. Around his neck hangs a large silver peace medal “from the President of the United States.” This type of highly prized medallion played an important role in frontier Indian policy. Peace medals were given as symbols of friendship and allegiance, first by the French and the British and later by agents of the American government. A directive issued in 1829 specified that the largest medals were to be given only to principal chiefs, the smaller ones to less distinguished individuals. While intended to sustain political peace between American Indians and Europeans, peace medals also illuminate a power dynamic present between Indian and Euro-American individuals.



In this work, Bodmer carefully rendered the many different materials in Gallant Warrior’s clothing, from the drape of the heavy buffalo hide worn over the shoulders, to the tightly embroidered shiny quills that adorn the leggings and shirt. Even the texture of the hair attached to Gallant Warrior’s armband can be visually understood through Bodmer’s depiction. This attention to detail brings the portrait to life and distinguishes Bodmer from other early Western artists.

Discussion:

Why do you think the man in the painting was named Gallant Warrior?

What tribe does Gallant Warrior belong to? Where did this tribe live in the 1830s?

Describe his clothing. Can you tell what materials they are made of? What does he have draped around his shoulders? What is the robe made of? How does Bodmer show that the robe is heavy? What is he wearing in his hair? Do the feathers mean anything? What is the brightly colored decoration on the shirt and leggings? What is he wearing around his neck? Who may have given him this medal? Why? What is Gallant Warrior carrying?

Bodmer included so many details in this portrait of Gallant Warrior. What do these details tell us about this man, his tribe, and the area where he lived?

What is a symbol? What symbols does Gallant Warrior wear and what do these symbols mean?

How has Bodmer praised Gallant Warrior in this portrait?

What is a portrait? Has anyone ever made a portrait of you?

Why do people have portraits made?

Why are Bodmer’s portraits of Native Americans in the 1830s important today?

How are they important to Plains Indians, today? What information do they provide for anthropologists?

Dacota Woman and Assiniboin Girl

Tableau 9

Maximilian and Bodmer encountered the Teton Sioux woman depicted in this print while staying at Fort Pierre. The young girl is from the Assiniboin tribe and was sketched later, after the travelers were upriver at Fort Union. The woman is wearing a dress with blue and white beaded trim, and a fringe of twisted metal cones that made a “tinkling” musical sound as she walked. Over the dress she wears a painted summer robe, a buffalo hide with the hair removed to make it lighter in weight. The colorful pattern on the robe, an elaborate combination of geometric motifs, is called a box-and-border style because of its central rectangle and outside border. Box-and-border robes were popular on the central Plains, particularly among the Sioux. They were also frequently called “women’s robes” and were indeed unlike the robes worn by men, which were painted with signs of personal and/or sacred meaning, or records of victories in warfare.

The young child was actually a Blackfoot but was living with the Assiniboin. She may have been taken captive after some skirmish between these two warring tribes and was being raised by an Assiniboin family. The child is wearing leggings and ornaments that are smaller versions of those seen on adults in other portraits. The hide dress appears to be several sizes too large for her, the excess material folded over at the waist. A tie at the neckline has broken or come undone, causing the dress to fall over one shoulder.



Discussion:

Describe what the woman is wearing. Can you find the small cones at the bottom of her dress? What sound do you think they made as she walked?

What shapes and patterns do you see on her robe? What is the name of the style of decoration on the robe? (“box-and-border”). Why do you think it is called this? What geometric shapes were used to create the pattern? What animal do you think this robe was made from? What material was used to decorate this robe?

Where is each subject looking? What do you think they are looking at? What do you think they are thinking?

How old do you think the girl is in the picture? Do you think the woman and child know each other? Do you think they are related? Why or why not? Why would Bodmer place a woman and child from two different areas together in one image?

Why do you think Bodmer chose to include so many details in this portrait of a woman and child? What do the details tell us about these two people?

After their short stay at Fort Pierre in early summer of 1833, the travelers boarded another Fur Company steamboat and headed upriver to Fort Clark, located above modern Bismarck, North Dakota. Not Far from Fort Clark, Maximilian and Bodmer encountered the principal “summer” village of the Mandan tribe.

Mih-Tutta-HangKusch, a Mandan Village

Tableau 16

The larger of two Mandan villages stood atop a steep bluff on the west bank of the Missouri only 300 paces northwest of Fort Clark. Bodmer’s magnificent view of this village, protected by its surrounding log palisade, shows the Mandan women with their tub-like bullboats. This type of boat was made by stretching a large buffalo hide over a framework of willows. Mandan women used bullboats to cross the river and make short trips by water during most of the year when the river was not frozen over. This “summer” village on the bluff was occupied through all but the coldest months of the year during which the Indians moved into a group of smaller lodges huddled together among the protective trees near the river.



Discussion:

Where is the Mandan village in this picture? Why do you think it is sitting on a high place? What are the Mandan women traveling in? How do you think this boat was made? What is it called? What are the Mandan’s houses like? What does the type of home the Mandan’s lived in tell us about their way of life? How does that differ from the way of life of those Native Americans who live in tipis, such as those depicted in Encampment of the Piegan Indians? Compare the image Encampment of the Piegan Indians with this picture depicting a Mandan village. What means did each group use to protect itself from enemies? Which group of homes can be moved around? What materials is each type of home made of? How can you tell?

After a brief visit to Fort Clark, Maximilian and Bodmer traveled on to Fort Union near the junction of the Yellowstone with the Missouri in what is today extreme western North Dakota. The travelers stayed at Fort Union from June 24th to July 6, 1833, where Bodmer produced studies of the Assiniboin people who frequented the post.

Indians Hunting the Bison

Tableau 31

According to Maximilian, hunting and warfare were the chief occupations of the Native American man. Plains Indians hunted with spears, bows and arrows, and later, guns. During the warmer months, groups of men traveled on horseback out onto the plains in search of buffalo. If the herds were scattered at great distances, hunts could take up to ten days, according to Maximilian. Once buffalo were spotted, the group of men swiftly pursued them, and from a short distance, shot the animals. Hunters often stood in their stirrups and shot from that position while running their horses at a full gallop.



Bodmer captures the drama of a buffalo hunt in *Indians Hunting the Bison*. Men on horseback charge toward a herd of buffalo. A hunter in the center of the work, with hair flying behind and muscles tensed, leans over his horse to aim at the large animal running for their lives across the prairie. Bodmer intensifies the action in the scene by depicting the buffalo with all hooves off the ground in an outward leaping motion. This style of rendering running animals was thought to be correct by 19th-century artists. It was later disproved, however, with Eadweard Muybridge's stop-action photography experiments in the 1880s, which showed that an animal's legs are actually tucked underneath its body at the moment when all hooves are off the ground.

Discussion:

What animals do you see in this work?

Why were buffalo so important to Native Americans? (For more information, see *Buffalo* theme). Why did the Native Americans hunt buffalo? Where did they go to find the buffalo herds?

What moment of the hunt did Bodmer decide to depict? How does Bodmer show that this scene is full of action?

Why do you think he chose to depict a moment during the hunt instead of before or after?

Do you think that the men on horseback are moving fast or slow? How can you tell? How does the artist show this?

Do you think it would be difficult to hunt buffalo in this way? What skills would a hunter possibly need to be able to do this?

Do you think Bodmer was actually standing near this buffalo hunt when he first sketched it?

Why or why not?

Fort Union to Fort McKenzie – July 6, 1833 – September 14, 1833

On July 6, Maximilian and Bodmer left Fort Union and traveled by keelboat to Fort McKenzie, the American Fur Company's most remote outpost on the upper Missouri River. Their voyage led them through the area of the "stone walls" on the upper Missouri where they encountered fantastical rock formations along the river banks. Maximilian and Bodmer stayed at Fort McKenzie from August 9th to September 14th, 1833, where they came in contact with the powerful Piekan (Blackfoot) Indians.

Herds of Bison, on the Upper Missouri

Tableau 40

Above Fort Union, game became plentiful and hunters from the boat were successful in supplying meat for passengers and crew. On July 10, four days out from Fort Union, buffalo appeared near the river and several were taken. On July 14, below the mouth of the Milk River, more buffalo approached the banks and a white wolf was reported in the vicinity of the herd.

Bodmer was hired as a scientific illustrator for Prince Maximilian; his landscapes served as documents of the natural environments where animals and plants (Maximilian's objects of study) lived. The trail of descending buffalo emphasizes the topography of the area; a small stream of buffalo at the top of the butte travel down and across the valley, making their way to the river. *Herds of Bison, on the*

Upper Missouri also shows Bodmer's artistic affinity for the picturesque landscape. Bodmer places the large herds of buffalo against a dramatic background of light and dark created by the sun as it sets behind the butte. The light fills the sky with a golden yellow and orange, drawing the viewer's attention across the valley floor and towards the reflective water where buffalo are gathering.



Discussion:

What river is pictured in this print? Can you find it on a map?

What animals do you see? Describe where the artist has included trees and plants in the print. Why would so many animals be moving toward the river? Why do you think there are more trees and plants by the river?

Can you find the place in the picture where the buffalo trail begins?

What sound do you think the herd of buffalo was making as it came down toward the river? Do you think it was loud or soft?

What colors do you see in the sky? Are they repeated in other places throughout the work? Why would the artist choose to repeat colors? How does Bodmer use color to draw the viewer's attention to certain areas of the work?

Where is the strong light source in the picture coming from? What areas of the picture does it highlight?

What climate is depicted in this scene? Is it wet or dry? Support your answer.

What is Bodmer trying to tell the viewer about this area of the country? How has he used the herd of buffalo to emphasize that this area is mountainous?

Bodmer was hired by Maximilian to visually document what the two men saw. What is Bodmer trying to document in this picture?

What does Bodmer do to make this picture a work of art as well as a document of the environment?

From what vantage point did Bodmer create this image? Are we on the ground by the river or higher up? How does Bodmer achieve this perception?

What effect does this perspective make for the viewer?

The Citadel-Rock on the Upper Missouri

Vignette XVIII

While traveling to Fort McKenzie on the upper Missouri, Maximilian and Bodmer encountered beautiful sandstone formations that lined the Missouri river banks. The two explorers were amazed at these unusual but strangely familiar shapes formed by the outcroppings of rock. Maximilian describes in his journal: “here on both sides of the river, the most strange forms are seen, and you may fancy that you see colonnades, small round pillars with large globes or a flat slab at the top, little towers, pulpits, organs with their pipes, old ruins, fortresses, castles, churches with pointed towers...” Bodmer made numerous sketches to document these formations.

On the afternoon of August 6 the keelboat approached one of the more prominent landmarks on the banks of the Missouri in the region of the Stone Walls. Lewis and Clark had described it early in the century, but did not name it. In Bodmer’s day it was known among the traders as La Citadelle, or Citadel Rock, and later as Cathedral Rock. Today it is a state monument.



Discussion:

What is the name of the large rock on the left side of the picture?

Why do you think it was called Citadel Rock? What is a citadel?

Maximilian and Bodmer looked at these rocks and imagined that they were pipe organs and castles.

Can you imagine anything else?

Why do you think areas of white stone in the distance are called “stone walls?”

Do you think they are close by or far away? How can you tell?

Locate an approximate area on the map where this image may have been created.

What river is depicted in the scene? At what point in the journey was the image painted?

What areas of the picture are important and how does Bodmer draw our attention to them?

Do you think Bodmer manipulated the light and dark areas of this image or just painted exactly what he saw that day? Describe the effect this creates.

Do the rock formations on the left side of the image remind you of anything?

Why were the steep river banks in the distance described as “stone walls”?

How does Bodmer create a feeling of depth in the picture?

Fort McKenzie, August 28th, 1833

Tableau 42

During the time of Maximilian and Bodmer's journey into the upper Missouri, the Blackfoot were the dominant warring group of Northwestern Plains Indians, feared by neighboring tribes as well as Euro-American traders and trappers traveling into the area. Kenneth McKenzie and the American Fur Company had recently established Fort McKenzie in order to build a new trading relationship with them. Like the other trading posts on the Missouri River, Fort McKenzie was not a military encampment, but rather a well fortified commercial outpost.



On the morning of August 28, 1833, inhabitants at Fort McKenzie were awakened to the sound of gunfire. As Maximilian and Bodmer, along with others inside the fort, gathered to watch from rooftops, some 600 Assiniboin and Cree Indians carried out a surprise attack on a small trading party of Blackfoot whose tipis were set up close by. The Assiniboin and Cree Indians began ripping open tipis, killing men, women, and children. At the onset of the attack, members of the small Blackfoot party sent for reinforcements at the main camp located eight to ten miles away, and 500 additional Blackfoot soon arrived; the battle continued fiercely. With the help of the Fort McKenzie agent and his men, the Blackfoot pushed the enemy Assiniboin and Cree back to the Marias river and they retreated. Bodmer's depiction of the battle, Fort McKenzie, August 28th, 1833, captures the violence of the attack, where warriors employed knives, guns, spears, bows and arrows, and several different types of war clubs. This has been called the most accurate portrayal of an intertribal battle by a white artist who actually witnessed such an event.

Discussion:

Identify on a map the general location of this fort. What state would it be in today? (for more information, please refer to a map of the journey at the back of the packet.) How long had the fort been operated?

What two groups of Native Americans are fighting?

What weapons can you identify in the work?

Why were members of the Blackfoot tribe camped outside of the fort? What did they do when the surprise attack occurred?

Who are the people sitting on top of the wall around the fort?

Do you think that Maximilian and Bodmer were fearful of the Native Americans that were fighting?

Why or why not?

How does Bodmer show action in this scene? Does Bodmer want viewers to feel like they are standing close to this battle or far away? Do you think Bodmer actually viewed the battle from this vantage point? Why or why not?

Encampment of the Piekann Indians

Tableau 43

In this *Encampment of the Piekann (Blackfoot) Indians*, about four hundred lodges were pitched close together on the flat near Fort McKenzie because enemy Assiniboin were reported to be in the area. Bodmer depicts the bustling activity in and around the encampment; men gather to talk, women carry heavy burdens, and children and dogs playfully run around the groups of adults.

Unlike many other artists who pictured the camps of nomadic Plains Indians, Bodmer was careful to show tipis of different sizes, reflecting differences in family size and wealth. Newlyweds with no children needed only a small tipi with a cover made from as few as six or eight buffalo cow skins carefully trimmed and fitted together and stretched over a conical framework of relatively short poles. But the family of a wealthy man who had a large family needed several larger tipis of fourteen or more skins each.



Discussion:

Describe what you see. What animals do you see? What are the men, women and children doing?

Are all of the tipis the same size? Why would some tipis be bigger than others?

About how many tipis can you see in the picture? How does Bodmer use the tipis to reveal depth?

How does a tipi compare to a house? How does a tipi compare to a camper?

How does this Piekann encampment compare to a Mandan village? (see *The Interior of the Hut of a Mandan Chief*). What does each type of home tell us about the tribe?

Why would a group of people need to be able to pack up their homes and move to different locations?

Winter at Fort Clark, November 8, 1833-April 18, 1834

Maximilian intended to proceed from Fort McKenzie overland to the Rocky Mountains, but he was persuaded by company officials of the danger of such a journey. Instead, he and Bodmer returned downriver to Fort Union. From Fort Union Maximilian and Bodmer traveled further downriver, returning to Fort Clark, where they spent the winter of 1833-1834 in the company of the Mandan and Hidatsa (sometimes referred to as Minatarre) Indians.

Travellers meeting with Minatarre Indians near Fort Clark

Vignette XXVI

On November 8, 1833, Toussaint Charbonneau, a French trapper who had traveled with the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1804-1806, accompanies Maximilian and Bodmer downriver to Fort Clark. A meeting near the fort with a group of Native Americans is depicted in the print *The Travellers meeting with Minatarre Indians near Fort Clark*. Charbonneau is believed to be the figure wearing a red scarf around his waist. He stands in the middle, introducing the two groups of men. Maximilian and Bodmer are pictured on the right side of the print; the Hidatsa men, wearing their finest regalia, are in a group to the left. Maximilian wears a green coat and hat and Bodmer stands next to him in a brown coat and top hat.

Fort Clark, a trading post situated on the west bank of the Missouri forty-five miles north of present day Bismarck, North Dakota, was built and operated by the American Fur Company. The Mandan and Hidatsa Indians lived in villages close by and frequented the post to trade. The ornamental beads, colored scarves, European style hats, and firearms, that are worn or carried by the men in this print, were all part of the active trade of the era.



Discussion:

Describe what you see. Where is this scene taking place? Who is pictured in the image? What does the title of the work tell us?

What animal do you see in the picture? Who do you think the animal belongs to?

Describe where the Hidatsa men are standing in the image. Who do you think is the most important person in this group of Hidatsa men? Why?

Where are Maximilian and Bodmer standing in the picture? Maximilian is wearing dark green clothing and Bodmer is wearing a brown top hat and coat. Can you identify them?

Which man is Toussaint Charbonneau? What is his role in this gathering of people?

How does the artist give us the impression that the two groups of men are trying to communicate with each other? What do you think they are talking about?

Do you think this is a formal occasion? Support your answer.

Winter Village of the Minatarres

Tableau 26

Plains farming tribes like the Mandan and Hidatsa lived in more permanent living accommodations than did the groups who relied predominantly on hunting. They built good-sized earth lodges from heavy cottonwood timbers, willow branches, and sod. In the summer, in order to avoid flooding, these lodges were located in villages high above the river; winter villages were located in heavily treed lowland areas for protection from harsh winters, as is depicted in this print.

In late November of 1833, Maximilian and Bodmer made a cold, tiring, nine-hour trek from Fort Clark to one of the Hidatsa winter villages to observe a ceremony. Composed of about eighty households, the village pictured in this work by Bodmer is most probably Eláh-sa, the largest of the Hidatsa settlements on the Knife River. Maximilian remarked on the dense arrangement of earth lodges in the winter villages, where the dwellings were of necessity packed closely together amid the thick, sheltering timber.

Outside the earth lodges people wearing heavy buffalo robes gather to watch Hidatsa men playing a hoop and pole game. One of the most common and widespread of all North American Indian games, it consisted of throwing or shooting long sticks through a hoop, with the score calculated on the basis of how they fell in relation to the target. The Mandan and Hidatsa men hurled poles at a hoop rolled on the ground or thrown in the air. (The women of these tribes played a game with a ball which was tossed and caught with the foot.)



Discussion:

What time of year is it in this print? How can you tell? How do the people's gestures and clothing reveal this? What techniques has Bodmer used—for example: color, the particular kind of brush strokes—to inform the viewer of the season?

What are the people in the picture doing? What are they wearing? How does a buffalo robe compare to a winter coat?

Why do you think the Mandan and Hidatsa lived in the woods during the winter?

Where did they live during the summer? What were Mandan homes called?

Can you find an earth lodge in this picture? What are earth lodges made of?

What game are the men playing in the print? How is it played?

Matò-Tope, A Mandan Chief

Tableau 13

Matò-Tope (Four Bears) was a prominent Mandan chief, popular among his people and respected for his many war exploits. Discussed at length in the writings of Maximilian and George Catlin, he was one of the best known Indian personalities of the early nineteenth century. Four Bears closely observed Catlin and Bodmer at work and was himself an enthusiastic painter. He represented his battle feats on his person, on his clothing, and on buffalo robes. (see *Indian Utensils and Arms* for an example of a painted buffalo robe by Four Bears).

Maximilian remarked that Four Bears wore something different almost every time he visited him, which was often. In this portrait, Four Bears wears clothing that shows his rank in the Mandan tribe. His new shirt is made of bighorn leather, elaborately trimmed with ermine tails, locks of hair, and long panels of bead-outlined quillwork. On the shoulders of the shirt he has painted symbols of brave deeds. The red spattered marks on the front recall old wounds. Usually the number of eagle feathers a man wore on his head signified the number of battle coups he had made, but an impressive headdress like this one might represent instead the combined coups of a war party or perhaps of an entire men's society (For an example of a Mandan men's society, see *Bison-Dance of the Mandan Indians*, in front of their Medicine Lodge, in Mih-Tutta-Hangkusch). The honor of wearing such a bonnet was reserved for the most distinguished leaders. The lance may be another emblem of achievement: the spear, adorned with the scalp of an enemy stretched on a loop, was claimed by Catlin to be the one Four Bears used to kill the Arikara murderer of his brother.



Discussion:

What tribe does Four Bears belong to? Where did this tribe live in the 1830s?

What is Four Bears wearing? What are his clothes made of? What does he have on his head?

What is he holding?

How can we tell that Four Bears was a great warrior? What, in Four Bears clothing, reveals his prominence in the Mandan tribe?

Do you think that Four Bears dressed like this every day or on particular occasions? Explain.

Why would Four Bears have chosen to dress like this for a portrait?

On what occasions do you wear special clothing or costumes? Why?

Would you like to speak to the person in this image? Why or why not?

If so, what would you ask him?

During the winter at Fort Clark, Maximilian and Bodmer had the opportunity to befriend members of the Mandan and Minatarre tribe who told them many details about their daily life and rituals and invited them to observe special ceremonies such as the Bison-Dance.

Bison-Dance of the Mandan Indians, in front of their Medicine Lodge, in Mih-Tutta-Hangkusch

Tableau 18

This ceremonial dance was performed by members of the Buffalo Bull Society, one of the six men's societies within the Mandan tribe. Each society had its own specific clothing, song, and dance; membership was determined by a man's age and status. If a man wished to join one of these groups or move up to a more prestigious society, he must have demonstrated his bravery and possess a certain wealth. The fifth society, the Buffalo Bulls, was one of the last and most important a man could join. The members were all seasoned warriors who had proven their worthiness to their fellows and acquired sufficient wealth to purchase their way through each of the younger societies. Men in the Buffalo Bull society would probably have been about forty years old.

The characteristic dress of the Buffalo Bulls was a strip of buffalo hide with horns attached. Two particularly brave society members were selected to wear masks representing entire buffalo heads pierced with metal rimmed eye holes. Men awarded this honor could afterward never flee from an enemy, no matter how great the danger.

In early April of 1834, the travelers observed a Buffalo Bull Dance. The practice of this dance meant to ensure the availability of sufficient amounts of buffalo to sustain the community. The scene depicted in the aquatint was recreated in Bodmer's Paris studio from earlier field studies. Bodmer used contemporary French models for some of the figures in this print, to achieve the effect of movement and drama he desired.



Discussion:

Describe what the men in the center of the work are doing. What are they wearing?

What are the people around them doing?

What special group do these men belong to? Could anyone join the Buffalo Bulls?

What were the requirements to join this society? How can you tell which men are members?

What purpose do you think men's societies played in tribal life?

Which one of the Buffalo Bulls is wearing a mask that covers his whole head?

Why has he chosen to wear this special mask? What responsibility fell on the man who was given the privilege of wearing the mask?

What is a ceremony? Have you ever been to a special ceremony?

What did people wear and what did they do during the ceremony?

Do Native Americans still participate in dance ceremonies, today? When?

How are their dances and costumes different today?

How did Bodmer show action in this ceremony?

*Interior of the Hut of a Mandan Chief**

Tableau 19

While staying at Fort Clark over the winter of 1833-34, Bodmer visited the dwellings of an old and respected Mandan named Dipäuch, and later produced a watercolor view of its interior based on sketches he made over a period of several months. This was later published in the European atlas to become one of Bodmer's best known subjects, highly valued for its ethnological detail. Maximilian and Bodmer learned much about the history and beliefs of the Mandan people while visiting Dipäuch.

Plains farming tribes like the Mandan and Hidatsa lived in more permanent living accommodations than did the groups who relied predominantly on hunting. Plains farming tribes used tipis while on hunting expeditions, but in the villages they built good-sized lodges from heavy cottonwood timbers, willow branches, and sod. The earth lodges were circular in appearance and averaged thirty feet or more in diameter. Four massive central pillars and an outer, polygonal framework of posts and beams supported the rafters and wall poles. (This work clearly shows the construction of the lodge with its central pillars and roof beams). Over this was laid first a matting of willow branches and grass, then a thick, insulating layer of earth. A square hole was left in the roof to admit light and to vent the smoke from the central fire pit. An exterior, moveable screen shielded the vent from wind and rain. The entrance to the interior was protected from the weather by a covered passageway.

The Interior of the Hut of a Mandan Chief is an outstanding example of Bodmer's careful rendering of detail. Underneath the open central vent, people sit on buffalo robes spread upon the packed earth floor, surrounded by their useful possessions. In the distance on the left side of the lodge are the family's horses (valuable horses were typically kept indoors because of the threat of horse thieves from other tribes). On the floor of that same side is a wooden mortar and pestle used by women for pounding corn. Besides the mortar and pestle is an inverted basket used for harvesting crops and carrying heavy loads. Another basket hangs from a peg on the foremost post on the left, along with a wooden paddle used for propelling bullboats. At the bottom of that post is a clay cooking pot. On the post at the right hangs a circular shield along with weapons and ceremonial gear.



Soft light emanates from the opening at the top of the lodge and creates a warm glow around the group of people seated on the floor. Through the dramatic use of light and shadow, it is as if the viewer has been allowed to peer from the darkness into the personal space of these people to observe their everyday life. Capturing every detail of the tools, ceremonial objects, and other possessions of the Mandan family, Bodmer provides a window into the Mandan culture in the 1830s.

Discussion:

What are the subjects doing in the painting?

What animals do you see inside of the lodge? Why do you think horses were kept inside?

What objects do you see on the floor? What do you think these utensils were used for?

Compare the interior view of this Mandan lodge with the scene of the Mandan village in *Mih-Tutta-Hangkusch, a Mandan Village*. Does the outside of the lodge look curved like the inside? How was this lodge made?

Were the Mandan Indians mainly hunters or farmers? What does their choice of home tell us about their lifestyle?

Imagine living in the lodge. Where would you sleep, eat, play?

How does the house compare to the tipis used by other tribes? How does the lodge compare to your own home?

Why would Bodmer want to create such a detailed picture of a Mandan home? What do these details tell us?

Where are we, the viewer, in this work? Where are we watching from?

How has Bodmer used light? And what effect does it have on the viewer?

*Note:

In the 19th century German title *Das Innere Der Hütte Eines Mandan Häuptlings* (The Interior of the Hut of a Mandan Chief), the German word “Hütte” is literally translated into the English word “hut.” However, unlike today’s common English use of the word “hut,” which connotes a small, often crude shelter, the German word “Hütte” was/is much broader and includes other specialized meanings. In the present context, therefore, the word “lodge,” or “earth lodge,” would appear to be a more appropriate interpretation of the word “Hütte” in the title of this work.

Pehriska-Ruhpa, Hidatsa Warrior, in the Costume of the Dog Dance

Tableau 23

Within the Hidatsa tribe there were also men's societies where membership was determined by age and status. Pehriska-Ruhpa (Two Ravens) was a principal leader of the Dog Society of his village, and in March of 1834 he posed for a portrait dressed in his society regalia. According to Maximilian, he was wearing at that time a large black cap made of magpie tail feathers with a wild turkey tail in the middle; a war whistle; and a long scarf-like cloth trailer.

In this work, Two Ravens stands in a dramatic pose evoking the action of the dance. He wears a headdress with hundreds of white tipped glossy black feathers that project out from his head. Maximilian said that the white tips are made by attaching a tiny down feather to the point of each larger feather. In the center of the headdress, a vertical plume is painted red. Just behind it, dyed horsehair floats from colored sticks attached to the shafts of the turkey feathers. Two Ravens also wear richly ornamented leggings and moccasins. All of this clothing was in constant motion as the dancer moved to the cadence of the drum and rattle. The rattle, made of small deer hooves or dew claws attached to beaded stick, is also a society emblem.



Discussion:

What tribe does Two Ravens belong to? Why is he wearing this special clothing?

Were women allowed to join the Dog Society?

What would Two Ravens' headdress look like if he were moving around? How does the design of the headdress accentuate the wearer's movements? How long do you think it took to make this headdress? How many different materials do you think were used to make it?

What is he holding in his hands? What is the rattle made of?

Why do you think Bodmer chose to depict Two Ravens in this pose?

Can you imitate this gesture?

Are there any organizations in our culture today similar to the Mandan and Hidatsa societies?

Why or why not?

Return to Europe

*On April 18, 1834, Maximilian and Bodmer exchanged gifts and farewells with their many friends at Fort Clark and set off down the Missouri. Their return journey took them to the Great Lakes and to Niagara Falls. They sailed from New York harbor on July 16. While Maximilian refined his extensive field notes into a two volume account, Bodmer supervised the production of 81 engravings, including *Indian Utensils and Arms*, to illustrate Maximilian's publication.*

Indian Utensils and Arms

Tableau 21

The largest and central object in this print is a reproduction of a buffalo robe painted by the Mandan chief Matò-Tope (Four Bears). The robe is fringed with hair (some of it apparently dyed horsehair) and embellished with a long strip of bright quill and beadwork. The scenes depicted represent several of Four Bears exploits, including his hand to hand combat with a Cheyenne chief, shown at the lower left. Maximilian acquired this robe from Four Bears during the journey.

Surrounding the painted buffalo robe are various skin and leather pouches decorated with bead and quillwork. Below the robe is a Mandan snowshoe made of woven branches bound with leather. Snowshoes were worn in the winter to enable a person to walk more easily through the snow.

A Mandan pipe is shown at the top of the print. Pipes were primarily associated with men's ritual activities. In speaking of the Mandans, Maximilian remarked that pipes were made of stone, clay, or wood and that many people fashioned their pipes according to their own taste to reflect a personal vision of supernatural belief. The bowl of this pipe is red clay, and the stem is wood. Just above and below the pipe are two hair ornaments made from quill-wrapped sticks with feathers and dyed horse hair attached. To the right of the pipe is a whip made of antler and used while riding a horse. In the far upper-right corner is a bird bone whistle that was worn around the neck and used during warfare. Bird bone whistles were popular among the Plains Indians.

Bodmer carefully renders every detail on the artifacts while also creating a visual balance of form, color, and composition, moving the eye easily across this beautiful rendering of objects. Attention to composition, however, does not come without sacrifice. Bodmer chose to distort the scale of objects in order to create a balanced composition. For example, in reality, the knife and sheath in the lower left corner is 14 inches long while the bundle of sticks just above it measures over 34 inches in length.



Discussion:

What types of objects do you recognize? Why would Maximilian and Bodmer want to collect and catalogue these objects?

Can you guess what some of these utensils were used for? Do you see any objects that look like you could wear them; carry them? How?

What kind of materials were these objects made from? Can you name any of these materials? What animals do you think they came from?

What shapes do you see? What colors can you see? How many long, thin objects do you see? What do you think these are?

Do you think the objects are placed in a certain order?

How does Bodmer use form, composition, pattern, and color, to create order and balance in this rendering of Indian Utensils and Arms? What does Bodmer have to sacrifice in order to create this balance? Compare the size of the headdress at the top with the size of the moccasin on the left side of the print. Do they look like they are depicted in proportion to one another? Why or why not?