

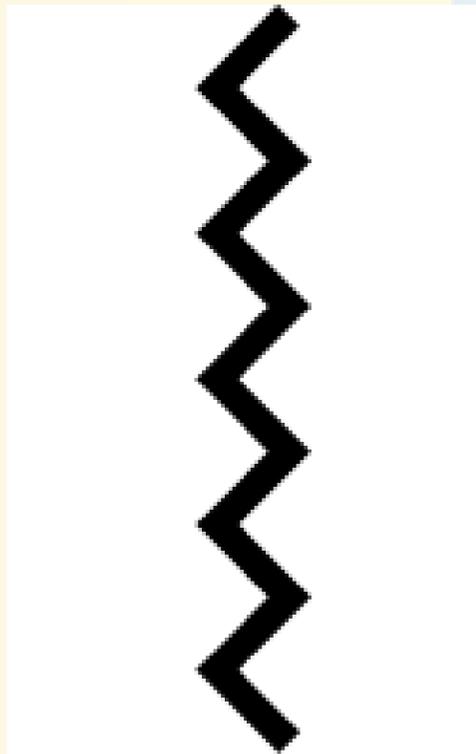
Osage Art

Osage Culture Traveling Trunk Project

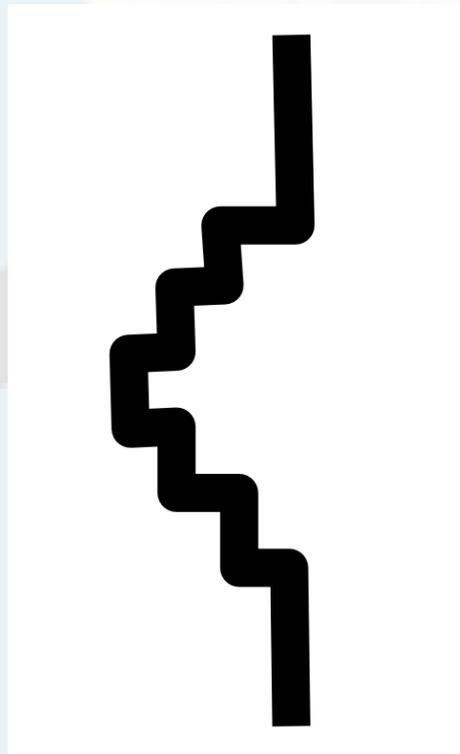


Osage Motifs

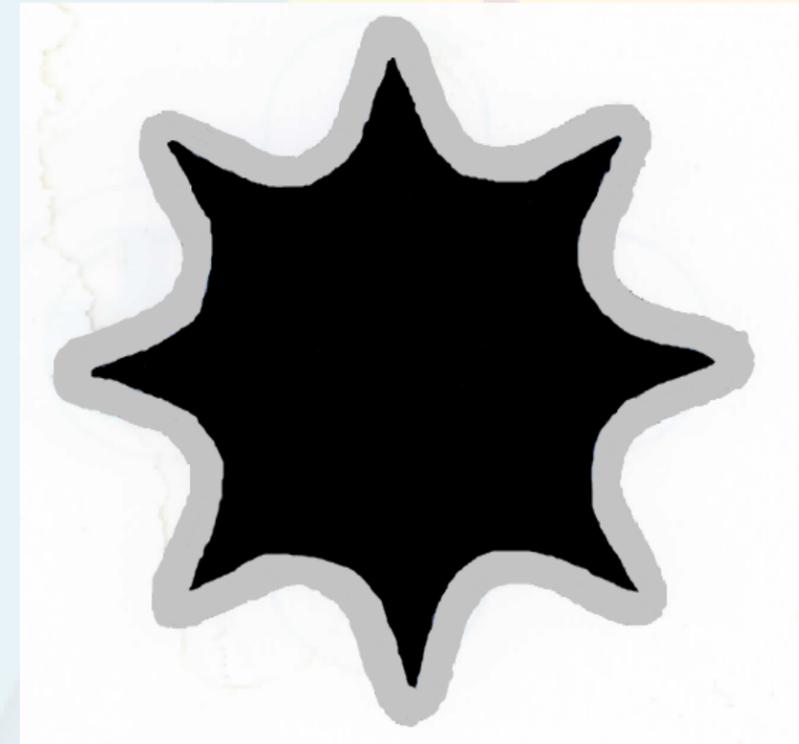
Osage art contains distinctive motifs. Each motif means specific things. For example, the lightning motif symbolizes speed and power. Only a few Osage motifs are shown here. There are many others.



Lightening



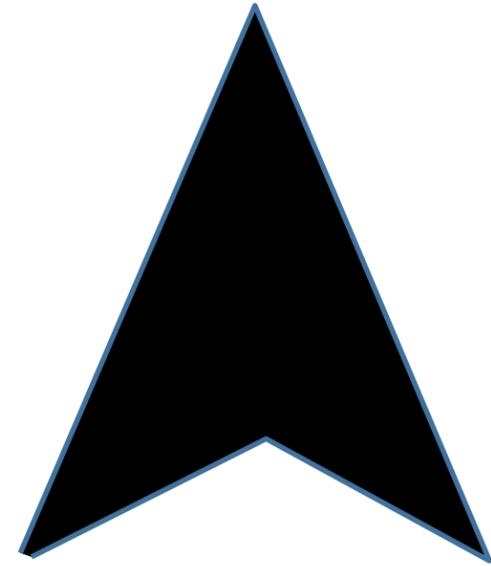
Thunder



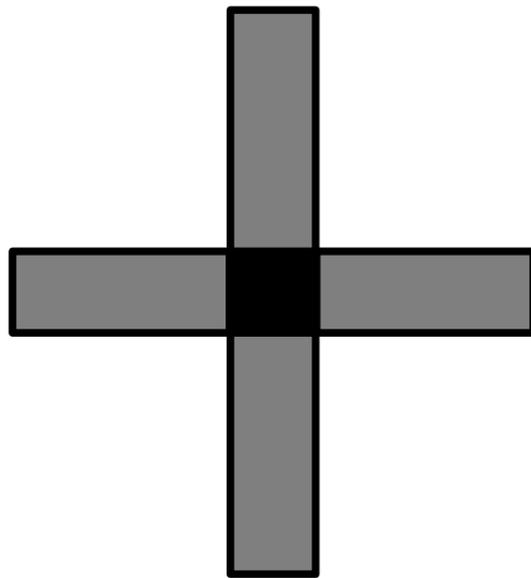
Evening Star

Motif: A shape or design that occurs repeatedly

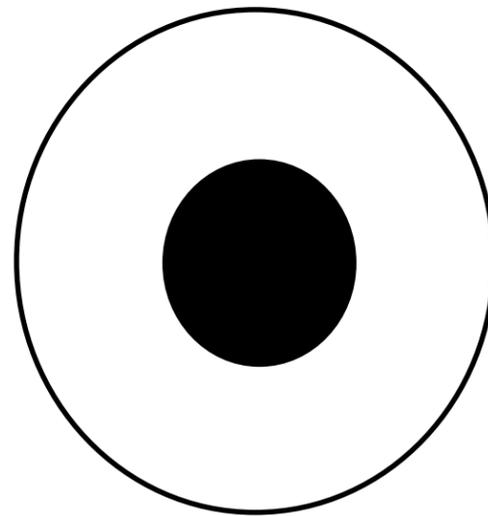
Osage Motifs



Arrowhead



Four Winds



Isolated Earth



The snare that
holds all life

Colors



Photo Courtesy of Smithsonian Institution

Vibrant colors characterize Osage art. Specific colors symbolize certain things. For example, historically, red symbolized day, sun, and life. Black symbolized night, moon, and death.

Beadwork

Beadwork developed when Europeans began to trade glass beads to Native Americans. Beadwork became a popular way of decorating cloth, leather, and other materials. There are many different methods of beading. The Lazy Stitch is a common method. This is done by stringing 5 to 7 beads on one thread and sewing them down to make a stitch.



Contemporary Osage beaded moccasins



Photo Courtesy National Museum of the American Indian

Osage beaded moccasins, made more than 100 years ago

Woodwork



Photo courtesy Brooklyn Museum



Photo courtesy Brooklyn Museum

Osage artists made this wood scraper and flute about 125 years ago. The flute is not finished. The scraper has a wood handle and metal blade. Scrapers are used to scrape animal hides, when making leather.

The Osage have a rich woodworking tradition. Traditionally, Osage woodworkers made large things like house frames and smaller things like cradleboards, bowls, flutes, pipe stems, and bows. Today, many Osages continue woodworking as exemplified by the contemporary wood walking sticks and cradleboard shown below.



Photo courtesy American Museum of Natural History

This Osage cradleboard was made out of wood and leather about 100 years ago.



Photo courtesy of Osage News

Contemporary beaded wood walking sticks



Photo courtesy Osage Historic Preservation Office

Contemporary wood cradleboard.

Ribbon Work

The art of ribbon work was invented by Native Americans after Europeans came to North America. This art combines European materials with Native American motifs and color symbolism. Ribbon work involves cutting and folding strips of fabric, and then sewing them in the form of designs onto clothing and blankets. Today, the Osage people continue to actively practice ribbon work.



Photo courtesy of Osage Museum



Photo courtesy of Osage Museum

Osage women wear or hold blankets decorated with ribbon work during formal events. This tradition began generations ago and continues today, as shown by these photos.

The Osage women's wedding coat is a unique type of clothing decorated with ribbon work. According to Osage oral tradition, generations ago, the U.S. government gave military coats to Osage men visiting Washington D.C. The coats were too small for most Osage men, so Osage women began decorating the coats with ribbon work and wearing them at wedding ceremonies and some other formal events. These highly valued coats become part of Osage culture and tradition.



Photo courtesy of Osage Museum

Osage women in wedding coats, about 100 years ago



Photo courtesy of Osage Museum

Osage women in wedding coats for a recent Osage Museum exhibit about wedding coats

Finger Weaving

Finger weaving is an Osage art in which fiber is woven to make flat objects such as belts and garters. Today, yarn is a popular material for finger weaving. In the past, before Europeans introduced yarn, Osages wove with thread and rope made from the hair of deer, buffalo, and humans.



Photo Courtesy of Osage News

Finger weaving class at Osage Cultural Center



Photo Courtesy of Megan Scales

Finger woven yarn garters worn by a man during In-lon-schka dances

Which Art Forms Do You See?

