

2017

Picturing History Panel

Fairfield University Art Museum

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A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE DRAWINGS IN THE EXHIBITION

Almost no Ledger books from the nineteenth century remain intact. The drawings in this exhibition come from a number of now-dismembered examples; these are among the best known and most historically important volumes of their kind. The name by which each book is now known reflects the identity of a past owner in whose possession it once resided, the place where it was originally made, or some other identifying attribute. (One of the ongoing projects undertaken by specialists using tools of codicology is to reconstruct the books from which these now dispersed pages originally came.) The Ledger books are named in the labels for individual drawings when known.

A single Ledger book often contained drawings by more than one artist. In some instances their identities, signaled by glyphs or other tell-tale “signatures,” are recorded (e.g. “Howling Wolf”) and are included in the labels. (Italicized names in brackets are transliterations of an artist’s native name, which have been included when known.) Scholars have invented sobriquets for Ledger book artists whose names have been lost to history but whose individual artistic styles are recognizable (“Artist A,” “Artist B”). Still other drawings remain anonymous and are not attributed to a specific artist.

The subject matter depicted in nineteenth-century Ledger drawings falls into three chronologically consecutive categories: warrior exploits, captivity drawings, and reservation drawings. The latter group includes images of animals and hunting, courtship, and ceremony. All are represented in the exhibition and discussed at greater length in the accompanying brochure.