



Couse On The Columbia

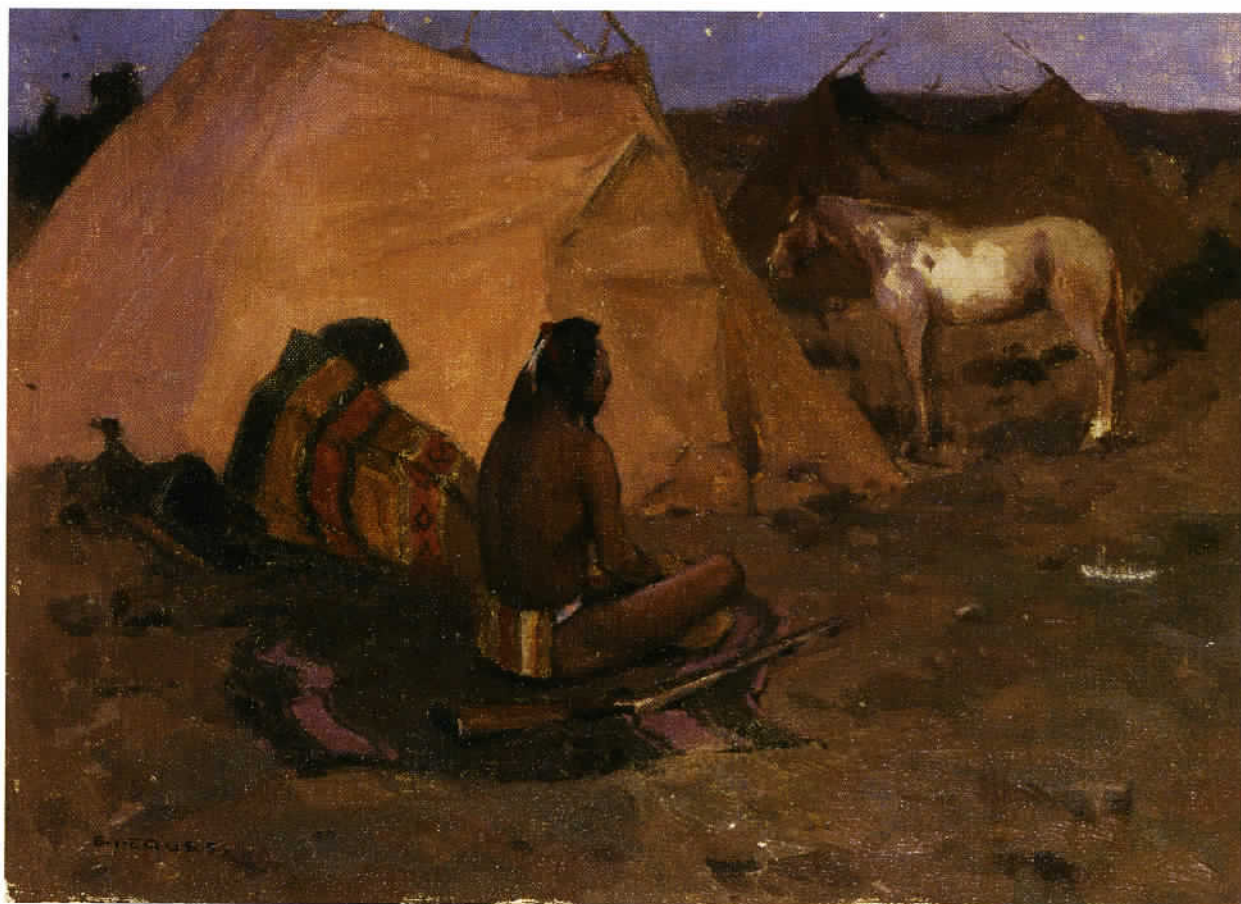
THOUGH E.I. COUSE WOULD BECOME FAMOUS FOR HIS ASSOCIATION WITH THE TAOS SOCIETY OF Artists and the Native scenes he painted in his adopted home of New Mexico, he first painted American Indians while living in the Pacific Northwest. That formative time in his career is the subject of the exhibit Eanger Irving Couse on the Columbia River, on display at the Maryhill Museum of Art in Goldendale, Washington, just 30 miles from a remote ranch that provided the genesis for Couse's Native American *oeuvre*.

Born in 1866 in Saginaw, Michigan, Couse displayed an early interest in the local Chippewa, leading to a lifelong ambition to paint the American Indian. He honed his artistic instincts at the National Academy of Design in New York City and at the Académie Julian in Paris, where he studied under William Bouguereau and Tony Robert-Fleury and won prizes for his work. It was during this time that mutual friends introduced him to Virginia Walker, a rancher's daughter from Washington state who was in Paris studying illustration. The two fell in love and were married in 1889.

Virginia's parents had owned a remote ranch since 1867 in southern Washington's Klickitat County; it would prove an ideal place for Couse to begin painting American Indians using live models. In 1891, the couple left Paris for an extended stay at the ranch and took up residence in a stone studio, where Couse began painting landscapes and local Klickitat, Rock Creek, Pine Creek, and Umatilla Indians.

With a Klickitat Indian and his wife as models, he went to work on his first significant Native painting, *The Captive*, which depicts the historical kidnapping of 17-year-old Lorinda Bewley by Cayuse chief Five Crows following the 1847 Whitman Massacre at the Whitman Mission on the Oregon Trail. The painting, which now hangs in the Phoenix Art

ABOVE: *The Captive*. **OPPOSITE TOP:** *Klickitat Encampment*. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** *Klickitat Medicine Man*.



Museum, fulfilled his goal of submitting a major Native-themed work to the Paris Salon, where it was shown in 1892.

In 1893, Couse moved to Étaples, a small fishing village and art colony on the northern coast of France, and made a subject of peasants and fishermen. Following this, the family moved back to the Walker Ranch in Washington in 1896 for two years, returning again in the summers of 1901 and 1904 while also dividing their time between New York City, Étaples, and Taos, New Mexico.

It was a conversation with his friend Ernest Blumenschein in 1902 that convinced Couse to move to Taos. He began spending summers there regularly, settling year-round in 1928. In Taos, Couse's artistic vision would find fruition. He would become a founder of the Taos Society of Artists and serve as its first president. And he would come full circle in his earliest ambition, painting local Indians from the Pueblo, famously portraying them in firelight, and building the celebrated body of Southwest work that owes a little-known but important debt to the Pacific Northwest.

—Dana Joseph

Eager Irving Couse on the Columbia River is on view through September 2 at the Maryhill Museum of Art, www.maryhillmuseum.org.

