

About the Cover Art



Allen Eckman's "Traditional Dancer" is the first sculpture to grace JRRD's cover and a first place winner showcased at the 2008 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Riverside, California. Eckman sculpted the 1/4-life-size Lakota traditional dancer using the unique Eckman Method of Cast Paper Sculpture, a technique developed and trademarked by Eckman and his wife Patty.

In cast paper sculpture, the artist pours paper pulp into original silicone molds. The paper is then pressed under vacuum pressure or by hand in the mold until most of the water is extracted. The paper casts are then allowed to dry inside the molds before detail sculpting is done by the artist. Cast paper sculpting is often time consuming and requires tremendous skill and ability.

Eckman's Native American heritage and military experience inspire much of his work. The physical and spiritual aspects of Native American culture, the history of the U.S. western expansion, and the Vietnam combat experience are recurring themes in his art. Eckman, whose great-great grandmother was Cherokee, is a combat-wounded veteran of the Vietnam war and the U.S. Marine Corps. As a radio operator in 1966 and 1967 stationed at a helicopter base in Chu Lai, Vietnam, he relayed messages for supplies and additional forces to the nearby helicopters. Eckman's secondary military specialty was as an aerial gunner. In all, Eckman completed 43 combat missions and received numerous air medals for his courageous efforts as a gunner.

Discharged in 1969, Eckman enrolled in the Art Center College of Design in California. Upon graduation, Eckman worked in advertising for 12 years before founding his own fine art business.

Eckman resides in the Black Hills of South Dakota, where he uses sculpture both as therapy for his posttraumatic stress disorder and to instill art appreciation in others through the distribution of sculpture teaching kits.

"My art has changed my life," said Eckman. "It has become a way of life for me. I work at home in peace, and I can put my whole self into it and focus on one thing. That is very therapeutic."

