



Impact Statement

Destiny Hinojosa, Grade 11

Reversing Columbus, 2026

Oil pastel, collage on cardstock, 17 x 13 inches

Alvin High School, Alvin, TX

Unsung Hero: Oscar Howe

I chose Oscar Howe as my Unsung Hero because I felt a more personal connection with him than many of the other heroes. My family comes from Native Americans in Mexico, and Oscar Howe's story inspired me as a man who fought against Native American stereotypes. Growing up, I remember stories, lessons, and songs taught to depict Native Americans as inferior and intimidating because they were different. Howe's drive to make others see Natives in a new light, such as spiritually and emotionally involved in the world around them, is a direct contrast to the often-spread ideas that they are barbaric and less civilized. His ability to fight against the dehumanization of Native Americans touched my heart, and I wanted to share my inspiration through my piece. Oscar Howe impacted the world through a colorful display of advocacy, advocacy for the right to be seen as human, and for the freedom of artistic expression. Howe's works helped shift the world's views on native traditions and beliefs taking by a unique and discouraged style and incorporating it into his even more unique and shunned culture. He also encouraged unique styles from other Native artists who were expected to stick with traditional "Indian art." Howe didn't believe that one's origins should constrain them to a certain style of expression, and that instead they should decide based on their own preferences.

To develop my piece, I looked through many of Howe's works, deciding as I sketched what elements I enjoyed the most, and would like to incorporate in my own piece. In the end, I decided that my focus would be incorporating his abstract style, with a touch of color that feels like it came straight from his pieces, and patterning to reflect Howe's uniqueness. My interpretation of Oscar Howe was a man who expressed his beliefs through art about others. Howe seems to have made a plethora of pieces, yet I cannot find a single self-portrait; every one of his pieces holds someone else as its subject. I thought that Howe deserved what he gave Natives throughout America, memorable tributes to their culture that express his feelings towards his origins. I decided to use oil pastels, a medium I personally love—but have been told it is hard to work with—in order to embrace Howe's ideas that people should be unique with their art while still enjoying it. I collaged the background to attempt to mimic Howe's normal background styles, contrasting styles full of sharp and ridged edges, or soft curves and swoops. I wanted my piece to reflect Howe as a whole, not just as an artist, but as a man who cared for those society looked down upon, and as a teacher who no doubt inspired his students in the same way his old teacher Dorothy Dunn inspired him. Oscar Howe's story has inspired me to continue expressing myself through my art, to advocate for my beliefs and share them with the world without shame. I hope this artwork reaches the heart of anyone who is willing to listen, I plan on sharing this piece on all of my public platforms, including my online portfolio, in order to bring the attention of people around me and people interested in my art to my piece.