

# Monument Valley Tse' Bii Ndzisgaaí "Clearing Among the Rocks"

National Native American Heritage Month November 2022

Pat Holbrook

Exploring the Southwest in the early 1980's was one of the best experiences of my life. Everywhere you turned was a visual wonder. Peter's parents had moved to Arizona in the late 1960's. Not only did this give us the opportunity to visit family but also to explore places like Canyon de Chelly, Arches, Zion, Bryce, The Grand Canyon and Monument Valley to name a few.

While doing research on Monument Valley I came across a very thorough and fascinating article on the early history of the area. The article was written by Tony Perrotte for the Smithsonian Magazine in February of 2010. The article covers The Mexican- American War, the annexation of the area from Mexican control, Kit Carson and the "Long Walk" to Anglo and Native rights going back and forth for decades. The article also describes how a dispute in 1958 prompted the Navajo Nation Council Advisory Committee to pass a resolution to allocate 92,000 acres of tribal lands to create Monument Valley Tribal Park and open it to the public. Google it. It is well worth reading.

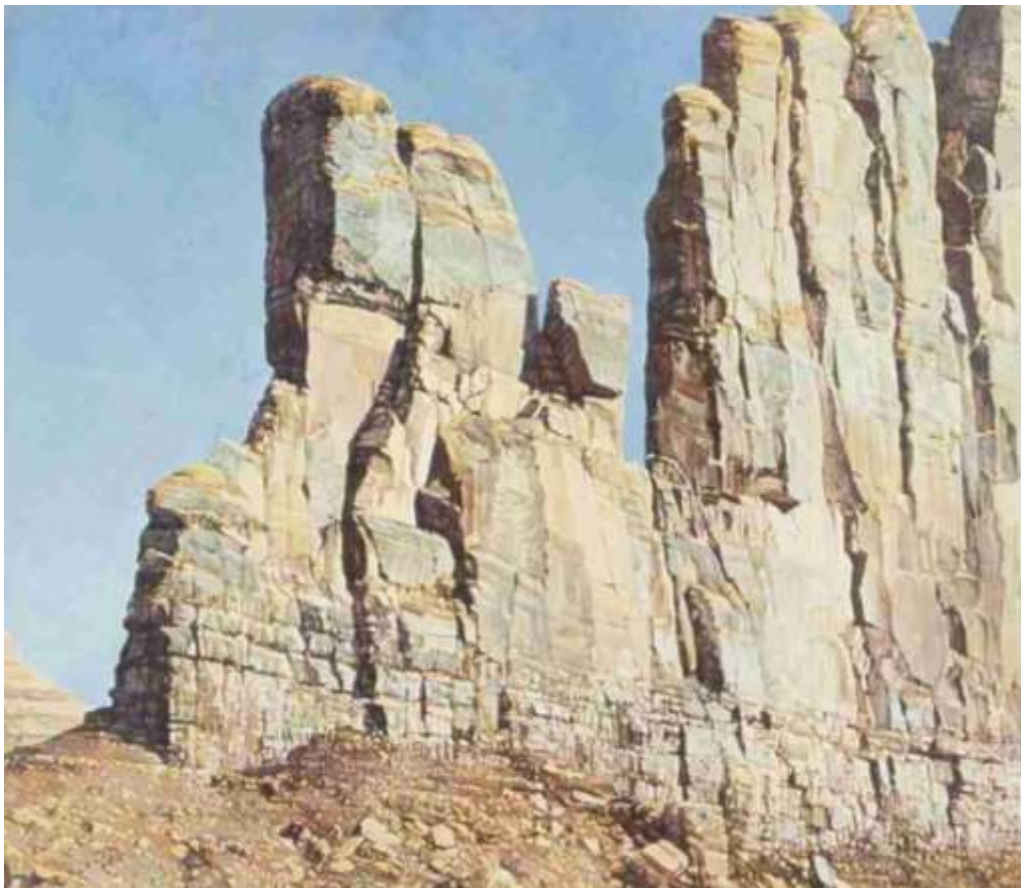
Peter and I and our 7 month old daughter visited the park for the 1<sup>st</sup> time in April of 1981. The entrance to the park is in Utah but the most recognized formations are in Arizona. We paid the park fee (today it is \$20) and drove our pickup truck around the 17 mile loop. Along the 17 mile Loop Road is many of the well recognized formations such as The Mittens, Elephant Butte, The Three Sisters, Camel Butte, Artists Point, The Thumb, Totem Pole, Yei Bi Chai, Spearhead Mesa and Rain God Mesa. Looking into Peter's painting archives I see at least 35 paintings from just this section of the park. I counted 10 paintings with the title Monument Valley (I-X) and 9 paintings (IX) titled Rain God Mesa.

What Peter was after in his paintings was not the recognizable rock formation but more the intricate structure of the formation itself. In an interview with Focus/Santa Fe magazine from August of 1999 Peter is quoted as saying "I'm looking for those abstract elements when I'm walking

around with my camera. I'm not looking for the postcard vista view- point. I'm looking for patterns, more than anything else, and intense color when I can find it. Patterns can be abstract and often repeated: for example, reflections in clouds can be the same shape as a small piece of land, with the same kind of structure and fracturing as larger pieces. I realize these patterns are valuable in making a painting- it's the repetition of form and movement." These abstract patterns can be seen in his paintings of Rain God Mesa and Camel Butte.

Below are the paintings of Monument Valley that are still available for sale.

Pat



**Camel Butte 1988 31x35.5 Watercolor/Gouache/Gesso on paper  
(unframed) Holbrook Studio**

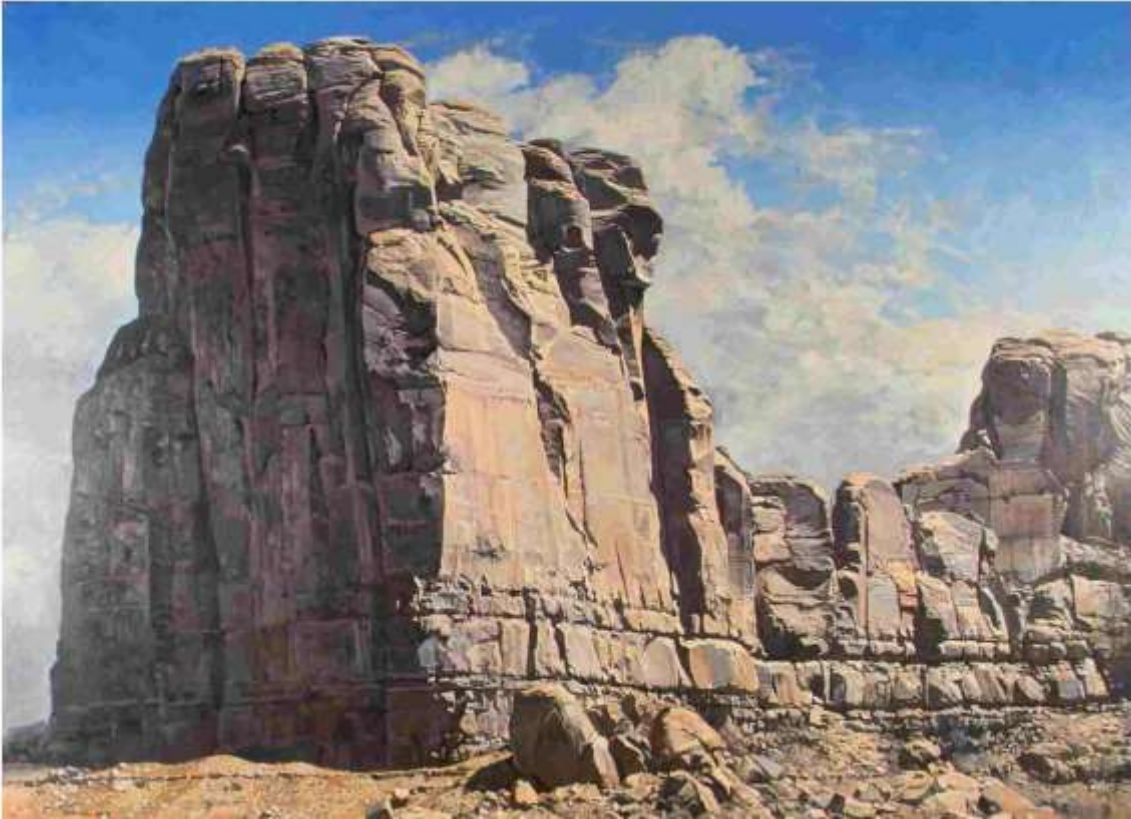


**Camel Butte Study 2010 10x16 oil on paper  
( Calabi Gallery Santa Rosa CA)**



**Clear Morning Spearhead Mesa 2014 18x28 oil on canvas  
(Holbrook studio)**

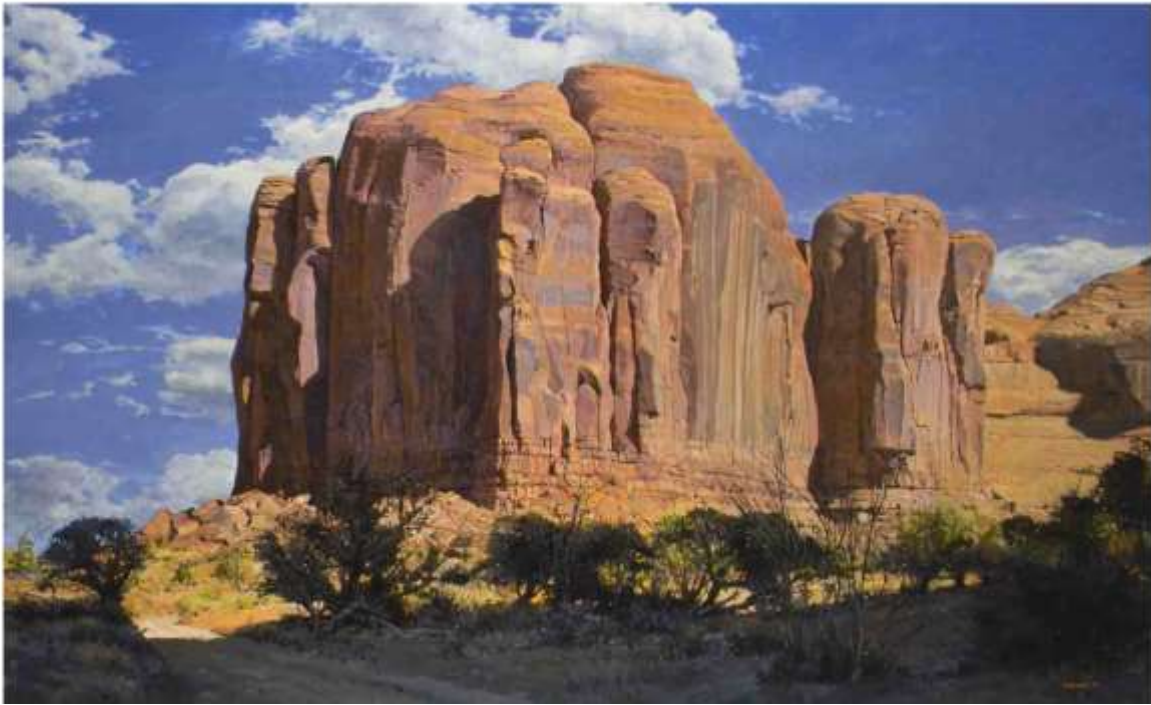




**In Monument Valley 2000-11 44x60 oil on canvas  
( Marshall Gallery Scottsdale AZ)**



**Monument Valley 1980-Woman with toddler is presumably Pat Holbrook**



**Spearhead Mesa- West End 2005 37x60 oil on canvas  
(Winfield Gallery Carmel-by-the-Sea CA)**



**Yei Bi Chai 1987 27x40 M.C Oil/Gesso on paper (Unframed)  
Holbrook Studio**





**Totem Pole and Yei Bi Chai 2000 60x44 oil on canvas  
(Holbrook studio)**