Hudson declared:

“[W]hen we consider that this mighty Republic expended some 30 or 40 millions of dollars, wasted some four years, and sacrificed many valuable lives in an ineffectual attempt to subdue a few straggling savages in the swamps of Florida, I think a war with Mexico in that sickly region would prove something more than a pastime.”
“Besides such a war might let loose upon our Southwestern frontier those injured tribes of Indians which our cupidity has driven from the graves of their fathers almost to the confines of Mexico itself. “
The opinion that war with Mexico would affect the balance of power between the U.S. and indigenous people was frequently discussed in newspapers throughout the nation. On February 12, 1845, the *New York Tribune* reported,

“Nearly or quite all this portion of Texas belongs to the Camanche (sic.) and other warlike tribes of Indians, who not merely have a clear right to it, but are abundantly able to maintain it. Every male Camanche (sic.) is an expert horseman and trained warrior from early youth. . . . These ‘savages’ will not be cheated out of their lands or driven from them very easily.”
Missouri was an important player in America’s relations with these indigenous tribes on the frontier.
Before the annexation of Texas, Missouri was the nation's westernmost state, situated on the frontier bordered by Indian nations. This image pictures "Indian Territory" abutting Missouri's Western border.
The government established an arsenal in Liberty, Missouri, just a few miles from Indian Territory. Bingham had been to Liberty and he associated with Santa Fe traders in Arrow Rock and Independence who regularly sent correspondence back to mid Missouri papers related to their encounters with Indians on the Santa Fe Trail.
For most of the 1840s these traders peacefully negotiated with Western Indians,
But once the Mexican War commenced, several settlers in the region of Bingham’s acquaintance were killed in the Taos revolt of 1847 in which an alliance of New Mexicans and Pueblo Indians killed numerous American soldiers and merchants, including Bingham’s acquaintance, Simeon Turley, from Arrow Rock.
Bingham was thus keenly aware of the dangers of trespassing into Indian lands—moreover, contrary to popular belief, he likely interacted with Indians and mixed blood people throughout the 1840s. Though the Osage were removed from Missouri in the 1820s and 30s, they occupied territory in modern Kansas within a few miles of Missouri’s western border, and were given leave to hunt and travel in Missouri throughout the 1830s and 1840s. Members of many other Indian nations also traveled the Missouri River and frequented the border regions of the state throughout the 1840s.
Bingham’s figure in the *Concealed Enemy* likely represents a member of one of these plains Indian groups. He bears more than a passing resemblance to an Osage brave living in modern-day Kansas represented in George Catlin’s 1841, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians*, a popular book many New Yorkers would have known.
For New Yorkers seeing Bingham’s Indian for the first time in 1845, the figure likely embodied numerous native peoples living in this contested space in the Central and Southwestern United States. The figure occupies the geographic “West” side of the picture and observes someone or something to his “East.”
The ambiguity of the title may have inspired audiences to contemplate the concept of expansion. Most viewers would initially see the Indian as the enemy, but he is not identified as such. So who is the “concealed enemy?”
And from whom is “the enemy” concealed—from the Native American? from the object of the Indian's gaze? or from the viewer? Could this figure be anticipating the arrival of concealed white enemies who will come as a result of Polk’s expansionist policies?
If one sees this as an image of America’s contested landscape, can interpret the dark clouds invading the clear skies over the Indian’s land as a reflection of these anxieties, a “pestiferous cloud of war,” to use the words of Philip Hone, threatening to change the shape of the American West.
The expression and pose of Bingham’s Indian suggests anxiety rather than sadistic aggression.
The representation of the Indian’s anxious vigilance and determination calls to mind the profile and furrowed brow of Michelangelo’s David, which Bingham likely knew from casts and engravings.
Like the David, Bingham’s Indian is shown at a moment of intense tension and anticipation before a moment of action.
A similar sense of anxiety and anticipation is captured in many of the diplomatic portraits James Otto Lewis made of Native Americans in the 1820s that were published as hand-colored lithographs in the widely distributed *Aboriginal Portfolio* in 1834 and 1835.
It is unclear whether Lewis intended for the figures to stare out at his audience with such suspicious and uncomfortable expressions, but the images certainly reflect the tension that existed between the native peoples and the white Americans intent on colonizing their lands.
An association of expansion anxiety with a threatening native figure also appears in the 1844 cartoon, *Matty Meeting the Texas Question*. Here the artist H. Buchholtzer pictures "Texas" as a frightening dark-skinned woman carried by Thomas Hart Benton and John Calhoun towards Martin Van Buren, the unsuccessful "favorite" for the Democratic nomination in 1844.
As Van Buren retreats, unable to stomach annexation, Polk and Dallas embrace the idea.

“What say you Dallas? She’s not the handsomest lady I ever saw, but that $25,000 a year, Eh’ its worth a little stretching of Conscience!”
The dark skin and semi-nudity, of the figure representing Texas may allude to Native Americans. Indeed her facial features conform with widely circulating images of older Indian women, such as James Otto Lewis’ *Winnebago Squaw*. 
The 1845 painting may communicate a message akin to that of the 1844 print: The annexation of Texas and potential war with Mexico promised to bring with it trouble from the indigenous people of the land.
Classical allusions in the *Concealed Enemy* might have implied similar warnings. The pose of Bingham’s Indian suggests a reverse variant of the ancient Roman statue, *The Dying Gaul* (also known as *The Dying Gladiator* in the nineteenth century).
Like the Gauls of France who resisted Roman invaders, the Native Americans will not give up their land without a fight.
Art historian Henry Adams has suggested that the *Concealed Enemy* and *Fur Traders* originally formed a dialectical pair. For Adams, *The Concealed Enemy* represents America’s native past, while the *Fur Traders* represents the European-American taming of the West.
Adams argument becomes tenuous, however, when one discovers that the *Concealed Enemy* and *Fur Traders* were sold separately and were not paired when distributed at the AA-U lottery. Nevertheless, I believe Adams was correct in suggesting that the images were thematically linked to each other and to the politics of the era. I propose that both reflect the fragile tensions between native forces, colonial impulses and the politics of expansion.
In a letter of 1844, Bingham described an idea for a pro-Clay banner that incorporated a native animal into its iconography in a way that recalls their use in *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri*. The artist proposes to paint:

“a large buffalo just broken loose from his keepers making the poke stalks fly to the right and left in the fury of his unbridled career.”
The “Poke Stalks” that Bingham’s buffalo makes fly were stalks of pokeweed, a common American plant used by Polk as a symbol of his campaign in 1844 (probably because of the similarity of the name “Polk” to “poke”).
The destruction of pokeweed was a common theme in Clay campaign material. In this Clay banner from Pennsylvania, the artist represents raccoons (well known symbols of the Whig party) munching on pokeweed.