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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Making History: The Role of History in Contemporary Native American Art

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Art History, Theory, and Criticism

by

Leah Diane Cluff

Committee in Charge:

Professor Elizabeth Newsome, Chair
Professor Norman Bryson
Professor Ross Frank
Professor Kuiyi Shen
Professor John Welchman

2013

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2013

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to all of my family and friends who have encouraged me throughout my doctoral program. Your love and support means more to me than you know. I would especially like to acknowledge my grandfather, Dr. James E. Cluff. You have instilled in all of your family a value for education, and it is my honor to follow in your footsteps.

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VITA

1997	Bachelor of Arts, University of California, San Diego
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Making History: The Role of History in Contemporary Native American Art

by

Leah Diane Cluff

Doctor of Philosophy in Art History, Theory, and Criticism

University of California, San Diego, 2013

Professor Elizabeth Newsome, Chair

This dissertation investigates the ways in which traditional Native American and Canadian First Nations ideas and concepts of history influence contemporary art made by artists with these backgrounds. It further takes into account an understanding of historicity as an approach to the philosophies that underlie concepts of history. The methodologies used in this analysis include investigations of mythology and ritual practice, ideas about landscape, and the roles of personal lives and biographies as forms of historical

documentation. It also includes an examination of specific government laws and treaties, which are forms of more standard historical sources.

Throughout the text, there is a concern with the ways in which artists use their practice to reclaim historical agency lost in the process of colonization. This agency is manifest in myriad ways, including the reference of traditional myths and ritual practices described in academic texts and artistic critiques of the laws enacted by settler governments. This dissertation also considers the manner in which this agency is transferred from artist to art object, allowing the artwork to manifest and display the agency of the artist herself or himself.

Through the use of traditional concepts of history and historicity, Native American and Canadian First Nations artists reassert their rights of agency within the historical record. They do so through reference to traditional ideas and as full participants in the contemporary art world. In so doing they reclaim a degree of control over their own histories, producing works and discourses that present, or intentionally refuse to present, a continuity with the historical past that has otherwise often been denied to modern indigenous Americans.

INTRODUCTION

> *It has been said that history is just an arrangement to make sure everything doesn't happen at once. Chronology, history's orderly "flow," must be among its least intuitive devices.*
>
> *-- James Clifford*[1]

> *What is out there is seen by the public and called "art." We didn't have a word for that in our culture, in my Mi'kmaq culture, or in many other Native cultures. For us it is, rather, an act of making, of giving, of recording. Like the petroglyphs that our ancestors left us, they're not definitive statements. They're part of our history, but not like the Western written text that becomes fact. They are what we make.*
>
> *-- Teresa Marshall*[2]

In 1995, Flathead/Salish artist Jaune Quick-to-See Smith created a lithograph titled *Celebrate 40,000 Years of American Art* (figure I-1). It features the title's text, stenciled above and below the figures of five progressively smaller rabbits. The rabbit, like coyote, is a trickster figure, a mischievous and subversive mythological hero; Rabbit's presence here clues the audience in to the subversive tone of Quick-to-See Smith's print. Quick-to-See Smith's use of the grisaille color palate and the rough-hewn texture of the print's background reference the petroglyphs and pictographs that are among the most distant traces of ancient American pictorial history. The rabbits are

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[1] James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 338.

[2] Teresa Marshall interview in Charlotte Townsend-Gault, "Marshall Arts," *Mix*, vol. 24 no. 3 (1999), 35.

Figure I-1. Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, *Celebrate 40,000 Years of American Art*, 1995. Image courtesy of the artist.

also inspired by petroglyphs of standing rabbits found at the Peterborough Site in Toronto, Canada.[3] The text and image together represent an astute maneuver; a reminder that the art of the Americas, its histories, and the combination of the two go back long before the arrival of European settlers, and European epistemologies of history. Quick-to-See Smith says of this work, "This etching is my succinct comment on colonial thinking."[4]

Artistic production can be understood as a site for the presence of Native histories and historicities. Historicity often reflects the underlying

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[3] Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, "Jaune Quick-to-See Smith," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 23 no. 2 (2002), 154.

[4] Quick-to-See Smith, 154.

concepts of a modality of history itself. In this case, it should be understood as a broader, more flexible definition of ideas about or senses and perceptions of history. Historicity can serve as an awareness of an individual or shared historical consciousness, a recognition of one's place within a specific historical formation or understanding. However, Peter Nabokov argues that historicity may not always be a matter of self-awareness; he expands its definition to also encompass forms of history that may not be consciously or intentionally constructed as such.[5] It is in this expanded sense that I employ the term and concept throughout.

This historical understanding spans a number of epochs of Native art making; from pre-contact and contact era arts, through the reservation period and into the contemporary world, looking at works of Native American and First Nations art can aid in disclosing Native senses of history. These senses of history can involve representations of deep time, such as origin, creation, and migration stories, or they may involve representations of more concrete events. What they share, though, is a representation of history that is often independent of the written word.

History, as it is understood as a discipline of Western academic scholarship, is strongly associated with the act of writing and the written text. Indeed, scholars frequently place primacy on the written word and discount

[5] Historicity can involve a variety of cultural practices, from oral histories, myths and legends, to ritual, to a people's relationship with the land. See Peter Nabokov, *A Forest of Time: American Indian Ways of History* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

information that is transferred by non-written means; after all, how can one know if data is accurate if it is not written down? This point of view, perhaps quite understandably, comes from centuries' worth of traditions in European scholarship that were profoundly text-based. As Anthony Grafton considers in *New Worlds, Ancient Texts*, up until the European exploration of the American continents, European thinkers' worlds were bounded by the information contained in books.[6] With the awareness of the New World also came the awareness that the world held more information than was to be found between the pages of these scholars' books. Old habits are hard to shake, however, and books and writing were still held to be the only true way of accurately passing information down through the ages.

Scholars have also argued that this focus on textuality and writing has much to do with the dominance of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity — often called religions of the Book — and their reliance on text as primary components of their theological presences. Since the practice of these religions, especially Christianity among European, Euro-American, and Euro-Canadian peoples, is defined by an ontological understanding of the importance of the written word; its significance to scholarship from these same cultures is correlative. Among scholars whose worldview stems to one degree or another from one of these religions of the Book, written scholarship

[6] Anthony Grafton, April Shelford and Nancy Siraisi, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992).

takes the same degree of scriptural prominence as do the religious texts, and it does so at the expense of the oral transmission of knowledge.

This primacy of the written word was not always understood as a definitively good thing. Plato himself mused upon the changes made to the human mind with the advent of writing. He was concerned that, as more and more people began to write their words and thoughts down, they would simultaneously learn forgetfulness and the capacities of their memories would begin to decrease.[7] While writing may not have changed the chemistry of the human brain to make us more forgetful, certainly the culture of writing has devalued the facilities of memory and remembrance. More recently, N. Scott Momaday has evaluated what he sees to be the key differences between orality and the written word; for him, the key to this difference lies in the precision of language. Momaday argues that, in oral cultures, the choice of wording is careful and precise, as spoken words are seen as having a direct power and capability for action upon the world. Writing, however, has allowed us to take this power of language for granted, and written cultures are, in many ways, less careful about how language is used.[8]

Momaday argues that the differences in the histories of European-descended peoples and Native American peoples lies at this crossroads of oral and written culture. He believes that our histories in many ways determine

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[7] Jennifer Daryl Slack and J. Macgregor Wise, *Culture + Technology* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 43.

[8] N. Scott Momaday, *Man Made of Words* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 15.

who we are as people, but he also finds that we must interrogate our varied understandings of the concept of history.[9] For Momaday, the crux of this difference in the meaning of history is the difference between the cultures of orality and the written word, and the precision with which language is used. He argues that it is necessary that oral traditions be considered histories. This is something that many scholars of Native history have come to assert in recent years.

This view of Native histories in many ways represents a paradigm shift in Western scholarship. As Eric Wolf pointed out slightly more than two decades ago, the rampant specialization and disciplinary divisions in academia had led to a view of the world as a whole that was equally separate and compartmentalized.[10] This compartmentalized way of thinking did not, and does not, allow for a view of the interconnectedness among different cultures, especially between Europe and the New World, nor does it allow for the mutual influences these contacts created. It does, however, tend to create the idea that the non-European societies are isolated, timeless, and without history.[11] This is further tied in, as Wolf argues, with the binary opposition between the modern and the traditional: tradition becomes equated with stasis and modernity with dynamism. This equation of tradition with lack of

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[9] Momaday, 53 and 55.

[10] Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 4.

[11] Wolf, 4.

movement denied traditional societies histories of their own and blocked off any evaluation of these "ahistorical" societies in conjunction with other societies with which they had contact.[12] Wolf's book argues against this form of compartmentalization; other scholars noted his critique, and texts exploring the histories of these people without history shortly followed.

The earlier histories of Native American peoples as they are found in academic and popular writing have tended to focus on either biographies of well-known warriors and prophets or generalized histories of events as they affected the larger body of the Native population. Alfonso Ortiz discusses how little these histories represent the actual history of indigenous America from an emic point of view, rather ironically stating that Native people do not find them controversial, as they do ethnography or anthropology, because these history texts have nothing to do with them.[13] As the number of scholars of Native American and First Nations heritage entering the academy slowly increases, their calls for a more accurate and nuanced approach to Native history have begun to be heeded. Many are engaged in generating these new approaches as they write their own histories from a "Native-centered" point of view.

As changes have occurred to the field of Native American history, scholars, Native and non-Native alike, have presented a more well-rounded

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[12] Wolf, 13.

[13] Alfonso Ortiz, "Indian/White Relations: A View from the Other Side of the 'Frontier'," *Indians in American History*, ed. Frederick E. Hoxie (Arlington Heights, IL: Harland Davidson, Inc, 1988), 9.

approach to understanding Native history. Much of this research and writing is focused on validating the different forms and cultural sites for historical material. History is not only found in books, but in all manner of behaviors, rituals, legends, and stories. Deep history can be found in the creation myths and rituals of a culture, which can be brought back into the present every time the ritual is enacted or the myth told.[14] For a number of artists, it is also found in the treaty negotiations and subsequent legal contentions between European, and later American and Canadian, governments and Native peoples. This combination of legal and historical analysis is fraught with tension, because these treaties are located at the intersections of oral and written cultures. Native histories are also strongly tied to location and place; Vine Deloria, Jr., contrasts this with Western modes of thinking that are chronologically based.[15] Landscape features might also be active historical agents and, therefore, prominently featured in Native histories.[16] Perhaps most importantly, and most different from Western historical methodology, is an insistence on the validity of multiple versions and stories of the same events.[17] Differing versions of a story are not viewed as being in conflict, nor is it necessary to resolve them

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[14] Nabokov, 173. For use of creation mythology in a history text see Georges Sioui, *Huron Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle*, trans. Jane Brierley (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999). A passing reference can also be seen in Michael Connolly Miskwish, *Kumeyaay: A History Textbook* (El Cajon, CA: Sycuan Press, 2007).

[15] Vine Deloria, Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1994 [1972]), 62.

[16] Nabokov, 2 and Leslie Marmon Silko, "Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination" *The Ecocriticism Reader*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), 264 - 275.

[17] Nabokov, 47.

into any solid, scriptural telling of the events, but rather their plurality is the accepted way of doing and presenting histories.

How, then, might we look at Native American and First Nations artists' use of history and historicity in their works? In some ways, I believe their methods can be understood as both an assertion and a negotiation of identity. As the traditional signifiers of indigenous cultural identity, such as language, heritage, or location of homeland, have been lost to a good portion of the indigenous North American population, it can be argued that an understanding of history, myth, and ritual practice have assumed new importance as the markers of a modern Native identity. This can be understood through Gerald Vizenor's concept of survivance, which places primacy on Native definitions and codes of identity.[18] For Vizenor, artistic production has long been a part of Native survivance, and it holds true for the works of contemporary artists of Native American and First Nations heritage.

These works may also serve a secondary purpose. Native histories have traditionally been part of an oral tradition, one that encouraged multiple versions. As these stories have entered Western scholarship, they have been written down, and all the weight of the decisive version of story or event has been placed on these texts. This converts the flexibility of the oral tradition into what Vizenor terms the scriptural nature of Western academia.[19] As artists

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[18] Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 15.

[19] Vizenor, 175.

use many of these stories and texts as source material in their creative works, they are able to convert these written records back into a form where multiple versions and interpretations are accepted, both within Native and Western cultures. The world of art is one of the few sites of Western culture where this type of multiplicity is both expected and accepted, and the idea of a definitive interpretation is often panned.

Review of Literature

The relationship between historicity and the artistic practices of Native artists is not one that has been deeply explored by art historians. There are several essays that reference the use of ethnography or oral traditions by specific artists, but as far as I am aware, no one has analyzed these connections within the framework of the larger body of Native American and First Nations peoples and histories. This may stem, in some ways, from the relative youth of the field of Native American art history; this is especially true in its sub-specialty focusing on contemporary Native arts. Writing on artists who practice in contemporary media is predominantly centered on the individual artists, or groups of artists, working in a particular medium or region, with significantly fewer essays and texts exploring thematic and theoretical relationships across artistic practices.

Art historian Ruth Phillips investigates the use of oral traditions by the Ojibwa and Iroquois artists of the Woodlands school, such as Norval

Morrisseau and Daphne Odjig.[20] Phillips argues that artists are not merely illustrating the myths and legends of their indigenous oral traditions but pictorially interpreting and presenting them. This presentation, Phillips argues, is a way of preserving these stories, as the artists were concerned that they might be lost due to forced acculturation and assimilation. The artists present these stories in their works to make them available for future generations. Phillips considers the work of artists who were told these stories by elders, as well as those who read published versions of myths and legends in academic texts.

In this essay, Phillips does not explore the different modes of reception between artists who were told the stories orally versus those artists who read them in texts. I find this interesting, because it seems to me that some different form of presentation is taking place in these two modes; both sets of artists may be preserving these stories for future generations, but those who have read the myths and legends in academic works may also be reclaiming or reincorporating these stories back into a Native context. Additionally, Phillips does not explore these oral traditions as a part of Native history or historicity, which is a key component of my own research and arguments.

Similar analyses of artistic practice in relation to published academic texts are found in essays by Ruth Phillips and Allan J. Ryan in an exhibition

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[20] Ruth B. Phillips, "Messages from the Past: Oral Traditions and Contemporary Woodlands Art," *In the Shadow of the Sun*, ed. The Canadian Museum of Civilization, (Hull, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1993), 233 - 256.

catalog for Lakota artist Colleen Cutschall.[21] As Cutschall's works in this exhibition draw heavily from ethnographic texts on Lakota and Pawnee myth and ritual, the authors investigate her works in relationship to these texts. The use of the Lakota ethnographic information, coming from James R. Walker's nineteenth century research at Pine Ridge is particularly interesting. Copies of his recordings of the Lakota creation myths have been distributed and taught in schools on the Lakota reservations. Through their discussions of Walker's research and its influence on Cutschall, both Phillips and Ryan touch on the idea of the artist reincorporating Native knowledge published in academic texts in her artworks. Additionally, Ryan includes an interview with Cutschall as part of his essay, ensuring the artist's voice is incorporated into his analysis.

Though these essays explore the relationship between myth and Cutschall's works and, in the case of her works based on the Pawnee Morning Star sacrifice, specific historical events, Phillips and Ryan do not examine these myths as elements of Lakota history in a broader sense. In some ways though, as argued by Peter Nabokov, the myths represent elements of the history of deep time. My analysis of Cutschall's works, and those by numerous other artists who reference mythology and ritual practice, aims to add this historicity into the scholarly discourse.

The literature already published on history or historicity in works of contemporary Native American and First Nations art is quite slim. Most

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[21] Winnipeg Art Gallery, *Colleen Cutschall: House Made of Stars*, (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1996).

involve references to oral traditions, published or verbally narrated, as source material for artists' works. However few go beyond such observations into an exploration of how and why artists might use these stories, as illustrated by the essays by Ruth Phillips and Allan J. Ryan discussed above. Even their publications do not explore how these works might be representations of historicity, historical documents, or function as historical agents themselves. This text will expand the relative paucity of research into this mode of Native artistic practice through an examination of a broader category of historical sources, such as are found in predominantly oral cultures. In order to better understand how oral cultures and their histories differ from those cultures with written historical sources, I now turn to a review of the scholarly discussion of orality and its role in documenting history.

The Role of Orality in History

In what is arguably the seminal book on defining the difference between oral and written cultures, *Orality and Literacy*, Walter J. Ong explores the commonalities and tendencies of what he terms primary oral cultures. Language, as Ong points out, is an innately oral phenomenon.[22] This innate orality is a primary component of human communication, and this ends up having a profound effect, as Ong notes, on human thought. Thought itself, Ong

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[22] Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy; The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge, 2002 [1982]), 6.

argues, is grounded upon the sound and the oral qualities of language.[23] Our human way of thinking, then, is based upon the oral tendencies of human language, not the written ones. Writing, as well, owes the debt of its very existence to orality.[24] However, as Ong and others have noted, primary oral cultures understand and utilize language very differently than those categorized as primary written cultures.

Sound, the oral component of language is by its very nature evanescent and ephemeral; in Ong's words, "Sound only exists when it is going out of existence."[25] This creates a very different relationship to language than we would find in primary written cultures, where the text itself serves as a permanent, or nearly permanent, lasting trace of thought. One may go back and reread a favorite story or text, but in oral cultures, these types of stories, if they are not currently in the act of being told, only exist as a potential narrative for a storyteller to relate.[26] While it is easy to conceive of this potentiality as being a profoundly negative condition, Ong also argues that written cultures have likely lost the ability to create some of the types of powerful performance of language that exist in primary oral cultures.[27]

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[23] Ong, 7.

[24] Ong, 8.

[25] Ong, 32

[26] Ong, 11.

[27] Ong. 14. He further notes that the relative "strangeness" that is often foisted upon primary oral cultures may be due in part to the nature of primary written cultures, 1.

One way that this becomes apparent for Ong is in examining the performances of poets working in the oral tradition. He notes that these poets' performances are different with each telling, that there is no correct or verbatim version.[28] We might consider that the idea of a structurally or factually "correct" version of events in a narrative only comes into play with the advent of a written text to which one may refer back. Words themselves also have greater potency in oral traditions. Words are events in oral cultures. Once the sound of utterance has passed, they leave no trace.[29] Ong notes that the power of the spoken word has a degree of almost magical potency, an idea which is echoed by other scholars.[30] Ong himself sites Malinowski's discussion of language as a mode of action, and N. Scott Momaday argues that spoken words are efficacious, powerful, and magical, and can, in and of themselves, bring about physical change in the universe.[31]

However, for all of the ways in which Ong carefully explores primary oral cultures, he unequivocally states that literacy, written language, is necessary for the development of history.[32] For Ong, this seems to be due to his argument that knowledge in primary oral cultures is solely based upon what one can recall; he believes that this type of knowledge does not allow for

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[28] Ong, 21.

[29] Ong. 31.

[30] Ong, 32-33.

[31] Ong, 32 and Momaday, 15-16.

[32] Ong, 14-15.

Figure I-2. Lone Dog, *Winter Count*, c. 1870. Image courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian (1/617). Photo by NMAI Photo Services.

the discourse that he argues is required for historical argumentation.[33] This categorically, for Ong, disallows the type of discourse-based knowledge required for the development of any manner of history.

If, as Ong directly states, writing creates history, then we should not expect to find written cultures' ideas of history, that is, their historicity, apparent in those of primary oral cultures.[34] A cursory examination of the Plains peoples' concept of the Winter Count proves otherwise, however (figure I-2). A Winter Count is a recording of a chronological history, wherein accounts of a family or band were recorded via an image that represents the

[33] Ong, 33.

[34] Ong, 168.

most important events of a given year. These distilled images, to use the description of Janet Berlo and Ruth Phillips, were then metonymic representations of all the other events that occurred that year and served as an *aide memoire* for the group's oral historians. Some Winter Counts could span the events of decades and centuries.[35] This type of visual object can serve as a touchstone for a form of chronological history; chronologies such as these are more generally accepted as historical sources, wherein recall of facts and events lie at least partially outside the human mind, if in visual, rather than textual, form.

Interestingly, some of the other works that Ong cites in his arguments on orality contradict his point of view on the lack of historical discourse in oral cultures. He refers to Claude Levi-Strauss's foundational text *La Pensée Sauvage* as an exploration of the ways that oral cultures think about themselves and the world.[36] Levi-Strauss, in this text, definitively argues for a dialectic of history that is part of the oral world, contradicting Ong's points.[37] And despite Ong's championing of Levi-Strauss's text as an exemplar of Ong's ideas, Levi-Strauss himself states that we should "apply dialectical reason to the knowledge of our own and other societies. But we must not lose sight of the

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[35] Janet Catherine Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 120-121.

[36] Ong, 171. Levi-Strauss himself later suggested that being without writing was perhaps a better way to refer to a "primitive" or "savage" culture. Ong then suggests that Levi-Strauss's text should be viewed as a study of the primarily oral mind.

[37] Claude Levi-Strauss, *La Pensée Sauvage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966). For his discussion of the ways humans can produce and understand history see pages 250-251.

fact that analytical reason occupies a considerable place in all of them and that, as it is present, the approach we adopt must also allow us to rediscover it there."[38] Thus, Levi-Strauss cautions against Ong's approach.

Other scholars more directly approach the study of the history of oral cultures. Jan Vansina considers the problem in *Oral Tradition as History*. From the outset, one gets the feeling of a professional disagreement between Vansina and Ong regarding the nature of oral cultures and their histories, as Vansina states in his preface that the totality of oral traditions cannot be reduced to the evanescent, calling to mind Ong's use of that specific description.[39] Vansina defines two differing types of historicity in use in oral cultures: oral histories are those narratives in which the events and situations related are contemporary to the informant; oral traditions are those that have passed on to others via word of mouth.[40] Those events that one would most commonly think of as histories, then, are considered oral traditions in Vansina's framework.

Vansina notes several modalities in which the historicities of oral cultures function. Historical consciousness exists, he argues, in two separate temporal registers: time of origin and recent time.[41] There is very little middle ground between these two, as once a given narrative has passed out of the

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[38] Levi-Strauss, 252.

[39] Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), xii.

[40] Vansina, 12-13.

[41] Vansina, 24.

recent past, it is relegated to the great span of deep history, which scholars such as Nabokov and Levi-Strauss refer to as mythological time. One problem that scholars from writing-based cultures seem to encounter with these types of oral traditions is that it can be hard to separate the forms of factual narration from the fictional. Vansina argues that factual accounts tend to be more faithfully recounted from telling to telling than do fictional ones and the ultimate difference between the two lies in a given culture's notion of truth, which he states must also be investigated.[42]

While Vansina acknowledges that lack of chronology and the interdependence of sources are some of the major limitations of the oral tradition, he posits some great benefits of researching this form of historicity, as well.[43] These oral traditions are what provide us with a form of insider interpretation of historical events for large swathes of the world; interpretations which, Vansina points out, Western history could never develop on its own.[44] This is because these histories have accumulated these interpretations as they are being transmitted from storyteller to storyteller, becoming simultaneously message and interpretation.[45] In this way, the oral traditions become both history and historicity, an account not only of events of

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[42] Vansina, 13-14.

[43] Vansina, 186-187.

[44] Vansina, 198.

[45] Vansina, 195.

the past, but one which also includes emic interpretations.[46] In this, Vansina notes, oral traditions play a similar role to written histories in reconstructing a narrative of the past, but they do so while behaving quite differently from written sources.[47] Perhaps the written and oral traditions are coming closer together, however; one of the tenets of modern Western history emphasizes the nature of multiple histories of peoples and events, traits that are common elements of oral traditions.

One point to be considered in this discussion is that Vansina and Ong both come from written traditions of scholarship, and their argumentations are based upon their own research of orality. Looking at the works of scholars whose cultural backgrounds involve what Ong would term primary oral cultures can provide some insight into the way that indigenous scholars view the nature of history. Numerous Native American scholars have written about the role of orality and its relationship to Native American histories. Tewa historian Alfonso Ortiz discusses the need for the discipline of history to accept the ways in which Native peoples "do" history such as in song and dance. For Ortiz this would not only expand the discipline of history as a whole, but, perhaps more importantly, correct some of the misconceptions and assumptions that litter the historical texts discussing the relationships

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[46] Vansina, 196.

[47] Vansina, 199.

between indigenous and settler societies.[48] Ortiz directly argues for the use of oral traditions as viable historical sources.[49] Further, he argues that we should

> also consider accepting Indian cultural productions other than writing as history. ... [W]e must believe that much history is bound up in tribal songs and dances as well as in the oral traditions. To these we can now add family photographs, records of transactions, and even sound and video recordings.[50]

In this, Ortiz goes beyond the considerations of sources that Vansina presents and argues for a much more flexible and expansive idea of a historical record.

N. Scott Momaday echoes this type of expansion when he discusses pre-contact rock art as the beginning of American literature. For Momaday, these pictographs are imbued with language, mythology, and song.[51] If we combine the arguments of Ortiz and Momaday in looking at ancient rock art, we are indeed looking at ancient historical texts. They just do not happen to be ones that we can read. Momaday, however, also associated more legible images with historical texts, as he, too, discusses the historical value of the Plains Winter Count.[52] He argues that we must understand what is meant by the word "history" and follows with a discussion that makes plain his point of view that history itself is not limited to books, but can be found in images and in the expanded universe of possible sources.[53]

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[48] Ortiz, 1-2.

[49] Ortiz, 15.

[50] Ortiz, 15.

[51] Momaday, 13-14.

[52] Momaday, 54.

[53] Momaday, 53-54.

Vine Deloria, Jr., pushes this consideration of expanded sources even farther. Rather than simply accepting a wider variety of historical source material, he argues that we also need to reflect upon the different ways this historical knowledge is produced and is situated in Native epistemologies. Deloria posits that the types of chronological histories that make up Western writings on the subject are not the dominant forms of historicity found among Native peoples and cultures.[54] Native histories instead are primarily spatial, as opposed to chronological, in their focus. Understanding the overriding importance of the land itself, as the constant point of spatial reference for these histories is the key point in Deloria's arguments on the subject.[55] For Deloria, Momaday, and Ortiz, the diversifying of historical sources, and better understanding of the contexts in which these sources are produced, serves a specific end beyond simply improving historical accounts. There is a moral component to their arguments in which increasing agency is claimed by Native peoples in their relationships with dominant American cultures through a greater acceptance of their oral and historical traditions.[56]

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[54] Deloria, Jr., 98.

[55] Deloria, Jr., 62. Ortiz argues for a direct link between history and location. Alfonso Ortiz, quoted in Nabokov, 131-132.

[56] See Deloria, Jr., 87-88, Ortiz, 2-3, and Momaday 54-55.

Object Agency

This increasing agency is not only found in the activities of Native scholars, but also in the objects that artists produce. The artists and artworks under discussion in this analysis aptly represent some of the roles of Native American and First Nations historical agents. As actors within contemporary historicities, these artists can and do act as historical agents; more recently, however, scholars have become interested in how agency can also be present in the objects that artists create. This area of study is often referred to as "object agency" or "thing theory." A number of scholars have theorized the roles and lives of objects as agents. Below, I will explore some of the basic tenets of this theorization.

Arguably, the seminal work of object agency theory is Alfred Gell's *Art and Agency*. In this text, Gell explores the various ways in which agency appears and becomes manifest in objects, specifically works of art. Gell is not only interested in the ways in which objects function as agents, he also includes in his discussion a more robust and detailed analysis of the means by which these objects gain their agency in the first place. Gell argues that what he calls "the immediate other in a social relationship" is not restricted to another human being; this other can also be an object, a thing.[57] This recognition of a social relationship between humans and things is the beginning of Gell's argumentation for the agency of things themselves. He

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[57] Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 17.

recognizes that the use of things is related to their agentive qualities, finding that objects are an extension of the exercise of human agency. This, for Gell, qualifies them from the outset as what he terms "secondary agents."[58]

He then moves on to analyze how this type of secondary agency, as an extension of human agency, can be fully transferred to objects themselves. For Gell, this comes through in the manufacture or selection of a given object for its intended function; agency, in effect, is distributed from human maker to manufactured object.[59] This distributional relationship holds sway in his argument for the agency of art objects. Gell argues that whatever type of action a person may perform with regard to another person may also be performed, at least imaginatively, by a work of art.[60] These ideas, taken together, suggest that artworks, in some fashion, exist as a form of distributed personhood, emanating from the artist-as-agent to the object that the artist creates. This is further borne out through Gell's statement that our social being-ness is not confined to our individual bodies; it also resides in our surroundings, which bear witness to our existence, as well as to our agency.[61] Early in the text, Gell argues that agency itself is relational and dependent upon context; he also explores how that agency is perhaps shared among all elements of that

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[58] Gell, 20.

[59] Gell, 23.

[60] Gell, 66.

[61] Gell, 103.

relationship, considering both human actors and contextual surroundings.[62] This form of distributed agency, for Gell, is how one should understand agency becoming manifest in works of art.

Gell also considers the way that agency functions in art objects. He claims that an individual artwork has the capacity to stand in, metonymically, for both the entire *oeuvre* of its artist and for the biographical and historical context of its creation.[63] As physical things, art objects are the material trace of an artist's cognitive processes not jus of the artist's agency; beyond a work's individual subject, it also records the way these processes and agency brought it into being.[64] Most importantly, Gell's analysis leads him to the conclusion that artworks are the visible form of an artist's agency.[65] In this sense, an art object, as a thing, represents both an object with agency in its own right, but also a visible trace of the agency of the artist that created it. Small wonder, then, that art objects hold such sway over us.

Other authors have considered the manner in which people use objects in relationship to the agency of things. In *Thinking Through Material Culture*, Esther Pasztory argues that the relationship between object and user, and between the animate and inanimate, has blurred, rather than distinct

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[62] Gell, 22.

[63] Gell, 232.

[64] Gell, 241.

[65] Gell, 250.

borders.[66] This blurring is one way that we can think of agency being present in, or transferred to, an inanimate object; thus, agency is granted through its relationship with the animate being who makes use of it. For Pasztory, it is the combination of human and object that creates the agentive presence.[67] The use of an object, how it acts upon the world, is central for most humans in understanding the meaning of that object.[68] In some ways then, Pasztory believes that agency is relational, linked to the concepts of use, and that its use also helps determine the object's meaning.

However, Pasztory also notes that objects have a distinct ability to act back upon humans psychologically.[69] Sigmund Freud's study of the uncanny, and its later adaption to robotics in the theory of the uncanny valley, also represent ways that objects, generally categorized as inanimate, have the ability to cause humans to behave or react as if they were animate. From this point, it is clear that Pasztory is also aware that objects may have agency in their own right aside from the type of relational agency discussed above. Within this, though, she is clear to point out that there is a difference between agency and intentionality; objects themselves can have agency, but only humans (or presumably other animate beings) can manifest their agency to

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[66] Esther Pasztory, *Thinking Through Material Culture: Toward a New Vision of Art* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 16.

[67] Pasztory, 30.

[68] Pasztory, 44.

[69] Pasztory, 28.

intentionally cause certain results.[70] That is to say that objects themselves have no intention to create desire or to be uncanny; their agency in causing these effects is purely a result of human psychology, not anything causative within the objects themselves.

The types of distributed agency that both Gell and Pasztory consider may also reflect back upon the role of the person who makes an object. Fred Myers suggests that, for art objects considered agents in terms of Gell's arguments, success can also be distributed. That is to say, when a given art object is successful, the success of that object is also distributed back to the artist who made it.[71] These shared accolades serve to further blur the distinction between artist and object, reflecting the blurring of the animate and inanimate that Pasztory notes.

Scholars of material studies have also begun to consider how objects themselves relate to the study of history. Ewa Domanska argues that we should understand the thing itself as a trace of history.[72] Domanska is interested in the ontological status of what she terms "relics of the past" that mediate relationships between people and things and how their status might reflect upon a different kind of historical study.[73] Domanska is primarily interested in

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[70] Pasztory, 22.

[71] Fred Myers, "Social Agency and the Cultural Value(s) of the Art Object," *Journal of Material Culture* vol. 9 no.2 (2004), 205.

[72] Ewa Domanska, "The Material Presence of the Past," trans. Magdalena Zapedowska, *History and Theory*, no. 45 (2006), 337.

[73] Domanska, 337.

the way that an object-oriented history, rather than a human-oriented one, might change the nature of that discipline.[74] She posits that one benefit of a thing-centered history is that it would be less open to finite interpretation.[75] While the form of analysis that I provide within this text does not qualify as a strictly object-oriented history in that the objects I discuss reflect human-based events and lives, I believe that the forms of historical agency present in these works is equally based upon a move away from finite historical interpretation.

Aaron Glass offers a model for human- and object-oriented historical agency in his article "Return to Sender." Glass considers the role of Native American artwork repatriation cases and Jewish artwork restitution cases. In this essay, he argues that the journey of these artworks-as-displaced-objects from foreign museums back to their home communities is both "a metaphor for — and an emphatic assertion of — both agency and identity."[76] Glass considers the means of collection of these art objects as events (i.e., the actual taking of the objects), but also as reflections of colonization. The objects' journey into the hands or museums of settler cultures, thus, becomes a symbol for the removal of agency from the cultures that originally produced these objects.[77]

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[74] Domanksa, 338.

[75] Domanska, 346.

[76] Aaron Glass, "Return to Sender: On the Politics of Cultural Property and the Proper Address of Art," *Journal of Material Culture* vol. 9 no.2 (2004), 116.

[77] Glass, 125.

These artworks have come to represent the past in terms of the history of their making and the ways of life and ideas that they represent; however, Glass argues that they have also become symbols of a revitalized cultural identity.[78] Asserting ownership over these objects has become progressively more important to Native American communities, as ownership of these items simultaneously represents a symbolic form of control over the ways in which Native American histories are interpreted and represented.[79] Glass states that "object circulation and ownership becomes an index of social agency, a focal point for asserting self-determination and self-control following moments in which identity was explicitly attacked."[80] Following on Glass's point, we might consider that the next step in this type of social agency is producing new objects that reflect the recovered histories represented by the return of these displaced objects.

All of these authors' ideas have informed my own concepts of how the works that I discuss in the following chapters can, and do, function as agents. Since the theme in my discussion of these pieces involves their representation of Native American forms of history and historicity, I argue that they specifically function as historical agents. I have grouped these discussions together thematically based upon the different manifestations of the historical

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[78] Glass, 126.

[79] Glass, 127.

[80] Glass, 128.

source material to which the artists refer. In each chapter, as well, I analyze how historical agency functions and can be understood in the works presented.

Summary of Chapters

As mentioned above, I have organized the chapters of this dissertation thematically. Each chapter explores a different mode of historicity; I will examine the ways in which each of these modes function as historical documentation or a way of understanding history and historicity, and then, I will analyze works of art by contemporary Native American and First Nations artists who reference and respond to these various themes. These chapters cover the topics of Mythology and Ritual, Landscape, Laws and Treaties, and Personal Histories.

In Chapter One, I explore the ways in which mythology and ritual practice are understood as capturing ideas about a peoples' history. While mythology and ritual practice are among the areas of Native American life most heavily studied by Western scholars, it is only recently that academia began to consider how these stories and events represent not only a culture's ideas about its religion, but also its history. Myths often explain how a people came to exist in the world, frequently representing compacts between peoples and the powers that created them. They guide people ethically and morally and form an expression of a culture's ideas about itself and its place in the cosmos.

To a person familiar with the Western discipline of history, this often seems far afield from what "history" is supposed to represent. Mythology does not appear to contain factual evidence in the way that one expects historical documentation to function, nor does it often have a solid chronology, as mythological events tend to occur in the deep time of creation. However, scholars such as Raymond J. DeMaille and Jonathan D. Hill argue that history and mythology share some important similarities; both form the framework through which cultures understand themselves and how they place themselves in the world. Further, we might also consider how complex, and unlikely, the idea of historical, factual truth actually is. The popular maxim "history is written by the victors," belies the concept of a complete historical truth, suggesting that if one were to be aware of alternative versions of events, as understood by the defeated, a different history would present itself. This chapter considers, with this in mind, a way of understanding a broad category of history that allows it to encompass not only the idea of historical fact, but also mythology, as mode of historical thinking and documentation.

Chapter One also discusses ritual practice as a mode of historicity. In some ways it might be understood as a form of applied mythology, as one of the goals of ritual can be to bring the deep originary time and energy found in many myths into the contemporary world, at least for the time of the ritual itself. Peter Nabokov makes a case for ritual practice as a performance of history, preserving cultures' pasts and presenting them to contemporary

audiences.[81] The works of art that I discuss in the section on mythology have a fairly direct correlation with the myths that they represent; they have a solid connection to the stories, which the images encapsulate. However, the works dealing with ritual practice in some ways are more removed from the topics and events that they take as their subjects. I reference theories on ritual practice in art presented by Charlotte Townsend-Gault as a framework through which one can understand why it is that these artists present, and withhold, the information that they do.

In Chapter Two, I turn to a discussion of land, which is among the most contentious subjects in relationships between indigenous and settler peoples. This is nowhere so apparent than in the absolutely different ways that artists from the settler cultures represent land and landscape in art when compared to those works made by artists from indigenous cultures. In order to understand this difference, I first explore the philosophies that underlie Western landscape painting, which are strongly related to Western ideas about land ownership and its imperialistic practices. This sits in strong contrast to indigenous North American views of land use. As philosophers such as Rousseau noted, the *meum et tuum* of Western land ownership does not seem to exist in the use and rights of most Native American and First Nations peoples.

[81] Nabokov, 177.

It is wrong to suggest, however, that the entirety of pre-contact North America shared the same view of land use and land rights; the way the land itself is understood varies from culture to culture. But one point seems to hold certain, land is given primacy of thought in Native cultures. As such, it is a vital component to understanding Native historicities, and it regularly appears as a subject in contemporary Native American and First Nations artworks. The land itself is a vital and vibrant part of many Native histories, as it is the place where events occur, and in some traditions it has the ability to act upon history itself. Given that there is no single, totalizing view of the indigenous North American landscape, with each work and artist that I discuss in this chapter, I explore how that specific work and artist are reflecting ideas about the land and history in a visual argument.

In Chapter Three, I analyze the modes of regulating land and land use that were necessitated by European contact and settlement. The laws and treaties of the United States and Canada are, as one might guess, incredibly provocative topics for works by Native American and First Nations contemporary artists. This chapter represents one of most documented areas, perhaps, where indigenous and settler ideas about history, culture, land use, and even identity, collide. As such, these laws and treaties, spanning much of the history of European (as well as Euro-American and Euro-Canadian) settlement, are frequently referenced, criticized, and subverted by contemporary Native American and First Nations artists.

Canadian First Nations artists frequently reference early contact-era laws and treaties in their works. The Indian Act of 1876, which has been regularly modified since its passing, is among the most frequent works of legal documentation to appear in contemporary First Nations art. Artists have responded to it in a variety of ways, from obscuring its text to shooting it; its prevalence in artistic criticism is probably due to the fact that it is the document that legally governs, for better or worse, the lives of most indigenous Canadians. Smaller treaties that governed relationships between Europeans and individual groups, such as the 1752 Mi'kmaq Treaty, are also discussed.

In the United States, contemporary artists have focused most often on a single piece of legislation that directly affects their livelihoods. In 1990, the U.S. government passed the Indian Arts and Crafts Act, which was designed to regulate the production of artworks labeled as Indian. With its passage, Native American artists became the only group who had to register with the government and prove their identity in order to make art labeled or marketed with such an ethnic identifier. It is no wonder that artists responded, directly and indirectly, with critical and subversive references to the 1990 act.

The sense of subversion and criticism is carried through into Chapter Four, where I examine contemporary artists' use of personal histories. These small histories can be read as little acts of resistance, of subversion against dominant cultures which have focused on assimilating indigenous peoples for years. What these small, personal histories represent are the lives of individual

peoples, historical actors in their own rights, whose lives and actions often resist the push and pull of mainstream culture's desire to determine Native identity; its dual insistence on assimilation and participation in the dominant modes of being Canadian or American while simultaneously romanticizing the presumably ahistorical indigenous past.

These personal histories are often biographical, telling the stories of the friends and family of the artists; some even tell the stories of the artists themselves. Some further trace both broad and individual strokes simultaneously. Merely the act of presenting these stories, though, marks these artists as subverting the dual nature of presumed indigenous identity. The people whose stories artists represent are fully and functionally themselves; they exist as full participants in both the modern and the indigenous worlds, dodging the dual insistence that appears aimed only at verifying the trope of the "vanished" Indian.

Of necessity, the topics, artists, and works under discussion in the following chapters is limited. The topic of indigenous North American historicities is far broader than the four categories that I am exploring in this dissertation. Equally, there are many other artists who are working with these subjects than I have mentioned herein. It is also vital to point out that, while this text focuses on the works produced by contemporary artists of Native American and First Nations heritages, many other pieces of art produced by

indigenous artists spanning the deep historical span of Native peoples' presence represent indigenous American historicities; this is not a new phenomenon. Given the wide span of time, the variety of cultures, and the sheer number of artists, it was necessary to limit the topics and artworks that I analyzed. The breadth and diversity of these earlier representations lie beyond the scope of this study, which limits its focus to the historical perspectives and discourses of artists working today.

Chapter One
Mythology and Ritual

Perhaps one of the greatest differences between Euro-American and Native American historicities is the role played by mythological events and ritual practices in Native American concepts of history. For most Euro-American people, it is difficult to see either mythology or ritual in any direct relationship to history, but they are vital parts of Native American historical thought. They explain how a people came to be, and how they continue to make, and mark, their place in the world. Whereas chronological and fact-oriented histories, like those more common in Western cultures, deal with the recorded and the documented, oftentimes Native American histories are contained in oral form. Nor do they always deal with the typical subjects of Western histories; rather Native senses of history reflect ideas about the beginning of the world and the creation of a people; the founding events of a culture. These concepts are frequently mythical in origin, rather than factual, and they can be hard to reconcile with a Western way of thinking about history.

Mythology

However, Western histories can have an aura of the mythical about them. As is commonly noted, history is written by the victors, which implies a

certain partiality is present even in Western chronological histories; different events, versions, or perhaps even facts might be noted if the "factual" text were written by another faction or side. Taking this idea one step further, Jonathan D. Hill notes that "neither myth nor history is reducible to a text, thing, fact or event. Both history and myth are modes of social consciousness through which people construct shared interpretive frameworks."[82] We also might consider what Raymond J. DeMaille argues about Sioux mythology; that "it is the only true history because it explains the moral framework within which Lakota culture developed and flourished."[83] DeMaille additionally characterizes myth as the Lakota sacred history. What these two ideas taken together suggest is that myth and history are not as far separated as they appear at first glance. They serve similar functions in that each provides a framework for people to understand themselves and their culture; ideally, each also provides a degree of moral guidance. Hill's point that neither history or mythology are reducible to facts or texts is an important one; broadening the scope of history's concern in this way requires a look at how it can serve as a form of social consciousness.

Though both myth and history can function as social frameworks, there are some differences in how they represent the societies that utilize them. In the case of examining Native American myths-as-history and comparing them with Western ideas of history, one must consider how differently time is

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[82] Quoted in Nabokov, 89 footnote 13.

[83] Quoted in Nabokov, 90 footnote 14.

understood. It has frequently been stated that the Native American sense of time is circular and opposed to the Western, linear understanding of time. While the situation may not be quite as simplistic as this duality suggests, the fact remains that the Native American sense of time is in many ways different from that of the West. This indigenous concept of time has been described as achronological, though not ignorant of the future or unconscious of the past.[84] Native American time is "a concept based on a sense of propriety, on a ritual understanding of order and harmony."[85] As Vine Deloria, Jr., points out, a sense of a chronological history is not one that is found among the Native cultures in North America, which tend to give primacy of thought to space and location rather than time.[86] Western peoples measure time in discreet packets, mathematically breaking it down into smaller and smaller units; these units then form the blocks by which we measure our days, years, and lives. This measured time reflects in Western conceptions of history; it is primarily chronologically organized and date-focused.

Understanding mythology as a form of history, then, requires an acceptance that it will not be chronologically driven or specific, but that the events that it describes, the origins of people's worlds, might be histories of deep time. That Native American societies view time as circular and repeating

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[84] Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 149 and 150.

[85] Gunn Allen, 154.

[86] Vine Deloria, Jr., *God is Red* (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1994 [1972]), 62 and 98.

suggests that their senses of history might be focused on things other than chronology; indeed people and events often seem to be the greater concern. Peter Nabokov has related the large amounts of chronological time, which these histories encompass to the *longue durée* noted by French historian Fernand Braudel.[87]

These chronological blocks often reach back to the time of the world's creation. Looking at several early paintings by Lakota artist Colleen Cutschall provides an example of how this reaching back can function. Many of the works produced by Cutschall take the ethnographic records of several Plains tribes as their starting point. In many ways, her works aid in a restoration of Lakota sacred history, much of which was lost or fell out of practice as a result of colonization.[88] Cutschall began this project with a series of works painted between 1987 and 1990, and exhibited in 1990 in a one woman show entitled "Voice in the Blood." These paintings are based primarily upon Lakota myth, ritual, and history recorded by James R. Walker, who was a physician on the Oglala Lakota Pine Ridge reservation between 1896 and 1914.[89] Walker worked with a number of Oglala elders to document myths and ceremonies,

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[87] Nabokov, 98.

[88] Ruth B. Phillips, "Colleen Cutschall's Art: Lakota Knowledge for the New MILLENNIUM," *Colleen Cutschall: House Made of Stars* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1996), 33.

[89] Robin Ridington, "The Mythic Voice," *Colleen Cutschall: Voice in the Blood* (Brandon, Manitoba: Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba, 1990), 19

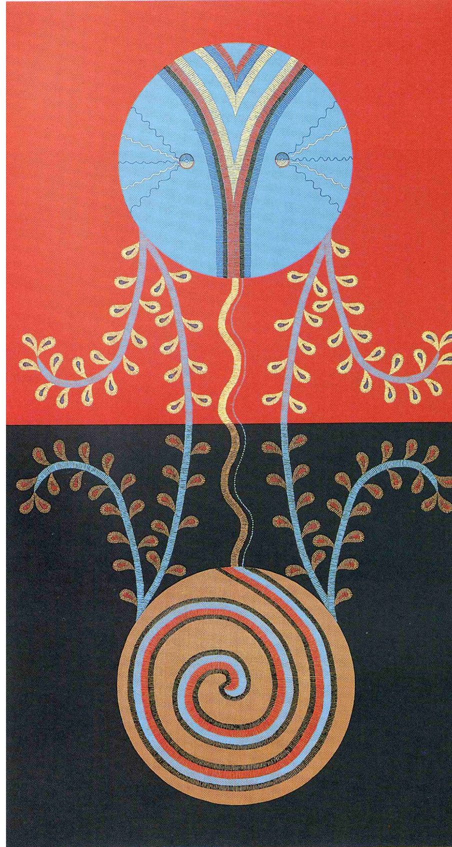

Figure 1-1. Colleen Cutschall, *The Primal Parents: Skan and Maka*, 1988. Image Winnepeg Art Gallery, courtesy of the artist.

eventually becoming so involved in Oglala life that he began instruction for membership in the Buffalo Society.[90]

The "Voice in the Blood" pieces deal with the creation stories and spiritual origins of the Lakota people and, as such, have a particular narrative that continues in and between each work. Early in this narrative comes the creation of the earth and sky, known in Oglala as Maka and Skan, respectively. Cutschall has depicted this origin in *The Primal Parents: Skan and Maka* of 1988 (figure 1-1). Skan and Maka were created by Inyan, an Oglala creator-

[90] Ridington, 19.

god, who declared that each would always be dependent upon the other.[91] Visually, this interdependence is suggested by the elements of vegetation that link the discs representing Skan and Maka, as well as by two umbilical-like lines, which Deirdre Simmons describes as flowing streams.[92]

Walker retells the Lakota creation stories; Inyan, embodying the primal creative power of rock, first creates Maka from his own blood, which is blue in color.[93] Inyan's blood then becomes the waters of the earth; however the spiritual power that had resided in these waters separates once the water becomes material. In this distillation, Skan is formed from the spiritual powers of Inyan.[94] This combined act of creation is often understood to represent the duality and interdependence of the masculine spiritual, as represented by Skan, and the feminine material, as represented by Maka.[95] Maka then petitions for control of the waters, which she uses to decorate her body, along with the vines and vegetation of the soon-to-be green Earth.[96]

The composition of this painting has each deity represented in his or her own half of the image, set off and separated by the black and red colored

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[91] Deirdre Simmons, "Voice in the Blood," *Colleen Cutschall: Voice in the Blood* (Brandon, Manitoba: Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba, 1990), 6.

[92] Simmons, 6.

[93] James R. Walker, *Lakota Myth*, ed. Elaine Jahner (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 206-207.

[94] Walker, 1983, 207.

[95] Elaine Jahner, *Lakota Myth*, ed. Elaine Jahner (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1983, 194

[96] Walker, 1983, 209 and 229-230.

fields. The blue blood of Inyan, in the form of running waters, joins the two discs. The blue disc likely represents Skan, since that is the color of Inyan's power, as well as the color associated with the deity.[97] Maka is associated with the color green, which will become the color that covers the Earth once the vegetation implied by the leaves attached to the joining blue links takes root in her soils. Now, however, she is the color of rock and water, her state at the beginning of creation. As Cutschall's title suggests, Skan and Maka, along with Inyan, go on to create the remainder of the Lakota gods, the Buffalo People (known as the Pte), and eventually, all the creatures of the Earth.

The split of the background in *The Primal Parents* suggests the division of gender identity (as differentiated from a strict reliance on biological sex) and gender roles. Many tribes in the Great Plains regions stressed the separate but complementary and interdependent relationship that Cutschall illustrates here. Men and women performed different tasks and labor, but all were equally necessary for the tribe's survival and no one gender's work was valued more than that of the other.

This particular work may have a contemporary reference that reaches beyond the presentation of creation mythology. As Paula Gunn Allen has noted that, as a result of colonization, contemporary Native American society no longer appears to consider this gender-role equivalency as important as in the past.[98] With this in mind, one point Cutschall may be suggesting is a return to

[97] Walker, 1983, 212.

[98] Gunn Allen, 31-32.

this more balanced gender participation, or she may be at least illustrating for her viewers that the way things are now is not always the way that they have been. Peter Nabokov proposes that one role of history among Native American groups is its stabilizing impact upon the present.[99] Certainly, the more equalized gender roles would be much more stable than the current appearance of exclusionary practices.

The historical referents for Cutschall's work not only come from written sources, but also from traditional artistic forms and styles of the Lakota past. The worked surface of *The Primal Parents* references the Lakota, and Plains-wide, practice of porcupine quill and, later, beadwork embroidery. Cutschall's detailed brushwork displayed in *The Primal Parents*, making up the vines and streams, as well as the adornments on both Skan and Maka, emulates these styles of beadwork and quillwork directly. The delicate lines that make up these elements in Cutschall's painting echo the lines of quill embroidery found on many Lakota items.

The concepts of duality and gendered division, as well as this beadwork painting style are echoed in a second piece from the "Voice in the Blood" exhibition, *The Second Time: The Courtship of the Sun and the Moon* of 1988 (figure 1-2). Even more apparent here than in *The Primal Parents* is the three-dimensionality of Cutschall's paint application. In the red field especially, the viewer can see how her painted quillwork stands up off of the picture's surface,

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[99] Nabokov, 46.

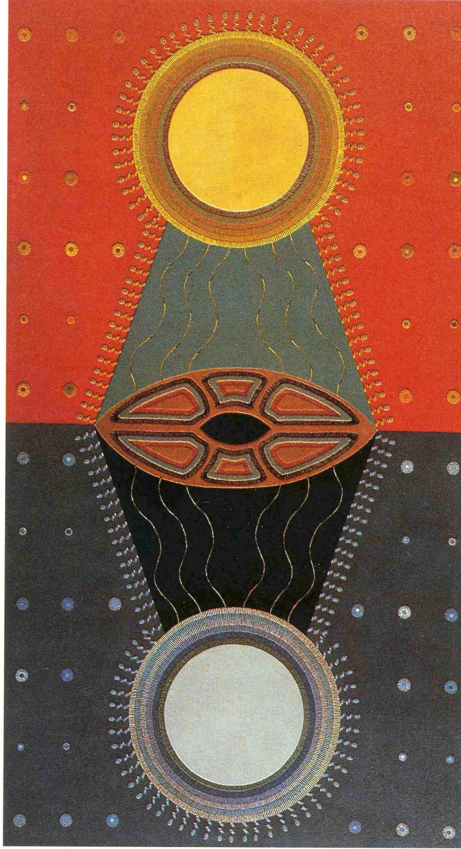

Figure 1-2. Colleen Cutschall, *The Second Time: The Courtship of the Sun and the Moon*, 1988. Image Winnepeg Art Gallery, courtesy of the artist.

further echoing the traditional forms of decoration where the work was necessarily three dimensional. The image is unified by the central ovoid element of the work, which joins the two juxtaposed color fields. This element is identified as the yoke of a woman's dress, likely a courtship robe based on the use of red and blue colors.[100] The circular beadwork elements that dot the painting may signify the stars, as the study of the stars and their movements were of prime import to the Lakota and central to their method of keeping time.

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[100] Simmons, 8.

Cutschall's imagery again relates specifically to Lakota mythology. As Walker relates, during the deep history of the creation of the universe, Skan splits the world into light and dark, day and night.[101] He then grants the right of the four superior gods — Skan, Maka, Wi, and Inyan — to create their own companions. Wi, the sun, creates Wiwin, the moon. Wiwin is not as bright as is the sun, because Wi wished to gaze on her beauty. Wiwin then becomes his constant companion, and governs the night sky.[102] This creation marks the distinction of the second time: night. As Elaine Jahner notes, we again see the balance between the genders, as Inyan's power shows both a feminine and

Figure 1-3. Colleen Cutschall, *Sons of the Wind*, 1992 and *Falling Star*, 1996 (installation view). Image Winnepeg Art Gallery, courtesy of the artist.

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[101] Walker, 1983, 210.

[102] Walker, 1983, 212-213.

Figure 1-4. ***Sons of the Wind,*** **(column detail). Image Winnepeg Art Gallery, courtesy of the artist.**

Figure 1-5. ***Sons of the Wind,*** **(column detail). Image Winnepeg Art Gallery, courtesy of the artist.**

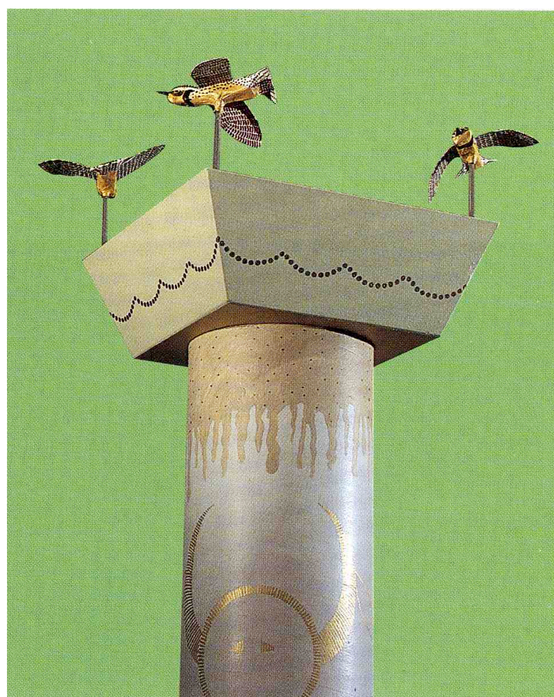

Figure 1-6. ***Sons of the Wind,*** **(column detail). Image Winnepeg Art Gallery, courtesy of the artist.**

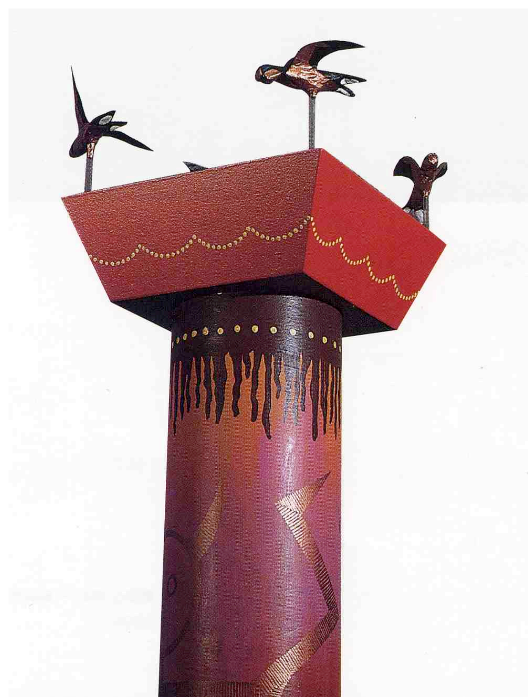

Figure 1-7. ***Sons of the Wind,*** **(column detail). Image Winnepeg Art Gallery, courtesy of the artist.**

masculine aspect through its transformation into the moon and the sun.[103]

Several other pieces in Cutschall's *oeuvre* reference Lakota mythology. Her 1992 work titled *Sons of the Wind* is one of the more striking; it is an installation that tells the story of the four sons of Tate, the Lakota god of the wind (figure 1-3). This work is comprised of four columns, which represent the four Lakota gods who created the cardinal directions and the four seasons. Each column in *Sons of the Wind* is painted with the image of its respective Lakota deity, done in the beadwork style of painting found in Cutschall's earlier works (figures 1-4, 1-5, 1-6, and 1-7). Above each column fly the birds that are associated with the column's depicted god. These gods are the four sons of Tate, and were sent out to order the world, both through spatial directions, as well as the division of time into the yearly seasons. This last temporal ordering they formed by becoming the four winds.[104]

Installed above *Sons of the Wind* is *Falling Star* (figure 1-3). This piece depicts Whoope, also called White Buffalo Calf Woman, in what appears to be a hide dress, signifying her form as a beautiful young woman.[105] This figure is surrounded by stars with feather-like spirals spinning off their suspended forms. In her form as White Buffalo Calf Woman, Whoope is central to the creation of the Oglala Lakota religious practice, bringing them the Sacred

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[103] Jahner, 195

[104] Phillips, 1996, 39.

[105] Phillips, 1996, 38 and Simmons, 17.

Pipe.[106] Through her relationship with Tate and his sons, she is also central to the creation of the Lakota universe.

This relationship is hinted at through the linked positioning of *Sons of the Wind* and *Falling Star*. As the installation of these works suggests, their narratives are closely tied together. *Sons of the Wind* consists of four pillars, each representing one of the four sons of Tate, the spirit of the wind. *Falling Star* represents Whoope, also known as White Buffalo Calf Woman, the daughter of Skan, who fell to the earth as a star, and became the adopted daughter of Tate. In order to make the world ready for human habitation, Tate sends each of his sons out to mold the earth, creating the four directions, the four seasons, and what the Lakota refer to as the fourth time, the year. Tate's sons journey around the edge of the world, and each of the four comes to the location that will mark his direction. At these locations, each son plants a column, in a color corresponding to that direction, and on each column alights a bird associated with that direction.[107] These are the columns created by Cutschall in *Sons of the Wind*.

Whoope also plays a role in this story, as Tate's two eldest sons both wish to make of her a wife. Whoope is not pleased at all with the elder son's behavior, and is in love with the second son, Okaga, the South Wind. Eventually, after undergoing many trials, Okaga is able to take Whoope for his

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[106] See the discussion of Colleen Cutschall's painting *She is Walking in the Sacred Manner* below for more details, and for Cutshcall's earlier exploration of this myth.

[107] See James R Walker's writings in *Lakota Myth* for the full version of this story. Walker, 1983, 289-369.

wife. Thus, the desire to marry Whoope becomes a central factor in the ordering of the world.[108] And, although it was omitted from the versions repeated by Walker, the relationships between Whoope and Tate's sons and Okaga's eventual marriage to Whoope, represent kinship obligations found between Lakota family members.[109] The origins of the Lakota world should be understood here as a history of deep time, one that also gives information about proper moral behavior to the Lakota people. At the end of the journey of Tate's sons, when the fourth time is established, a great feast is held. After the feast, the narrative of the myth moves to the beginnings of historical Lakota life.[110] This narrative twist clearly links the deep history of Lakota creation to the more current history of Lakota life. Further, it is a history that viewers necessarily recreate, whether they know it or not. Moving around Cutschall's work, they emulate the quest of the sons of Tate.

The type of mythological history that Cutschall utilizes can also be seen in the works of Hopi artist Michael Kabotie (Lomawywesa). One of Kabotie's recent mural projects is an excellent example of how deep mythological time and more contemporary historical events can combine in Hopi historicity. In 2001, he and artist Delbridge Honanie (Coochsiwukioma) painted *Journey of*

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[108] Paula Gunn Allen references another version of this myth where Whoope is said to control the four winds. See Gunn Allen, 16-17.

[109] Jahner, 201.

[110] Janher, 203-204.

the Human Spirit for an exhibition at the Museum of Northern Arizona.[111] Where their earlier mural projects focused exclusively on the good parts of Hopi culture, *Journey of the Human Spirit* looks at both the light and dark places of Hopi history.[112] This examination is necessary in order to find what Kabotie calls “the middle place,” a place of balance.[113] Mural paintings are a traditional form of Hopi art, present in ritual spaces called kivas. Some of the best known Hopi murals come from the archaeological explorations at the site of Awat’ovi. Stylistically, Kabotie is known for his references to the painting styles of Awat’ovi.

Like Cutschall’s *Sons of the Wind*, Kabotie and Honanie’s mural begins by showing the history of deep time, through the emergence story of the Hopi people. It then shifts to illustrating the Pueblo Rebellion of 1680, one result of which was the destruction of Awat’ovi itself. At the same time as the violence of the Rebellion, there were Hopi villages that existed peacefully.[114] The last panels of *Journey of the Human Spirit* show two different views of modern technology: one that is completely destructive, representing modern industry run amok, and the other that offers a harmonious and spiritual life.[115] The

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[111] Images of the entire mural can be found on the Museum of Northern Arizona’s website at http://www.musnaz.org/hip/murals.shtml.

[112] Michael Kabotie and Delbridge Honanie, with Tanya Lee and Garrett Rosenblatt, “Painting *Journey of the Human Spirit:* A Contemporary Hopi Mural,” *Plateau* 3 no. 1 (2006), 59.

[113] Kabotie and Honanie, 59.

[114] Kabotie and Honanie, 62-63.

[115] Kabotie and Honanie, 66.

contradictions of light and dark are clearly presented, and as Kabotie discusses them, the experience of both is necessary for the formation of great visionaries.[116] The final scene in the mural's narrative shows two katsina-style figures flanking a computer, which rests atop a pyramid. As from a fountain, symbols representing the major religions of the world spew from the fount of the internet, representing the harmony that the globalized connectivity of internet communication can produce. Kabotie sees the technology of the computer and internet as a tool with the potential for unifying large portions of the world's population.[117]

This work, while not in the precise approximation of the Awat'ovi style seen in Kabotie's earlier mural collaborations, does use many of the same forms and styles. That this style is used in *Journey of the Human Spirit*, a mural that represents the light and dark sides of Hopi culture is particularly apt; the Hopi themselves burned Awat'ovi, because it was the one Hopi village to invite back the Spanish priests following the Pueblo Rebellion.[118] The story of Awat'ovi can be seen as representing both the light and dark of the Hopi world. For Honanie, "Awat'ovi represents something we Hopis and others should learn from, instead of letting it go."[119] Kabotie builds upon Honanie's comment, arguing that "this mural opens up an old wound so it can be healed.

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[116] Kabotie and Honanie, 64.

[117] Kabotie and Honanie, 60-61.

[118] Patricia Janis Broder, *Hopi Painting* (New York: Brandywine Press, 1978), 213.

[119] Kabotie and Honanie, 54.

It's a way of showing that all humanity has destructive impulses similar to those that led to the destruction of Awat'ovi. We all have the unhealed side within us."[120] Through his artistic reference to the murals found there, Kabotie ensures that Awat'ovi will have contemporary relevance and resonance. Presenting the long span of Hopi history, from deep time to the present day, ensures that Kabotie and Honanie's viewers will put events like Awat'ovi and their own lives within a specific historical context. That the history presented is uniquely Hopi gives that context its resonance.

Like Cutschall, Siberian Yupik and Inupiaq artist Susie Silook is interested in exploring ethnographic texts for inspiration for her works. Like Kabotie and Honanie, she also relates the relevance of these stories and ideas to the modern world and its problems in her art practice. Silook is a carver and a sculptor, making delicate, graceful figures in a traditional ivory medium. Culturally, this form of carving was male work; Silook states, however, that she never was very good at the traditionally feminine tasks, being drawn instead to carving.[121] Unlike some men, Silook's father supported her desire to learn to carve, so she pursued that art.[122] Many of Silook's works reference ideas from Yupik and other Inuit myths.

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[120] Kabotie and Honanie, 54.

[121] Janet Catherine Berlo, "Susie Silook: 'Simultaneous Worlds' and the Yupik Imagination," *After the Storm: The Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art, 2001*, edited by W. Jackson Rushing III (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 75-76.

[122] Berlo 2001, 76.

Figure 1-8. Susie Silook, *Sedna,* 1995. Image courtesy of the artist.

One of the recurring figures in Silook's works is Sedna, the Sea Mother.[123] Sedna is understood to control the animals of the sea and provide them to or remove them from the Inuit hunters. In 1995's *Sedna* (figure 1-8), we see the graceful and attenuated sea goddess. She holds her hair, orderly and clean, with one hand, and her other hand caresses the head of the sea creature at her knees. The relationships between hands, hair, and animals are all intertwined in the myths surrounding Sedna. Silook's interest in the Sea Mother came from reading Daniel Merkur's *Powers Which We Do Not Know:*

[123] As Daniel Merkur notes, Sedna is a generalized name that has come to represent a number of different Inuit conceptions of a Sea Mother, each with different names. Daniel Merkur, *Powers Which We Do Not Know: The Gods and Spirits of the Inuit* (Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho Press, 1991), 97.

The Gods and Spirits of the Inuit.[124] In Merkur's descriptions of Sedna (who he refers to as the Sea Mother) he discusses her origin and relationships to sea animals. In these myths, a young girl, trying to get back onto a boat out of which she has fallen, has her fingers chopped off. As her fingers reach the water, they transform into the different species of animals that make up the life of the sea. The girl herself can no longer hold onto the boat, so she then sinks to the bottom of the sea and becomes the Sea Mother, Sedna.[125] This relationship is deftly and subtly explored in Silook's work. Though her Sedna retains her digits, we still see the correlation between Sedna, her hand, and the animals of the sea, shown through the brushing of Sedna's fingers against the animal itself. Sedna, too, curves gracefully, like seaweed floating in its underwater ecosystem, suggesting the location of her home.

Sedna's touch to her hair is also important, and it reflects ideas that Silook has explored in other pieces. *Seeking Her Forgiveness*, from 1992, shows us an attenuated Sedna, this time with seal-like fins rather than legs (figure 1-9). A smaller figure sits tangled up in her hair. This image references stories of Sedna told by some Inuit groups that involve Sedna withholding the animals of the sea, as punishment for not properly observing certain cultural traditions or for violating them. In order to get Sedna to release the animals, a shaman must travel down to her house under the sea, and pass a number of harrowing obstacles. Once the shaman has done so, he is able to meet with

[124] Berlo, 2001, 77.

[125] Merkur, 133.

Figure 1-9. Susie Silook, *Seeking Her Forgiveness*, 1992. Image courtesy of the artist.

Sedna, at which time he must pacify her by combing and cleaning her hair, which has become dirty and tangled as a direct result of the violations of tradition. When the shaman has done so, then Sedna releases the animals.[126]

This is the scene that Silook has carved here. The smaller figure touching Sedna's hair is the shaman, trying to pacify the Sea Mother. This is a work that likely comments on more than just the Sedna stories; as Janet Berlo points out, *Seeking Her Forgiveness* was made just several years after the Exxon Valdez oil spill off the Alaska coast. This, combined with the effects of the modern fishing industry, has created some profound changes in the

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[126] Merkur, 118.

ecology of the Alaskan oceans.[127] Given the title that Silook has chosen for her carving, it seems likely that we are being asked to seek Sedna's forgiveness. She may, in this work, directly symbolize the ecosystems of the oceans themselves; not only are we being asked to clean Sedna's hair, but we are being asked to help rectify the ecological catastrophes that have occurred along the Alaskan coast.

Like the supernatural and world-ordering beings discussed above, tricksters are among the most important categories of beings in Native American mythologies. Allan J. Ryan describes the trickster as existing at the center of Native American artistic practice and at the center of the mythological universe.[128] In oral traditions, mentioning a trickster figure is a key way to signal to an audience that important ideas are about to be expressed.[129] Nabokov has also associated trickster figures with means of political survival by Native peoples in the post-conquest eras.[130] Perhaps, then, it is no surprise that tricksters make their way into the discourse of contemporary Native arts, especially as they revolve around ideas of myth and history.

In the Native American cultures of California, the major trickster figure is Coyote. For the Maidu people of Northern California, Coyote, or Weh-Pom,

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[127] Berlo, 2001, 77

[128] Allan J. Ryan, *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* (Vancouver, British Columbia: UBC Press, 1999), 3.

[129] Ryan, 1999, 9.

[130] Nabokov, 109.

Figure 1-10. Judith Lowry, *Weh-Pom* from *Weh-Pom and the Star Sisters*, 2003. Image courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian (26/7500). Photo by NMAI Photo Services.

Figure 1-11. Judith Lowry, *Basin* from *Weh-Pom and the Star Sisters*, 2003. Image courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian (26/7501). Photo by NMAI Photo Services.

Figure 1-12. Judith Lowry, *Northern Coast* from *Weh-Pom and the Star Sisters*, 2003. Image courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian (26/7502). Photo by NMAI Photo Services.

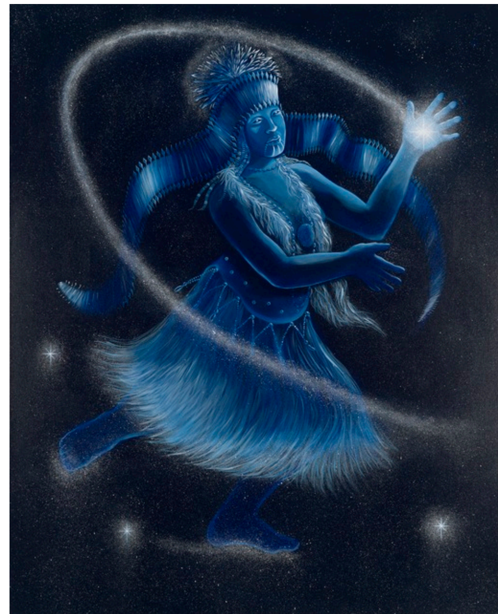

Figure 1-13. Judith Lowry, *Southern Coast* from *Weh-Pom and the Star Sisters*, 2003. Image courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian (26/7503). Photo by NMAI Photo Services.

Figure 1-14. Judith Lowry, *Mountain* from *Weh-Pom and the Star Sisters*, 2003. Image courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian (26/7504). Photo by NMAI Photo Services.

Figure 1-15. Judith Lowry, *Kanaka* from *Weh-Pom and the Star Sisters*, 2003. Image courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian (26/7505). Photo by NMAI Photo Services.

is intimately tied to the creation of the world and to humans' lives and deaths. As a result of his actions, people are taught about death and the proper way to bury and mourn the dead.[131] Hammawi Band Pit River/Mountain Maidu/ Washo artist Judith Lowry references one of the Maidu Coyote myths in her series of paintings titled *Weh-Pom and the Star Sisters* (figures 1-10, 1-11, 1-12, 1-13, 1-14, and 1-15). The Star Sisters are beautiful girls who live in the skies, and Weh-Pom has been lusting after them. He journeys to the sky to seduce them but finds that they would rather dance than succumb to his advances.

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[131] Rebecca J. Dobkins, "The Life and Art of Frank Day," *Memory and Imagination: The Legacy of Maidu Indian Artist Frank Day* (Oakland, California: Oakland Museum of California, 1997), 3.

Coyote must then immediately leave the sky, lest he be trapped there forever.[132]

The paintings are placed with the five celestial sisters, each on her own canvas, surrounding the central image of Weh-Pom. Lowry depicts the five sisters wearing the traditional regalia of flicker feather headbands, shell necklaces, and tule skirts; they string comets and stars along as they dance through the skies.[133] Coyote is notoriously lusty in Maidu mythology, and the Star Sisters' lack of response to his desires codes Coyote's behavior as inappropriate.[134] As with the other deep time myths discussed above, stories and paintings like these are designed to teach people about appropriate behavior. Taken together, we can see how Weh-Pom has a vital role in the history of Maidu people; he shows how not to behave, but through his actions, however inadvertent, people learn important cultural information.

While mythology may be most often considered the history of deep time, of the time of origins and beginnings, Nabokov points out that myth not only encompasses the old, it also absorbs all that is new into its "all-knowing, omnipotent worldview."[135] Almost by definition, then, the works of these contemporary artists are just as much a part of myth, and myth-based history,

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[132] Anya Montiel, *Judith Lowry: Offerings of Solace and Strength* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, 2004), 3.

[133] Lara Evans, *Judith Lowry,* http://www.iaia.edu/museum/vision-project/artists/judith-lowry/.

[134] Roland Dixon, *Maidu Texts*, http://www.archive.org/details/maidutexts00dixorich.

[135] Nabokov, 90.

as are the oral traditions on which they are based. These works can perhaps be understood as extensions of the oral tradition; by representing these myths, the histories of deep time, contemporary artists are involved in processes of revitalizing and recontextualizing their histories for contemporary audiences. Through their representations of myths and mythological figures, they are continuing to relate these foundational stories of their tribal histories and ensuring the continuity of historical transmission to a variety of viewers.

One of the roles of these artworks is arguably their ability to present these myths and histories to a contemporary audience. In this way, one aspect of historical agency can also be transmitted to the art objects themselves. Not only can this come through a transference of the artists' agencies, as I have argued in the introduction, but also through the agency of the story, of the myths themselves. Using these myths in artworks puts them in an already-existing agentive framework. To better understand how myth can make its agency felt in the world, I would like to turn to the examination of ritual practice as it appears in contemporary Native arts.

Ritual

If we can then see closer similarities in myth and history, or at least view them as two sides of a coin, then what is the role of ritual? Claude Levi-Strauss suggests that myths, especially those with originary intent — which he terms "mythical histories" —have a paradoxical nature: they are

simultaneously separated from but joined with the present. Where this juxtaposition of past and present is reunited is in ritual.[136] Nabokov takes this one step further when he argues that ritual performances are ways to reenact this sacred mythical histories that often explain the origins of the world or consolidate ancestral groups.[137] This same sense of performative history might be found in commemorative ceremonies designed to mark similar world- or people-creating mythologies.[138]

It should be noted that this idea of ritual practice simultaneously being historical practice is not one that is universally held. Other scholars of ritual have claimed that the "time out of time" in which ritual exists precludes any possibility of it functioning as a form of history; while it may account for or explain historical events, ritual is not, itself, history, and may even stand against it.[139] Arguably, this conception of history is focused on a chronological definition and appears to hinge on a discreet position in time as a prerequisite for history. Nabokov even agrees with this position to a degree, finding that some forms of ritual stem more from mythical, cosmological time and that there is a distinction between this time and that of lived experience, however flexible this distinction may be.[140] With that point noted, though, Nabokov

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[136] Levi-Strauss, 236.

[137] Nabokov, 173.

[138] Nabokov, 179-180.

[139] Roy Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity,* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 217 & 234.

[140] Nabokov, 177.

goes on to argue that many ritual cycles and religious events do fit a conception of a Native performance of history, through veneration and preservation of their cultures' pasts as it is conceived by Native peoples.[141]

These strong ties between mythic history and ritual are quite apparent when we look at works of art made by artists of Native American and Canadian First Nations heritage who are working in contemporary media. Myth and ritual are oft-covered subjects, and they are profoundly interlinked in art practice. However, one nearly universal trait holds true for Native artists who utilize ritual practice as subject matter; the representation of the ritual itself is not what is shown. Rather, a technique for distancing is used, one that is explained by Charlotte Townsend-Gault in her essay "Ritualizing Ritual's Rituals."

Townsend-Gault has discussed the importance of ritual and ceremonial practices in Native North America as both modes of personal and social negotiation, as well as indicators of colonized societies' recovered power.[142] She further posits a point with which I completely agree; this power, in some manner, is dependent upon control of the line between the knowledge that is shared and that which is withheld.[143] Anthropologist Audra Simpson has discussed this strategy of knowledge control as a refusal to share information that is simultaneously an assertion of agency and control over that

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[141] Nabokov, 177.

[142] Charlotte Townsend-Gault, "Ritualizing Ritual's Rituals," *Art Journal* 51 no. 3 (1992), 51.

[143] Townsend-Gault, 1992, 51.

information.[144] While this strategy is perhaps more readily apparent in ethnography and anthropology, it is present, as well, in the creative practice of many Native American artists, especially in works dealing with, or referencing, ritual participation.

Townsend-Gault refers to the use of this strategy in artistic practice as the "ritual of ritual."[145] When artists make a ritual of ritual, they process and reformat ritual, depicting or otherwise sharing those parts of their spiritual knowledge that can be made public, but keeping private those that cannot.[146] In other words, this is a technique of distancing that decreases the danger of revealing that which should not be revealed. The process of framing this information, the beliefs, materials, and contexts that make up these rituals of ritual, is done self-consciously and is termed a ritualizing process by Townsend-Gault.[147] Elsewhere, the concept of ritualization is defined as a process that makes real an imagined community.[148] In this way, Townsend-Gault's ritualizing process may be best understood as a form of metonymy, where the represented portions of the ritual stand in for the whole, but only for those who already possess that knowledge.

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[144] Audra Simpson, "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, 'Voice' and Colonial Citizenship," *Junctures*, 9 (2007), 67-80.

[145] Townsend-Gault, 1992, 53.

[146] Townsend-Gault, 1992, 53.

[147] Townsend-Gault, 1992, 53.

[148] John A. Grim, "Cultural Identity, Authenticity, and Community Survival: The Politics of Recognition," *American Indian Quarterly* 20 no. 3/4 (1996), 358.

The presence of audience is inherent in Townsend-Gault's definition, as the audience is involved in the social process of ritualization, which is also an act of cultural assertion.[149] Her definition recognizes that different members of any given audience may have differing levels of understanding of the works in question and that this is the intention of the ritualizing process. Works referencing ritual practice make tacitly clear that there is a point beyond which outsiders, even those that are sensitive to the power relationships at play, cannot venture.[150] Finally, Townsend-Gault asserts that this use of ritual — that is as a ritualized ritual of ritual — also functions as a critique of much about Western thinking, problem-solving, and insistence on chronology.[151] This critique echoes what many Native scholars have written and said about Western scholarship's writing of Native histories.

This framework of distancing will aid in analysis of works of art that reference ritual practice. As Nabokov has argued, reenactments in ritual of origin stories or important events are essential components of many Native historicities. Since Colleen Cutschall has focused much of her artistic practice on works that utilize ritual subjects, I now turn to an analysis of her works that

[149] Townsend-Gault, 1992, 53.

[150] Townsend-Gault, 1992, 58.

[151] Townsend-Gault, 1992, 58.

relate to the Oglala Lakota Sun Dance.[152] This is a ritual that functions as a reenactment of the sacrifices made by the first Sun Dancers in reciprocity for the animals and food sent to the Lakota by Wi in a time of desperate need.

As the story was told to James R. Walker, the Lakota people were going hungry one winter, and a council was convened to decide what should be done. The group's shaman told one of the men that if he should go on a journey to the west, he would find a solution to their problem. This man went on the journey and endured several trials. Finally, he met a woman and performed actions that indicated their marriage. She led the man to her people, the buffalo people who live below the earth and who are the predecessors to the humans who live on its surface. The buffalo people suggested that the man ask Wi to intercede on the Lakota's behalf, and then vow to perform a dance, which the buffalo people would teach him, in return. The man agreed and then returned to the Lakota with his wife.

Food and game became readily available for the Lakota, and time passed to midsummer. The man reminded the Lakota of the promise to perform the dance, but as food was so abundant, they did not see the need and did not dance. Food and game again became scarce, and the people returned to the man and his wife willing to learn and perform this dance. The people were told that they must now cause their own blood to flow in order to demonstrate

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[152] The Sun Dance is also a ritual that Cutschall has participated in. Therefore we should understand her presentation and withholding of information about this ritual specifically in terms of Townsend-Gault's framework. See Allan J. Ryan, "Celestial Connections: Sacred Space, Cyberspace, Exhibition Space," *Colleen Cutschall: House Made of Stars*, (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1996), 15.

their sincerity to Wi. The buffalo woman then showed the people how to make the camp circle and dance lodge, and the man taught them the songs and dance.[153] Thus the dance, as performed since, is both in reciprocity to Wi for his continuing effort in giving the Lakota food and game, in addition to serving as an enactment of events belonging to the Lakota sacred history.

The Sun Dance is held whenever anyone needs to make a Sun Dance sacrifice, the proper purposes of which are fulfilling a vow, securing supernatural aid for oneself or another, or requesting supernatural powers for oneself.[154] The Sun Dance historically occurred over a number of days, with enough time for travel, as well as two sacred four-day periods.[155] Today, however, much of the organization that happened during the first four-day cycle is now done well in advance.[156]

The construction of the Sun Dance lodge is one of the many ritual events that are a vital part of the Sun Dance complex. Historically the lodge was constructed in a circle, with the sacred spot for raising the Sun Dance pole at its center.[157] While Walker does not discuss the specifics of the lodge's creation, Arthur Amiotte mentions the directional specificity of the

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[153] James R. Walker, "Oglala Sun Dance," *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History*, Clive Wissler, ed., Vol. 16, (New York: The American Museum of Natural History, 1921 [1917]), 212-215.

[154] Walker, 1917, 60.

[155] Walker, 1917, 100

[156] Arthur Amiotte, "The Lakota Sun Dance," *Sioux Indian Religion*, Raymond J. DeMallie and Douglas R. Parks, eds., (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 77.

[157] Walker, 1917, 103.

lodgemaker's movements, traveling from the sacred spot, the center of the world, to the west, north, east, and south.[158] This directional journey reiterates the one taken by the four sons of Tate, the wind spirit, wherein the cardinal directions were created and the earth made fit for human habitation.[159]

The sacred Sun Dance pole is the trunk of a tree specially chosen by Lakota ritual specialists for this purpose. Both historically and contemporarily, this tree is referred to as an enemy once selected.[160] The tree is then chopped down by four maidens, ritually killing the enemy.[161] The tree is brought back to the camp and raised in the sacred spot of the Dance lodge. As Amiotte discusses its modern day significance, the sacred pole represents an *axis mundi* and, upon its raising, it becomes the center of the earth with the cardinal directions proceeding from its location.[162] It also connects the zenith, holding masculine powers with the feminine nadir.

White Buffalo Calf Woman, also referred to as White Buffalo Woman and Whoope, is a figure of great importance in Lakota cosmology. It is she who brought the Sacred Pipe and its religion to the Sioux people.[163] She also holds a special role in the contemporary Sun Dance ceremonies. As Walker makes no

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[158] Amiotte, 79.

[159] Amiotte, 79 and Walker, 1983, 289-369. See above for Cutschall's depiction of this myth.

[160] Walker, 1917, 105 and Amiotte, 81.

[161] Walker, 1917, 106 and Amiotte, 82.

[162] Amiotte, 79.

[163] Simmons, 17 and Arval Lookinghorse, "The Sacred Pipe in Modern Life," *Sioux Indian Religion*, Raymond J. DeMallie and Douglas R. Parks, eds., (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 68-69.

mention of her role in the earlier ceremonies in which he watched and participated, it is unknown if this is a later development or if Walker neglected to mention this position, perhaps because it is one held by a woman. According to Amiotte, the sacred woman, who becomes White Buffalo Woman, dances with the pipe and endures similar sacrifices to the men who dance.[164] It is also her actions that initiate the modern Sun Dance; she appears on the horizon with her face painted red on the morning of the dance; she enters the lodge and goes to sit in her sacred space, where an altar will be built.[165] As a part of the construction of this altar, a buffalo skull will be placed upon it, near what Amiotte describes as a mandala, representing the center of the world.[166]

The Sun Dance was formally outlawed by the United States government in 1883.[167] Amiotte does point out, however, that it still was practiced in secret, and began to revive as early as 1924, with a much larger revival occurring in the 1960s and 70s.[168] After the government's actions in 1883, while the Sun Dance was being practiced in secret, pictorial representations of the ceremony, created by Sioux people, began to be sold to primarily non-Native patrons and collectors.[169] The early images often appeared as paintings made for

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[164] Amiotte, 76.

[165] Amiotte, 85.

[166] Amiotte, 86.

[167] Harvey Markowitz, "From Presentation to Representation in Sioux Sun Dance Painting," *The Visual Culture of American Religions,* David Morgan and Sally M. Promey, eds., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 170.

[168] Amiotte, 75.

[169] Markowitz, 170.

ethnologists, as in the case of Short Bull's paintings for James R. Walker, or in ledger book drawings, such as those in Walter Bone Shirt's ledgers.[170] These types of representational paintings were not a part of the Sioux painted artistic tradition, which displayed representational qualities only in the Winter Count calendars.[171] Nor did the Sun Dance's related artistic production provide for any forms other than associated sacred paintings.[172] In short, pictorial works representing the Sun Dance ceremonies seem to be a development that began once the Sun Dance ritual was forbidden, possibly drawing on the historical precedents of the Winter Count and Plains ledger book art.

Many of Colleen Cutschall's works deal with the materials of the Sun Dance, especially as it relates to Lakota cosmology. Ritual participation is a matter with which the artist is intimately familiar.[173] In some of her works, this representation of the Sun Dance is fairly direct; in others, the allusions to ritual practice require an investigation into Cutschall's ontological understanding. Much of her work also aims to restore a more balanced view of gender in Lakota life, especially as it relates to artistic practice.[174] Cutschall, through her works informed by her own ritual participation, also seems to provide an equalizing view of men's and women's roles in the Lakota ritual

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[170] Markowitz, 170 and Ross Frank, "Walter Bone Shirt Ledger," *Plains Indian Ledger Art,* https://plainsledgerart.org/plates/index/13.

[171] Markowitz, 166.

[172] Markowitz, 166 – 169.

[173] Ryan, 1996, 15.

[174] Phillips, 1996, 37.

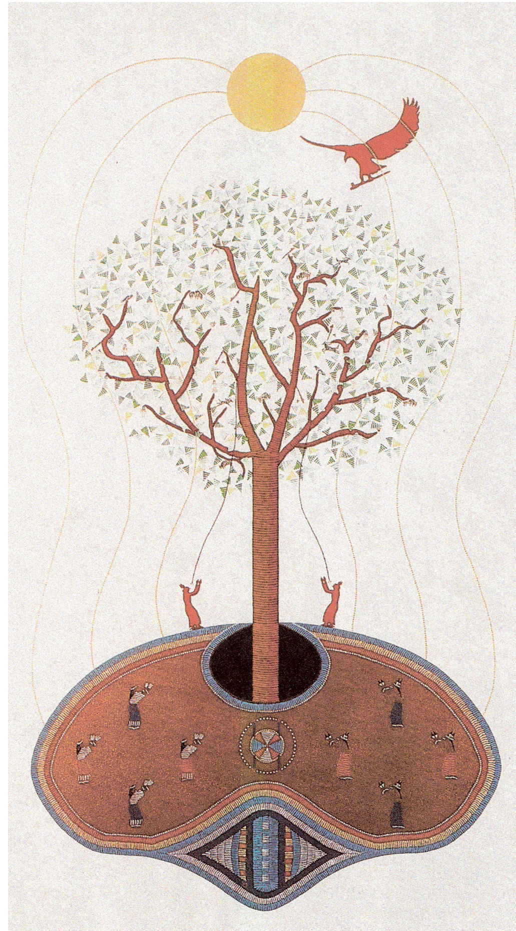

Figure 1-16. Colleen Cutschall, *Voice in the Blood*, 1990. Image Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba, courtesy of the artist.

sphere, especially when compared to the much more male-dominated view proffered by James R. Walker.

Custchall's 1990 painting, *Voice in the Blood*, is probably the most direct representation of the Sun Dance found in her oeuvre (figure 1-16). The sense of the Sun Dance as an offering of reciprocity is echoed in Cutschall's statements about *Voice in the Blood*. "*Voice in the Blood* is the painting that brings the series [of paintings based upon Lakota mythology] full circle to begin again when the Lakota make their blood and flesh offerings at the

Sundance. The efficacy of the first act of creation is repeated by the dancers and others who wish to give offerings."[175] We see the ritual dancers reenacting the Lakota creation; this reciprocity is visually illustrated, as well. The sun, Wi, is at the top of the composition, with curvilinear lines, done in Cutschall's painstaking beadwork style, streaming down to the surface of the earth. These same lines are also found traveling from the heads of the dancers at the base of the tree up in to its leaves. Not only does this indicate equality of offering and sacrifice on the parts of Wi and the dancers, but the termination of the dancers' lines in the treetop indicates the Sun Dance pole's nature as conduit for these offerings.

Voice in the Blood further evinces the gender equality and duality found in many of Cutschall's works. As mentioned earlier, Arthur Amiotte discusses the sacred pole as an *axis mundi*, connecting the powers of the feminine, located at the nadir, with those of the masculine, found in the zenith. The imagery of tree and earth Cutschall paints here suggests a correlation of male and female as well. The tree, with all of its inherent verticality, can also be read as a male phallus, especially when viewed in conjunction with the ovoid shape at the base of the imagery, which appears in the form of a vulva. As Deirdre Simmons points out, the female aspect of the Earth is also indicated through the shape of a yoke from a woman's dress.[176] Further, Cutschall's painting style echoes this gender duality, with the beadwork style of paint application

[175] Colleen Cutschall quoted in Simmons, 18.

[176] Simmons, 18.

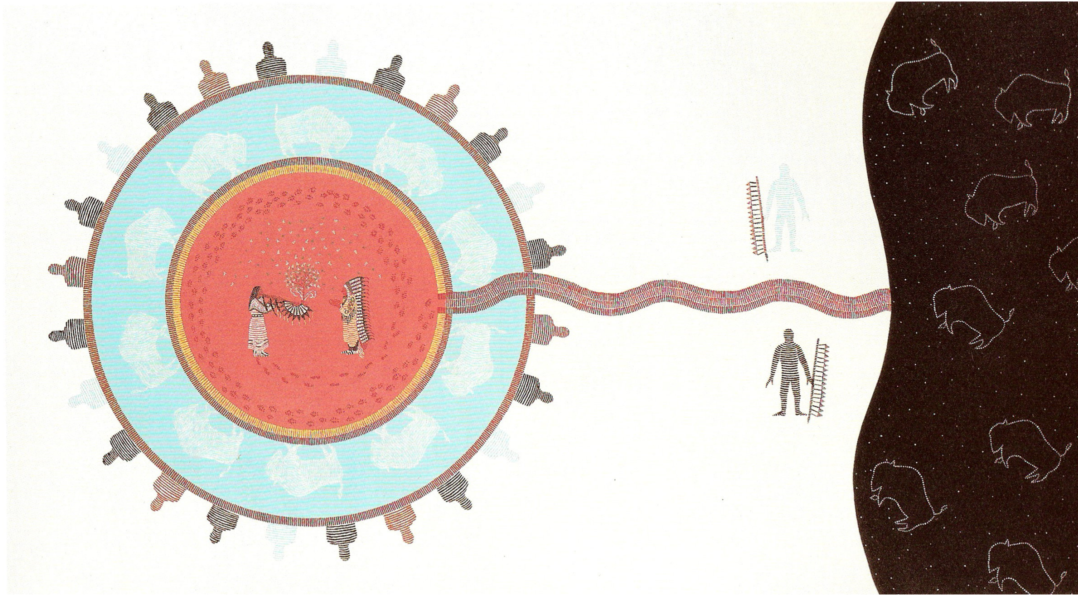

Figure 1-17. Colleen Cutschall, *She is Walking in the Sacred Manner*, 1990. Image Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba, courtesy of the artist.

suggesting the traditional art made by Lakota women, and the representational aspect, signifying that made by men.

Another of Cutschall's works done in this intricate painting style is *She is Walking in the Sacred Manner*, also painted in 1990 (figure 1-17). This work illustrates White Buffalo Calf Woman bringing the sacred pipe to the Lakota people. As Arval Lookinghorse, the current keeper of the sacred Pipe, relates, the Buffalo Calf Pipe is the foundation for Sioux religion.[177] Arthur Amiotte further states that the ideas behind the Sun Dance ritual, the learning and teaching experiences, became formalized with the arrival of the sacred Pipe and the related ideas, as taught by White Buffalo Calf Woman.[178]

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[177] Lookinghorse, 69.

[178] Amiotte, 84.

The artist's choices in imagery for this work further evince the relationships between White Buffalo Calf Woman, the sacred Pipe, and the Sun Dance. White Buffalo Calf Woman has arrived from the east, as indicated by the beadwork trail leading into the circular enclosure from the right side of the painting. This is also the direction that she appears on the horizon at the beginning of the Sun Dance. This particular correlation suggests that the circular enclosure in Cutschall's painting represents just such a lodge. In the center of the lodge, White Buffalo Calf Woman presents the sacred Pipe to the Lakota. Out of the Pipe comes a tree, which represents her teachings.[179] The appearance of the tree cements the Sun Dance imagery, related as it is to the sacred pole at the center of the lodge, while simultaneously making a correlation between White Buffalo Calf Woman, the Pipe, and the Sun Dance. Cutschall's choice of title for this work, *She is Walking in the Sacred Manner*, also relates to this association; "I Walk in the Sacred Manner" is the song that is sung to signal White Buffalo Calf Woman's arrival on the morning of the Sun Dance, and it is what she intoned as she arrived to present the Pipe from the east.[180]

Whereas *Voice in the Blood* is a more direct representation of the Sun Dance as a ritual practice, referring to its form and the reciprocal nature of the sacrifice, *She is Walking in the Sacred Manner* institutes some of the distancing that Townsend-Gault discusses. As viewers of this painting, our

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[179] Simmons, 17.

[180] Amiotte, 85.

understanding of its meaning is determined by our awareness of its subject. The relationship of this image to Lakota ritual practice and sacred history is not overtly apparent to a viewer with minimal familiarity with Lakota religious life. The audience's varying knowledge of these subjects helps to create the framework of distancing that is present when an artist makes a ritualized ritual of ritual.

Cutschall has also made several installation pieces that, although they do not take the Sun Dance as their specific or direct subject matter, relate to this ritual practice through imagery and mythology. Perhaps because of their formations as installation pieces, these works have also been described in terms of their ability to bring about a space that has the energy of ritual, without necessarily being an actual sacred space.

The first of these is the combined installation of *Sons of the Wind* and *Falling Star*, which were discussed in relationship to Cutschall's use of Lakota mythology. These two pieces also relate to the mythology and practice of the Sun Dance. The journey of Okaga, the South Wind, and his subsequent marriage to Whoope, have a thematic correlation to the journey taken by the Lakota man, at the behest of a shaman, in the story relating how the Lakota were taught the Sun Dance. That man experiences tests similar to those undergone by Okaga and meets and marries his wife, of the Buffalo People, in a comparable fashion. Perhaps this thematic similarity is meant to provide a correlation between the Sun Dance's origins and those of the world. This

correlation is strengthened by the manner in which the Sun Dance lodge is laid out. Amiotte describes the lodgemaker journeying from the center to each of the four cardinal directions, keeping in his mind the journey of Tate's sons as he does so. The creation of the Sun Dance lodge, then, would seem to hold a similar cosmological significance, marking out the earth's directions, which are further referenced in Cutschall's *Sons of the Wind*.

This creates an interesting relationship between mythology, ritual practice, and the viewer's interaction with Cutschall's piece. *Sons of the Wind* is large enough for viewers to walk around and through. This causes a viewer, knowingly or otherwise, to recreate the journey of Tate's sons. The agency of ritual practice has been transferred to the work of art, and then is reconstituted as a ritualization of ritual through the viewer's possibly unwitting emulation of Sun Dance and mythological, world-defining journeys.

Catching the Sun's Tail, from 1993, gives the appearance of an ethereal space that feels palpably more ritualized than does *Sons of the Wind* and *Falling Star* (figures 1-18 and 1-19). Here, Cutschall has presented a funnel made of white feathers, which descends from the billowing white cloud above, coming to a point at the center of the radiating spokes of the circle of a medicine wheel. Placed in the center of this funnel is a buffalo skull, painted red and black. Stepping down and away from the raised platform of the medicine wheel appears another stone circle, open in four equally spaced locations.

Figure 1-18. Colleen Cutschall, *Catching the Sun's Tail*, 1993. Image Winnepeg Art Gallery, courtesy of the artist.

The imagery here strongly, though abstractly, correlates to the Sun Dance. Beginning at the outside, there is the stone circle open in four locations, which suggests the four cardinal directions. This, then, would seem to indicate that Cutschall has schematically depicted the Sun Dance lodge, which is laid out directionally. The medicine wheel also holds a similar structural relationship with the dance lodge, with correlations being drawn between its radiating spokes, and those of the roof of the lodge. The medicine wheel here would also seem to function as a structuring of the relationships between humans and the cosmic world, something that is also akin to the role

Figure 1-19. Colleen Cutschall, *Catching the Sun's Tail* detail, 1993. Image Winnepeg Art Gallery, courtesy of the artist.

of the Sun Dance.[181] Its spokes also reflect, as in a pond, the feathered lines, which form the funnel, displaying the joined form of the *kapemni*, an hourglass shaped symbol that Lakota theology relates to the concepts of reciprocity with the cosmos.[182]

While much of this reading of the work hinges upon the medicine wheel, it is the buffalo skull that acts as the keystone. As discussed earlier, a buffalo skull was placed upon an altar made in the Sun Dance lodge located in White Buffalo Calf Woman's sacred area. The use of paint on the buffalo skull, especially the red color, also indicates a correlation with White Buffalo Calf

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[181] Phillips, 1996, 38.

[182] Ryan, 1996, 15

Woman, whose face is painted red during her ritual entrance into the dance lodge. Therefore, my reading of this work suggests an abstracted reference to the Sun Dance lodge and altar, at a moment of ritual activation.[183] This work does not literally create the sacred space of a dance lodge, but rather a ritualized ritual of such a ritual space; it aims to refer to such a space while simultaneously withholding the direct creation and experience of the ritual itself.

Often, the mythological and ritual forms of historicity are quite interlinked; this is not surprising, as ritual practices are, in many cases, not only informed by, but are also reenactments of, events that are recounted in mythology. One instance where we can see these two categories woven together in art practice is in Cutschall's 1996 installation *Garden of the Evening Star*, which references not only Lakota history, but also that relating to the Pawnee (figure 1-20).[184] This work was born out of a performance organized by Cutschall at the St. Norbert's Art and Culture Centre in Manitoba, Canada.[185] It explores the Pawnee Morning Star sacrifice, also known as the Captive Girl sacrifice, based on ethnologist Gene Weltfish's record of its occurrences.

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[183] Allan J. Ryan also arrives at a similar conclusion, though not through a close examination of the work's imagery. See Ryan, 1996, 14.

[184] For a panoramic view of the installation please visit http://www.artwave.rogers.com/presents/gallery/winnipeg/.

[185] Colleen Cutschall, "Garden of the Evening Star," *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century* ed. W. Jackson Rushing III (London: Routledge, 1999) 189.

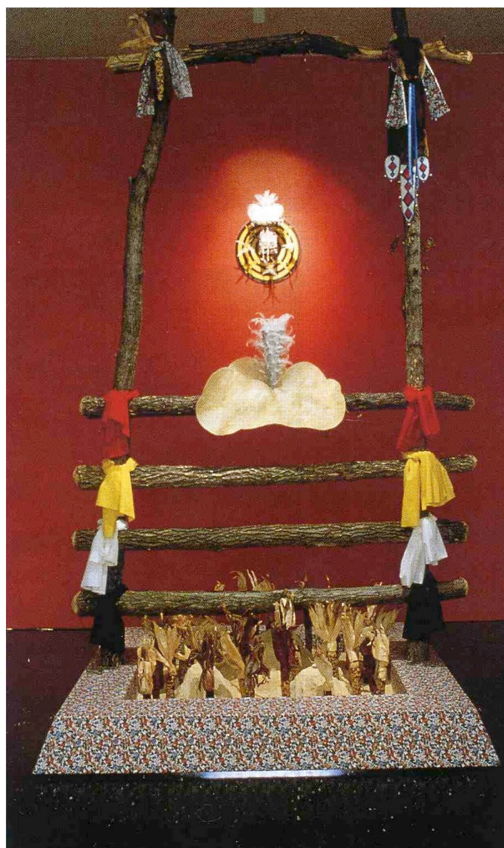

Figure 1-20. Colleen Cutschall, *Garden of the Evening Star*, 1996. Image Winnepeg Art Gallery, courtesy of the artist.

As described by Weltfish, the Morning Star sacrifice was occasionally required by the Morning Star of the Pawnee in reciprocation for his efforts in creating the first people.[186] Heaven, as a part of the Pawnee creation story, created the stars as deities of the cardinal directions: the Evening Star with her associate, the moon, were located in the west; the Morning Star and his associate, the sun, were in the east; the north held the North Star; and the south was the place of Canopus, the South Star.[187] The four semi-cardinal

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[186] Gene Weltfish, *The Lost Universe: Pawnee Life and Culture* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), 106.

[187] Cutschall, 192.

directions were then created as four pillars to hold up the sky.[188] Heaven then gave to Evening Star the clouds, winds, thunders, and lightning, which she was to place between herself and her garden, where they would take human form and become priests.[189]

It was time to create the first people. This task was complicated by an argument between Morning Star and Evening Star. As a result of the argument, Morning Star had to overcome obstacles, which Evening Star had placed for him at the four semi-cardinal directions before he was able to mate with her. Of their joining is born the first girl, who was carried to earth upon a funnel-shaped whirlwind.[190] The Sun and the Moon then mated and created the first boy, who was also carried to the earth.[191]

When it came time to make the sacrifice to the Morning Star, the Pawnee would go capture a girl from an enemy village and would proclaim her to be holy for the Great Star.[192] This girl would live for the next year as the embodiment of the Evening Star, and was treated as holy for that time.[193] Once the year had passed, she was sacrificed upon a specially built scaffold, which was ritually prepared and built of elements with reference to the semi-cardinal

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[188] Weltfish, 80-81.

[189] Weltfish, 81 and Cutschall, 192.

[190] Weltfish, 82.

[191] Weltfish, 82.

[192] Weltfish, 108.

[193] Cutschall, 193.

directions and then placed above a pit covered in soft down feathers.[194] This pit was known as the garden of the Evening Star, the mythological location for the origin of all life.[195] The girl was placed on the scaffold and sacrificed by a priest. The priest fired an arrow through her heart, her blood was used ritually, and finally, all male members of the tribe would fire arrows at her. She was then buried, and the earth received her blood.[196] The girl would also act as a means of reciprocal communication between the Pawnee and their star gods.[197]

Cutschall's *Garden of the Evening Star* very successfully represents this narrative. The main sculptural element is the wooden scaffold. The four cross-bars at its base are tied with fabrics in red, yellow, white, and black, which are the four colors of the semi-cardinal directions. On the highest of these four bars is a funnel made of white down feathers and placed upon a cloud. This funnel depicts the whirlwind that carried the first girl, child of the Morning Star and Evening Star, to the earth. The use of down feathers furthers this correlation, as this is the material that was placed in the garden of the Evening Star pit during the Pawnee ritual.

Placed upon the wall behind the scaffold is a target, of the type used for archery practice (figure 1-21). Placed upon the target is what appears to be a

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[194] Weltfish, 112.

[195] Weltfish, 112.

[196] Weltfish, 114.

[197] Cutschall, 193.

Figure 1-21. Colleen Cutschall, *Garden of the Evening Star* detail, 1993. Image Winnepeg Art Gallery, courtesy of the artist.

Figure 1-22. Colleen Cutschall, *Garden of the Evening Star* detail, 1993. Image Winnepeg Art Gallery, courtesy of the artist.

doll wearing a dress, the feathers used as her hair and about her neck suggesting a representation of the girl in her Evening Star guise. In some ways, the use of the archery target may be viewed as problematic, suggesting the concept of play rather than ritual. However, its presence is a successful way to allude to the girl's sacrifice by arrow-shot, without having to display an arrow pierced figure, which may have been more disturbing than any sort of reference to play which the target conjures.

In the garden pit below the scaffold, rather than the down feathers, which Weltfish relates as its material components, Cutschall has placed ears of corn, growing from the ground (figure 1-22). The pit itself is lined with the same flower-covered fabric that makes up the stuff of the girl's dress just

above, as well as the fabric tied on the topmost crossbar of the scaffold, further correlating the doll figure to the Evening Star.

Cutschall's use of corn may have several references. It may allude to the next ritual occurrence of the ceremonial cycle in which the Morning Star sacrifice happened; this ceremony concerned the distribution of special seeds of corn to owners of the Pawnees' sacred bundles.[198] It may also reference many of the blood sacrifices made in Mesoamerica to the Corn God, in reciprocation for his role in the creation of the world. Not only is there a thematic correlation between the two geographically and culturally distinct areas, but Weltfish also cites the presence of a similar type of scaffold sacrifice in Mesoamerica.[199]

What then, led Cutschall to explore this particular Pawnee sacrifice when many of her other pieces deal fairly specifically with Lakota culture and mythology? Why would this be a part of her historical rendering? The answer, I believe, lies in the identity of the last known girl to be the Morning Star sacrifice. On April 22, 1838, an Oglala Lakota girl named Haxti was sacrificed as the Evening Star goddess. Thus, not only might this particular piece reclaim an event from Pawnee history, but it also does the same for Lakota history. Further, it honors the role of Haxti as the Evening Star, where, as Cutschall

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[198] Weltfish, 85.

[199] Weltfish, 117-118.

states, "[E]ven to her own people, the path she was on was one of cosmic destiny, far more powerful than that of a Pawnee warrior."[200]

This work also provides a degree of lucidity in viewing the historical interactions of Native tribal groups on the Plains. As Audra Simpson points out, the disciplines of anthropology and ethnology work in accordance with the politics and power of colonization.[201] Simpson argues that much of these disciplines' writings produced a timeless, ahistorical, and eminently peaceful series of narratives about the cultures of indigenous America that defied the historical reality.[202] Simpson argues that ceremony and tradition are vital concerns of many Native peoples, but that those concerns are intimately tied to other ideas of sovereignty and proper ways of being in the world.[203] In some sense, the recapitulation of Haxti's story as it appears in Cutschall's installation reflects Simpson's critique. The Morning Star Sacrifice is a narrative that appears in an anthropological text, and Weltfish only explores it from a monadic point of view; that is, what the sacrifice means in terms of the Pawnee ritual cycle. Cutschall's exploration of the piece, and her honoring of Haxti's position, reveals a deeper chain of history through interactions of Pawnee and Lakota than Weltfish's text ever considered.

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[200] Cutschall, 194.

[201] Simpson, 67.

[202] Simpson, 68.

[203] Simpson, 68.

Where Cutschall's works often are designed to evoke the feeling of ritual, either in atmosphere or in form, other Native artists are interested in depicting larger ceremonial cycles in contemporary art. Michael Kabotie, working in collaboration with a group of Hopi artists called the Artists Hopid, along with Delbridge Honanie, is one example. For Kabotie, as for many other Hopi artists, the archeological excavations at the old Hopi village of Awat'ovi, especially the kiva murals there, had a profound impact on his art practice. Indeed, some have argued that the iconography of the Awat'ovi murals is the dominant iconography of contemporary Hopi painting.[204] *Hopi Ceremonial Calendar* of 1975, a mural at the Hopi Cultural Center Museum, is one of Kabotie's earlier works that references the murals of Awat'ovi.[205] It was executed by the Artists Hopid group, of which Kabotie was a founding member. Kabotie frequently works in collaboration with other artists, both Hopi and non-Hopi, which he relates to the fact that his feelings about art are inherently tied to being raised in the Hopi community, where ceremonies are communal.[206]

As the title of the work indicates, *Hopi Ceremonial Calendar* provides a visual narration for the ritual cycles that make up the Hopi year. The timing for ceremonies is determined by solar or lunar observance.[207] The ceremonial

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[204] Broder, 204.

[205] Images of *Hopi Ceremonial Calendar* can be see in Broder, 154-155.

[206] Zena Pearlstone, "Ancestral Reunions: The Hopi/Celtic Collaboration of Michael Kabotie (Lomawywesa) and Jack Dauben," *American Indian Art Magazine* 28 no. 2 (2003), 79.

[207] Broder, 143.

cycle itself can be understood as following an agricultural pattern: fertilization, germination, growth, harvest, and regeneration. As wintertime is the period of agricultural dormancy, it is the season for ritual.[208] This ceremonial cycle can also have a reassuring effect on the world at large, as the unpredictable events of human history occur within the ceremonial cycle, which can also give the sense of a participatory management, keeping the universe on track.[209]

Hopi Ceremonial Calendar depicts a ritual cycle that is based on the movements of the moon.[210] The point of beginning for both the mural and its ceremonials is on the left side. The first ceremonies represented are under the guidance of the Bear Clan, which sponsors the ceremonies for the first half of the cycle. In the large circle placed in the center of the mural, the ceremonies associated with the winter solstice are depicted. At this point in the cycle, the ceremonial sponsorship changes from the Bear Clan to the Kachina Clan. With the conclusion of the Niman ceremony in July, which is the rightmost ceremonial depiction, the guidance transfers back to the Bear Clan.[211]

Through this framework of ritual sponsorship, the artists have generated a sense of the cyclical nature of these ceremonies. Compositionally, this cyclicality is emphasized in the circular cartouches in which each ceremony is represented, implying both its order within the cycle itself, as well

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[208] Broder, 149.

[209] Nabokov, 43.

[210] Broder, 151.

[211] Broder, 152-154.

as its yearly recurrence. The focus on the ceremonies of the winter solstice, via scale and their central placement, suggests the importance of this particular ritual. According to Kabotie, all members of the ritual societies participate in this ceremony.[212] The relationship of this ceremony to both the Bear Clan and the Kachina Clan, as well as its timing during the mid-point of the winter ritual season also are evinced through the mural's compositional arrangement.

Visually, the *Hopi Ceremonial Calendar* is quite similar in style to the kiva murals discovered at Awat'ovi. About these murals, Kabotie states,

> I have talked about those [Awat'ovi] murals because they've had a profound and deep impact on me. At that point I realized that our people had a long history in the arts. Then I became aware that the pottery designs, the basket designs, the kachina designs were all developed long before the coming of the white people. So I began to reflect back on those earlier forms.[213]

From the construction of the human form to the presence of supernatural beings, animals, and stars, myriad themes from Awat'ovi's design motifs are reconstituted throughout the *Hopi Ceremonial Calendar*. Artists Hopid have also included the rainbow, considered to be the path upon which the Hopi supernatural beings travel. One hardly need note that the mural medium was entirely apposite for this depiction, as parts of the rituals depicted occurred within contemporary kivas, which may be decorated with ceremonial murals similar to those found at Awat'ovi.

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[212] Quoted in Broder, 153.

[213] Michael Kabotie, interview with Lawrence Abbott *I Stand in the Center of the Good* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 108.

As Charlotte Townsend-Gault argues, these works are not literal depictions of ritual practice, nor are they works that are made as part of a ritual performance. Instead, they are rituals of ritual, representations of sacred practice that are keyed towards defining and protecting the division between what is appropriate knowledge to share, and what is not. In the rituals which these works reference, history can be found in the reenactment of events from deep mythological times. In these works of art by Cutschall and Kabotie, then, these histories are also referenced, but they are done so in such a way as to make sure their viewers realize that the material being presented, being ritualized (to use Townsend-Gault's term), is part of a contemporary cultural discourse as well. These are sacred histories, and there is a line beyond which those who are not cultural descendants of these histories cannot, and should not, cross.

This protective line has been theorized by Audra Simpson as an act of refusal, which is intimately tied to issues of personal, political, and cultural sovereignty. As an anthropologist, Simpson defines this sovereignty based upon "a calculus ethnography of what you need to know and what I refuse to write in."[214] In reflecting upon Cutschall and Kabotie, that sovereignty is equally about an analysis weighing what the viewer needs to know and what the artist refuses to paint, sculpt, or draw. It leaves questions regarding meaning and a lack of information hanging in the air. The refusal to provide

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[214] Simpson, 72.

more information, either by scholar, collaborator, or artist, is a realization of a boundary beyond which one cannot push, but is also a recognition of a right to privacy, to sovereignty over discussions of and representations of individuals' private lives.[215] It is the same type of protective framework that Townsend-Gault theorizes in her ritualized ritual of ritual.

The protection of and revelation of sacred histories, of ritual practices, and of mythologies is a definitive form of historical agency. This agency is found both in the role of the artist, as the person who ultimately decides what information to present and what to leave out, but it also inheres to the artwork itself. The work is, in this case, the mediator of the artist's agency, the membrane through which the artist's ideas are presented to viewers. Viewers will have differing responses and reactions to these artists' works based upon their own familiarity with the myths and rituals being presented. These differing levels of familiarity, then, can broadly represent various audiences that the artist is reaching. Depending upon that audience's relationship to the histories, uninformed, informed, culturally related, or otherwise, a different agentive relationship to the work is formed.

However, like the oral traditions on which these artworks are based, the works have the ability to exist simultaneously with multiple interpretations. In some ways, their agency lies in this manifold presence. These works assert the rights of the artist to choose what information to present; in other words, the

[215] Simpson, 74.

right to interact actively with his or her own histories. We can see this clearly in Cutschall's pieces: she often uses texts written by Euro-American scholars, based upon information provided to them by Native collaborators. These Native collaborators frequently believed that their way of life was not long for this world, and they were interested in ensuring that their histories would remain even if they did not. Because of these concerns, their discussions of myth and ritual are complete and thorough; fixed entities whose truth has come to be understood as almost scriptural. Cutschall takes these thorough narratives and reapplies a degree of flexibility to them, giving them the forum for multiple interpretations and reasserting her own agency in regard to these histories in the process.

Possibly the only area more contentious than ritual practice for Native American and Euro-American relationships is the issue of land. Oftentimes these contestations are framed in terms of the European conquest and the taking of land, but in many ways it is as much an issue of historical importance of land, and landscapes, as it is one of actual settlement and possession. It is to the relationship of landscape and history that I turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO
LANDSCAPE

When discussing images of landscapes, the visual association that one's brain often drums up is of glorious Corots or Constables — bucolic pastoral paradises. Or perhaps, if one has a more vivid imagination, one thinks of the sublime and sometimes nightmarish scenes of Caspar David Friedrich. To an average viewer, perhaps, the relationships of these images of the landscape to the politics of land use and ownership that underlie them is not always as clear as the scene itself. This relationship of landscape image to the politics of land is of predominant importance in understanding the representations of land in North America, as painted by both settler-culture and indigenous artists. Images of the land painted by contemporary Native American and Canadian First Nations artists are informed by a familiarity with, and perhaps a reaction against, Euro-American and Euro-Canadian landscape painting. However they also evince many indigenous ideas of land tenure, historicity, and historicity's relationship to land.

In many settler-culture landscape paintings, if indigenous American peoples are shown they are seen as part of the natural environment itself, as much objects of the landscape as are the trees and hillsides. Marilyn Burgess notes that,

> Idealized differences between Native and non-Native societies in Western culture are articulated through an imaginary

> separateness between natural and urban worlds. The prescribed a-historicity of the natural world is reflected in the renderings of the quaint ethnicities of Native people.[216]

These images set up a separation between settler and colonized, wherein the settler becomes associated with the urban, "civilized" space, and the colonized with the natural environment. In these settler-culture landscape image, nature is seen as separate from and outside of culture, something that was "made for" its inhabitants.[217] It should not be surprising, then, that Native peoples, for so long viewed as objects of the landscape painter's gaze, should turn to a very different mode of representing land and landscape in art. For a better understanding of why this may be, it becomes necessary to first interrogate this tradition in landscape painting, examining its underlying concepts and ideologies.

Bruno Latour has suggested that the nature-culture binary is a direct result of the ideas upon which modernity is based; namely, the fiction that modernity's subjects are separate from nature and able to place nature under their control.[218] This settler-style landscape painting, then, would seem to be directly implicated in this fiction as a tool with which to exercise control over

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[216] Marilyn Burgess, "The Imagined Geographies of Rebecca Belmore," *Parachute* no. 93 (1999), 13.

[217] Most American schoolchildren learn Woodie Guthrie's song "This Land is Your Land" which features the lyric "This land was *made for* you and me." (Italics mine.)

[218] This understanding of Latour's ideas comes from Charlotte Townsend-Gault, "Have We Ever Been Good," *The Named and the Unnamed*, (Vancouver, British Columbia: Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, 2003), 11. For Latour's argument about the fictional status of modernity see Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), especially 76.

nature. Through painting, the natural world becomes only as wild, only as dangerous as the artist allows; he (my choice of pronoun here is deliberate) effectively controls the landscape through his gaze and the mediation of his image. Indeed, this level of control via representation is nothing new to the history of Western art, and extended even to the ownership of landscape paintings; for members of the middle class in Britain, owning landscape paintings was seen as a substitute for the ownership of physical land.[219]

As Kate Morris suggests, while landscape painting, at one level of analysis, may be about scientific thinking, as illustrated by perspectival illusionism with landscape as its object, more is going on in such works.[220] The subjectivity of landscape is a topic that is still under debate; nonetheless, its representations are laden with culturally specific meanings. W.J.T. Mitchell suggests that landscape, as a general global category, is an instrument of cultural power, functioning in a manner that is, perhaps, independent of human intention.[221] Mitchell further argues that landscape is inherently connected to programs of imperialism.[222] This does much to explain the genre of landscape painting that features images of conquered territories. In these works, if people are represented at all, they are usually members of colonized

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[219] Kate Morris, "Picturing Sovereignty," *Painters, Patrons, and Identity* ed. Joyce Szabo, (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 189.

[220] Morris, 188-189.

[221] W.J.T. Mitchell, "Introduction," *Landscape and Power* ed. W. J. T. Mitchell, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 1-2.

[222] W.J.T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," *Landscape and Power* ed. W. J. T. Mitchell, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 9.

groups. Extending the idea of landscape paintings as a tool for controlling nature, when colonized peoples are placed clearly in the nature portion of the nature-culture binary, representing them in landscape paintings suggests that they are equally under the control of the imperial power and further, that they were placed there, made for the use and control of this conquering, painting society. Mitchell argues that this type of landscape image, as it functions in our post-colonial and postmodern present, is now viewed with something akin to nostalgia; its forms of imperial powers and controls are seen as ideologies of the past.[223]

While Mitchell perhaps elides the whole genre of landscape painting into a single category of political intention, his analysis has validity for landscape works that represent the North American territories. In Canada, one of the most prominent modernist groups to paint the landscape was the Group of Seven. Almost uniformly, their paintings of the Canadian landscape reflect a solemn and uninhabited wilderness. This can be seen in Robert MacDonald's 1921 painting, *The Solemn Land* (figure 2-1). This work displays a peaceful scene of water drifting quietly through a mountainous region. The warm tones and use of lighting suggest sunset over an empty and unpopulated territory. Though perhaps an accurate depiction of the scene before him, the implication of an uninhabited landscape evinced by MacDonald's painting is patently false. We might dismiss this as mere circumstance – that the scene was devoid of

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[223] Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," 20.

Figure 2.1. J.E.H. MacDonald, *The Solemn Land*, 1921. Image courtesy National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo © NGC.

people when MacDonald encountered it – except for the fact that the preponderance of the Group of Seven's paintings display such a solitary wilderness with nary a human inhabitant.

The trace of the Canadian government's colonization and expansionist policies can be seen in works like MacDonald's. If the land had never been inhabited, which is how MacDonald's painting makes it appear, then it was anyone's to claim. The precedent for this thinking came from the doctrine of *terra nullius*, which in Roman law allowed for the seizing of unoccupied lands. *Terra nullius* was used by the British government to lay claim to lands in Australia.[224] As applied, the doctrine argued that indigenous inhabitants of

[224] Captain Cook, upon arriving in Australia and noting that the indigenous Australians did not have a European form of land tenure, declared that the land belonged to no one and was open for settlement under the *terra nullius* doctrine. This held legal and political weight until the Australian High Court overturned it in the 1992 Mabo decision. See Simpson, 69.

certain territories were not using the land in a manner consistent with European-style land tenure; therefore, it was legally uninhabited. In Canada, a similar form of the empty land doctrine was used by the chief commissioner of lands and works beginning in 1864 to reduce the territory allotted to the First Nations peoples.[225] By depicting the Canadian territories as unpopulated, despite the fact that these lands had been the tribal territories of many indigenous Canadian peoples since time immemorial, MacDonald's painting should be understood as part of the justification for territorial expansion, even if after the fact.

Further south in the United States, similar landscape painting is being made, though in some cases we do find representations of Native peoples in the wilderness. Albert Bierstadt's 1863 painting *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak* is one such (figure 2-2). Bierstadt's painting shows viewers a distant and tribally unidentified group of Native people, encamped on a plain below a scene of the majestic, and ever-so-slightly purple-hued, Rocky Mountains. The land, though not shown as vacant, is as undeveloped as the territory shown in MacDonald's work. Bierstadt's implication here is similar; though the territory may be inhabited the land is uncultivated. Through not being used properly it is considered untenanted.

Bierstadt also paints his Native people as part of the landscape of the Western American territory itself. They are not known to us as individuals, nor

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[225] Dr. Bruce Granville Miller, *A Short Commentary on Land Claims in BC,* http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/Resources/shortcommentary.htm#axzz2LyhLdnls.

Figure 2.2. Albert Bierstadt, *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak*, 1863. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1907 (07.123). Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

are they painted with the degree of anthropological intent found in images by artists such as Karl Bodmer. They are placed here as part of a picturesque scene, as much a part of the landscape as the trees and river. Though Bierstadt does include the area's occupants, their lack of development and improvement of their territory makes a visual case for it being technically uninhabited and available for settlement. Works like this responded to, and were understood to support, the case for Westward expansion under the American doctrine of Manifest Destiny.

Bierstadt and MacDonald both depict a North American landscape ripe for settlement. However, they are both painting after the large-scale migrations and settlements have occurred. In this sense, these works embody a sense of nostalgia for the unsettled, pristine territories into which settlers have

begun to move. The sense of sunset in MacDonald's work is echoed in the soft lighting and deep shadows of Bierstadt's painting. Taken together, they give the sense of looking romantically backwards, to how the land might previously have been seen. However, these images are ideologically, rather than anthropologically driven. They are images working in response to the colonialist settlement projects of the Canadian and American governments, and they are the style of painting to which many Native American and First Nations painters of land are responding.

If we accept Mitchell's reading of MacDonald's and Bierstadt's styles of landscape painting as illustrative of the West's imperialist ideologies, it is understandable that Native American and First Nations artists would avoid using this style of depicting the land at all costs. Indeed, representing and referring to the land and landscape utilizing other techniques can be read as an art of resistance to the imperialism of the West; while non-Native peoples may see the current moment as post-colonial, for most indigenous people of the Americas, the "post" prefix has not yet arrived.[226] Depicting the land with reference to traditional Native ideas of land occupancy and histories, then, allows indigenous artists to assert that neither the land nor the colonized peoples traditionally placed in it are entirely under the control of the West. Further, these images of the land, informed by Native cultural views, illustrate

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[226] Loretta Todd, "What More Do They Want," *Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives in Canadian Art*, ed. Gerald McMaster and Lee-Ann Martin, (Tortola, British Virgin Islands: Craftsman House BVI, Ltd, 1992), 71.

how vastly different the Native interactions with the land and nature are from those of the European-based North American cultures.

That the Native peoples of North America have differing relationships to the land than non-Native people is beginning to be widely understood by many scholars. Though these relationships are often spoken of in general terms as encompassing the diversity of indigenous cultures inhabiting the continent, it is necessary to note, as Peter Nabokov cautions, that the focus and specific interactions with the land and landscape may differ from culture to culture.[227] Many scholars of Native backgrounds suggest, however, that there are commonalities in the importance placed upon the land by Native peoples. Vine Deloria, Jr., states that "American Indians hold their lands — places — as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made with this reference point in mind."[228] This is in direct contrast with people of European origin, who tend to give this primacy of thought to time. For Deloria and other scholars, these rather fundamental distinctions give rise to very different relationships with the land and with each other.[229]

Alfonso Ortiz echoes the sentiments of Deloria, acknowledging the importance the land itself has for many Native peoples. He argues that "Historians need to develop a sensitivity to certain tribal traditions that have a

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[227] Nabokov, 133.

[228] Deloria, Jr., 62.

[229] W.J.T. Mitchell would seem to agree with this statement, noting that "Empires move outward in space as a way of moving forward in time." See Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," 17.

bearing on a people's past, present, and aspirations for their future, to wit, on their history, which have no meaning apart from where they occur."[230] Other Native writers and scholars, such as Paula Gunn Allen and Leslie Marmon Silko, have made similar statements about the importance of a culture's homelands and the relevance of these places to their histories. In many Native cultures, landscape elements often acted as agents in the world, having a capacity for volition and intentionality.[231] Differing from the nature-culture binary that Latour and others have noted in Western modernity, the bonds between landscape and culture found in indigenous American societies hold a primary position in these cultures' existential groundings.[232]

References to specific geographical sites and occurrences can lend validity to stories and histories told by Native groups.[233] In some cases, the chronology of a story or history may be ambiguous, but the named locations where the story takes place are definite and identifiable.[234] Indeed, areas viewed as homelands to Native cultures are frequently imbued with more importance than other surrounding places; emergence beliefs or other types of sacred, primordial ties inhere to these locations.[235] As artist Jaune Quick-to-

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[230] Ortiz, quoted in Nabokov, 131-132.

[231] Nabokov, 132.

[232] Nabokov, 131.

[233] Nabokov, 135.

[234] Nabokov, 139.

[235] Nabokov, 132.

See Smith notes, the land itself spawns the stories and myths that keep Native identities intact.[236]

As this focus on the land as a site of historical meaning suggests, different types of knowing and understanding can be found in Native artists' relationships to the land.[237] It can also be understood that the land itself has social meanings that are profoundly spiritual and intensely political.[238] As Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun notes, "Land is power, power is land."[239] In an era when colonial governments are hearing and deciding land claims cases in national courts, the multivalent truth of Yuxweluptun's statement can be seen; the land embodies both spiritual and political power.

At the end of her discourse on Native painters of the land and landscape, Kate Morris asserts that landscapes, no matter who paints them, are highly personal expressions.[240] I agree with Morris's assessment, but would like to add an addendum to it. As personal expression is inherently formed by cultural experience and understanding, examining the cultural relationship of an artist to the land will give nuance to any readings of works

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[236] Diana Nemiroff, "Modernism, Nationalism and Beyond," *Land Spirit Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada*, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992), 39.

[237] Charlotte Townsend-Gault, "Kinds of Knowing," *Land Spirit Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada*, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992), 76.

[238] Diana Nemiroff, Robert Houle, and Charlotte Townsend-Gault, "Land Spirit Power," *Land Spirit Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada*, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992), 12.

[239] Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, "Artist's Statement," *Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun: Born to Live and Die on Your Colonialist Reservations*, (Vancouver, British Columbia: The Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, 1995), 1.

[240] Morris, 194.

that reference the land. To see how such readings may be achieved, I turn now to an analysis of land-based works by Native artists.

Anishinabe artist Rebecca Belmore makes art on a variety of themes, but one frequent topic is humans' relationship with the land. Sometimes, she presents her specific point of view or experience in a work, while other pieces may reference larger cultural groups' interactions with the world around them. Many of her works, though not all, are site specific, and it has been said of Belmore that "she creates spaces to consider the local construction of the natural."[241] The validity of this statement can be seen clearly in the performance and video installation piece *Fountain*, which she created for the 2005 Venice Biennale (figure 2-3). The work consists of a video of a performance by Belmore, which is then back-projected onto a sheet of falling water from a fountain. The video opens on a fire on the beach, and then cuts to

Figure 2-3. Rebecca Belmore, still from *Fountain*, 2005. Image courtesy of the artist.

[241] Burgess, 13.

Belmore in the water. She is struggling in the ocean, trying to fill a bucket. Suddenly, she is successful and able to cope with the ocean's power. Belmore then walks to the shore, and up to the camera, carrying the bucket of water. She then throws the water from the bucket at the camera, at which instant it turns to blood. The video ends with Belmore staring at the camera, and her audience, through the sheet of blood dripping down the screen.

Here, water is the dominant ecological trope tying together Belmore's identity and that of Venice itself. In an interview that accompanies the catalog for *Fountain*, Belmore states that water, for the Anishinabe, is a dangerous element because of their belief in a watery underworld inhabited by monstrous creatures.[242] Tuscarora scholar and critic Jolene Rickard notes that

> Belmore understands the significance of and connection between power and water. Her Anishinabe heritage has taught her about the Micipijiu or the 'great horned cat or underwater lion, the night panther who could raise storms with a flick of his tail.' The Micipijiu lives in the waterways of the Anishinabe memory and embodies the unthinkable tragedies of human existence. Belmore may never mention this spirit, but she knows the significance and the role it has in her culture.[243]

In a more global sense, Belmore argues that, as we increasingly populate areas with low naturally occurring water and pollute that which is available, water may soon become an issue that is more important than oil.[244] Indeed, the

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[242] Rebecca Belmore, Interview, *Rebecca Belmore: Fountain*, (Vancouver, British Columbia: Kamloops Art Gallery, The Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, 2005), 26.

[243] Jolene Rickard, "Performing Power," *Rebecca Belmore: Fountain*, (Vancouver, British Columbia: Kamloops Art Gallery, The Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, 2005), 73.

[244] Belmore, 27.

blood dripping like water down the screen of the final sequence gives us a sense of pending ecological disaster and death.

Although in a very different way, the history of Venice is equally intimately tied to water. The city is constructed upon land dredged from the waters and is slowly being reclaimed by them. Historically, the Doge of Venice would perform a ceremony in which he threw a golden ring into the waters, thereby metaphorically marrying himself to the sea, simultaneously demonstrating the utter dependence of Venice upon her waters for her wellbeing and the city's dominance of them.[245] Waterways provide the main transportation routes around the city. These selfsame routes illustrate the need for concern about the quality of water in and around our cities, as it is not an uncommon experience to find trash, dead animals and other forms of

Figure 2-4. Rebecca Belmore, *Wana-na-wang-ong* detail, 1993. Image courtesy of the artist.

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[245] Frederic C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic*, (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 57.

pollution floating in a Venetian canal. In *Fountain*, then, Belmore has created a work that reflects not only her cultural conception of the landscape, but also its relationship to Venice, the locale in which the work was designed to be shown.

Belmore also creates works that refer specifically to the land where she grew up. Her 1993 installation piece *Wana-na-wang-ong* was created in response to the landscape paintings made by the Group of Seven depicting the Canadian wilderness (figure 2-4). Wana-na-wang-ong is the Anishinabe name for Sioux Lookout, where Belmore spent time as a child, and it roughly glosses to the English terms "beautiful" and "curved."[246] In this piece, Belmore has created two tapestries woven of the stuff of the earth: spruce roots, lichen, and sphagnum moss. These tapestries were then hung in a curved position, thereby creating a work that is not only made of the land, but also evocative of the place it represents.

The installation also included a sandy beach form, shaped to echo the curved panels, with a clay bowl set before it, filled with cedar chips (figure 2-5).[247] Hot cedar tea was served at the gallery, presumably filling the space with its aroma. Unlike the Group of Seven's works, Belmore's *Wana-na-wang-ong* gives the viewer a visceral, tactile sense of the land. It is not something to be dominated or controlled, but rather to be felt, inhaled, drunk; in other

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[246] Charlotte Townsend-Gault, "Hot Dogs, a Ballgown, Adobe, and Words: The Modes and Materials of Identity," *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century*, W. Jackson Rushing III, ed., (London: Routledge, 1999), 121.

[247] Burgess, 14.

Figure 2-5. Rebecca Belmore, *Wana-na-wang-ong* detail, 1993. Image courtesy of the artist.

words, it is a space with which we interact using all of our senses, a space in which and with which we live. By physically enclosing the viewer within the land, this work also serves as an assertion of Belmore's philosophy that "We are a part of nature, we are elemental."[248]

Further, the shape of the piece reflects the Anishinabe description of Sioux Lookout, giving visual form to the correlation of language and land described by Gerald McMaster. "For aboriginal people, language originates from the land…where indigenous languages articulate the land and in turn the aboriginal is articulated by the land."[249] This correlation may also extend to the fragmentary nature of Belmore's piece, as she has but a fragmentary

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[248] Robert Enright, "The Poetics of History: An Interview with Rebecca Belmore," *Border Crossings,* 24 no. 3 (2005), 64.

[249] McMaster, quoted in Rickard, 69.

understanding of the Anishinabe language.[250] This partial understanding of language also reflects back onto the landscape itself; the process of colonization forcibly seized land from the indigenous populations of the Americas. Their descendants are now fighting to maintain the portions allotted to them, as well as making land and water rights claims for areas under Canadian and American governmental control.

The importance of land that one knows in childhood is also seen in the works of Navajo artist Emmi Whitehorse. Many of Whitehorse's works are influenced by her grandmother, who was a weaver. Whitehorse credits this to the weaver's ability to represent abstract ideas about human attitudes and landscape, ideas that Whitehorse has then adapted in her works.[251] The artist further credits her grandmother with teaching her how to view space.[252] Although Whitehorse's imagery is ultimately intensely personal, it reflects what critic Lucy Lippard has called "metaphysical views of the Navajo world."[253]

Among Whitehorse's earliest works are her *Kin-Náh' Zin'* series of paintings. These works are named after and reflect the landscape of the area in

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[250] Burgess, 15.

[251] Joseph Traugott, "Kin' Nah' Zin'," *Artspace*, 6 no. 3 (1982), 41.

[252] Dottie Indyke, "Nature's Calm: The Atmospheric Paintings of Emmi Whitehorse," *Southwest Art*, 30 no. 2 (2000), 44.

[253] Emmi Whitehorse, interview with Lawrence Abbott, *I Stand in the Center of the Good: Interviews with Contemporary Native American Artists*, (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 287 and Lucy R. Lippard, "Shimá: The Paintings of Emmi Whitehorse," *Neeznáá: Emmi Whitehorse 10 Years*, (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian, 1991), not paginated.

Navajoland where Whitehorse's home during the summer months was located.[254] Whitehorse attributes the calmness and serenity found in all of her works to her experiences as a child at Kin-Náh' Zin'.[255] Despite their groundings in a physical location, these paintings should be seen as visualizations of moods and attitudes, and not solely as representations of a location.[256] As is the case with Belmore, Whitehorse evokes the landscape. Rather than providing the viewer with sensory data, however, Whitehorse creates a sense of atmosphere in paint.

This atmospheric sense of location in Whitehorse's works can be seen in a 1981 work from the *Kin-Náh' Zin'* series (figure 2-6). The reds, blues, and purples used by Whitehorse are highly evocative of the landscape in the

Figure 2-6. Emmi Whitehorse, work from the *Kin-Náh' Zin'* series, 1981. Image courtesy of the artist.

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[254] Abbott, 291.

[255] Abbott, 298.

[256] Traugott, 40.

American Southwest. It has been suggested that the double triangle motifs in these works represent mountains.[257] The other geometric shapes similarly suggest landscape formations, such as canyons and cliff walls, while still other areas evoke a magnified view of the desert floor. Indeed, these dual views of the land have been noted in her works, with the land appearing simultaneously distant and close up.[258] Whitehorse's personal connection to the locations she represents is furthered by her technique for applying paint. All the imagery in her work is applied by hand alone, including the paints; the artist feels it makes her works "more personal for me and to me because of that hands-on technique."[259]

Landscape also played an important role in Whitehorse's later series of works titled *Mt. Taylor*. *Rincón Márquez* of 1987 is one of the more recent works from this series (figure 2-7). These works reflect different ideas about the landscape, the physical environment of Mount Taylor, and its dimension as a mountain sacred to the Navajo people.[260] These works came out of a time when Whitehorse was rather unhappily living in Connecticut, and so she painted the imagery of the Connecticut landscape, its leaves and trees, but in the colors of the Southwest.[261] In *Rincón Márquez*, this leaf imagery can be

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[257] Traugott, 40.

[258] Lippard 1991, not paginated.

[259] Abbott, 287.

[260] Abbott, 292.

[261] Abbott, 293.

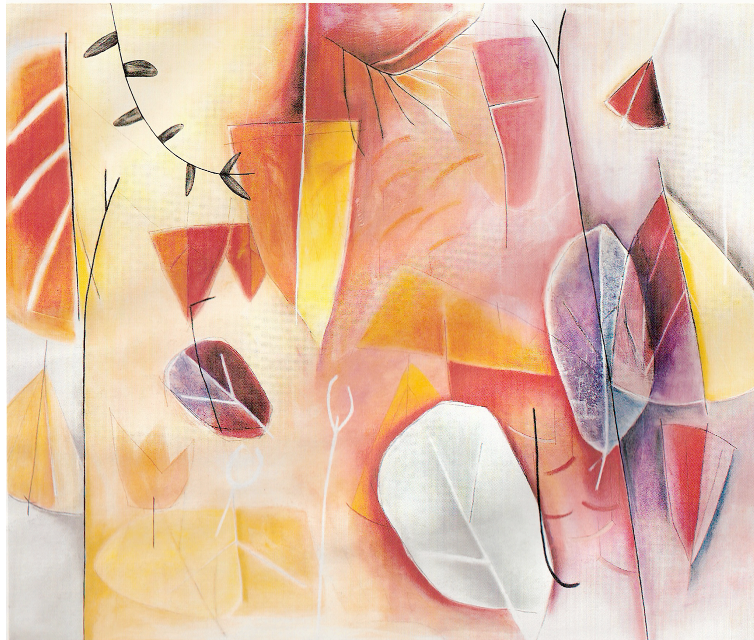

Figure 2-7. Emmi Whitehorse, *Rincón Márquez*, 1987. Image courtesy of the artist.

seen, along with ivy creeping from the top left corner, again colored in the hues of Whitehorse's homeland. Whitehorse describes feeling lost in the northeast, "because [she] could never tell which way was south or east or north from living under that canopy of trees."[262] Naming the series of works painted at this time after Mount Taylor makes perfect sense as a way of recovering that awareness of directionality; the sacred mountains, to the Navajo people, have inherent directional associations.

This atmospheric sense of landscape is still found in Whitehorse's more recent works, which are inspired by the surfaces of slow-moving or still water in natural settings.[263] In many ways, Whitehorse is able to evoke a particular

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[262] Abbott, 293.

[263] Dana Newman, *New Mexico Artists at Work*, (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2005), 135.

landscape without directly representing it. Her works are able to communicate their ideas without getting bogged down in the particular details of place.[264]

Coast Salish artist Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun has been described as the artist who best expresses the Native bond to the environment.[265] Yuxweluptun describes himself as a history painter.[266] While these two analyses may seem to be, at best, non-related and, at worst, a contradiction in terms, if one considers Alfonso Ortiz's recommendation, mentioned above, to consider history as directly and irrevocably tied to the land on which it occurs, a clearer picture of Yuxweluptun's conception of painting history emerges. He states, "I'm always tagged with being a political artist, but it's very political to be an Indian in this country [Canada]. Art has always been able to record history and when it comes to recording history, I want to open up this bag of worms."[267]

The ways in which Yuxweluptun has chosen to open his particular bag of worms can be seen in *Red Man Watching White Man Trying to Fix Hole in Sky* of 1990.[268] In the foreground stands the artist's Red Man, made of the stuff of the Northwest Coast formline traditional style, gazing back at lab-coated White scientists, standing upon the detritus of Western culture, trying

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[264] Traugott, 41.

[265] Ryan, 1999, 277.

[266] Robert Enright, "History Painter," *Border Crossings*, 20, no. 2 (2001), 39.

[267] Enright, 2001, 40.

[268] See Gerald McMaster and Lee-Ann Martin eds., *Indigena*: *Contemporary Native Perspectives in Canadian Art*, (Tortola, BVI: Craftsman House, 1992), 159 for an image.

to patch a gaping hole in the sky. The hole in the sky motif is a common feature of many origin myths from the Pacific Northwest, often indicating a passage between the earth and sky, or above, worlds.[269] The teetering tower of scientists emulates the mythological motif; however, Yuxweluptun's work is better understood as a condemnation of Western cultures' treatment of the environment. Firstly, he critiques the creation of the modern-day hole in the sky: the holes of ozone layer; secondly, this work criticizes the attempt to use science alone to "fix" it. The trope of the patch, a literal stop-gap measure, suggests that this effort, without an equal effort to fix the nature-culture binary fiction that is endemic to Western modernity, is doomed to fail. As the artist points out, in reference to the chlorofluorocarbon ban which became completely enforced in 2000, "It will take a hundred-year ban to bring ozone levels back to pre-1985 levels before the hole in the ozone layer can be fixed."[270]

This reading of *Red Man Watching White Man Trying to Fix Hole in Sky* is reinforced by the use of the formline crests and totems on the mountains in the far distance. The figures represent sacred beings who often serve as ancestors or aides to many Native families along the Northwest Coast. These crests evince a spiritual connection with the land, which may, in some

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[269] See Ella E. Clark, *Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest*, (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1966 [c. 1953]). In some hole in the sky myths, territory rights and land use permissions are granted by as the first ancestors pass through the hole to the earth below.

[270] Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, "Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun," *Land Spirit Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada*, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992), 226.

ways, embody the spirits Yuxweluptun has thus represented.[271] They may also represent rights to particular resources within the land, such as fishing or hunting grounds, held by families and clans in the Northwest Coast alongside their privileges to display specific crest animals.[272] What they certainly seem to represent is the artist's answer to a question he posed, "How do you paint a land-claim?"[273] It suggests, as has been noted, that landscape is a political issue for Yuxweluptun.[274]

Interestingly, in *Red Man Watching White Man Trying to Fix Hole in Sky*, Yuxweluptun appears to also be toying with the representational conventions of the landscape painting styles associated with colonialism. The Red Man in the foreground, the figure that leads the viewer's eye into the work, is looking on the landscape in the background, just as do the figures in Casper David Friedrich's works illustrating the sublime qualities of the land. The small, anonymous scientists in the background have taken the place of the indigenous people who appear in Bierstadt's landscape, there, as here, identifiable only by their costume. However, the artist makes the sardonic tone of this inversion quite clear, as the wrapping around of the Red Man's formline face simultaneously lays bare the inversion's mechanisms and implicates the viewer's position in this schema.

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[271] Townsend-Gault, 1999b, 114.

[272] Nabokov, 140.

[273] Yuxweluptun, 1992, 221.

[274] Denise Olekzijczuk, "Nature in History: A Context for Landscape Art," *Lost Illusions: Recent Landscape Art*, (Vancouver, British Columbia: The Vancouver Gallery, 1991), 19.

Yuxweluptun's 1991 work, *Scorched Earth, Clear-Cut Logging on Native Sovereign Lands, Shaman Coming to Fix*, deals with similar environmental issues to *Red Man Watching White Man Trying to Fix Hole in Sky*.[275] However, this later work implies the ability to suture Western culture back into the natural world — the division of culture from nature is not likely to be found in shamanistic religious practice — to ameliorate the damage done to the environment. The barren earth and the cut trees in the foreground, complete with formline crests on their stumps, suggest the clear-cut logging policies that have long been in effect in British Columbia. Indeed, this was a situation that directly impacted the artist, because he lived near the largest clear-cut logging area in the world.[276]

The imagery here implies that the land itself feels the pain of this environmental ravaging. While one interpretation of the tears cried by the sun, mountains, and earth tends towards banal sentimentality, if one looks at the formline crests as representing spiritual presences embodied in the landscape, then the tears move from banal to tragic. The tongue sticking out from the mountain, placed centrally in the composition, is a frequently occurring motif in Yuxweluptun's work. The tongue motif has been related to its appearance in the *Sxwayxwey* mask, representing the concept of plenty, but in Yuxweluptun's works, it is distorted and distended, thus depicting the

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[275] An image can be seen at the website of the National Gallery of Canada, http://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artwork.php?mkey=42661

[276] Olekzijczuk, 19.

opposite.[277] These elements, taken together, illustrate the desperate straits in which the environment has been placed at the hands of modern progress and industry.

Here, however, Yuxweluptun has proposed a possible solution, which is found in the figure of the shaman. As the title indicates, the shaman has come to fix the damage done to the land by logging and other ventures. While the concept of the shaman has been nearly irretrievably complicated by New Age philosophies, in the autochthonous sense, he or she would be a mediator between humanity and the larger natural and spiritual worlds. Certainly, it is implied here that Yuxweluptun's shaman, or what he stands in for, has the power to restore people's relationships to the land and, possibly, to one another. Interestingly, this is a trait that Loretta Todd, another Canadian First Nations artist, has attributed to Yuxweluptun's paintings.[278] Also notable is the depiction of the shaman himself. Most Native figures illustrated by Yuxweluptun appear in a similar form as the figure on the shaman's right; he has holes in his torso represent missing vital organs, which are representative of the damages caused by colonialism. The shaman, however, is a whole person, suggesting a form of salvation for both people and the land.

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[277] Charlotte Townsend-Gault, "The Salvation Art of Yuxweluptun," *Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun: Born to Live and Die on Your Colonialist Reservations*, (Vancouver, British Columbia: The Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, 1995), 7.

[278] Loretta Todd, "Yuxweluptun: A Philosophy of History," *Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun: Born to Live and Die on Your Colonialist Reservations*, (Vancouver, British Columbia: The Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, 1995), 48.

That the land of North America should be such a politically charged site should come as no surprise, since it is the location of a European colonial project that is still continuing, even in today's "post-colonial" moment. Thus, the land is the place upon which Native and non-Native people meet, each as agents in their respective and, at times, intertwining histories.[279] Given that the European-based cultures of North America are participants in Latour's fiction of the separation of nature and culture, whereas indigenous cultures generally are not, these meetings are often contentious. Sometimes these meetings provoke protest, as was the case with Shell Oil Company's drilling on the Lubicon Cree reservation. Other times, violence occurs, as it did at Oka, during a Mohawk protest against a proposed golf-course on sacred lands.

This collision of Native and Euro-American land use is the subject of Cahuilla artist Gerald Clarke's 2009 piece *One Tract Mind* (figure 2-8). The piece is a mixed media installation, involving a miniature version of a cul-de-sac-laden tract home complex. The work also includes digitally manipulated photographs of tract homes, and a digital projection of the homes in these types of housing complexes. The video is projected on the gallery wall, fenced off from the viewers in a way that recalls the gated nature of these communities. The layering of imagery seen in photographs and sculptural models get at the sense of layering of history which is present in the modern American landscape.

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[279] Burgess, 15.

Figure 2-8. Gerald Clarke, *One Tract Mind*, 2009. Image courtesy of the artist.

Clarke's installation references both the housing crisis and the ongoing water shortages that are ever-present in contemporary California. The tract housing development model sits on the floor; each house placed on its perfectly groomed square of AstroTurf. Cul-de-sacs and streets wend through the homes; the reality of this model can be found in nearly every city in California. Clarke's model also shows some of the costs of this development. Glasses of water sit alongside the houses and grassy plots, calling into question the ability of the state's natural resources to support its growing population. The canvas ground on which the model homes sit is silkscreened with images representing Native Californian life. These, in turn, serve as a reminder of the fact that the land on which homes like these are built was originally home to a

variety of Native American cultural groups — a fact that is hidden in much of the mythology of California.

Clarke references the layered history of California through the canvas backing on which his ticky-tacky houses sit. Underneath the streets and AstroTurf, he has silkscreened images of gourds, acorns, grass-thatched housing, basketry, and rock art designs (figure 2-9). The rock art image represents the Hemet Maze, a design that comes from nearby Clarke's own home.[280] The traditional arts and architecture of Native California appear here, and as viewers, we are asked to find the correlation between the images and models. We can see the relationships between the thatch houses and the

Figure 2-9. Gerald Clarke, *One Tract Mind* detail, 2009. Image courtesy of the artist.

[280] See http://www.ceres.ca.gov/geo_area/counties/Riverside/landmarks.html. The entry on the Hemet Maze Stone is Historical Landmark No. 557.

model homes, between the Hemet Maze rock art pattern and the twisting and turning streets. But what of the basketry?

Here the digital photographs come to our aid. Clarke continues his layering motif in these prints, as well. The images show us houses, in the recent Spanish architectural style found throughout California's tract housing developments. Beneath each house, Clarke has again placed image references to Native California peoples. One image shows us a series of baskets placed beneath the roof line of a gated community (figure 2-10). Looking at the patterns of roofs and the stepped geometry of the baskets' meander-like pattern, we immediately see a visual, aesthetic correlation. Clarke hints at the links, the aesthetic commonalities, found in the diversity of contemporary and Native Californian life.

Figure 2-10. Gerald Clarke, *One Tract Mind* detail, 2009. Image courtesy of the artist.

Other photographs show us flowers, possibly of the Datura plant, lying beneath homes. These might reference the natural California landscape, so different from the bright green AstroTurfed lawn of Clarke's development; as Datura, these flowers further suggest a relationship to traditional Native Californian ritual practices. This is echoed through his sly reference to the water crisis, through the glasses partially filled with water, which sit on the model's canvas. We also see an image of a Native man, lying buried beneath one home. This image gets to the crux of Clarke's work; it grapples with the idea that the larger Californian (and American) historical narrative does not know the substance on which it is based. Clarke's work raises the question of what sits beneath California's major cities. When viewing the video, after seeing the layers that Clarke has presented in the model development and the digital photographs, we are forced to wonder: what lies beneath these homes?

The images that Clarke has silkscreened on the canvas base of his model home development, which echoes the gated communities shown in the video, give us some clues. All of these images relate specifically to indigenous Californian ways of life. Petroglyphs and basketry are among the most prevalent forms of Southern California Native arts, and in both inheres a deep symbolic connection to the land and land use. Gourds, a traditional form of water container, were also often used as parts of rattles which accompanied the traditional Bird Songs.[281] Acorns formed some of the staple foods of a

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[281] Clarke himself is part of a group of Bird Singers.

California diet. What lies beneath these homes, then, are the layers of California's peoples, of its histories.

James Clifford provides a method for understanding Clarke's work through the lens of history. In "Fort Ross Meditation," Clifford examines the myriad histories present in the piece of landscape that today is known as Fort Ross, California.[282] Clifford's goals here are "to understand my location among others in space and time. Where have we been and where are we going? But instead of a clear direction or process, I find different, overlapping temporalities, all in differing ways 'historical.'"[283] In Clifford's essay, these temporalities include those of the Native peoples who inhabit this piece of land, Russian traders, and Mexican and European explorers. He argues that the events that bring us to our places in the modern world can only be understood as "historical reality" through what he terms "local projects and stories," in other words through events and narratives that take place in a specific location or landscape.[284] Clarke's work makes a similar argument, I believe. In California, the overlapping temporalities reveal the history of the land itself, as a site for Native ways of life, which are still practiced, overlapping with tract houses, water crises, and foreclosures. Modern California, indeed.

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[282] James Clifford, "Fort Ross Meditation," *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 299-345.

[283] Clifford, 301.

[284] Clifford, 302.

Clifford's essay puts indigenous American historicities into high relief; his work is remarkable — perhaps unique — for considering the history of the land itself, of who occupied it, and when, as a part of a larger American historicity. Clifford, in discussing a piece of oral history centered on the Kashaya Pomo site of Métini (another name for the land also called Fort Ross), argues that "the truth of the story…told cannot be separated from *a way of narrating, and judging, history*;" here, this way is demonstrably centered on the land at the site of Métini.[285] As I argued in the beginning of this chapter, this view of the land, the landscape, as materially active and efficacious, historically speaking, is one that is firmly tied to Native ideas of history. It is not an idea of history that is prevalent in Euro-American scholarship in the discipline. When a scholar like James Clifford focuses on land, then it is noticeable; however, the land itself has long, perhaps always, been a major component of Native histories. It is readily apparent, too, in the works of landscape art, which we find being made by contemporary artists of Native American and First Nations heritage.

The power of the land to act with agency is present in many different Native historicities.[286] Yuxweluptun is able to show us this agency visibly, through the use of a spiritually activated landscape. In his works, the viewer has a sense of the power of the landscape and its ties to Native cultures on the

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[285] Clifford, 317. Italics in text.

[286] See Keith H. Basso, "Wisdom Sits in Places," *Senses of Place*, eds. Steven Field and Keith H. Basso, (Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press, 1996) for a view of history and cultural knowledge that is inseparably tied to place.

Northwest Coast. In other artists' works, though, the agency of the land is still present, if less explicitly visible. For Whitehorse, landscape is intimately tied to her personal history; it also provides a sense of morality. In Clarke's work, the land holds and displays the layered history upon which we all live; it is the active conveyor of history. This view of the land as active agent in the history of the world is not one that is commonly expressed by Western historians.

About his depictions of the land, Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun has said that they are informed by lived experience, not by the gaze.[287] This seems to me to be an apt description, not only of the differences between a settlement-driven aesthetic of landscape painting and one informed by Native traditions, but also the ways in which cultures on each side of this divide view their interactions with the natural world. Perhaps the nostalgia, which W.J.T. Mitchell associates with Western landscape paintings today, also comes from a recognition that, kicking and screaming, the Western world is being dragged into a lived experience with the natural world, one environmental regulation at a time. The Native artists discussed here, though not the only Native artists by far to represent the land in their works, suggest how artists, regardless of culture, can depict the land and landscape from traditions where lived experience — history — and not the gaze is what determines one's relationship to the land.

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[287] Enright, 2001, 43.

CHAPTER THREE
LAWS AND TREATIES

One of the longest standing traces of historicity referencing the relationships between indigenous Americans and European settlers is the treaty. Treaties are relatively unique among the types of historicity under discussion; treaties are predominantly, although not always, written and, as such, have a firm place in the field of Western history. One of the earlier treaties between European and Native American groups, however, is recorded in a non-written format: the wampum belt. The Gus-wen-tah wampum belt, also known as the Two-Row Wampum Belt, was *made* to ratify the 1613 Two-Row Wampum Treaty signed at Tawagonshi in upstate New York between representatives of the Iroquois and the Dutch peoples (figure 3-1). The Two-Row Wampum is often described as symbolizing an equitable relationship between the Iroquois and the Dutch; this autonomous relationship existed

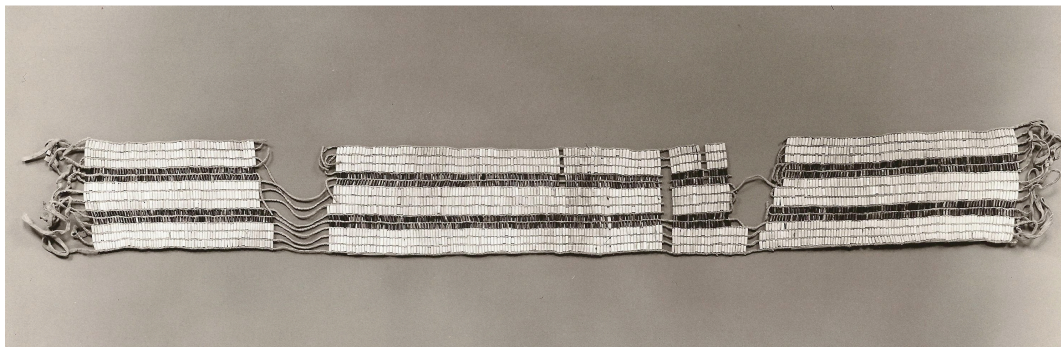

Figure 3-1. Iroquois Artist, *Two-Row Wampum Belt (Gus-wen-tah)*, date unknown. Image courtesy Woodland Cultural Centre.

later between the Iroquois and the British, when control over the colonized lands changed hands.[288] The Wampum Belt indicates that,

> These two rows will symbolize two paths or two vessels, travelling [sic] down the same rivers together. One, a birch bark canoe, will be fore the Indian people, their laws, their customs and ways. We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our own boat. Neither of us will try to steer the other's boat.[289]

This passage suggests the ideas that the Iroquois Confederacy had about coexistence with the European settler populations; that it would be a form of living side by side, with each population living according to the "customs and ways" of their respective traditions.

As the history of the intervening 400 years has made apparent, these ideas about mutual coexistence are not ones that were necessarily shared by the European colonists who came and made the treaties, laws, and nations that eventually governed the indigenous populations of the lands that make up Canada and the United States. The legal and treaty histories between colonial governments and colonized peoples are rife with documentation — a rare case when European and Native American historicities collide. The treaties and laws written by the colonial governments make clear that they did not view

[288] See Robert W. Venables, *An Analysis of the 1613 Tawagonshi Treaty*, www.onondaganation.org/aboutus/history_two_row_wampum.html. Venables's essay also discusses the scholarly debate over the authenticity of the 1613 treaty, the doubt of which appears to avoid referencing the oral histories of the Iroquois peoples.

[289] Quoted in Townsend-Gault, 1992, 77. This is an oft-quoted passage describing Gus-wen-tah, appearing, among many other places, in David Neel, "Life on the 18th Hole," *BC Studies*, no. 89 (1991), 138 and Robert A. Williams, Jr., "The Algebra of Federal Indian Law: The Hard Trail of Decolonizing and Americanizing the White Man's Indian Jurisprudence," *Wisconsin Law Review* no. 219 (1986), 291.

their relationship with the Native American and First Nations cultures as two separate entities, metaphorically traveling side by side down a river. Rather, Canada and the United States have been much more interested in trying to steer boats. The texts of the treaties themselves give the sense of applying a paternalistic glove that encases an iron fist. Small wonder, then, that these treaties and other subsequent laws have been the subjects of works made by contemporary artists of indigenous heritage, as they grapple with the multiple and often conflicting histories of the cultures in which they live.

The importance today of the Two Row Wampum Belt as a concept of government and as a visual icon should not be dismissed. That it still should be seen as valid and legitimate is made clear in Seneca and Scots-German artist Marie Watt's references it in one of her small blanket "samplers" titled *Two Paths One River* (figure 3-2). Using the satin edges of blankets which

Figure 3-2. Marie Watt, *Two Paths One River*, 2006. Image courtesy of the artist.

have been found or donated to Watt for her projects, the artist recreates the patterns of the two streams, existing side by side. One notable difference between Watt's work and Gus-wen-tah is her vertical use of line compared to the horizontal directions seen in the wampum belt. This directional shift has been associated with the emphasis found in Iroquois and Seneca creation stories, which tell of Sky Woman descending vertically to the earth.[290] Watt's piece reinforces the importance of the Gus-wen-tah among the Iroquois people by replicating the two-row motif. The medium of the work, though, implies a critique of the reality of the current governmental situations. Blankets, often highly valued trade items, also have a long and loaded colonial history. They seem to have been one of the vectors for the spread of smallpox among Native American and First Nations communities.[291]

Watt's use of the Gus-wen-tah motif, combined with the blanket medium, appears to criticize both early colonial and contemporary Native and settler relations. The reference to the Two Row Wampum Treaty and it's stance of mutual independence is undercut by the medium of the blanket that lays bare the effect of colonialism on conquest-era Native populations. The use of reclaimed wool, and its association with the history of blankets as both trade goods and disease vectors, complicates an easy reading of *Two Paths One River* as a simple reclamation of the Two Row Wampum design. The blankets

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[290] Cynthia Fowler, "Materiality and Collective Experience," *American Indian Quarterly*, 34, no. 3 (2010), 348.

[291] Fowler, 349. See chapter 4 for a longer discussion of the history of blankets and Marie Watt's works.

emphasize the tendencies towards domination, perhaps at any means necessary, found in the United States and Canadian government policies, rather than the Iroquois' stated preference for mutual coexistence.[292]

The historical evidence of the unequal relationship between Native and European-descended peoples indicates that Watt's sampler is best read as an ironic inversion of the intent of Gus-wen-tah. While honoring the ideals of the Iroquois treaty, she simultaneously points out that the historical realities played out rather differently. This sense of subversion and irony is one that is found in works by many indigenous artists referencing the laws and treaties of their colonizing governments.

Early Laws and Treaties in Canada

In Canada, several artists have designed works that reference and critique laws enacted by the government that control and define the lives and spaces of indigenous peoples. Among the most powerful of these pieces is Nadia Myre's *Indian Act*, made between 2000 and 2003 (figure 3-3). Myre's *Indian Act* is based upon legislation passed by the Canadian government that effectively governs all aspects of First Nations life. The Indian Act, passed originally in 1876 and modified regularly through to the present day, has passages that determine issues of land rights, governmental oversight, and even who can legally identify themselves as a member of a First Nations

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[292] This reading of *Two Paths One River* becomes even further complicated, however, by Watt's combined Native and Euro-American heritage.

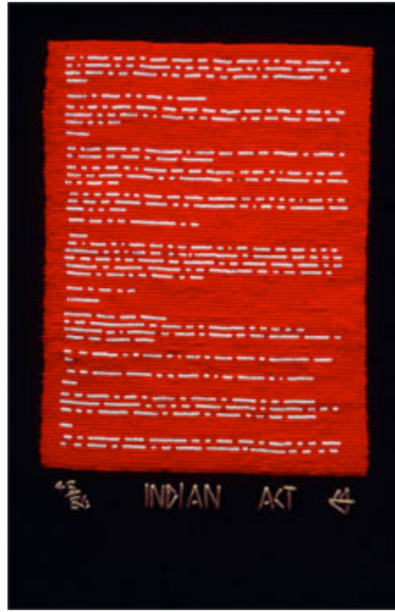

Figure 3-3. Nadia Myre, *Indian Act*, 2000-2003. Image courtesy of the artist.

community.[293] Richard Hill has noted that the Act represents a change in the way European governments dealt with Native populations.

> Previously, European states and their settler colonies often went to great lengths to use Aboriginal political documents, such as wampum belts, in their political relations with First Nations. The shift to incomprehensible, one-sided documents like the Indian Act was a deliberate signal, a failure to communicate that was no doubt meant to communicate a great deal.[294]

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[293] This last portion is among the most controversial passages. It emphasizes the passing of family name and Indian identity down the male line, allowing First Nations men who marry non-Native women to retain their treaty rights. However, those First Nations women who marry non-Native men thereby forfeit any treaty rights. *Indian Act, Collection of Criminal Statistics, &c Canada,* 1876, 55-72. See Article 3, especially.

[294] Richard Hill, "The Unreadable Present: Nadia Myre & Kent Monkman," *C Magazine,* no. 75 (2002), 33.

Figure 3-4. Nadia Myre, *Indian Act* (gallery view), 2000-2003. Image courtesy of the artist.

It is all the more interesting, then, that Nadia Myre states, "Native people have a love-hate relationship with [the Indian Act]."[295]

Myre's *Indian Act* deftly explores this love-hate relationship. The piece consists of all 56 pages of the Act, which have been beaded over in red and white beads and surrounded with a backing of stroud, a type of wool broadcloth (figure 3-4). The beading was performed over the course of three years and involved the handiwork of more than 230 volunteers who beaded the pages at several different events.[296] This act of beading the law plays with, subverts, and critiques the meaning of the Indian Act in myriad and fascinating ways.

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[295] Fowler, 352. Not all First Nations artists are so kind in their descriptions of and art works about the Indian Act. In 1997, Coast Salish artist Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun performed *An Indian Act Shooting the Indian Act*, wherein he did, in fact, shoot a copy of the document. By all accounts, his London audience was nonplussed by the events.

[296] Fowler, 351-352. Myre dutifully recorded the names of all of her assistants, and when putting *Indian Act* on exhibition, she placed their names on the walls alongside the framed pieces.

Most visible is the critique involved in beading over the text of the Act itself. Myre and her assistants beaded a red background, while placing white beads along the locations where the legible words of the Act were written. This has the effect of simultaneously obscuring the text, while leaving a trace of its location; we know it says something, but we cannot read or understand it. Myre's actions have rendered the Indian Act illegible, and this illegibility implies a critique of the government's actions as well. There are honest and serious questions about how many of the First Nations peoples, those who were governed and legislated into or out of existence by it, could have read the Act at the time it was written. The illegibility of *Indian Act* equates with a language differential between those who wrote it and those whom it governs. As viewers, we are placed in a similar position; we know the text is important, but we cannot decipher its meaning.

At the same time, Myre's use of beads provides a secondary critique. Beads are the medium for the Two Row Wampum Belt, which represented a treaty that was valued for its philosophy by many indigenous American peoples. By rewriting the Indian Act in the language of Gus-wen-tah, Myre performs an act of comparison. She asks viewers to compare the philosophy of dominance that lies behind the Indian Act of 1876 with the philosophy of mutual coexistence that is evinced by the Two Row Wampum Treaty. This act of beading also subverts some of the intent of the Indian Act, as it could be argued that the change in medium, from ink on paper to beads on fabric,

translates it into an Indian language. Myre herself acknowledges this subversion, discussing beading as an act of silent resistance.[297]

As mentioned above, the *Indian Act* piece was created through the collective effort of Myre, Myre's friend and curator Rhoda Meier, and more than 230 volunteers. Even the work's creation functions as a subversion and critique of the legislation. The intent of the Indian Act is to govern indigenous Canadian peoples as individuals, especially with regard to land ownership; this is certainly how European nations and governments understood their populations.[298] Few, if any, First Nations peoples utilized individual land ownership to determine civic rights and duties. This tension between individual and collective ownership plays out in Myre's *Indian Act*. She is identified as the artist who created the work; however, it is constantly necessary to remind viewers that she did so collectively, with the assistance of her many volunteer beaders. Myre emphasized this point by displaying the names of her assistants on gallery walls at one exhibition of *Indian Act*.

The identity of these beaders also critiques one of the most nefarious passages of the Indian Act. The Act itself defines who is considered "Indian" under Canadian law. To wit,

> The term "Indian" means -
> *First*. Any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band;
> *Secondly*. Any child of such person';

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[297] Fowler, 354

[298] See *Indian Act*, Article 3, section 5 and Article 6.

> *Thirdly*. Any woman who is or was lawfully marrie[d] to such person:
> *(a)* Provided that any illegitimate child, unless having shared with the consent of the band in distribution of moneys of such band for a period exceeding two years, may, at any time, be excluded from the membership thereof by the band, if such proceeding be sanctioned y the Superintendent-General:
> *(b)* Provided that any Indian having for five years continuously resided in a foreign country shall, with the sanction of the Superintendent-General, cease to be a member thereof and shall not be permitted to become again member thereof, or of any other band, unless the consent of the band with the approval of the Superintendent-General or his agent be first had and obtained; but this provision shall not apply to any professional man, mechanic, missionary, teacher or interpreter, while discharging his or her duty as such:
> *(c)* Provided that any Indian woman marrying any other than an Indian or a non-treaty Indian shall cease to be an Indian in any respect within the meaning of this Act, except that she shall be entitled to share equally with the members of the band to which she formerly belonged, in the annual or semi-annual distribution of their annuities, interest moneys and rents; but this income may be commuted to her at any time at ten years' purchase with the consent of the band:
> *(d)* Provided that any Indian woman marrying an Indian of any other band, or a non-treaty Indian shall cease to be a member of the band to which she formerly belonged, and become a member of the band or irregular band of which her husband is a member:
> *(e)* Provided also that no half-breed in Manitoba who has shared in the distribution of half breed lands shall be accounted an Indian and that no half-breed head of a family (except the widow of an Indian, or a half-breed who has already been admitted into a treaty), shall, unless under very special circumstances, to be determined by the Superintendent-General or his agent, be accounted an Indian, or entitled to be admitted into any Indian treaty.[299]

This effectively legislates away a good portion of the already existing population of indigenous descent whose mothers were Native and fathers were not, as well as the descendants of Native women and fur traders, who are today

[299] *Indian Act*, 56-57.

known as the Metís. More insidiously, the law's determination of descent and identity along patrilineal lines has the result of reorienting cultures that would previously have been considered matrilineal.

How then, does this relate to the volunteer beaders? Consider that the group is made up of people who are both Native and non-Native. Their status as such is governed by the 1876 Indian Act; this is the legislation that determines what their legal identity is in this respect.[300] Yet all of these people are working as assistants on a piece of art that is identified as a work of contemporary First Nations art. In a very literal sense, these volunteers, Native and non-Native alike, through their labor in beading Myre's piece, are participating in an Indian act.[301] A powerful critique indeed.

Mi'kmaq artist Teresa Marshall offers a similar critique with her 1995 piece *Bering Strait Jacket #2* (figure 3-5). This work consists of a straightjacket, made of pinstriped fabric, with the lapels and buttons generally found on men's suiting. On the inside lining of the jacket, Marshall has silkscreened the text of a 1752 treaty between the Canadian government and the Mi'kmaq people. In one of the work's earliest incarnations, it was hung from a hanger that was then strung from a pair of sculpted human hands that

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[300] The Indian Act, in its definitions of terms, also separates out who is an "Indian" and who is a "person." See *Indian Act*, Article 3 subsection 12.

[301] See David Capell, "The Invention of Line: Nadia Myre's *Indian Act,*" *Parachute* no. 111 (2003), 99 - 111, for a further discussion of the linguistic impact of the word "act." Richard Hill also discusses the relationship of the volunteers' identities to Myre's piece, Hill, 33-34.

Figure 3-5. Teresa Marshall, *Bering Strait Jacket #2*, 1995. Image courtesy of the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, Indianapolis.

appeared to be manipulating the strings much like a marionette.[302] At one time the work also had a pocket square, embroidered with the words "Indian Act" in red thread, in the breast pocket.[303] The combination of treaty text, suiting, and straight jacket offers a punch to the gut, which the ironic humor found in the work's juxtaposition of references and in the play on words in the title does not entirely alleviate.

The 1752 Treaty came as a result of an earlier war between the Mi'kmaq and the British. Of all the indigenous groups in Canada, the Mi'kmaq have had

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[302] Gerald McMaster, "Bering Strait Jacket," *Teresa Marshall: The Deportment of Indian Affairs*, (Toronto: A Space, 1995), 27.

[303] McMaster, 26 and 27.

the longest contact with European populations.[304] In 1749, the frictions of this contact came to a head when the British founded the city of Halifax on Mi'kmaq territory without Mi'kmaq consent. The 1752 Treaty is a peace treaty that settled the ensuing conflict, with the exchange of land surrendered for the rights to hunt and fish. Articles 2 and 4 related the terms of this part of the Treaty.

> 2. That all Transactions during the Late War shall on both sides be buried in Oblivion with the Hatchet, And that the said Indians shall have all favour, Friendship & Protection shewn [sic] them from this His Majesty's Government.

and

> 4. It is agreed that the said Tribe of Indians shall not be hindered from, but have free liberty of Hunting and Fishing as usual and that if they shall think a Truck house needful at the River Chibenaccadie, or any other place of their resort they shall have the same built and proper Merchandize [sic], lodged therein to be exchanged for what the Indians shall have to dispose of and that in the mean time the Indians shall have free liberty to bring to Sale to Halifax, or any other Settlement within this Province, Skins, feathers, fowl, fish or any other thing they shall have to sell, where they shall have the liberty to dispose thereof to the best Advantage.[305]

Gerald McMaster argues that this treaty then became the model for all later First Nations treaties in Canada.[306]

The binding nature of a straightjacket suggests Marshall's own feelings about the 1752 Treaty; perhaps that it is unnecessarily confining, perhaps even

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[304] McMaster, 26.

[305] King George II of Great Britain, *1752 Peace and Friendship Treaty Between His Majesty the King and Chief Jean Baptiste Cope*, 1752, www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100029040.

[306] McMaster, 26-27.

cruel. The use of the suiting materials adds a dash of gallows humor to the work, as many who wear suits in general might argue the same thing about the restrictive qualities of those items. The treaty text written on the inside lining of the suit — an item of clothing strongly associated with government officials — suggests that the fault lies squarely within the colonial British, and, later, Canadian governments. In fact, in the nineteenth century the signing of treaties often involved the gift of suits to the chiefs who signed these treaties; they were also given to native boys who were forcibly placed in boarding schools.[307] The suit, then, can be understood as a potent symbol. Like a straightjacket whose function is to control the insane, the suit portrays control and assimilation into Euro-Canadian culture. The suit today perhaps represents a similar connotative meaning, as it has become associated with the legal, the governmental, and the very idea of the official.

This relatively straightforward reading is complicated, however, by Marshall's family background and her own discussions of her works. Marshall is both Mi'kmaq and Canadian by heritage; though she spent her summers with family on the reserve, Marshall attended what she terms "white schools" on military bases, since her father was in the military.[308] Gerald McMaster has pointed out that understanding Marshall's heritage as both Mi'kmaq and

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[307] McMaster, 28-29. Chapter 4 discusses works of art that specifically reference the effects of these boarding schools.

[308] Teresa Marshall interview in Diana Nemiroff, "Teresa Marshall," *Land Spirit Power*, eds. Diana Nemiroff, Robert Houle, and Charlotte Townsend-Gault, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992), 196

Canadian is vital to interpreting her works.[309] Marshall argues that her works are not inherently political, that she finds her works are a balance between her self and her environment.[310] Within this framework, Marshall finds that when people do not know or understand her history and culture as the basis for her work, then it becomes politicized.[311]

Marshall argues that the audience for her works is primarily those who have had a similar education to hers, one she terms "normal," who now have to unlearn all the fictions that are present in the mainstream historical narratives of Canada.[312] As McMaster points out, one of these fictions, from a First Nations point of view, is often the idea of the Bering Strait migration.[313] The fiction behind the idea of the Bering Strait migration lies with the recognition that this theory, produced by Western academia, does not correspond with many First Nations and Native American origin stories. These stories locate the places of origin or emergence squarely within the landscape of North America.

One must ask, then, how does this affect any reading of *Bering Straight Jacket #2*? *Bering Straight Jacket #2*, may, in the end, have as much to do with the restrictions of identity as it does with the restrictions of treaties. The

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[309] McMaster, 24.

[310] Teresa Marshall, interview in Townsend-Gault, 1999a, 32.

[311] Townsend-Gault, 1999a, 35.

[312] Nemiroff, 199.

[313] McMaster, 25.

confines of a restricting suit, the sartorial symbol of success in the Western world, combined with the straightjacket like restrictions of the treaty conveys a sense that there is little room to move out of one's labeled identity. We might also consider the confining nature of education. Mainstream Euro-Canadian or Euro-American schooling, what Marshall terms "normal," glosses over the conquest-era relationships that created the 1752 Treaty and the 1876 Indian Act. Artists like Marshall use their works to remedy this, filling in the gaps in this education.

Most of the artists discussed above are Canadian First Nations artists who reference Canadian government treaties and acts in their works. This is not to suggest that the government of the United States has somehow adhered more closely to the ideas of the Two Row Wampum Treaty or that Native artists in the United States have been less concerned with the laws that have affected them. It is quite the opposite. In the United States, many artists have responded to a law issued by the federal government much more recently and one that hits much closer to home: the 1990 Indian Arts and Crafts Act.

The United States and the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990

On November 29, 1990, Public Law 101-644, otherwise known as the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 (IACA), was signed into law. This Act was ostensibly written to regulate and protect Native American arts and crafts production against the sale of mass-produced Indian art imported from

various Asian countries, such as Taiwan and China. While the IACA may have been conceptualized with such good intentions, its clauses regarding the designation of who may be considered an Indian artisan have had far reaching, and arguably negative, consequences for many Native American artists.

The IACA is among the recent incursions by the United States government into the realm of Native American artistic production. This involvement began as a part of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal program, serving as a way to provide some modicum of economic independence for the indigenous population of the United States. The reservations onto which Native American populations had been forcibly removed were remote from most industrial labor, and the land was generally not agriculturally productive. The government believed that the arts would be favorable as a milieu for the relocated Native populations.[314]

The background of U.S. federal government bureaucracies created in relationship to the Native American groups is fairly complex. In 1824, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was created as an agency under the War Department by the Secretary of War. Congress statutorily ratified the BIA in 1834, and in 1849, the Bureau was moved to the Department of the Interior.[315] It was under this legacy that Congress issued the 1928 Meriam Report, which

[314] Robert Fay Schrader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board: An Aspect of New Deal Indian Policy* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), 20. Interestingly, the government also attempted the same type of economic intervention by support of the arts in Appalachia. See Joy L. Gritton, "Made in Japan," *Painters, Patrons and Identity,* ed. Joyce M. Szabo (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 164.

[315] Gail K. Sheffield, *The Arbitrary Indian*, (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 199, Chapter 2 Note 1.

found that the development of Indian arts and crafts should be a concern of the United States government and, importantly for later contexts, that quality and genuineness should be factors included in the government's policies.[316] The Meriam Report's recommendations were put into effect, creating the Indian Arts and Crafts Board (IACB), which was established under the Department of the Interior by legislation signed by Franklin Roosevelt on August 27, 1935.[317]

The Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 modifies the powers of the IACB to regulate the genuineness of Native American art. The relevant text reads as follows:

> …(1) to create for the Board [the IACB], or for an individual Indian or Indian tribe or Indian arts and crafts organization, trademarks of genuineness and quality for Indian products and the products of an individual Indian or particular Indian tribe or Indian arts and crafts organization.[318]

The 1990 act also amends the portion of the United States Code regarding Indian goods and products, by declaring that it is illegal to sell any good that "falsely suggests it is Indian produced, an Indian product, or the product of a particular Indian or Indian tribe or Indian arts and crafts organization, resident within the United States."[319]

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[316] Schrader, 18.

[317] Schrader, 111.

[318] *Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990*, Public Law 101-644, 101st Congress, 2nd Session, *United States Statutes at Large*, 104, 4662.

[319] *Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990*, Public Law 101-644, 101st Congress, 2nd Session, *United States Statutes at Large*, 104, 4663.

With this language, the U.S. government dipped its toes once more into the murky waters of authenticity.[320] As with the Canadian Indian Act, one of the most controversial and troubling clauses in this act regards the government regulation of Native American identity.

> …(c) As used in this section –
> (1) the term 'Indian' means any individual who is a member of an Indian tribe, or for the purposes of this section is certified as an Indian artisan by an Indian tribe;
> (2) the terms 'Indian product' and 'product of a particular Indian tribe or Indian arts and crafts organization' has the meaning given such term in regulations which may be promulgated by the Secretary of the Interior;
> (3) the term 'Indian tribe' means –
> (A) any Indian tribe, band, nation, Alaska Native village, or other organized group or community which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians; or
> (B) any Indian group that has been formally recognized as an Indian tribe by a State legislature or by a State commission or similar organization legislatively vested with State tribal recognition authority.[321]

As the text of the act states, it is concerned primarily with two things: first, regulating what is to be considered genuine Native American art and, second, who is a genuine Native American, at least for artistic purposes. These two points are also some of the most troubling designations from an artistic, if not juridical, point of view.

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[320] Native American scholar Theodore Jojola argues that the 1935 legislation which instituted the IACB also codified what "authentic" Indian art is. Theodore S. Jojola, "On Revision and Revisionism: American Indian Representations in New Mexico," *American Indian Quarterly*, 20 No. 1 (1996), 42.

[321] *Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990*, Public Law 101-644, 101st Congress, 2nd Session, *United States Statutes at Large*, 104, 4663.

Joy Gritton has stated that "questions of authenticity are largely meaningful only for outsiders."[322] While the response to the 1990 act among Native peoples has been widely varied, the idea of authenticity is one that is widely discussed within artistic and scholarly communities and often lambasted.[323] Paul Chaat Smith, a Native scholar, discusses the concept of authenticity as an ideological prison, which Native artists have to be particularly canny in trying to escape.

> ...[As a] prerequisite for making Indian conceptual art, one must become an expert in the fine art of staging jailbreaks... I am not speaking of literal jails, but the ideological apparatus that powerfully creates its own world of expectations and normalcy. Indeed, it becomes "reality," which despite the implications of its name is always subjective, or as Lily Tomlin said once, basically just "a collective hunch."[324]

The enactment of the IACA by the IACB defines who can be considered an Indian artist in a problematic fashion. While the act designates who can be legally considered an "Indian artisan," the actual means of certification were not made clear. The 1990 act required implementation by the IACB, and the latter entity produced its regulations on November 20, 1996. These regulations

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[322] Gritton, 180.

[323] Sheffield, 94. Sheffield is a legal anthropologist, and as such her focus is not the same as one who is writing from an art historical point of view. While recognizing the different responses among the Native communities, she tends to minimize the impact of the 1990 act upon artists, at one point stating, erroneously, that most fine art marketed as Indian is in fact produced by non-Natives. This statement seems to reiterate Gritton's point regarding what is considered authentic. See Sheffield, 144.

[324] Paul Chaat Smith, "Luna Remembers," *James Luna:* Emendiato*,* (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of the American Indian, 2005), 28.

state that the tribes can only certify those of documented Indian lineage, which must be presented in writing to the governing body of the tribe.[325]

This method of certification necessarily leaves some artists by the wayside.[326] There are many people of Native American descent who are unable to become enrolled members of their tribes for a variety of reasons. Perhaps some had ancestors who were uncomfortable registering with the U.S. government in accord with the Dawes Act of 1887.[327] Others may have been unable to obtain an enrollment or certification due to the wrong combination of Native ancestry, as some tribes determine their heritage strictly along matrilineal or patrilineal lines. Further, people may be excluded, because their affiliation is with a tribe or group that is not recognized by either the federal or state governments.

The question of authenticity has most often been critiqued in the contemporary Native art world. This is likely because the largely Euro-American art establishment regularly accused Native artists who were interested in exploring modernist art practices of not making authentically

[325] Sheffield, 30.

[326] Among the most famous of these cases is that of Jimmie Durham, who is a non-enrolled Cherokee, and will be discussed below.

[327] The Dawes Act allotted land parcels to those of Indian heritage who registered with the United States government. Some refused to register in protest of the number of non-Natives who registered in order to get land, others were wary, with reason, of the government knowing who and where they were.

"Indian" art.[328] One of the goals of the 1990 IACA was to ensure the genuineness, at least as regards point of origin, of traditional-style Native art objects, such as Navajo rugs or Pueblo Katsinas, and to differentiate these from replicas produced overseas.[329] However, the IACA affected all realms of Native art production in the United States, and the most vocal criticisms of the Act come from artists working in contemporary media.

Thus, the field of contemporary Native American art becomes the grounds on which artists contest the concepts of authenticity and Indian identity, as presented in the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990. One of the artists who has been most prevalent in this arena is Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, who was raised primarily on the Diné reservation. Regarding Tsinhnahjinnie's practice, Lucy Lippard states that "she turned to photography as a weapon when her aesthetic/ethnic subjectivity came under fire."[330] One of the most effective of these "weapons" is her 1993 installation *Nobody's Pet Indian*. This installation featured portraits of Native American artists and activists, both

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[328] In 1958, Sioux artist Oscar Howe had his work rejected from the Philbrook Annual, a yearly exhibition of Indian art. His work was rejected for not being "Indian enough." Howe wrote a scathing letter in response, which is worth quoting here. "Who ever said that my paintings are not in traditional Indian style has poor knowledge of Indian art indeed. There is much more to Indian art than pretty, stylized pictures.... Are we to be held back forever with one phase of Indian painting, with no right for individualism, dictated to as the Indian always has been, put on reservations and treated like a child, and only the White Man knows what is best for him? Now, even in Art, 'You little child do what we think is best for you, nothing different.' Well, I am not going to stand for it." Howe, quoted in Berlo and Phillips, 221.

[329] In fact, guaranteeing the genuineness of Indian art is one of the stated goals of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990. Acceptable works are marked with an IACB seal.

[330] Lucy R. Lippard, "Independent Identities," *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. W. Jackson Rushing III (London: Routledge, 1999), 140.

Figure 3-6. Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, *Would I have been a member of the Nighthawk Society or the Snake Society or would I have been a half-breed leading the whites to the full-bloods?*, 1991. Image courtesy of the artist.

enrolled and non-enrolled, and was created in response to the 1990 act.[331] *Nobody's Pet Indian* was re-installed at the San Jose Art Museum in 2002, further provoking debate regarding the IACA.[332]

One of the most provocative pieces in the installation is *Would I have been a member of the Nighthawk Society or the Snake Society or would I have been a half-breed leading the whites to the full-bloods?* (*Would I have been…*)(figure 3-6). This piece is a triptych of Tsinhnahjinnie's self-portraits; each of the three photographs features slightly different imagery on Tsinhnahjinnie's face, while the text across the bottom of each image titles the work. The numbers, which are placed across Tsinhnahjinnie's face in each image, are 111-390, her government-issued tribal enrollment number. The references to the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 in this work are myriad. Through the inclusion of her enrollment number, Tsinhnahjinnie references her legal ability to produce Indian art. By including this in a work that, because of its contemporary media and postmodernist sensibility, does not conform to the institutionalized view of what constitutes Indian art, she is thumbing her nose at the government's concept of authenticity or genuineness. Since Tsinhnahjinnie is Diné, any work that she produces is, by definition, Native American. Further, since she is legally able to identify herself as a Native

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[331] Lucy R. Lippard, "Esthetic Sovereignty, or, Going Places with Cultural Baggage," *Path Breakers: The Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art, 2003,* ed. Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 7.

[332] Veronica Passalacqua, "Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie," *Path Breakers: The Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art, 2003,* ed. Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 84.

American artist, any work she produces is necessarily a "genuine" piece of Native American art in terms of the IACA, without regard to the manner, style, or materials of its formation.

Would I have been… additionally references the difficulties of many artists who might self-identify as Native American but are unable to receive any official certification of their status. The text alludes to the historical figure of Eufala Harjo, who was a member of a resistance group to the Dawes Act and who witnessed "half-breed" Indians handing over the names of some full-blooded resisters to the Dawes Commission.[333] Depending on one's ancestors' trust in the federal government, some Native artists may not be able to produce or market their work as Native American, whereas prior to November 29, 1990, they could. Additionally, Harjo's story indicates the debate within Native communities regarding the federal government's intervention, both historically and currently. As Tsinhnahjinnie's choice of wording, especially the use of terms such as full-blood and half-breed, might indicate, it is a debate that is heavily emotional.

Visually, *Would I have been…* indicates the artist's antagonism toward the 1990 act, as well. Certainly the tattoo-like appearance of Tsinhnahjinnie's

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[333] Theresa Harlan, "As in Her Vision: Native American Women Photographers," *Reframings,* ed. Diane Neumaier, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 118. The Nighthawk and the Snake Societies were what were termed "fullblood" societies that resisted assimilation into Euro-American life, and specifically the land allotments of the Dawes Act. See Donald L. Fixico, "History of the Western Southeast Since Removal", *The Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 14 The Southeast*, eds. Raymond Fogelson and William Sturtevant (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2004), 168, and Angie Debo, *And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes* (New Haven: Princeton University Press, 1973 [1940]) 54.

enrollment number on her face suggests the all too visible control of the federal government over Indian affairs. It also suggests the tattooing of Nazi concentration camp numbers upon the bodies of those who were interred within them. The fact that Tsinhnahjinnie appears gagged in one of the frames is also notable. It certainly suggests that the artist feels that she is not always heard within the mainstream political discourse and that her opinions matter little to the federal government. Finally in the third frame just to the right of the artist's head appears a dollar sign, possibly indicating the view that the 1990 act is about nothing so much as money. Given the subversive tone of Tsinhnahjinnie's piece, a reasonable interpretation suggests that the beneficiaries of this money are not very likely to be those Native artists who are subject to the law's requirements.

Tsinhnahjinnie also references the 1990 act in her 1994 piece *Don't Leave the Rez Without It!* (figure 3-7). This piece consists of identification cards with images of Tsinhnahjinnie and historical Native American activists. The text on the cards reads "United States of America/Government Approved and Certified/Indian Artist [or Activist]." The concept of needing governmental approval and certification to be an artist or activist is ludicrous; by making these I.D. cards, Tsinhnahjinnie brings that to the viewer's attention in a satirical way. While some viewers might not be as disturbed by the requirement of being a certified "Indian artist" or may not be informed as to the consequences of this requirement, the mere thought that one might be

Figure 3-7. Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, *Don't Leave the Rez Without It!*, 1994. Image courtesy of the artist.

required to register as an activist underscores the IACA's probable violations of the First Amendment. After all, a government-approved activist is probably not much of an activist at all. The piece also suggests how very different attitudes towards an Indian identity prevail on the reservation and off of it.

Don't Leave the Rez Without It! also plays with the concept of authenticity. The work itself is part of a collection of digital images titled *Photographic Memoirs of an Aboriginal Savant*, also from 1994. These images have been manipulated to appear older and, thus, more authentic. The irony is also reinforced by the project's status as primarily a digital and, therefore, definitively not antique, "book." To create the aged look for this

series of works, the prints are placed upon yellowed or aged pages from old books.[334]

Other artists refer to the 1990 act in ways that are more oblique, though no less politically motivated than Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie. Painter and printmaker Jaune Quick-to-See Smith has made several pieces that allude to the IACA in ways that are quite different from Tsinhnahjinnie. One of the most interesting of these works is *The Red Mean: Self-Portrait* of 1992 (figure 3-8). This work is Quick-to-See Smith's response to Da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* and

Figure 3-8. Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, *The Red Mean: Self-Portrait*, 1992. Image courtesy of the artist.

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[334] Passalacqua, 83.

the proportions of the Golden Mean, which solely reference the male body. In contrast, the body here is that of the artist, and the circle, which no longer circumscribes the figure, is a medicine wheel.[335]

It is in the elements of collage that appear within Quick-to-See Smith's body that the effects of the 1990 act come to bear. The number 7137, the artist's tribal enrollment number, has been stenciled on her torso. Directly above this number is a collage piece reading "Made in the USA," and to the right, another states "Major Values." That these statements are related to Quick-to-See Smith's enrollment number may be understood based upon their contiguous locations. That they are to be taken ironically is indicated by the phrase placed just above "Made in the USA." This phrase, "Coyote Made Me Do It," is the key to deciphering the image.

Coyote is a trickster figure for many different Native American cultures. When he appears in contemporary art, it is a sign that there is an element of irony, frequently subversive, that should be read into the piece. In *The Red Mean*, the appearance of Coyote subverts a patriotic interpretation of the statements placed nearby, revealing the artist's ironic usage. Arguably, Quick-to-See Smith was made in the USA, but the United States has also been inflicted upon her. This same government also requires her to register and have her identity certified in order to practice her chosen vocation. The side-by-side placement of Coyote, Quick-to-See Smith's tribal enrollment number,

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[335] Zena Pearlstone and Allan J. Ryan, "About Face," *About Face,* ed. Zena Pearlstone and Allan J. Ryan, (Santa Fe: Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian, 2006), 35.

and the idea of American values indicates the works subversive intent. The types of major values that one might associate with the United States — equality, liberty, and freedom to pursue a legitimate career — are, in fact, subverted by the IACA. No other group of people is forced to register their identity with the federal government in order to practice their occupation or to market the products made through that practice.

In *Coyote Made Me Do It*, a drawing from 1996, Quick-to-See Smith makes this association between Coyote and tribal enrollment requirements vividly clear. In this work, an image of Coyote is sketched in profile with Quick-to-See Smith's enrollment number stenciled vertically along his torso. The work's title, stenciling, and the number's location recall her earlier use of these elements in *Red Mean*. Here, though, the suggestion becomes more apparent; rather than tracing the outline of her own body, as she does in *Red Mean*, Quick-to-See Smith uses the outline of Coyote's body as her stand-in. The placement of her own tribal enrollment number on his body suggests that Quick-to-See Smith sees herself as a trickster, indicating her meaning through irony, a common trope found in many trickster stories.

Peter Nabokov's investigation of Native American history and historicity discusses modern and contact-era trickster stories and cycles; in them he finds a sub-genre, in which trickster figures have begun to go head to head against figures from Euro-American culture. At a time when indigenous Americans found their lives changing dramatically with the onslaught of

European colonialism, their trickster figures triumphed over the folkloric narratives of the settlers. For Nabokov, these trickster cycles represent a form of resistance against the measures of assimilation which the colonial governments and religions pushed.[336] Quick-to-See Smith's adoption of a Coyote guise, a trickster motif, alongside a reference to the 1990 act can certainly be best understood as a form of trickster resistance, similar to those Nabokov has found in the oral traditions of Native peoples.

While to this point, I have discussed artists who have been able to continue to refer to their art as Indian or Native American under the IACA, it is imperative to mention that this is not the case for all Native American artists. Non-enrolled Cherokee artist Jimmie Durham is probably the best known of the artists so affected. In 1993 Durham declared, "I am not Cherokee. I am not an American Indian. This is in concurrence with recent U.S. legislation, because I am not enrolled on any reservation or in any American Indian community."[337] The art world took great notice of this statement. This same art world, however, did not examine the context in which he made that pronouncement. Given that his tribal affiliation was non-enrolled, he was no longer legally empowered to refer to himself as Indian or Native American in the context of his artistic production.

As Richard Schiff states, the 1990 act was designed to protect Indian art commerce from foreigners, including what he terms "foreign Indians;" these

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[336] Nabokov, 109.

[337] Jimmie Durham, quoted in Townsend-Gault, 1999b, 127.

foreign Indians included Native Americans who are non-enrolled, for any number of reasons, those who are from non-recognized tribes, and those who are indigenous Americans but whose tribal lands fall south of the United States border.[338] Since Durham fell into the foreign Indian category, his work was profoundly affected by the passage of the act. Durham had two shows cancelled, one in Santa Fe and one in San Francisco, as a result; however, these same works had been previously shown at Exit Art in New York City without problems.[339] While Durham views his work as that of a contemporary artist, for whom government certification is not the point, the canceling of his shows would seem to indicate that the art world as a whole found his identity as a Native American to be the more compelling part of his artistic persona.[340] Durham, however, continues to demand to make art without reference to his ethnicity, should he so choose, insisting that he has rights to his self-representation.[341]

Durham has stated that he believes one's conduct determines identity more than birth or government recognition.[342] He worked within the American Indian Movement during the 1970s without regard to his status as a non-

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[338] Schiff, 74.

[339] Schiff, 75.

[340] Schiff, 75.

[341] Townsend-Gault, 1992, 54.

[342] Schiff, 77.

enrolled Native American.[343] However, he was never interested in marketing or making profit from his "Indian-ness."[344] Nonetheless, this element of his identity does appear in his works. Durham has used text written in the Cherokee language in his works as a way of indicating to his non-Native, or non-Cherokee reading, viewers that there are just some elements of his works that are not meant to be understood, except by those who already have that knowledge.[345]

Perhaps we can best understand Durham's statement and subsequent actions as a performative argument about identity. The art world in general, and the 1990 IACA specifically, seem over-concerned with the issue of identity insomuch as it correlates to the idea of the authentic. For Durham, it would seem that his "I am, but yet I'm not" attitude towards self-identifying, or even self-branding, as a Native artist is a way to escape the lockdown of authenticity that Paul Chaat Smith references. If you refuse to play the game, as Durham arguably does, and instead choose to develop your own rules, then maybe you are able to stage Smith's jailbreak.

There is no doubt that the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 has been beneficial for some artists as well. The IACA was intended, in part, to prevent

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[343] One need look no further than the recent controversy surrounding Ward Churchill, who also was active in AIM, and has been bombarded with accusations of faking his Indian identity. While I have no opinion on Churchill's case, the correlation between his position and Durham's is notable.

[344] Jimmie Durham, interview with Dirk Snauwaert in *Jimmie Durham*, ed. Laura Mulvey, Dirk Snauwaert, and Mark Alice Durant, (London: Phaidon Press, 1995), 8.

[345] Townsend-Gault, 1999b, 127.

foreign companies from making inexpensive knock-off versions of traditional Native American arts, and then marketing them as Native American for sale on the open market. The Native artists who were the traditional makers of these objects were, in this sense, protected by the IACA. However, it is the government's incursion into the determination of authenticity and identity that is ultimately so problematic. In this instance, the IACA shares much in common with Canada's legislation and treaties. Both the IACA and the Canadian Indian Act determine who can be considered Indian, and both pieces of legislation create the possibility of a governmental or legal identity that does not match up with one's cultural or social identity. Privileges and rights are granted to those who do fall on the correct side of the identity matrix and are rescinded from those who do not meet the appropriate criteria.

The question then becomes one of control; control of representation, of tradition, of land, of identity. The laws and treaties under discussion in this chapter are written to firmly and forcibly place that control in the hands of the Canadian and U.S. governments and to insist that the indigenous peoples who they have conquered have no real right to command these things in the first place.

Using art as a means of resistance allows the artists, and by extension, many other indigenous peoples, to reclaim the agency that these pieces of legislation have taken away. It can deny or subvert their power, as in the case of Nadia Myre making the Indian Act illegible or Jimmie Durham

performatively declaring that the government does not have the right to define his identity. The works then become the vital, vibrant, and lasting monuments to these artists' agencies, their acts of resistance. The works, in fact, embody the power these artists have reclaimed from the very acts that they subvert.

What these laws and treaties leave out, which of course they must do by their nature, is a focus on the individual, a person with relationships to cultures, peoples, and events. When thinking of histories, the focus is generally on the larger picture, the grand scale. Now and again, it is useful to bring the historical eye to a tighter focus, a smaller frame of reference. History, after all, is something that is experienced by individuals — people who understand these occurrences on a local level, in terms of their personal relationships and encounters. This is where I will turn in the next chapter, examining the personal histories presented by Native American and First Nations artists.

CHAPTER FOUR
PERSONAL HISTORIES

In his essay titled "On Romanticism," Paul Chaat Smith discusses the background of two popular "Indian" books, *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky: A Message from Chief Seattle* and *The Education of Little Tree*. Though each purports to be authentic Indian literature, *Brother Eagle* features text written by a Euro-American professor and documentary screenwriter, and *Little Tree* was written under a pseudonym by Asa Carter, speechwriter for George Wallace and noted white supremacist.[346] Smith writes,

> I've written about these two books at some length because to me they're perfect examples of the ideological swamp Indian people find ourselves in these days. We are witnessing a new age in the objectification of American Indian history and culture, one that doesn't need Indians except as endorsers. Our past is turning into pieces of clever screenplay. And even the exposure of an Indian book as a total fake turns out to be little more than a slight embarrassment, easily remedied.[347]

For Smith, the solution for this situation is to understand what he calls the "secret history" of America's indigenous populations, to know that "Geronimo really did have a Cadillac, and used to drive it to church, where he'd sign autographs."[348] Understanding the real, the personal histories of Native

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[346] Paul Chaat Smith, *Everything You Know About Indians is Wrong*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 14 and 15.

[347] Smith, 2009, 16.

[348] Smith, 2009, 21.

peoples makes it difficult to elide events, fictions, and histories into Smith's rhetorical screenplay.

Further, these personal histories foreground Native agency. Like Geronimo in his Cadillac, these histories — personal narratives really — are formed through the blending of past traditions with present events and realities.[349] They also emphasize the agency of the actors. Through the presentation of specific, small scale, and often autobiographical histories of Native peoples, where the presenters — through discussions of their own lives or biographies of other Native people — can choose what is conveyed and what is left out, we begin to see a view of contemporary Native historicity that is structured by Native ideas about power, control, and agency.

This, I believe, is the ideological thrust of the autobiographical and the personal histories that are often found in works by contemporary artists of Native American and First Nations descent. In many ways they represent a political statement. The statement hinges on identity; as Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun points out, being Indian is in and of itself political.[350] This is not an issue of identity alone, but also one of agency. The popular cultures of Euro-American and Euro-Canadian peoples have romantically identified the Indian as a vanishing (or already vanished) race, a people without history, whose lives exist solely in a premodern past. How, then, are contemporary Native people

[349] See Nabokov, 194 for further discussion.

[350] Enright, 2001, 40.

to assert their rights and controls over their present, their past, their future? How are they to be present in the modern world like anyone else?

Individual Histories

The artist who perhaps set the bar for works grappling with this issue is Luiseño and Digueño artist James Luna. In 1987, he placed himself in the art world, literally and figuratively, through a performance and installation work titled *Artifact Piece* (figures 4-1 and 4-2). *Artifact Piece* was performed originally at the San Diego Museum of Man, a museum dedicated to the field of anthropology and co-founded by noted Southwest Native American specialist, Dr. Edgar Lee Hewett.[351] It was then shown a second time in 1990 in *The Decade Show* in New York. In this work, Luna placed himself in a sand-

Figure 4-1. James Luna, *Artifact Piece*, 1987. Image courtesy of the artist.

[351] See http://www.museumofman.org/history. Hewett is perhaps best known for his work with Maria Martinez at San Ildefonso pueblo.

lined museum display case with labels displaying his tribal affiliations, as well as indicating prominent features and scars on his nearly nude body. Another nearby case housed the artifacts of his life: his college diploma, his divorce papers, and books and records by Hank Williams, the Sex Pistols, and Jack Keroac, among others.[352] Label text gave some indication of Luna's intent, reading

> Having been married less than two years, the sharing of emotional scars from alcoholic family backgrounds was cause for fears of giving, communicating, and mistrust. Skin callous on ring finger remains, along with assorted painful and happy memories.

and

> Drunk beyond the point of being able to defend himself, he was jumped by people from another reservation. After being knocked down, he was kicked in the face and upper body. Saved by an old man, he awoke with a swollen face covered with dried blood. Thereafter, he made it a point not to be as trusting among relatives and other Indians.[353]

Though many visitors stopped to stare, discomfited, at Luna presenting himself as a decidedly modern artifact, others managed to miss him and his point entirely.[354] The discomfort and tension of *Artifact Piece* lay in the audience's dawning awareness of their own complicity in the event; after all, they were attending a museum dedicated to the study of humanity, while they

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[352] Smith, 2005, 34 and Truman T. Lowe, "The Art of the Unexpected," *James Luna: Emendiato*, (Washington D.C.: National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 2005), 13.

[353] Quoted in Smith, 2005, 34.

[354] Smith, 2005, 34.

Figure 4-2. James Luna, *Artifact Piece*, 1987 (gallery view). Image courtesy of the artist.

were simultaneously expecting that the humanity on display was not going to be European. As Paul Chaat Smith notes, discussing an exhibition of First Nations life at the Natural History Museum in Regina, Saskatchewan, “Why are we in this museum at all? The English and the Ukrainians and the Germans aren’t here. Only us, next to the dinosaurs.”[355]

The tension of *Artifact Piece* is exacerbated by the audience’s awareness that Luna is fully alive, lying in that case. The art critic Elizabeth Hess noted her response to Luna’s work: “The realization that Luna was not an inanimate object was stunning. Who was watching whom? I already had a relationship with this person. What would he do if I talked to him? Touched him? I felt self-conscious staring at Luna, yet I was riveted.”[356] Hess’s reaction gets to the heart of *Artifact Piece*’s intent and the critique that Luna’s performance

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[355] Smith, 2009, 24.

[356] Quoted in Lowe, 2005, 14.

makes. Here we have a living artist, placing himself as object in a museum. The moment the viewers realize that they are observing a living subject and not an object, is the work's revelatory moment.

Through this realization, *Artifact Piece* critiques the role of museums and museum viewership in the objectification of Native peoples, past and present. Luna is able to generate a tension between himself as a contemporary subject, displaying autobiographical artifacts similar to those belonging to the audience, and the objectification inherent in the act of display. This objectification is taken so much for granted that some viewers of Luna's piece never seemed to realize that they were looking at a living person.[357] Anthropology museums such as the Museum of Man had, at one point, been the sites for "living exhibits" of Native people brought in to display traditional ways of life, sometimes living within replica villages, for the benefit of museum patrons.[358] More recently, these museums frequently exhibited sculptural dioramas of Native American life in a pre-modern past, and it is likely that some viewers believed that this was what *Artifact Piece* represented.

What those living exhibitions and diorama displays conveyed, though, was the sense that Native American peoples belonged solely to the past, alongside the dinosaurs, as Smith notes. Luna's performance deftly counters this belief; he places his decidedly modern accoutrements alongside himself as

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[357] Smith, 2005, 34.

[358] The 1915 Panama-California Exposition held in San Diego's Balboa Park, the site of the Museum of Man, displayed some of these "living village" exhibits. See http://www.sandiegohistory.org/pancal/sdexpo33.htm.

artifact on display. It is hard to mistake a Sex Pistols record for a pre-modern artifact. Viewers are almost forced to understand Luna as a complex, modern man; he is also someone who pulls no punches about his life, as the labels referencing alcoholism and fighting indicate. Luna presents the complex reality of Native American life in an institution that has often seemed dedicated to the insistence on its portrayal as a romantic and ahistorical fiction. The San Diego Museum of Man, with its academic lineage of Native American anthropological research that began with Dr. Hewett, becomes the perfect site for such a critique. I believe it is truly to the Museum's credit that they invited and hosted such a critique, as well.

More recently, Luna has taken a turn at presenting the life of another Luiseño crosser of borders. In 2005, Luna was invited by the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian to exhibit at that year's Venice Biennale. Luna was interested in exploring the relationships between Italy and the Luiseño people; he did so in a large scale installation called *The Chapel for Pablo Tac* (figure 4-3).[359] Like Luna, Pablo Tac was Luiseño; he was born at the San Luis Rey Mission in 1822.[360] And as Luna metaphorically crosses — perhaps ignores is a better phrase — artistic borders, Tac crossed geopolitical ones. Also like Luna, Tac altered his role as an object of history;

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[359] This is the view of the Chapel as it was installed in the Eiteljorg Museum in Indianapolis, Indiana, during 2007-2008. It shows the fullest view of the installation as a whole.

[360] Lisbeth Haas, "Pablo Tac," *James Luna: Emendiato*, (Washington D.C.: National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 2005), 49.

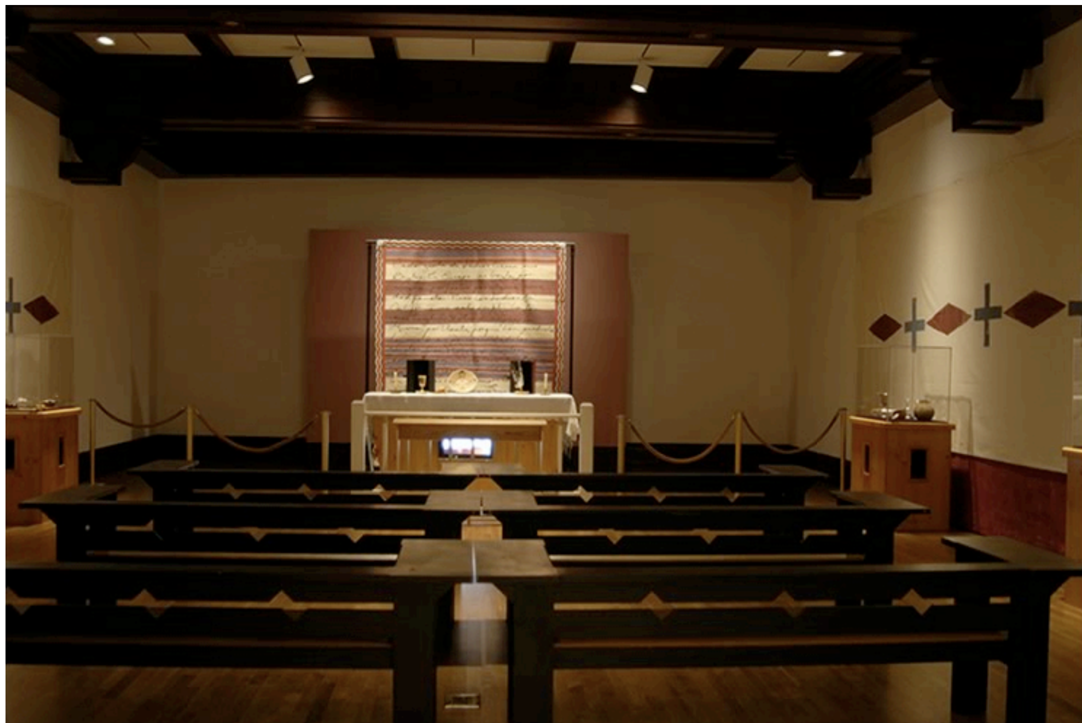

Figure 4-3. James Luna, *Chapel for Pablo Tac*, 2005. Image courtesy of the artist.

rather than let himself be defined by European scholars' texts about the Luiseño, he wrote his own ethnohistory of his people and his life.

At the age of ten, Tac left the mission to travel to Italy, via Spain and Mexico, to join the priesthood. Though he survived smallpox in 1840, he died the following year.[361] Tac is known today primarily as a historian, having written a 150-page manuscript that covers both the history of the Luiseño people during the mission period, as well as the grammar of and Spanish translations for the Luiseño language.[362] *The Chapel for Pablo Tac* honors Tac's life and work as a scholar and a religious devotee. In a mainstream

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361 Haas, 49.

362 Haas, 49-50.

Figure 4-4. James Luna, *Chapel for Pablo Tac*, 2005 (detail). Image courtesy of the artist.

historical discourse that focuses primarily on the actions and agency of the Church upon Native populations, Luna's piece returns some of the agency back to the Luiseño, emphasizing the role and effect that one Native man had, albeit briefly, upon the Church.

The *Chapel for Pablo Tac* is a large scale installation piece that recreates the interior space of a traditional California Mission church. Luna based the design of the piece on the current presentation of the Missions as guidebook-friendly historical sites.[363] The format of the space mimics that of a small church, with two rows of pews that face a central altar. Along the side walls of the room, Luna has placed a series of cases that hold various implements of religious practice; these items, however, are both Luiseño and Catholic. For instance, one case contains a silver cup, several glass bottles marked with a cross, an eagle feather, a small pot, and a dipper-shaped gourd

[363] Luna, quoted National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, "James Luna - Chapel for Pablo Tac", Digital Video, 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AStOGFopWC4.

Figure 4-5. James Luna, *Chapel for Pablo Tac*, 2005 (detail). Image courtesy of the artist.

(figure 4-4).[364] The placement of these items side by side functions like Tac's Luiseño dictionary; as viewers, we translate and understand the purpose of the unfamiliar items in terms of the familiar.

This juxtaposition of regalia continues on the altar itself, which holds a chalice, eagle feather, medicine pouch, and basket, as well as several candles in brass holders (figures 4-5 and 4-6). On the front of the altar Luna has mounted a video monitor, which appears to play images of Italian churches.[365] Behind the altar is a monumental tapestry, a blanket woven with the striped patterns often associated with Navajo chief's blankets. However, Luna has included some of Tac's writings in Spanish, in which Tac compares Catholic and Luiseño religious practices.

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[364] Truman Lowe points out Luna's sardonic approach with this piece, noting Luna's deliberate blurring of fact and fantasy. Lowe, 20. One vitrine holds a rattle and a throwing stick made from a hammer. See Smith, 2005, 29 for an image.

[365] See National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 2011.

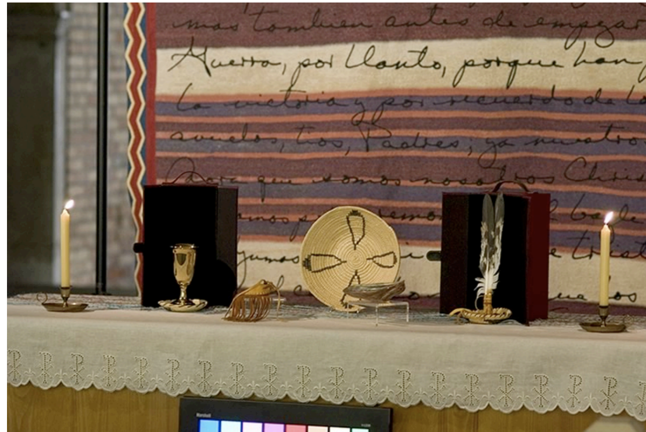

Figure 4-6. James Luna, *Chapel for Pablo Tac*, 2005 (detail). Image courtesy of the artist.

In many ways, this comparison brings out the similarities to be found in European and Native American religious life. Luna and Tac, via his text, seem to present the commonalities of human life here, rather than the differences that can be all too divisive. Luna himself acknowledges the installation is a "statement of cross-cultural similarities, as opposed to difference."[366] For Luna, this interpretation of both Tac's life and of the results of the Mission system is particularly apposite. After all, he began the project by "looking at missions, the façade of missions, because there's a lot of them that are not really what they were. They're interpretations."[367]

This idea of historical reconstruction is part of Luna's project here. The California missions, as presented to today's visitor, represent a palatable, perhaps sanitized, narrative of these institutions' roles in the state's history. Information and objects from the historical record are chosen to present a

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[366] Luna, quoted in National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 2011.

[367] Luna, quoted in National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 2011.

specific view of the missions and their place in California life. Similarly, Luna is involved in a historical reconstruction of Tac's life. However similar these may seem, there is one significant difference. Native Californians have very little say in how their lives and histories are presented at the mission sites; they have no agency in these histories. Luna's focus on Tac utilizes a doubling of Native historical agency: the first is found through Tac's written history of his own life wherein he chooses what to present; the second is evinced through Luna's representational choices in *The Chapel for Pablo Tac*.

While Luna undoubtedly wants his audience to understand the importance of Luiseño religion, a comparison between Catholicism and traditional Luiseño practices might not be the only point to take away.[368] In many areas that had been under Spanish colonial control, a hybrid style of Catholic worship developed that incorporated Native ideas and forms of spiritual practice. The Virgin of Guadalupe in Latin America is probably the most familiar example of this hybridity. Examples exist in North America as well. At Santa Clara Pueblo, New Mexico, on certain feast days, the Saints' statues are taken out of the Pueblo's Church and placed outdoors. Traditional dances are then performed before them, and members of the Santa Clara community come and address them one by one.[369]

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[368] It is also important to note that the piece was originally designed and installed for the Venice Biennale, where the audience would not be as familiar with Luiseño life, and very possibly not at all knowledgeable about Luiseño traditions. Luna enjoys playing to, and with, audiences with often romantic views of Indian life.

[369] *Pablita Velarde: An Artist and Her People*, directed by Shirley Wilt, (1984; Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2006), DVD.

We can see a similarly blended understanding of Catholicism in Tac's own writings through the Luiseño terms he chose to represent Catholic concepts. These terms represent ideas that were important to the Luiseño, rather than to the Catholic priests and, as Lisbeth Haas argues, they "suggest why it may have been feasible [for the Luiseño] to adopt Christianity."[370] What the *Chapel for Pablo Tac* argues, then, is not only for a comparative view of traditional religious practice, but for a more nuanced understanding of the hybrid forms of religion that developed through contact.

Mountain Maidu/Washo/Hammawi Band Pitt River (and Scottish-Irish/Euro-Australian)[371] artist Judith Lowry takes her own personal histories, as well as those of her family, as the subject of her paintings, many of which are based upon old family photographs. Lowry's choice of subjects, however, does not appear arbitrary, or solely based upon fond memories. As with James Luna, the subjects of Lowry's paintings reflect and consider larger issues of concern to many Native American communities. In *Family: Love's Unbreakable Heaven*, a triptych from 1995, Lowry firmly grapples with the ideas of family, passing, and the effect that these have on one's own identity (figure 4-7).

The triptych's central panel shows us a young boy, dressed in full Plains regalia, including a feathered headdress and beaded moccasins. The left panel

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[370] Haas, 51.

[371] Lucy R. Lippard, "Judith Lowry: Aiming for the Heart," *Illuminations: Paintings by Judith Lowry*, (Santa Fe: Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian, 1999), 7.

Figure 4-7. Judith Lowry, *Family: Love's Unbreakable Heaven*, 1995. Image courtesy of the artist.

represents a young girl, taller and a few years older than the boy. Though she is playing a drum, she is dressed in Anglo-American style clothing: pants, Mary Jane's, a cardigan, and a button-front shirt with a Peter Pan collar. The girl, standing on rocks in the middle of a small pond, is noticeably lighter-skinned than the boy. The right-flanking panel is the largest, holding two adults, presumably the children's parents. The mother wears a yellow and green Squaw Dress; its rick-rack striping along with the concho-patterned belt reflect a popular 1950s take on Native American clothing.[372] The father, also darker complected, wears a vest, along with his otherwise era-appropriate shirt and pants. He is filming the children. The glass ornaments placed throughout each of the three panels indicates the Christmas season.

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[372] Lippard, 1999b, 13. For a detailed look at the influences of Native American clothing on Western couture, see Nancy J. Parezo, "The Indian Fashion Show," *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, eds. Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

Specific details in the work, along with Lowry's use of a three-panel composition, relate *Family: Love's Unbreakable Heaven* to medieval and Renaissance Christian paintings. The triptych format was often chosen for both church and personal altarpieces; these devotional images frequently represented scenes of the Annunciation or the Holy Family. Lowry regularly uses motifs from Renaissance paintings; she developed a love for art of that era as an Army brat living overseas.[373] Here, Lowry adds palm trees, a desert landscape, and a crystal-clear night sky as the background to her triptych, perhaps as an allusion to the Adoration of the Magi. These elements tie into the references to Christmas; taken with the halo painted around the mother's head, they also allow the work to function as a devotional image. In this case, it is a child's sacred sense of family that is being honored.

The painting, as one might guess, is based upon Lowry's own family; it represents a memory of a childhood Christmas in Germany.[374] Lowry's father Leonard was career military, and Lowry spent much of her childhood abroad.[375] The memory reflects the differences between Judith and her darker-skinned brother. Lucy Lippard points out that her brother "was in a sense given permission to be Indian and proud of it, while his sister stood to the side,

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[373] Theresa Harlan, "Looking Home: Remembering a Native American Family," *Illuminations: Paintings by Judith Lowry*, (Santa Fe: Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian, 1999), 40.

[374] Lippard, 1999b, 13.

[375] Lippard, 1999b, 7 and 35.

paler, more distant."[376] He wears the Plains costume, and appears to be the focus of what his father's home movie is recording. Young Judith is separated, in her own panel, playing the drum but she appears to more of an observer than a participator in this event. The sense of isolation is highlighted not only through the separate panels, but also through the placement of the girl standing on rocks in a lake. The lake, though small, keeps her distant from the scene in which her brother frolics, and seems to represent her psychological isolation at that moment.

Her own dress is arguably also a costume, in a style worn by many middle-class Euro-American girls in the 1950s, which represents young Judith's identity as much as does her brother's more obviously dress-up outfit. Judith's inheritance of her mother's Euro-Australian skin tone allows her to pass in a way that her brother will never be able to. It is this point, upon reflection, that allows the viewer to see how the issue of passing cuts and slices identity in myriad ways. The painting of young Judith creates a sense of her isolation from her identity — that she is not given the same permission to be Indian as her brother. At the same time though, she did not face some of the same overt prejudices her brother did. Lowry, in speaking of the memory that this painting depicts, states that this was the moment at which she realized her family was different in being biracial. "I took after my mother, while my brother is Indian-looking. He went through a lot of pain growing up … a lot of

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[376] Lippard, 1999b, 13.

what I feel now about the relationship between white and non-white comes from seeing the way my father and brother were treated."[377]

Lowry's work is steeped in these types of family stories and histories. Lucy Lippard points out that "many of them [are] tragic reflections of indigenous life on a larger scale."[378] Nowhere, perhaps, is this more true than in Lowry's 1992 painting *Going Home* (figure 4-8). *Going Home* represents one of the darkest points in Native American colonization: the forced attendance at boarding schools for Native children. Theresa Harlan argues that "When military campaigns, land seizures, and elimination of food sources were not enough, the family became a strategic site for attack. Government and

Figure 4-8. Judith Lowry, *Going Home*, 1992. Image courtesy of the artist.

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[377] Lowry, quoted in Lippard, 1999b, 14. Lowry's brother has since died.

[378] Lippard, 1999b, 9.

missionary boarding schools removed native children from their families in order to assimilate them completely."[379] Many children ran away home; many of these same children died attempting to flee the schools.

One of these children was Lowry's great-aunt, Margaret (Molly) Lowry. Molly Lowry attended the Greenville Indian Industrial School in California. When she was nine years old, she and two other girls ran away from the school in the middle of winter in protest of corporal punishment they had received.[380] Despite the fact that Molly's family lived three miles from the school, the girls were headed for Susanville, which was much further away.[381] It seems likely that Molly and the other girls feared being found and forced to return to the school if they ran away to Molly's family's home. Molly died of exposure before she reached safety. The two other girls who escaped with her both had limbs amputated due to the cold; one later died from complications.[382] At a trial of school officials held as a result of these events, the school's matron who had administered the strapping that caused the girls to run away was not held responsible for the deaths of the two girls, in spite of the belief held by the school's superintendent that she was unfit for her job.[383]

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[379] Harlan, 1999, 40.

[380] Lippard, 1999b. 34 and Chag and Rebecca Lowry, http://www.originalvoices.org/USGovtRolesNine.htm, accessed July 12, 2012..

[381] Chag and Rebecca Lowry, "Going Home," *Original Voices,* 2002 http://www.originalvoices.org/USGovtRolesNine.htm.

[382] Lippard, 1999b, 34. The surviving girl eventually recanted, stating that the devil made them run away.

[383] Lowry, 2002.

Lowry first found out about her great-aunt's death when researchers from the University of Nevada were studying the Lowry family's marriage into a powerful Reno clan.[384] After Lowry had painted *Going Home*, Rebecca Dobkins, an art historian researching an entirely different subject, found a copy of Molly's case file at the National Archives and provided it to Lowry.[385] Receipt of this file devastated the Lowry family; they had not discussed Molly's death "because it is considered rude to talk about tragic and unexpected events."[386] Lowry states that it is the Irish part of her heritage that wants to focus on what happens to Indian families that have had their social and political agency taken from them.[387]

This loss of agency includes the inability of Molly, or her family, to control who has access to her story; it is available for study at the National Archives. Members of the Lowry family have published brief accounts of the events that led to Molly's death, which are cited above. However, Molly herself had no say in how her life and death were recorded; she is an object of study with no agency in how she is presented. Laura L. Terrance, a scholar of ethnic studies, when faced with a similar situation involving an unpublished boarding

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[384] Lippard, 1999b, 33-34.

[385] Lippard, 1999b, 34.

[386] Lippard, 1999b, 34.

[387] Lippard, 1999b, 34.

school journal found in an archive, performed an act of scholarly refusal.[388] Rather than discussing the unpublished journal whose subjects had no agency in what they would choose to have referenced, she instead investigated the published text "The School Days of an Indian Girl," written by Zitkala-Sa, also known as Gertrude Simmons Bonnin.[389] As Molly Lowry has no voice in her own status as research subject, and as her family has only publicly discussed limited information on her death, I, too, will perform a similar act of scholarly refusal. In order to understand the types of events that students like Molly Lowry suffered through at the boarding schools, I turn to Zitkala-Sa as well.

Zitkala-Sa was a member of the Yankton Sioux tribe, and she attended White's Manual Institute in Wabash, Indiana, beginning in 1888.[390] As Terrance notes, boarding schools forced assimilation upon students, taking away traditional ways of dress, hairstyle, language, diet, and religious practice.[391] Zitkala-Sa resists this form of acculturation, though not always with success. She writes of her fight against having her hair cut, as the style that the school insisted upon symbolized cowardice in her home community.[392] Despite her protest, which included running away, Zitkala-Sa

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[388] Laura L. Terrance, "Resisting Colonial Education: Zitkala-Sa and Native Feminist Archival Refusal," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 24 no. 5 (2011) 621-626. For more on the idea of scholarly refusal see Audra Simpson's article "On Ethnographic Refusal," discussed in chapter 1.

[389] Terrance, 621.

[390] Terrance, 621.

[391] Terrance, 623.

[392] Zitkala-Sa, "The School Days of an Indian Girl," *American Indian Stories*, (2003) http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10376/10376-8.txt. Accessed February 17, 2013.

does have her hair cut. Later in the narrative, though, Zitkala-Sa records acts of resistance that include following the rules so closely that she subverts their meaning and intent.[393] Through the act of presenting her life, and through the narrative choices she is able to make, Zitkala-Sa reclaims some of her lost agency in her text; she is able to discuss her own life as an individual and is equally able to refuse to reference that which she does not want shared. Allowing Molly's family to make the same choices about what they want shared grants them and, by extension, Molly a similar agency.

Going Home shows us Molly; Lowry has painted her glowing with light, which would seem to indicate her innocence, martyrdom, and death. Molly is knee-deep in snow, which gives some indication of the weather during her flight. In the distant background is the Indian School, far from where the spectral Molly stands. An owl flies next to her; an omen of death in many Native cultures that appears to guide the girl into the next world.[394] *Going Home* has a haunting, somber quality, quietly driving home the emotional effects of the boarding school system. Molly, however, appears at peace, as if she is able to escape this system of forced assimilation in death. As in *Family: Love's Unbreakable Heaven*, Lowry uses the iconography of Christian paintings; Molly's glowing aura suggests a spiritual transfiguration that frees

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[393] Zitkala-Sa.

[394] Anya Monteil, *Judith Lowry: Offerings of Solace and Strength* (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 2004), 2.

her from the captivity of the school, like a Christian martyr escaping mortal oppression for eternal spiritual freedom.

The combined senses of tragedy and serenity that resonate in *Going Home* reflect Lowry's and her family's responses to finding out about Molly's fate. For Lowry, painting *Going Home* became a way to achieve "solace…a way to put it to rest in my heart."[395] The tragedy of Molly's death is clearly referenced in the snowy landscape in which her feet are buried. The snow obscuring Molly's feet perhaps also refers to the two girls who escaped with her and the amputations that were performed upon their frozen legs. That this was a fate that Molly and many other Native children risked and succumbed to speaks volumes about the treatment of these children in boarding schools.[396]

However clearly Lowry portrays the tragic qualities of these events, she conveys a sense of serenity to her viewers as well. It would seem that this stems from the solace Lowry sought in painting this work. The glow of the horizon over the mountains echoes the otherworldly radiance of Molly and the snowy landscape. The owl is there to escort Molly home, the other world to which Lowry's title implies she is traveling. Though she never quite reached her physical home alive, in death she ultimately escaped the boarding school system, to which many other surviving runaways were forced to return.

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[395] Monteil, 2.

[396] Leonard Lowry, Judith's father, told his daughter that one of the reasons that Native youths made such excellent soldiers was because of the regimentation and discipline that they faced in these schools. In Leonard Lowry's case this was certainly true — he was a highly decorated soldier who retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army. Lippard 1999b, 35 and Harlan, 1999, 43.

The narrative clarity in Lowry's paintings is part of her technique; in the past, she was concerned that this level of accessibility might negatively affect her work. However, it was more important that her family and other viewers be able to understand the events and ideas she was referencing.[397] While only discussing limited information on Molly's specific case, Lowry uses iconography that conveys a sense of her sacrifice and perhaps even benediction. Viewers who might not be aware of the history of boarding school perhaps would be familiar with the motifs from paintings of Christian martyrs, allowing Lowry to tell her great aunt's story while retaining control over the narrative of Molly's life. Obscuring the meaning, making the narrative more opaque, would be counterproductive; the blend of biography and Christian iconography helps to create the emotional impact of *Going Home*.

Many of Lowry's works deal specifically with painting her family photographs. Some of them, such as 1996's *Beautiful Dreamers* (figure 4-9), continue to evince Lowry's interest in Renaissance painting. This painting is based upon a photograph of Lowry's father and his friends, celebrating New Year's Eve in 1945.[398] Lowry, however, has added elements to the original photograph; Renaissance-style *putti* are capriciously setting fire to clothing, barstools, and aiming flaming arrows at people's heads. While Renaissance *putti* usually function as cherubic, Classicizing figures, Lowry's *putti* are

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[397] Lippard, 1999b, 36.

[398] Lippard, 1999b, 14.

Figure 4-9. Judith Lowry, *Beautiful Dreamers*, 1996. Image courtesy of the artist.

clearly behaving differently. In this respect, they signal the presence of an alternate meaning.

This meaning is clearly not found through the Renaissance understanding of the *putti* figures, but rather in Maidu mythology. In this tradition, imp-like creatures are known for setting fire to those who enter forbidden places.[399] As Lowry states, "Who better than those little Western European Christian cherubs to be our little demons?"[400] Lowry is inserting the imagery of the *putti* and the role of the Maidu imps into an image of her father and his friends in a bar to critique the over-consumption of alcohol and its effects upon the larger Native population.

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399 Lippard, 1999b, 15.

400 Quoted in Lippard, 1999b, 15.

These imps suggest the ravages of alcoholism on Native American peoples. Those who hold drinks in their hands, Lowry's father on the right, the woman in blue on the left, and the even white sailor who barged into the photograph uninvited, are all being set aflame, or are in imminent danger of it, by the *putti*. The man in the center is already on fire; that, along with the rakish tilt of his hat, suggests that he may have already had too much to drink. The flames devouring the floor suggest that the bar is indeed the forbidden place guarded by the imps. However, more is going on in Lowry's use of family photographs, and it requires a reading beyond an explanation of subject and symbolism to do the work justice. Something more specific is suggested in the act of remaking family photographs, something that seems inherently related to memory.

Frank LaPeña, a fellow Native Californian artist, has suggested that art making and memory are inherently intertwined. He says, "I consider the process of art as being the most important element in the doing of art. It is a test of our humanity. In creating art, people and events are remembered; and we can relive all the emotions of those thoughts."[401] This relationship of process to remembrance suggests that, in some ways, the most important materials for art making are thoughts, ideas, memories, and emotions. In the act of painting a family photograph, Lowry seems to be stressing the act of memory, the ability and need to remember.

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[401] Quoted in Harlan, 1999, 39.

Native scholar Theresa Harlan suggests that family portraiture holds a special quality of memory for Native American families. For Harlan, family memory serves as an "enduring test of humanity" when framed against the consequences of conquest and colonization of the Native American populations by European and, later, American nations.[402] As with Luna's collection of modern artifacts seen in *Artifact Piece,* family portraits can function as a reminder to the settler society that, indeed, Native people have not vanished, that their families and cultures are alive and well today. Beyond this, however, Lowry's works explore the histories of families and peoples that are largely left out of the master narrative of Western history — or if they are mentioned it is only to indicate that they have vanished.

Consider *Beautiful Dreamers*. Here we see Lowry's father, Leonard, wearing his Army dress uniform, replete with ribbons that indicate his dedication to service. Leonard Lowry served in World War II; yet when we contemplate the mainstream narrative of veterans of the "Greatest Generation," soldiers of color are emphatically not included. The history of World War II is written based upon a largely white, male subjectivity. Those non-white men who served often came from among the most oppressed groups in American society: Japanese-Americans, African-Americans, and Native Americans. Given their relationships to the society whose way of life they were defending, it would seem that history owes them more. Through her

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[402] Harlan, 1999, 40.

re-presentation of this specific photograph, Lowry raises this issue. In a work that otherwise appears to be about the dangers of alcoholism, she quietly makes the case for her father's inclusion in the histories of World War II. A link can be forged between these two interpretations when we consider what happens to people who are routinely denied this sort of historical agency.

Alternative narratives of history are also raised in *Family: Love's Unbreakable Heaven*. The role of costuming plays such a large part in this triptych; Judith and her parents wearing clothing straight out of *Leave It to Beaver*, her brother wearing the 1950s version of a child's Plains warrior's costume. One gets the sense of a costumed identity — the perfect mid-century American family. The historical representation of the post-war American family, though, is Anglo; again consider *Leave It to Beaver*. Lowry's family is biracial. This not a part of the narrative of the American nuclear family — one can imagine the difficulties and prejudice that the Lowrys faced — and stories of families like theirs are not discussed as even existing in the 1950s. Lowry's painting conveys the sense of a family dressing the part — aware that they do not fit in, but not yet having an alternative history to claim.

Lowry's act of remaking such images can also be understood as an insistence upon the continuing presence of Native American peoples and families in the United States. As *Going Home* suggests, Native families were sometimes separated by the policies of the U.S. government. Lowry's works argue, however, that despite the policies' best efforts, Native families were not

broken. In the same way that the myth of the vanishing Indian is roundly criticized by Luna in *Artifact Piece*, Lowry subverts the idea of the shattered family. Instead, through her representations of family photographs and family histories, she creates alternate historical narratives in which her family's place is claimed. These works arguably present a stronger statement than those made by the original images, a double insistence both on the history of her family and its continuation.

Community Histories

Like Luna and Lowry, Seneca and Scots-German artist Marie Watt places a focus on the small histories of everyday people. However, Watt emphasizes a more collective view of these everyday narratives. Watt's material of choice is what she terms "reclaimed wool," which comes from secondhand blankets.[403] These blankets have been either donated to Watt for use in her works, or she has purchased them from Goodwill or other secondhand stores.[404] Watt's choice of previously used, and presumably loved, blankets is intentional, as she wants blankets that have absorbed the accrued and sometimes multiple histories of their previous owners.[405] The social and

[403] Janet Catherine Berlo, "Back to the Blanket: Marie Watt and the Visual Language of Intercultural Encounter," *Into the Fray: The Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art, 2005*, ed. James H. Nottage (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 114.

[404] Berlo, 2005, 113. In some instances, after a work is done being exhibited, Watt then donates the blankets back to charity. See Smith, 2009, 78.

[405] Berlo, 2005, 113.

political histories that become embedded in objects is one of the main emphases of Watt's work.[406]

Blankets themselves have a long and storied presence in Native histories. For Watt, they represent the span of life, as she states "We are received in blankets and we leave in blankets," referring to customary practices of birth and burial.[407] Blankets, too, are some of the earliest objects that were traded between Native peoples and Europeans; as early as 1611, Jesuit priests documented the wearing of trade blankets by indigenous Americans.[408] They also represent the conflict of the European conquest of the New World; stories and representations of early germ warfare through blankets laden with

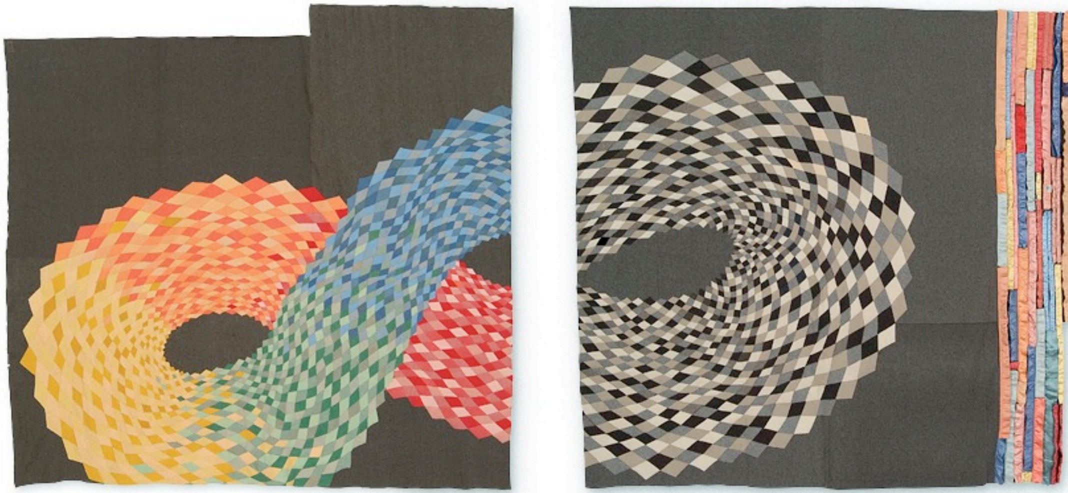

Figure 4-10. Marie Watt, *Braid*, 2004. Image courtesy of the artist.

[406] Marie Watt, "Marie Watt," *Migrations: New Directions in Native American Art,* ed. Marjorie Devon, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 118.

[407] Quoted in Jo Ortel, "Multiple Migrations: (E)merging Imagery," *Migrations: New Directions in Native American Art,* ed. Marjorie Devon, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 56.

[408] Berlo, 2005, 111.

smallpox abound.[409] The histories of blankets as a group are indeed weighty, but Watt's focus is more specific:

> I am drawn to the human stories and rituals implicit in everyday objects like blankets, bridges, and doorknobs. Made familiar by use and scaled to the body, they often go unnoticed but make me think about the relationship between part and whole; I wish to capture this sense of familiarity in the objects I make.[410]

The use of everyday objects and the relationship between part and whole are both well expressed in Watt's 2004 work, *Braid* (figure 4-10). *Braid* is a large-scale tapestry diptych featuring color-graduated pieces of reclaimed wool sewn into a Mobius loop. At the far right edge, Watt includes pieces of the satin edge binding from the blankets that make up the braid itself. Like Nadia Myre's *Indian Act* discussed in the previous chapter, *Braid* was created communally. Seventy-seven of Watt's friends assisted in sewing the piece.[411] For Watt, the sewing bees came out of the need to have social interactions with her friends while trying to complete the work.[412] For Watt, this social aspect became woven into the formation of *Braid*.

> Like the tradition of weaving hair, *Braid* is the weaving together of story, blankets and sewers. I began with an interest in the many associations with braids: traditional native identity, a

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[409] As Janet Berlo notes, scholars have found little evidence for the intentional use of this type of blanket-based germ warfare. Given the devastating outcome of epidemic illness in the New World, including smallpox, whether the spread of these diseases through intentional exposure is documentable may be beside the point. However, there are two letters from British officers during the French and Indian War in 1763 which suggest that there was some deliberate intention in infecting Native peoples with smallpox-laden blankets. See Berlo, 2005, 112 and 119, note 6.

[410] Watt, quoted in Ortel, 55.

[411] Fowler, 349.

[412] Ben Mitchell, *Marie Watt Blanket Stories: Almanac,* (Casper, Wyoming: The Nicolaysen Museum, 2006), 25.

> genetic marker, a ledger of passing time, and the intrusion of western educational reform (one of the first things stripped from native students in boarding schools was their long hair). Additionally, the braid's three skeins suggest various trilogies. In Seneca teachings, for example, we have the Three Sisters: Corn, Beans, and Squash… While they are independent, the Three Sisters have more strength and vitality when they support each other. They represent the nutritional and spiritual sustenance of our community. *Braid* took on an additional significance when friends and family came together for sewing bees to help complete the work. Watching my friends with their heads down, hands busy, stories flowing, I learned once again about the importance of community. My history is woven into these blankets, along with the wool, thread, and souls of 77 friends who sat round the pieces hand-stitching and story-telling, and transforming the blankets one more time.[413]

The woven, intertwining patterns of *Braid*, as they loop around infinitely, suggests the interlocking histories of the anonymous owners of the blankets and those of the community of friends who helped Watt make the piece. Given the large number of assistants and blankets, there are a wide and diverse series of histories in which this piece is steeped. These histories, viewed from afar, become the patchwork pattern of *Braid*'s central motif. Like watching farmland pass from an airplane window, the details are not visible. On closer inspection, and through Watt's discussions of the work, we begin to see these details. Perhaps they appear through uneven or unusual stitch-work or gaps in between two diamond pieces, traces of a novice sewer, or perhaps a particularly worn portion of wool or satin indicates a child's — or adult's — favorite blanket. As with Nadia Myre's *Indian Act*, the unknowns of this

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[413] Watt, quoted in Berlo, 2005, 114-115.

community should lead us to examine what our predisposed ideas of community are and how one might trace its history or histories.

One concept *Braid* makes abundantly clear is that it is difficult to present the nuances of individual lives in such a piece. Whereas Luna, with his focus on his own life or that of Pablo Tac, can work in specifics, Watt's work here is more general. In many ways, though, this is equally attributable to the nature of Watt's style. She is stylistically influenced by American modernism, especially Minimalism and hard edge abstraction.[414] For the artists and critics who subscribed to this aesthetic philosophy, the meaning of their modernist works lay well outside the pieces themselves. Watt, perhaps, splits the difference between these two points. *Braid* does not specifically present the detailed histories of Watt or her community of friends, but the material of the reclaimed blankets has absorbed something of their lives, along with those of the blankets' previous owners. Something of the agency of all of these various people is infused within this work, and that, too, is a part of Watt's piece.[415]

As with Judith Lowry's paintings, we might consider how Watt's *Braid* subverts the standard narratives of history; in this case the narrative is the history of modernist art. The artists identified with Minimalism and hard edge

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[414] Berlo 2005, 111

[415] Watt's sense of the blanket's personality and will is deeply affected by her work with this material: "One of the great things about the blankets is that there is no such thing as a square blanket. People have inhabited them and worn them. You put the sides together and you think they are going to match, but they don't. They are really wonderful in that way. I love how each blanket has its own personality. As a result, they don't stack easily. They have this posture that is not really that different from the human body. The blankets have a will of their own." Quoted in Ortel, 56-57.

abstraction are almost uniformly male; the value attributed to their works comes from an understanding of their originality and is associated with the individual creativity of a singular artist. Watt is a female artist working with a collective group of assistants. Through these changes, Watt critiques the art historical narrative of the artist-as-genius; this narrative always involves a male artist, suffering alone with no one to understand his genius. Watt's art historical narrative is otherwise, perhaps more in tune with the alternative histories of communal craft production such as quilting bees. Watt's choice of medium, the blanket, reinforces this interpretation of criticism and production of an alternative history.

Serpent River Ojibwa artist Bonnie Devine also works in the intersections of community and personal histories. Like Marie Watt's tapestries, Devine's works frequently incorporate sewn objects; for Devine, the act of sewing bears an important relationship to memory.

> In my work sewing functions as an act of claiming memory… Sewing creates a mark, a careful line, a row of hyphens, which though tentative and vulnerable, yet thereafter attaches, contains and demarks the place where I have been and connects it to the place where I am going.[416]

The relationship that Devine draws between the act of sewing and claiming of memory — in other words, of personal history — takes on what is perhaps an unavoidable political bent in her 2003 sculptural installation, *Canoe* (figure 4-11). Devine's *Canoe* is approximately seventeen feet long, which is the

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[416] Devine, quoted in Fowler, 357.

Figure 4-11. Bonnie Devine, *Canoe*, 2003. Image Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, Indianapolis. Courtesy of the artist.

general size of a functioning Ojibwa river canoe.[417] This canoe, however, is made from hundreds of pages of notes, which Devine took as reference material for her master's thesis.[418]

Though Devine often hand-stitches other works, it was necessary that *Canoe*'s pages be machine sewn, in order for her viewers to be able to read what is written on the work's pages; the sewing machine did not wrinkle and distort the pages as much as hand-sewing would.[419] What these pages display is a damning indictment of the colonial relationship between the Canadian government, in this instance, and First Nations people. There are notes on the

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[417] Bonnie Devine, *Stories from the Shield,* http://www.ccca.ca/c/writing/d/devine/dev002t.html accessed June 7, 2012.

[418] Fowler, 357. Devine's work has given this author some new ideas on what should be done with the pages of notes for this dissertation.

[419] Fowler, 357-358.

1850 Robinson Huron Treaty, which granted the Canadian government control over the northern shores of Lake Huron and eventually allowed uranium mining at these sites. Devine's notes also document the mining of the uranium in the 1950s as described by her family members. She further records the after-effects: about 170 million tons of radioactive leftovers are scattered around the site, which continue to affect the people, ecology, and wildlife of the region, which includes the Serpent River First Nation where Devine's family lives.[420]

Other notes reference the tradition of Ojibwa canoe technology, which guided Devine when she was creating her own *Canoe*.[421] About this process, Devine states,

> Using the notebook paper on which I gathered my research, sewing the hundreds of pages of transcribed notes together as if they were birch bark or weegwas, I constructed a canoe that reads. Approximately seventeen feet long, it is the size of a working river canoe, built according to the tradition of the Ojibway navigators. Sewn with thread though and not spruce-root lashings, inscribed with the new language of physics and geology and not the ancient pictographic transformation symbols, it will, I hope, carry far the story of the people and the land.[422]

In creating this reading canoe, Devine has taken pages of writing, a form of communication with scriptural solidity and permanence, and turned it into art. In so doing, Devine has changed the nature of the text; rather than existing

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[420] Fowler, 357 and 358.

[421] Fowler, 358.

[422] Devine, *Stories from the Shield.*

with a fixed meaning, it becomes, through its new form as art object, something open to greater interpretation. Art objects can exist with multiple and variable meanings without reflection upon the accuracy of the objects themselves. Interestingly, this is an attribute, sometimes considered problematic, of oral histories but not one that is associated with written histories. By turning her notes recording the written history of the 1850 treaty and subsequent 1950s uranium mining into a canoe, Devine has made the text itself, the trace of written communication, flexible and variable in a way that it often resists. Her transformation of text into art opens up a space for alternative histories of the Serpent River region to develop.

Devine's quote above hints at another type of relationship between image and text through her reference to "ancient pictographic transformation symbols." The Midewiwin, an Ojibwa healing society, had several associated art forms. One of these involved the creation of Midé birch bark scrolls, which depicted ritual pictographic images.[423] Though not textual histories in the Western sense, these pictographic scrolls are understood as communicating the embedded and coded concepts of Ojibwa history. Devine's use of her research notes, studying the effects of nuclear waste on her family and community, stands in the place of these pictographic scripts, and yet, it serves a similar function. The questions then become: how do we understand them, and how do we interpret them?

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[423] For further information, see Selwyn Dewdney, *The Sacred Scrolls of the Southern Ojibway*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), especially Chapter 5.

What *Canoe* brings to the fore is the friction that exists between Western scientific, progress-oriented thinking and the communities that are exploited by such progress. The effects of the uranium mining on the Serpent River community were clearly not important enough to the Canadian government to prevent the mining of uranium ore from occurring or even for it to be concerned about cleaning up the waste. This particular instance at Serpent River stands in metonymically for the numerous occurrences of land and treaty exploitation that are a direct result of European colonialism.[424] In this way, Devine's *Canoe* perhaps echoes more of the Midewiwin impetus than is immediately visible. One school of thought holds that the Midewiwin society arose in response to the increasing pressures, both psychological and physiological, that were felt by the Ojibwa people at the time of contact and colonization.[425] It served, perhaps, as a form of cultural resistance, a way to retain and protect the Ojibwa worldview and traditions against the coming onslaught of European settlers, religions, and governments. *Canoe* embodies the same undercurrent of resistance as Devine deftly presents the cost of science, and perhaps metonymically, Western contact, upon her community. *Canoe* is also an act of cultural resistance; emphasizing the indigenous technology of canoe-making and criticizing the dominant mode of scientific

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[424] See Chapter 2 for further discussion of this in regards to land rights, Chapter 3 in regards to treaties.

[425] See Harold Hickerson, "Notes on the Post-Contact Origin of the Midewiwin," *Ethnohistory,* vol. 9 no. 4 (1962) 404-423 and Michael Angel, *Preserving the Sacred: Historical Perspectives on the Ojibwa Midewiwin*, (Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2002), especially page 73,

process, Devine transforms her own research into a history of community writ large.

The acts of subversive remembering that these artists perform embodies more than a recitation of alternative histories. Writing about James Luna's work, Paul Chaat Smith argues that "the act of remembering turns you into a heretic, a revolutionary, a troublemaker."[426] His observations apply equally to the other works and artists discussed in this chapter. The act of remembering personal histories, when faced with a dominant historical paradigm, which still argues for the non-existence of indigenous Americans, is an act of profound resistance. Simply saying "I am here, this is an aspect of my life" becomes revolutionary in such a context. This type of resistance has a place in many indigenous American oral traditions as well, through the genre of trickster stories.

The trope of Native American artist as trickster should be considered here in relationship to the idea of resistance, specifically as a way of framing personal history as a counter-narrative to dominant historical paradigms. As I discussed in Chapter 3, Peter Nabokov points out that more modern trickster stories have been told as a way to resist or overturn the hegemony of Western worldviews; in these cycles, trickster figures often win out over characters associated with Western colonizing forces.[427] The personal histories discussed

[426] Smith, 2005, 28.

[427] Nabokov, 120.

in this chapter, whether of individuals or communities, perform a similar type of resistance to hegemony. They present themselves, their families, and their communities as so much proof that the years of colonization and forced assimilation did not, in actuality, vanish the "vanishing Indians." These artists and their works represent what is, for Paul Chaat Smith, at the heart of Indian agency, where the "conversation is about a different kind of today, where we are present in the world like anyone else."[428]

The agency present in these works is very direct and apparent, representing the most straightforward of Alfred Gell's ideas on agency in works of art.[429] These works have absorbed the agency of their makers, in some cases both as artist and as autobiographical subject. These contain not only the agentive forces of the artist as creator, but will convey and display an aspect of the artists' own personal history to future audiences. As Judith Lowry's works evince, these agentive histories can be just as forceful when raising questions of identity or assimilation as they can when James Luna makes assertive statements about his own modernity.

It is not only through a presentation of their own lives that artists are able to record this type of agentive history. By referencing and honoring the life of Pablo Tac, James Luna creates a space for Tac within a Western discourse that rarely considers the effects of Native people upon its own forms

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[428] Smith, 2005, 44.

[429] See the Introduction for my discussion of Gell's ideas on object agency.

and ideals.[430] Tac's own writings on the history and lives of the Luiseño people may have been rosy, as Nabokov characterizes them, but that he endeavored to record his own people's views of their lives, histories, and rituals, and the effect of the Mission system upon these is remarkable.[431] Tac is someone whose agency was directed at affecting the history of the Catholic church; Luna's work in his honor reinstates Tac's work in the historical record and, arguably, implements Luna's own intention to alter the Church's history. It is important that this emendation be made, as this history is one that is otherwise often considered to be unidirectional, with the Church solely affecting Native peoples, but not the other way around.

Similar intent can be seen in Bonnie Devine's *Canoe* through its representation of the history of the Serpent River community. Her work shows us a group whose concerns would appear to have been disregarded by the Canadian government; Devine ensures that their point of view about the costs of uranium mining is heard and recorded. That it is a point of view opposed to the government is entirely germane to the piece. More subtly, Marie Watt's *Braid* also records the history of community, both through her assistant sewers and through the reclaimed wool blankets, which are her materials. *Braid* is steeped in the histories of myriad imaginable and real communities, as we consider the histories of those whose traces can be found in stitch and

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[430] For ideas about how Native cultures and mores have affected those of the United States, see also Gunn Allen, 1986.

[431] Nabokov, 205.

blanket. It also reflects the varied history of the blanket as object within the Native community as a whole.

The agencies of artists, subjects, and communities are ever present in the works discussed in this chapter, presenting what I have termed personal histories, histories on a small scale. What these histories best represent is the continued presence of Native people, the resistance to being vanished, and the qualities of survival that all make up what Gerald Vizenor has termed survivance.[432] For Vizenor, survivance is an active presence of Native reality, which encompasses a rejection of concepts of Western hegemony and domination and the narratives of tragedy and victimization that are often ascribed to Native peoples.[433] The active presence of the artists, their subjects, and their communities illustrated in this chapter are apposite to Vizenor's ideas; the straightforward and direct presentation of these personal histories represents the presence and survivance of Native peoples.

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[432] See the Conclusion for further discussion of Vizenor's critical ideas.

[433] Vizenor, 15.

CONCLUSION

During a graduate school seminar on epistemologies of knowledge, I was involved in a lengthy discussion on how we, as academics, classify and define academic disciplines. The discussion broke down along two lines; one covered an argument that these disciplines maintained strict and well-defined boundaries and that any type of epistemology that did not conform precisely to these boundaries could not be included within them. The other set of arguments placed Western academic disciplines in a larger context, in which they were only one manifestation of a broader, more encompassing epistemology.

This dissertation proceeds according to the second line of thinking; namely, that the Western academic discipline of history is only one way of performing the epistemology of history. History, writ large, can perhaps be best understood as a form of social memory and, as such, can describe types of remembrance that include mythology, ritual practice, the importance of landscape, and art. Many other forms of material culture, such as architecture, earthworks, artifacts of daily life, and ethnographic and archaeological materials, also function as reminders or traces of social memory, though they are not specifically examined in this analysis. In this sense, we might consider the idea of historical agency to be reflected in a peoples' or a culture's ability to

create, respond to, and to some degree, have control over these aspects of social memory.

In his article "Return to Sender: On the Politics of Cultural Property and the Proper Address of Art," Aaron Glass considers how social memory can become bound up in art objects. Glass analyzes Native American artworks that have been repatriated back to Native peoples from non-Native museums and art collections He finds that the objects themselves, through the various acts of their collection, have become metaphors for colonization and an associated removal of political and social agency.[434] Importantly, Glass argues that many objects have "the capacity to 'objectify' such transient notions as identity, ethnicity, and history."[435] When works of art, objects that manifest these concepts, are repatriated to their home cultures, Glass suggests that they also function as an assertion of agency and identity.[436]

Glass considers how ownership of these repatriated objects can become symbolic of control over history.[437] Their return, then, represents a change in who has control over historical narratives; as the object moves from colonizer to colonized, so does the control over any associated histories. This return further represents a symbolic return of historical agency. In this way, Glass argues, these objects not only come to represent the past, but they also embody

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[434] Glass, 125.

[435] Glass, 116.

[436] Glass, 116.

[437] Glass, 127.

the power of a revitalized cultural identity.[438] The making of new artworks, although not considered by Glass, that represent this revived historical agency would seem to me to be a part of the larger relationship in which art, history, and historical agency all function. Through references to Native forms of history and historicity, the artists discussed in this dissertation assert a control over historical narratives and their own historical agencies. This control builds upon that which Glass finds apparent in the repatriated objects; however, the roles that agency and identity play here are not only found upon a work's return home, but also at its creation.

Alfred Gell considers this interrelationship between, artwork, artist, and audience in *Art and Agency*. Gell explores these interactions as forms of relationships through what he terms the art nexus; rather than solely examining an art object as a unitary and isolated object, Gell is interested in the ways that agency moves and is distributed between a web of relationships, the center of which is the artwork itself.[439] In Gell's theory of the art nexus, agency exists in myriad capacities. The artist acts with agency when creating a work of art; as I have discussed in the introduction, Gell further argues that the artist's agency, through the act of creating an object, becomes distributed into that object as well.[440] It is primarily in this way that I have considered

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[438] Glass, 126.

[439] Gell, 36.

[440] Gell, 22-23.

historical agency becoming manifest in the works of art that I have discussed herein.

Within the art nexus, the object is also able to act as an agent, both because its materials determine what the artist can or cannot do with its form and because it can influence and determine ways in which audiences will respond.[441] The issue of audience and audience response has been taken into consideration by many of the artists in the artworks discussed in this dissertation. For instance, we might consider how Colleen Cutschall's *Catching the Sun's Tail* installation variously acts upon different audiences depending upon their relative familiarity, or lack thereof, with the Sun Dance. While I have used Charlotte Townsend-Gault's ideas of the ritualized ritual of ritual, or Audra Simspon's theory of ethnographic refusal, Gell's suggestion of the agency of the work to determine audience membership and to elicit separate responses depending upon that membership also covers a similar theme. It is primarily in this way that I have considered the role of agency within the art nexus, as something that is distributed from artist to artwork, and then asserted by the artwork to the audience.

Gell also argues, however, that the audience can act with agency back upon the art object.[442] In considering Aaron Glass's ideas about returned art objects becoming sites of control over history, I can also see Gell's ideas at work. In this case, agency is ascribed to the returned object not only by its

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[441] Gell, 24 and 29-30.

[442] Gell, 24.

original creator, but also by its audiences — both the audience that collected the object in the first place, and the audience of its returned home. In performing acts of viewing and interpretation, the audiences for the artworks discussed herein interact with the art object, and it interacts with them. Perhaps the agency these works currently manifest is distributed almost entirely from the artist; Glass's research suggests that, in the future, other audiences might ascribe different agencies to these objects.

While the works that I have considered in this dissertation have almost entirely been works of visual art, we should consider how some of the non-art forms of historicity function within a similar nexus of interaction. One model for such analysis can be found in Paul Connerton's *How Societies Remember*. Connerton examines the idea of social memory and how the collective performances that constitute it transmit and perpetuate the shared memory of a people.

Connerton argues that the oft-utilized narratives of history persist, even at the point where they are no longer undergoing scholarly analysis, as a form of "unconscious collective memory."[443] His point echoes how I, and other authors, have used the term historicity. For Connerton, this type of social memory, conscious or unconscious, is vital in any given society's constitution of itself; he finds that societies tend to be what he terms "self-interpreting communities," and that they do this most powerfully when presenting a

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[443] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember,* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 1.

concept or image of themselves as having continuously existed.[444] His point dovetails with the ways that scholars such as Jonathan D. Hill and Raymond J. DeMaille discuss the roles of history and mythology and their function within a social framework.[445] As with Hill and Demaille, Connerton is not interested in examining the written texts of history, but rather the more performative forms of social memory that societies use to constitute themselves. Connerton divides his study into two basic categories, analyzing what he terms commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices.

In his presentation of commemorative ceremonies, Connerton argues that these performances explicitly claim a direct continuity with the past; performing the ceremony correctly entails a direct link with the way that a given society at that given moment understands its relationship to its past, its history.[446] The goal of these ceremonies is not to remind participants of the past events, but to re-present these events to those performing and viewing the ceremony.[447] While Connerton's examples of types of commemorative ceremonies are all drawn from Western cultures and religions, a similar point is also made by Peter Nabokov, in his analysis of rituals that enact sacred or chartering histories in Native American cultures. Both Connerton and Nabokov argue directly that these reenactments are more than just reminders;

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[444] Connerton, 12.

[445] See Chapter 1 for my analysis of Hill and Demaille.

[446] Connerton, 45.

[447] Connerton, 43.

they bring the events of the past ritually into the space and time of the present.[448] For both scholars these ceremonies are events that help to form and shape a society's communal memory — in other words its historicity.[449]

This recognition of ritual's ability to connect past and present, and its ability to bring past into the present moment, is perhaps why it is such a fertile ground for indigenous American artists. Ritual provides a connection to history and historical practice that has otherwise been denied Native peoples. Much of what we might term the mythology of the "vanishing Indian," has the effect of severing contemporary Native peoples from their pasts. The idea of the vanishing Indian is insidious; it allows for questions to be asked about the authenticity of contemporary Native cultures and implies that, as they are not the "real" descendants of pre-conquest American societies, they are not entitled to their own histories. Within this political leveraging of the past, Native American and First Nations artists turn to re-presentations of their own collective ceremonial experiences as a way to lay claim to their histories and to assert continuity with their pasts.

Colleen Cutschall, in her *Garden of the Evening Star* installation and her works relating to the Sun Dance, utilizes this artistic form of reclamation of her history. In so doing, however, she also reasserts control over this history. Her works reference and represent ritual experience, but they do so at a distance. Though Cutschall has taken part in rituals, such as the Sun Dance,

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[448] Nabokov, 173 and Connerton, 45.

[449] Nabokov, 173 and Connerton, 48.

her works do not specifically describe her, or any other participant's, ritual experiences. She presents ritual as her work's subject, but does not narrate the course and events of the ritual. Instead she frames her presentation in such a way that the audience is simultaneously aware of the subject and of her refusal to discuss particulars. It is this refusal that allows Cutschall to control the discussion of her experience in the re-presentation of her history. She has participated in ritual acts that bring the past into the present, and by asserting control over how she depicts those events, Cutschall is able to reclaim the power of the ceremonial experience to bridge contemporary and ancestral times, making the past manifest in the space and time of ritual participants. She also claims a right to frame and analyze her own and her people's history without regard to the concept of authenticity.

In his analysis of bodily practices, Connerton considers how the habits of the human form have become, in a quite literal sense, embodied history. Connerton posits that the body houses a sort of sedimented history of the past, through our habitual movements, postures, and activities.[450] Connerton points out that the types of training that we receive regarding what constitutes proper bodily behavior and etiquette often reflects historical circumstances that no longer apply to current societies. He considers the role of posture in indicating rank, especially when a single person gets to be positioned in one manner while all others place themselves differently.[451] One might consider the "all

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[450] Connerton, 72.

[451] Connerton 73-74.

rise" command from a courtroom bailiff to be a bodily trace of standing when royalty entered a room. Similarly, Connerton traces the presence of modern day Western etiquette and table manners back to courtly Europe; while not necessary from any practical or nutritional sense, as any way of getting food into the body serves that purpose, these etiquettes were a way to reinforce class differences between the social strata.[452] Though good table manners today are but a memory of this same class system, they have become codified as proper behavior for all, because they once represented the proper behavior of the ruling classes. In this sense, Connerton argues that the past is kept in mind through such habitual bodily actions.[453]

Interestingly, these sorts of trained, repetitive actions were often forcibly instilled upon Native bodies as a form of ensuring Western acculturation. The boarding school system often forced Native children to cut their hair to appropriate Western lengths, to wear a uniform, to speak English, and to use Western table manners. In many aspects of their lives, these students had to abide by a strict and stringent degree of Western etiquette. What these enforced standards were, in fact, doing was replacing indigenous American bodily practices with European ones. It is as if the educational theorists were attempting to replace to social memories — histories — instilled in the indigenous forms of bodily action with the aggregated histories of Western society through the use of Western bodily practices. By insisting upon

[452] Connerton 84.

[453] Connerton, 102.

the use of Western-style actions, the boarding schools forced their students to embody the histories of their conquerors.

Connerton's text is most often concerned with issues of social memory in Western societies, though he does pull some of his examples from non-Western cultures. What Connerton does not consider, though, is the way that this type of social memory can be used to consolidate the power of a dominant society and allow it to define the history of other societies existing under its purview. While Connerton's text is quite useful in examining how scholars might expand Western societies' definitions of history and their understanding of historicities, this problematic element makes his text more difficult to apply to Native American and First Nations cultures. As many of the artists mentioned in the previous chapters are involved in defining and redefining their historical presence, we should take a look at how they are respond to different types of social memory and, more specifically, written histories, which have all but erased their agency and activity from the historical record. For this, I turn to the writing of Gerald Vizenor.

One of the primary concerns of Vizenor's book *Fugitive Poses* is how the dominant cultures have constructed a romanticized view of indigenous American life that leaves no room for the voices and ideas of Native peoples to be heard. To put this in terms of Connerton's analysis, dominant American and Canadian cultures have used their capacity for social memory and the related constitution of a community to define themselves in opposition to the

Native Other. Vizenor uses the term *indian* to refer to this romanticized Native Other, and the word native to refer to real knowledge and information about indigenous American life.[454] Vizenor further develops the idea of the native, as opposed to *indian*, presence through his concept of "survivance," which is the active presence of the native and a rejection of the tropes of dominance, tragedy, and victimhood that he argues are part of the definition of *indian*.[455] The type of sovereignty implied by this concept of survivance, the active native presence and concomitant refusal to be defined by the idea of the *indian*, Vizenor terms "transmotion."[456] Transmotion is not only political sovereignty, but also cultural, historical, and natural sovereignty, per Vizenor's definition. I would argue that it is this type of transmotion that is present in the works by Native American and First Nations artists discussed in the preceding chapters.

One of Vizenor's specific concerns is the manner in which images created by European explorers and settlers came to define *indian* life for the European and, later, Euro-American and Euro-Canadian cultures. He argues that these images of the past are far more influential than the literal events of the past; the images here create the *indian*, which effectively effaces the actual past of the native.[457] This development of the European idea of *indian* life, the social memory constituted at the time of contact, was created in large part

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[454] Vizenor, 14, 28, and 39. Italics in text.

[455] Vizenor, 15.

[456] Vizenor, 15.

[457] Vizenor, 145.

through images; these were often drawings and paintings by explorers that were later brushed up and enhanced by printmakers back home.[458] Vizenor argues that these contact-era images erased any presence of what he terms the native — that is, the the ability of indigenous Americans to represent themselves — and replaced it with the idea of the exotic *indian*.[459]

This image of the *indian* persisted through the use of ethnographic photography during the reservation years, as even photographers such as Edward Curtis, who had the respect of some of his native subjects, actively wiped out all traces of the modern from their images and often provided costumes and clothing to the subjects of these photographs to make them fit with this preconceived idea of the *indian*. In this way, Vizenor argues, photography became the evidence of the vanishing *indian*, and the camera a weapon of cultural dominance.[460] For Vizenor, these photographs depict the *indian* and mark the absence of the native; further, the presentation of the *indian* in these pictures denies “the native observation of their own presence in the histories of representations.”[461] The simulations of the *indian* that are found in these images have become opposed to the reality that Vizenor represents through the idea of the native; they reflect a master narrative that

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[458] Vizenor, 149-150.

[459] Vizenor, 151.

[460] Vizenor, 155 and 156.

[461] Vizenor, 164.

prefers "ersatz cultures over the actual presence of natives."[462] He argues that native stories and lives create a sense of presence and a resistance to the images of the vanishing *indian*; one might argue that contemporary Native art provides a similar site for native agency.[463]

Vizenor discusses two forms of contact- and reservation-era arts as representing the type of sovereignty that he encompasses in his term transmotion. In comparison to the role of images of the *indian* produced in the prints and photographs from this period, works of historical Native American art show how native peoples understood and presented their own lives in image-based media. Vizenor sees the pictures inscribed on the bark scrolls of the Midewiwin society as images of survivance and transmotion because they trace the history and presence of native peoples as they chose to present themselves.[464] Vizenor also argues that Plains ledger art serves a similar purpose.[465] Ledger art developed out of the traditional Plains art pictorial media, which was transformed when Plains men were imprisoned by the U.S. Army. While incarcerated on bases, such as Fort Marion, in Florida, these men began using the traditional pictorial style to represent events from their lives and histories; in this sense, their works also embody the idea of survivance that Vizenor posits.

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[462] Vizenor, 165.

[463] Vizenor, 154

[464] Vizenor, 178.

[465] Vizenor, 179.

Vizenor further argues that the stories of native peoples sustain survivance.[466] The types of art that he discusses, namely Midewiwin scrolls and ledger art, are directly tied to these stories. The Midewiwin scrolls likely serve as mnemonic devices of sorts, with images representing storied events. In a similar way, the ledger drawings depict events that would have been narrated orally. Vizenor relates these types of image making to the idea of visual memory and sees in them what he terms "a virtual sense of native presence."[467] Vizenor further considers that contemporary native literature holds traces of his idea of transmotion, as native authors present their own ideas, lives, and histories.[468] Though he does not discuss contemporary art making, arguably it can represent transmotion in a similar way.

Key to understanding Vizenor's concepts of survivance and transmotion, I believe, is the idea of agency. If survivance represents the active presence of the native, it is a term that requires political, cultural, and historical agency for indigenous American peoples. Transmotion appears to be the presence and historical trace of such an agency. In this sense, the works that I have discussed in the preceding chapters aptly represent the transmotion of contemporary native peoples, and the works themselves embody the ideas of survivance; a refusal to be defined by dominance, tragedy,

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[466] Vizenor, 184.

[467] Vizenor, 170.

[468] Vizenor, 184.

and victimhood.[469] As with ledger art and the Midewiwin scrolls, many of the works presented herein are tied to stories; these may be origin stories and myths, stories of the land, or personal histories, narratives that evince, as Vizenor argues, a sense of native rather than *indian* presence.

Much of the research cited in this dissertation is based upon a scholarly discourse of how best to write about historicities — peoples' understandings about and ways of doing history — that can be very different from traditional Western forms of history. There has been much debate within the field of history about how indigenous American histories should be presented. This debate inflects, at a remove, my own choices of research material, as well as the methodologies of the artists discussed herein. Over the last several decades, historians have held a discussion about how to best write about indigenous American cultures. The methodology that arises from this discourse is meant to center on Native peoples and their historicities; it is often referred to as the New Indian History.

The idea of this Native-centered history is based upon an awareness that many earlier histories of indigenous American peoples had been written from the cultural standpoint of those authoring the texts; that is to say that these works evince an ethnocentric bias in interpreting events.[470] Calvin Martin describes this as "the tendency to interpret another culture using the

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[469] Vizenor, 15.

[470] Calvin Martin, "The Metaphysics of Writing Indian-White History," *The American Indian and the Problem of History*, ed. Calvin Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 27.

norms and values of one's own culture as a point of reference."[471] This New Indian History is inspired by developments in ethnohistory, and its goal is to portray Native peoples as historical agents in their own right; who act for their own values and interests, some of which might be radically different than those of Westerners put into similar situations.[472] This form of historiography embraces both methodological, as well as moral ends.[473]

It is also considered by many scholars to be a necessary change. Michael Dorris notes that the traditional historical definitions of Native Americans are frequently based upon a comparison with non-Indians; how they are similar or different to other studied cultures.[474] Dorris argues that this eternal comparison causes Native peoples to become so Othered as to be dehumanized; they appear so different as to be incomprehensible.[475] Dorris states the need for a Native-centered history, one that functions as a more objective account of indigenous American peoples, but he also recognizes that the forms of historical documentation needed to perform this type of history —

[471] Martin, 27.

[472] Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., "Cultural Pluralism Versus Ethnocentrism in the New Indian History," *The American Indian and the Problem of History*, ed. Calvin Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 36.

[473] Berkhofer, 36-37.

[474] Michael Dorris, "Indians on the Shelf," *The American Indian and the Problem of History*, ed. Calvin Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 100.

[475] Dorris, 101.

such as oral histories, ritual practices, mythologies — would often be considered “unorthodox.”[476]

Writing nearly twenty years after Dorris and Martin, Devon Abbott Mihesuah questions the efficacy of the New Indian History. Mihesuah notes that some historians, despite their claims to be practicing a Native-centered ethnohistory, seem to be much more interested in retreading old historical ground than in attempting to analyze the present day realities of Native peoples.[477] A component of Mihesuah’s argument has to do with the ability of history to legitimate power; it establishes and maintains sovereignty.[478] If histories do not present the agency of Native actors instead they uphold a system of marginalization-through-interpretation that is based in colonialism. Though Mihesuah references the role of written history, we can also consider how those bodily accretions of historical behavior, as noted in my discussion of Connerton, are also used to enforce sovereignty.

Mihesuah’s analysis places primacy on historical research and writing that is concerned with present day indigenous American communities and realities; the moral component, here, requires historical texts to be useful to the subjects of their study.[479] In this, she echoes the call of Linda Tuhiwai

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[476] Dorris, 102-103.

[477] Devon Abbott Mihesuah, “Should American Indian History Remain a Field of Study?,” *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities*, eds. Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 143-144.

[478] Mihesuah, 145.

[479] Mihesuah, 144.

Smith, who argues that research involving indigenous peoples should benefit to these communities.[480] Mihesuah states that she believes historians need to reevaluate their motives for writing histories, if they are not concerned with the contemporary realities of the people they study.[481]

I believe that a focus on contemporary realities is necessary in the study of the art history of Native American and First Nations people, as well. Indeed, it is required when analyzing contemporary art made by artists from these cultures, as their works frequently reference these realities. The value in understanding how indigenous Americans present their own lives, and discuss their own places in history, provides as a degree of sovereignty, an awareness of the survivance of Native peoples. However, I think it can also benefit the cultures and histories grouped together under the concept of the West.

While the focus of this dissertation has been on the role of Native American and First Nations artists in presenting these other ways of doing history, we might also consider the implications of these traces of historicity for the traditional academic discipline itself. History, after all, is so much more than the dates and facts that would appear to make up its sum. I see two types of research opening up from my analysis of Native historicities in contemporary Native American and First Nations art. One of these paths involves considering the broader definitions of history and historicity in

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[480] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, (New York: Zed Books, 1999).

[481] Mihesuah, 154.

Western cultures. Perhaps the textual dominance in Western scholarship has led to neglect of other sources of historical information. I believe that Connerton's evaluation of social memory begins to open up such discussions. Historians of Western societies might further look at the ways in which oral histories and narratives are used by academia referencing Native American peoples as guides for other ways that Western historicities could be investigated.

The second line of inquiry I see developing involves the differences apparent in Native means of understanding the world; of listening to and accepting that there are alternative ways of knowing, different epistemologies that inform different societies and cultures. Rather than proscribing that *indian* cultures are ahistorical, since the documents of Native histories and Western histories do not hold much in common, perhaps acknowledging the sources, stories, and images presented by Native peoples as their histories would be a better tactic. This is an acknowledgment that many Native writers and scholars are clamoring for. One interpretation of Vizenor's arguments about survivance and transmotion could be that the dominant Euro-American and Euro-Canadian cultures have spent a great deal of cultural energy defining *indian* peoples; one aspect of sovereignty lies in the act of self-definition. Accepting that there are different means of understanding the world, and different systems of knowledge production seems to me to open up a discursive space where this type of self-definition could flourish.

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