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Installation view of Kay WalkingStick: An American Artist, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC, 2015,
foreground: *WalkingStick, New Mexico Desert*, 2011, collection National Museum of the American Indian, 26/9250, background: *WalkingStick, Me and My Neon Box*, 1971, exhibition organized by Kathleen Ash-Milby and David Penney (artworks © Kay WalkingStick; photograph © Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian)

Kathleen Ash-Milby and Ruth B. Phillips

Inclusivity or Sovereignty? Native American Arts in the Gallery and the Museum since 1992

Writing in the pages of this journal in 1992, Kay WalkingStick decried “the lack of serious critical discussion of Native American art outside of its relationship to ethnographic or tribal art and artifacts.”¹ Almost twenty-five years later, the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) opened the first retrospective exhibition of WalkingStick’s work to favorable reviews from the art critics of major American newspapers.² Holland Cotter of the *New York Times* called Kay

WalkingStick: An American Artist “an overdue career survey,” while the *Washington Post*’s Philip Kennicott wrote sensitively of the artist’s successful exploitation of the diptych format to express her dual heritages and pointed to the comprehensive scope of the exhibition: “When the issues are complex,” he wrote, “depth is essential.”³ Both the exhibition venue and the attention paid by prominent reviewers are indicative of the distance traveled by public museums since 1992, as well as the paradoxes that continue to riddle the institutional infrastructure of Native American art.

While the retrospective exhibition of a senior Native American artist’s work in a large national museum signaled the maturing of a field which had, a quarter of a century earlier, still manifested itself primarily through group shows, it remains true that the show was organized by an ethnically specific museum committed to promoting the work of artists historically marginalized by mainstream American art worlds. It thus left unresolved central tensions between the desire for inclusion in major art institutions that has powered momentous changes in recent decades, and the equally compelling desire to claim and control exclusive spaces for the representation of Native North American arts and cultures.

Twenty-five years is, in many ways, a blink in history. Yet this quarter century, marked by a growing consciousness of globalization and the strengthening of movements of decolonization in many settler nations, has seen significant repositionings of contemporary Native North American arts in museums and related institutions. This essay will trace some of these changes from the perspectives of two witnesses and participants in this history: an Indigenous curator of Navajo descent working in an American national museum who specializes in contemporary Native American art, and a non-Indigenous art historian of Ashkenazi Jewish descent teaching in a Canadian university who specializes in Native North American art and critical museology.

In 1992 a multitude of voices justifiably protested the exclusion of Native artists from mainstream art venues. The historical consciousness-raising of that year demonstrably sharpened awareness of the more comprehensive restitutions required by histories of disenfranchisement and displacement and led to more recent discourses of visual sovereignty—as evidenced by the creation and achievements of the NMAI itself.⁴ A comparison between 1992 and 2017 reveals dramatic growth in the numbers of practicing Indigenous artists, the quality of their work, the frequency of exhibitions, and the sizes and locations of exhibition venues. That numerous artists have since found a purchase in museums and galleries across North America has been the work of many arts professionals, both Native and non-Indigenous. At the same time, however, the changes remain uneven. In some regional institutions, contemporary Native American art is prominently displayed

1. Kay WalkingStick, “Native American Art in the Postmodern Era,” in “Recent Native American Art,” special issue, *Art Journal* 51, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 15.

2. Full disclosure: One author of the present essay co-organized the exhibition discussed here: *Kay WalkingStick: An American Artist*, organized by Kathleen Ash-Milby and David Penney, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC, November 7, 2015–September 18, 2016.

3. Holland Cotter, “Kay WalkingStick’s American History,” *New York Times*, April 13, 2016, at www.nytimes.com/2016/04/17/arts/design/kay-walkingsticks-american-history.htm, as of July 13, 2016; Philip Kennicott, “Kay WalkingStick, Painting Her Heritage,” *Washington Post*, at www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/kay-walkingstick-painting-her-heritage/2015/11/05/3aef3380-824a-11e5-9afb-0c971f713doc_story.html, as of November 6, 2016.

4. In 1992, the National Museum of the American Indian was still very much a work in progress. The existing staff, collections, and facilities of the Museum of the American Indian—Heye Foundation, created through an Act of Congress in 1989, were in the process of being folded into the Smithsonian Institution. The original Museum of the American Indian facility, opened in the 1920s at Audubon Terrace at 155th St. and Broadway in Manhattan, was in the process of shutting down while the staff worked on inaugural exhibitions for a new facility, the George Gustav Heye Center at One Bowling Green, which opened only in 1994.

in dedicated galleries, integrated into permanent installations of American, Canadian, and contemporary art, or both, while in many others—including some of the most influential—it remains conspicuously absent. The timing of special exhibitions tends to be sporadic and is often tied to a moment of historical commemoration. With a few notable exceptions, furthermore, collecting programs are often similarly opportunistic and reliant on private donations.⁵

As we will argue in this essay, these somewhat quantitative measures of improvement can mask even more difficult conceptual issues. In the twenty-first century, a cultural discourse of postcolonialism, which came to the fore in the late twentieth century as external colonies in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere fought for and gained independence, has been supplanted by a renewed insistence on the unfinished project of decolonization, especially in settler-colonial societies. The assertion of “visual sovereignty” in and through Indigenous practices of art-making, pedagogy, and curatorial practice is complemented by a more recently formulated critical interrogation of settler-colonial art history on the part of non-Native scholars.⁶ The New Zealand *pakeha* (white settler) art historian Damian Skinner, for example, has urged the need to “write a new kind of art history that will actively grapple with the impact of settler colonialism on both artistic practice and art historical narratives.”⁷ This discursive politics has resulted in new theorizations countering liberal values of “recognition” and “inclusion” that, it is argued, have failed to disturb ongoing colonial power relations.

While these arguments are not new, they have been more fully articulated in recent years. In 1994, for example, the Mohawk curator and historian Deborah Doxtator—an early and acute critic of the Western museum—wrote that “the tasteful lighting of objects, which for Western society is culture—beautiful baskets, spoons, and clothing items, for example—illuminates far more about Euro-Canadian aesthetics and values than they do about the cultural views of the people who made the objects. Such an exhibition within an aboriginal world view completely ignores the basic values and culture principles that the object represents.”⁸ Two decades later, the Dene political scientist Glen Coulthard made this case more comprehensively in a rigorously theorized response to the philosopher Charles Taylor’s influential affirmation of the “politics of recognition.” Coulthard argues that “when delegated exchanges of recognition occur in real world contexts of domination the terms of accommodation usually end up being determined by and in the interests of the hegemonic partner in the relationship.”⁹ Applying such arguments to the art gallery leads us to ask as yet unanswered questions: On whose terms should inclusion take place? What does sovereignty look like in terms of institutional practice?

The 1992 Columbus Quincentennial gave new impetus to pressures for inclusion and the creation of dedicated institutional spaces for Native arts in both the United States and Canada. In both countries, Native North American artists commemorated five centuries of colonization, loss, and survivance with groundbreaking exhibitions of contemporary art, some of which we discuss later in this essay. Arguably, however, this moment of commemoration was merely the outward sign of a deeper process of contestation and activism that had been gathering momentum for some years. In late 1989, after years of advocacy and lobbying, the NMAI was created as a new museum in the Smithsonian Institution by an act of Congress.¹⁰ In the summer of 1990, Canadians had witnessed the unfolding of

5. The National Museum of the American Indian may be the only major museum with an annual acquisitions budget and collecting plan that prioritizes contemporary Native art. The Denver Art Museum has aggressively collected as well, though this area is largely supported by a major private donor. The Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art in Indianapolis has the second largest collection of work by living Native artists, but purchases are tied to the support of the fellowship program, supported largely by the Lilly Foundation. During the past decade especially, the National Gallery of Canada and other major Canadian art galleries have been actively expanding their contemporary Indigenous art collections.

6. We use the term “visual sovereignty” to denominate the right claimed by Indigenous artists to determine their modes of self-expression and to own space for the presentation of their work independently of direction or approval from outsiders.

7. Damian Skinner, “Settler-colonial Art History: A Proposition in Two Parts,” *Canadian Journal of Art History* 35, no. 1 (2014): 131–71.

8. The statement was made at a 1994 symposium organized by the Commonwealth Association of Museums. See Deborah Doxtator, “The Implications of Canadian Nationalism for Aboriginal Cultural Autonomy,” in *Curatorship: Indigenous Perspectives in Post-Colonial Societies; Proceedings*, Mercury Series Directorate Paper 8 (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1996), 56–69.

9. Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 17. See also Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism*, ed. Amy Gutman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25–74.

10. Public Law 101-185, National Museum of the American Indian Act, November 28, 1989.

11. At the time of this writing, an unfortunate historical parallel is unfolding in North Dakota as Native American activists from the United States, Canada, and elsewhere are joining with the Standing Rock Sioux to protest the desecration of sacred lands and defend their land and the safety of their water supply against threats posed by the Dakota Access Pipeline.

12. Public Law 101-601, H. R. 5237, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, and Public Law 101-644, Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990.



Richard William Hill, draft map of major group exhibitions of Indigenous art during the 1980s and early 1990s, made by Hill for his ongoing research project (photograph © Richard William Hill)

13. The task force was commissioned in 1989 as a response to the national boycott of *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples*, a "supershow" organized in conjunction with the 1988 Calgary winter Olympics. It was funded by the federal Department of Communications (now Heritage Canada) and cochaired by Tom Hill and Trudy Nicks. Its report, *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships between Museums and First Peoples* (Ottawa: Canadian Museums Association, 1992), is available from the Canadian Museums Association. See also Trudy Nicks, "Partnerships in Developing Cultural Resources: Lessons from the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples," *Culture* 12 (1992): 87–94; and Ruth B. Phillips, "Moment of Truth: *The Spirit Sings* as Critical Event and the Exhibition inside It," in *Museum Pieces: Toward the Indigenization of Canadian Museums* (Montreal: McGill Queens, 2011).

14. The momentum for change also reflects the impact of earlier activism. Jolene Rickard, for example, points to the American Indian Movement and its occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973 and the first United Nations Conference on Indians in the Americas in Geneva in 1977. Rickard, "Visualizing Sovereignty in the Time of Biometric Sensors," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 470.

the Oka crisis, begun as a protest against a proposal to extend a golf course onto a Mohawk burial ground and leading to a seventy-eight-day armed standoff between the protestors and the Quebec police and Canadian military.¹¹ In the same year the United States Congress passed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), which required a comprehensive process of museum disclosure and the return of certain categories of Indigenous cultural property, and which also ushered in a new era of collaboration between Native Americans—including contemporary artists—and museums. Congress also passed the Indian Arts and Crafts Act, which regulates the identification of art by Native Americans for sale, limiting the legal definition to artists enrolled in federally recognized tribes.¹² The year 1992 also coincided with the release of the report of Canada's federally appointed Task Force on Museums and First Peoples. It established guidelines for repatriation and also formulated specific recommendations for capacity building in Indigenous institutions, professional training for Indigenous curators, and support for contemporary artists.¹³

This history of contestation and negotiation created a context for change in Indigenous and settler art worlds which, beginning slowly through a range of local initiatives, has continued to build during the past decade.¹⁴ Even so brief a summary indicates the different histories of resistance, activism, and change in the United States and Canada, but it also suggests the permeability of the border—often programmatically ignored by artists and activists who recognize the unities of Indigenous histories in the Americas. In the discussion that follows we account both for contrasts in the pace and patterns of change between Canada, where Indigenous peoples constitute the significant "other" of the settler-colonial nation, and the United States, where African Americans have occupied that position during the past four centuries. In an essay of limited length such a review



Joe Cantrell giving artist talk for the exhibition *Native Images: Joe Cantrell and Katherine Fogden, 1995*, American Indian Community House Gallery, New York (photograph © Joanna Bigfeather)

can, inevitably, provide only the outline of a complex story of interaction among artists and institutions. Aware of this limitation, we seek to provide an armature for further studies that can illuminate the ways in which the exhibitions and events we mention have actively intervened in our understandings of Native American histories and contemporary realities.¹⁵

Trajectories of Change: The Decade after 1992

As reflected in the 1992 *Art Journal* issue, during the early 1990s contemporary Native art could most often be seen in large group exhibitions and projects, many of which were tied to the Columbus Quincentenary. This historic moment created an opening that Native artists could use both to voice political critique and to draw attention to the agency of artists in Native American survivance—the resilient retention of identities and traditions in the face of enormous obstacles defined by Gerald Vizenor as the “active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion.”¹⁶ Looking back, it is evident that many artists were conscious that such opportunities were rare and, in fact, might not be repeated. The group exhibition format reflected the organizers’ desire to promote and expose as many artists as possible to the larger art world as quickly as they could. The artist James Luna expressed the general fear that the sudden interest in Native art was a fad when he asked, sardonically, “Will you call me in 1993?”¹⁷ This trepidation was not unfounded. Many artists of Luna’s generation had experienced exclusion from mainstream art museums and galleries through the 1980s and had only recently begun to be recognized as significant contemporary figures—even if the recognition was framed as a multiculturalist gesture of inclusion.

Changes in the United States

Despite several important exhibitions organized by larger museums, the real action in the United States during the 1990s was in community art centers and small nonprofit institutions.¹⁸ The American Indian Community House (AICH)

15. Richard William Hill’s current research project is contributing such understandings. See his article “9 Group Exhibitions that Defined Contemporary Indigenous Art,” *Canadian Art*, July 28, 2016, at <https://canadianart.ca/features/9-group-exhibitions-that-defined-contemporary-indigenous-art/>, as of June 19, 2017. We are grateful to Hill for allowing us to reprint the schematic exhibition map made as part of his research process.

16. Gerald Vizenor, “Aesthetics of Survivance: Literary Theory and Practice,” in *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*, ed. Vizenor (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 1.

17. Luna quoted in Steven Durland, “Call Me in ‘93: An Interview with James Luna,” *High Performance* 14, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 34–39. Luna was also known to ask this question in his performances.

18. See, for example, the conference *Shared Visions: Native American Painters and Sculptors in the Twentieth Century*, May 8–11, 1991, conference publication (Phoenix: Heard Museum, 1992); and Theresa Harlan, *Watchful Eyes: Native American Women Artists*, exh. cat. (Phoenix: Heard Museum, 1994).



Installation view, American Indian Contemporary Arts gallery, San Francisco, 1990s, with artworks by Nora Naranjo-Morse (artwork © Nora Naranjo-Morse; photograph © American Indian Contemporary Arts)

19. Although the C. N. Gorman Museum is part of the University of California, Davis, in the 1990s it resided in a single gallery within the Native American Studies department and was run by professor George Longfish with no full-time staff. In programming, funding, and audience it was closer kin to a community gallery than to a university museum with full staffing and administration. 20. Joanna Bigfeather, telephone conversation with Ash-Milby, May 27, 2016.

Gallery in New York City, American Indian Contemporary Arts in San Francisco, Two Rivers Gallery in Minneapolis, and the C. N. Gorman Museum at the University of California, Davis, were particularly important.¹⁹ In these smaller venues, Native curators, who were often themselves artists, were not content to wait for others to create the opportunities their communities craved. They had the freedom to organize exhibitions on an ongoing basis, rather than waiting for once-in-a-blue-moon opportunities. Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, George Longfish, G. Peter Jemison, Sarah Bates, Theresa Harlan, and Joanna Bigfeather all took strong leadership roles, curating exhibitions in small venues of this kind and advising galleries and museum staff on an ad-hoc basis. For some, this was a continuation of artist activism started in the 1980s. The artists' connections were multiracial, often coalescing in urban centers, but extensively networked and deeply intertwined socially and professionally across the country.

Although the majority of these shows still conformed to the group exhibition format, the volume of exhibitions encouraged the exploration of specific themes or media, as, for example, in *Indian Humor* (1995) at American Indian Contemporary Arts, and *Native Response to HIV/AIDS* (1995) and *Fashion from Native Thought* (1998) at the AICH Gallery. These exhibitions were meant to reach and educate a broad spectrum of viewers, but their first audience was Native people in the community. As Joanna Bigfeather, AICH curator and gallery director (1993–99), recalls, “It was always important to me that the community be involved in these exhibitions and be proud of them.”²⁰ These efforts were reinforced with the

21. Including: Joanna Bigfeather, director 1999–2002; Margaret Archuleta, director 2003; Ryan Rice, chief curator 2009–14; Candice Hopkins, chief curator 2015; Patsy Phillips, director 2008–present.
22. *Our Land/Ourselves: American Indian Contemporary Artists*, ed. Paul Brach, exh. cat. (Albany: University Art Gallery, State University of New York, 1990); *We, the Human Beings: 27 Contemporary Native American Artists*, ed. Kathleen McManus Zurko, exh. cat. (Wooster, OH: College of Wooster, 1992); *The Submuloc Show/Columbus Wóhs: A Visual Commentary on the Columbus Quincentennial from the Perspective of America's First People*, exh. cat. (Phoenix: Atlatl, 1992).
23. *Invitational '74*, January 26–March 3, 1974, included works by T. C. Cannon, Helen Hardin, Larry Golsh, Valjean Hessing, Jerry Ingram, Mary Morez, and Fritz Scholder. *The Heard Museum of Anthropology and Primitive Art Newsletter*, January–February 1974, 1, 3.
24. Margaret Archuleta, "Curator's Statement," *7th Native American Fine Art Invitational*, ed. Archuleta, exh. cat. (Phoenix: Heard Museum, 1997), 2.
25. See Archuleta, *Art in Two Worlds: The Native American Fine Art Invitational 1983–1997*, exh. cat. (Phoenix: Heard Museum, 1997). The museum organized eight biennials and invitationals from 1983 to 2002. After Archuleta's departure, the position of curator of fine art was not filled until 2006 with Joe Baker, who left the museum in 2008. Along with solo artist projects, Baker coorganized two critically noted group exhibitions during his three-year tenure: *Holy Land: Diaspora and the Desert* (2006), cocurated with Lara Taubman, and *Remix: New Modernities in a Post-Indian World* (2007), cocurated with Gerald McMaster in collaboration with NMAI. At the time of this publication, the Heard Museum is advertising this position, which has been unfilled since 2008.
26. The George Gustav Heye Center, named after the founder of the Museum of the American Indian, is located in the Alexander Hamilton Custom House, a historic landmark building in lower Manhattan.
27. The fifteen artist collaborators included visual artists, performing artists, and a poet: Arthur Amiotte, Douglas Coffin, Allen Deleary, Pualani Kanaka'ole Kanahale, Margo Kane, Frank LaPena, Jane Lind, Harold Littlebird, Jose Montano, Soni Moreno-Primeau, Dan Namingha, LeVan Keola Sequeira, Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, Denise Wallace, and Josephine Wapp.
28. Several Native curators were involved at various stages in this project, including Richard W. Hill Sr., Truman Lowe, Joanna Bigfeather, and Bentley Spang. See *Who Stole the Teepee?* ed. Fred Nahwooksy and Hill, exh. cat. (Phoenix: Atlatl, 2000). Atlatl, Inc. was an influential organization for Native artists in the 1990s, hosting national conferences that brought the Indigenous arts community together and provided support services.

opening of the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) Museum in downtown Santa Fe in 1992, directed by the Tuscarora artist and curator Richard W. Hill Sr. Although the IAIA Museum was relatively small, exhibiting primarily the collections of the IAIA art school and providing an exhibition venue for its alumni and students, it nonetheless established a unique foothold as the only North American museum focusing exclusively on contemporary Native art. In subsequent years, it became an important site of practice for the Native arts professionals who served there in curatorial and leadership positions.²¹

At the larger institutional level, we can trace an incremental progress toward greater representation of contemporary Native American art during the 1990s, as manifested in occasional temporary exhibitions. Most were traveling shows organized by smaller organizations that made the rounds of university art galleries and larger regional museums, such as *Our Land, Ourselves* (1990), *We the Human Beings* (1992), and *The Submuloc Show/Columbus Wóhs* (1992).²² Among mid-size American art museums, the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona, was an exceptional and pioneering leader during this decade.

Founded in 1929, the Heard had historically focused on the traditional arts and heritage of Native people, particularly of the Southwestern United States, but began to shift away from a purely ethnographic approach during the 1970s and 1980s. It organized both medium-size and more tightly focused exhibitions of the work of selected artists, such as *Houser and Haozous: A Sculptural Retrospective* (1984). In 1974 the Heard held its first invitational exhibition of "leading American Indian painters" following a 1973 sculpture exhibition.²³ By 1983 the curator Erin Younger had pioneered the first biennial for Native American art based on a fine-art model; Jaune Quick-to-See Smith worked closely with the museum as an advisor and served as a selector for the second biennial in 1985. After being hired as the museum's first curator of fine arts, Margaret Archuleta changed the format back to an invitational, which allowed her to expand the exhibition program and to bring in guest curators such as Theresa Harlan. Archuleta's approach to the invitational format diminished the curatorial or institutional voice and foregrounded that of the artists. The selection process was competitive, and for each exhibition new outside judges were asked to choose the participants. She stated that her role as curator was "to facilitate the first person experience for the artist, the Native communities, and for our museum audience."²⁴ This approach also involved the invited artists in the selection of their art, their catalogue entries, and the wall texts. Archuleta's strong voice and advocacy for contemporary Native art continued to inform the invitational exhibits through the 1990s until her departure from the museum in 2002.²⁵

The model of inclusivity adopted by museums such as the Heard not only included but also empowered Native artists. In a similar vein, the creation of the NMAI was widely heralded as a watershed moment because it introduced a model of visual sovereignty that, for the first time in a major museum, enabled Native American administrators and curators to indigenize the presentation of Native culture and history. The representation of the lives and expressions of Native people past and present was central to the museum's mission from its establishment, but in its early years the NMAI did not make an active commitment to exhibiting the work of living artists. The museum was founded with the transfer to the Smithsonian Institution of the massive collections of New York



Installation view, *Third Biennial Native American Fine Arts Invitational, 1987*, Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona, organized by Margaret Archuleta (photograph © Billie Jane Baguley Library and Archives, Heard Museum, Phoenix)

29. This was not a published policy, but the practice of museum staff. The rationale was confirmed by Ann Drumheller, NMAI registrar during this time period, as well as Ash-Milby, who worked in the curatorial department during this period, 1993–99. Ann Drumheller, telephone conversation with Ash-Milby, October 27, 2016. As an example, Ash-Milby's proposed purchase of works from the exhibition *Indian Humor* in 1998 was not approved by senior curatorial leadership to be forwarded to the collections committee, the Curatorial Council, for consideration. Rare exceptions were the purchase of two works by Jim Schoppert in 1997 and works by Edgar Heap of Birds, Gail Tremblay, and Marcus Amerman from the 2000 exhibition *Who Stole the Teepee?*. There were many complicating factors, competing needs, and sometimes conflicting priorities in the museum's first decade, as confirmed by museum staff past and present, including former director W. Richard West Jr., and former assistant director for cultural resources Bruce Bernstein. West, telephone conversation with Ash-Milby, October 28, 2016; and Bernstein, telephone conversation with Ash-Milby, November 2, 2016.

City's Museum of the American Indian—Heye Foundation. Over half of the approximately eight hundred thousand catalogued objects from North, Central, and South America are archaeological items, and most of the remainder are ethnographic. Thus the NMAI's first priority was to create comprehensive exhibitions that reflected these encyclopedic collections and reified the continued living presence and diversity of Native people by celebrating art of the past at the George Gustav Heye Center, the museum's new exhibition facility in New York City.²⁶ An early sign of the authority and Indigenous perspectives contemporary artists would introduce to the museum was an installation the artist and curator Gerald McMaster created for one of the three inaugural exhibitions, *All Roads Are Good: Native Voices on Life and Culture*. His spiraling circle of beaded moccasins, each pair poised in the position of dancing feet, melded the practice of the contemporary art installation with the function of historic artifact display, jettisoning the standard grids of the Western museum. A second exhibition, *This Path We Travel: Celebrations of Native American Creativity*, focused on contemporary art and was organized by the fifteen participating artists rather than the museum's curators.²⁷ Despite these strong opening statements, over the next nine years contemporary art was represented at the New York venue primarily through traveling exhibitions loaned from other organizations. Among the few exceptions was *Who Stole the Teepee?* (2000), produced in collaboration with Atlatl, a Phoenix-based Native American artist service organization.²⁸

The NMAI's program of contemporary art collecting during this period was similarly cautious because of a concern that, with no contemporary art curator on staff to guide decision-making, its acquisitions could unfairly influence the market for individual living artists.²⁹ Funding for acquisitions was also lacking on



Gerald McMaster creating moccasin installation, 1994, for *All Roads Are Good: Native Voices on Life and Culture*, inaugural exhibition, National Museum of the American Indian, New York (photograph © Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian)

30. "Collections Policy," National Museum of the American Indian, 1995, NMAI Archive Center, New York, 9.

31. Rayna Green, Curator Emeritus, Smithsonian National Museum of History, telephone conversation with Ash-Milby, November 5, 2016.

32. Funding for special projects throughout the Smithsonian never meets the amount needed, and difficult choices are always necessary. For example, in the mid-1990s contemporary Native art acquisitions at the Smithsonian American Art Museum were curtailed in favor of other under-represented groups, including Latino artists.

According to Andrew Connors, a former curator at SAAM who had organized an exhibition, *Pueblo Indian Watercolors* (1993), and acquired a work by Allan Houser for the museum, the rationale given to staff was that NMAI had greater authority and expertise to pursue this work. Connors, telephone conversation with Ash-Milby, November 5, 2016.

a more general level. In consequence, and despite the identification of the poor representation of contemporary art in the collection as a significant weakness in the 1995 "Collections Policy" document, there were very few purchases of contemporary art, and additions to the collection were largely passive, limited almost entirely to donations and works that were traditional in form and execution.³⁰

Unfortunately, too, while there was no official policy or directive to this effect, one of the unintentional consequences of the creation of NMAI was that staff working on Native art and culture projects at other Smithsonian museums witnessed the attrition of funding and postponement of exhibitions.³¹ This indicates the degree to which it may have been assumed that the NMAI would now take responsibility for most, if not all, Native American art content, making representation, collecting, or support in other Smithsonian museums unnecessary or redundant.³²

Changes in Canada

Although many in Canada have urged the creation of a similar Native-led national museum, this has not yet occurred.³³ Rather, the Canadian Museum of History (formerly the Canadian Museum of Civilization) began to collect contemporary First Nations and Inuit art during the 1970s when fine art institutions remained

Print advertisement for *Indigena*, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull, Quebec, 1992
(photograph provided by Lori McNulty Digital Storytelling and Content Strategy)

Ads for the show were subject to the approval of the Indigenous curators as well as the museum.

INDIGENA

“You cannot discover an inhabited land. Otherwise I would cross the Atlantic and ‘discover’ England.”
Chief Distributions of the Columbus Voyages

While the world celebrates the 500th anniversary of Columbus’s “discovery” of the Americas, Native Canadians reflect on the outcome of this historic meeting. Within decades, millions of Aboriginal people were dead—victims of imported epidemics and violence. Native artists from across Canada portray their views of the 500 years since Columbus in *INDIGENA*, a provocative multi-media arts project featuring an exhibition, special events and a publication.

The passionate collection of paintings, videos, installations, performances and essays examines the tangled complex of history, language and identity that defines Aboriginal cultures today.

Created by members of the Native artistic community and organized by the Museum, *INDIGENA* is a compelling voice of hope at this momentous time in history. Don’t miss this powerful presentation. The answers to a more promising future may be waiting in the past.

“INDIGENA: Propagation of Indigenous Peoples on 500 Years,” was organized by the Canadian Museum of Civilization with the cooperation of the Society of Canadian Artists of Native Artists and the generous support of the Council for the Arts of the Canada Council, the Indian Art Centre and the Board for the Society of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the Canadian Native Arts Foundation, and *Indigo* of Montreal Ltd. The arts project includes the publication *“INDIGENA: Contemporary Native Perspectives,”* published by the Canadian Museum of Civilization and *Indigo* of Montreal Ltd. and available at the Museum Bookstore or by calling the Museum Publishing Division at “3-1-1”.

Indian and Inuit Art Gallery
CANADIAN MUSEUM OF CIVILIZATION • HULL (QUÉBEC)

APRIL 16 TO OCTOBER 12, 1992
100 Laurier Street, Hull, Quebec (K1P 7Y6, 7000)

33. On June 21, 2017—National Aboriginal Day—Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that a heritage building located across the street from the Parliament buildings would be turned over to Indian, Metis, and Inuit organizations for use as a cultural space, stating, “This new space—located so close to Parliament Hill—will help ensure that the dialogue we have started is sustained and deepened as we move forward together.” While specific plans have not been developed at the time of writing, it is highly likely that contemporary Indigenous art will figure in its displays. See <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2017/06/21/prime-minister-announces-100-wellington-become-space-indigenous-peoples>, as of July 12, 2017.

34. Through 2013 a second curatorial position for contemporary Inuit art was held by Odette Leroux, Maria Muellen, and Norman Vorano. The two separate curatorial positions for Inuit and Indian art were combined in 2014.

35. *Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives*, ed. Gerald McMaster and Lee-Ann Martin, exh. cat. (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1992).

36. Gerald McMaster, *Edward Poitras: Canada XLVI Biennale di Venezia*, exh. cat. (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1995).

37. See Lee-Ann Martin, “The Waters of Venice: Rebecca Belmore at the 51st Biennale,” *Canadian Art*, Summer 2005, at <https://canadianart.ca/features/rebecca-belmore-venice/>, as of November 25, 2016. In 1999 Nancy Marie Mithlo spearheaded significant ongoing interventions to represent Native artists at the Venice Biennale through exhibitions, performances, and public programs. The latest iteration, *Wah.shka*, was curated with Mary Bordeaux for the 2017 Biennale; see http://nancymariemithlo.com/Venice/Venice_Biennale_2017/index.html, as of June 2, 2017.

largely resistant. Since 1977 it has staffed a dedicated curatorial position, held successively by the Indigenous artists and curators Robert Houle, Gerald McMaster, Lee-Ann Martin, and Linda Grussani.³⁴ McMaster and Martin’s Columbus year exhibition, *Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives*, broke new ground, not only by commissioning leading artists to contribute works reflecting critically on 500 years of colonialism, but also through the critical discourse articulated in its Indigenous-authored catalogue.³⁵ Three years later, McMaster was selected as the commissioner for the Canadian Pavilion at the 1995 Venice Biennale and, supported by his museum, made the groundbreaking decision to feature a First Nations artist, Edward Poitras.³⁶ This precedent would be followed ten years later when Rebecca Belmore’s *Fountain* represented Canada at the 2005 Venice Biennale.³⁷ McMaster’s *Reservation X: The Power of Place* followed in 1998, innovating again with a set of installations that focused on the centrality of place to contemporary artists’ conceptions of identity and community, coexistent with their cosmopolitanism and active participation in mainstream art worlds. During these years, too, Lee-Ann Martin mounted an important series of exhibitions, which were both thematic (*The Powwow: An Art History*, curated with Bob Boyer in 2000 for the MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina) and monographic (*Alex Janvier: Negotiating the Land*, Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon, 1994; and *Bob Boyer: His Life’s Work*, for the MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, in 2012).

Until recently, however, the best-funded and most consistent national project of institutional collecting was carried out by the Indian and Inuit Art Centre at Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. Since 1965 it has maintained a National Indian and Inuit Art collection—now numbering over five thousand works—and has been guided by a mandate to promote contemporary



Rebecca Belmore, *Fountain*, 2005, production still for video installation/performance (artwork © Rebecca Belmore; photograph by José Ramón González, provided by Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia)

38. A parallel Inuit art center was disbanded and its collections transferred to the National Gallery of Canada and other Canadian museums in 1992. A federally endowed Inuit Art Foundation took over the promotional activities between 1985 and 2012. The past history of institutional engagement with Aboriginal arts was the subject of the 2006 Aboriginal Curatorial Collective meeting. See Barry Ace, "The Way Ahead: Surveying the Curatorial Landscape," at www.aboriginalcuratorialcollective.org/research/thewayahead.html, as of May 15, 2016.

39. See Diana Nemiroff, "Modernism, Nationalism, and Beyond: A Critical History of Exhibitions of First Nations Art," in Diana Nemiroff, Robert Houle, and Charlotte Townsend-Gault, *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada*, exh. cat. (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992).

40. For an example of this lobbying, see Alfred Young Man, ed., *Networking: Native Indian Artists Symposium IV*, conference proceedings (Lethbridge, AB: Graphcom Printers, 1988).

artists by buying key works through a juried selection process, publicizing them through a documentation center, lending to museums, and organizing small exhibitions in its on-site gallery and occasional international touring shows. Managers of the center have included a distinguished list of Indigenous artists and curators: Tom Hill, Jackson Beardy, Richard W. Hill Sr., Viviane Gray, Barry Ace, Lee-Ann Martin, and Linda Grussani.³⁸

Since the early twentieth century, the collection of the National Gallery of Canada (NGC) has included a small number of works by Indigenous artists, but until the 1990s it was mandated to collect and display only settler Canadian art.³⁹ During the 1980s the Society of Canadian Artists of Native Ancestry (SCANA), carried out an effective lobbying campaign for inclusion in the NGC's permanent collections and installations. The NGC's curator of contemporary art, Diana Nemiroff, argued successfully for this inclusivity. In 1986 the purchase of a major work by the Anishinaabe artist Carl Beam, *The North American Iceberg*, signaled the change in direction that was more fully expressed by the 1992 exhibition *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery*, organized by Nemiroff, Houle, and Charlotte Townsend-Gault.⁴⁰ During the 1990s, the NGC quietly began to create a presence for contemporary Aboriginal art in its rotating installations by installing one of its contemporary galleries with Indigenous Canadian works. In 2003 it launched a much larger initiative by incorporating historic and modern Aboriginal art (mostly loaned) into the chronological survey presented in its Canadian galleries under the project title *Art of This Land*.⁴¹



Installation view, *Land, Spirit, Power*, 1992, from left, artworks by Carl Beam, Truman Lowe, and James Lavadour, organized by Diana Nemiroff, Robert Houle, and Charlotte Townsend-Gault (photograph © National Gallery of Canada)

41. See Anne Whitelaw, "Placing Aboriginal Art at the National Gallery of Canada," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 31, no. 1 (2006), at <http://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/1775/1897>, as of May 15, 2016; and Ruth B. Phillips, "Modes of Inclusion: Indigenous Art at the National Gallery of Canada and the Art Gallery of Ontario," in *Museum Pieces: Toward the Indigenization of Canadian Museums* (Montreal: McGill Queens, 2011), 252–76.

42. This list is by no means comprehensive, but, rather, a sampling that illustrates regional initiatives. In Canada, the foundation had been laid in the 1980s by groundbreaking shows across the country, such as *New Work for a New Generation*, curated by Robert Houle for the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina, Saskatchewan, in 1982; *Horses Fly Too*, curated by Norman Zepp and Michael Parke Taylor for the Mackenzie Gallery in 1984; *Norval Morrisseau and the Emergence of the Image Makers*, curated by Tom Hill and Elizabeth McLuhan for the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1984; and *Beyond History*, curated by Karen Duffek and

Taken together, these developments evidenced a historic, if still tentative, expansion of scope on the part of large Canadian national museums of art, history, and ethnology. Even this shift could not, however, have occurred without the activities of numerous smaller institutions spread out across Canada. These included First Nations cultural center museums, smaller art galleries and university museums, and—not least—a loose network of artist-run nonprofit galleries. The Woodland Cultural Centre museum in Brantford, Ontario, which serves nearby Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe First Nations, began to hold annual exhibitions of contemporary Indigenous art in 1975, long before larger museums became involved. In western Canada, a parallel role was played by the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, which also exhibited contemporary artists' work well before the larger art galleries began to engage with it. Other municipal, provincial, and university art galleries also created important temporary exhibitions during this decade, both on the work of individual contemporary artists and on thematic topics. Examples include the Edmonton Art Gallery's *Shades of Difference: The Art of Bob Boyer* (1991), the Winnipeg Art Gallery's *Robert Houle: Sovereignty over Subjectivity* (1992), and the Thunder Bay Art Gallery's *Basket, Bead and Quill* (1996).⁴²

Twenty-First Century Evolutions: A Shifting Landscape

By the turn of this century, the landscape at the National Museum of the American Indian had shifted significantly. In 2000 McMaster, already a longtime



Installation view, Robert Davidson: *The Abstract Edge*, University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver, 2004, organized by Karen Duffek (artwork © Robert Davidson; photograph provided by UBC Museum of Anthropology)

Tom Hill for the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1989. In the United States, foundational exhibitions during these years were *Women of Sweetgrass, Cedar, and Sage*, curated by Jaune Quick-to-See Smith at the American Indian Community House in 1983; *Contemporary Native American Art*, curated by Joan Randall in consultation with George Longfish at the Gardiner Art Gallery, Oklahoma State University, also in 1983; and two exhibitions curated by Jimmie Durham and Jean Fisher: *Ni'Go Tlung A Doh Ka [We Are Always Turning Around on Purpose]* at Amelie A. Wallace Gallery, SUNY Old Westbury, Long Island, in 1986; and *We the People* at Artists Space, New York, in 1987.

43. McMaster held this position until 2002, when he became a special assistant to the director until he left the museum in 2005. Lowe held his position from 2000 to 2008.

44. The twelve artists featured were Kay WalkingStick, Rick Bartow, Joe Feddersen, Harry Fonseca, Hachivi Edgar Heap of Birds, George Longfish, Judith Lowry, Nora Naranjo-Morse, Shelley Niro, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Marie Watt, and Richard Ray Whitman.

45. Some contemporary art purchases were

consultant to the NMAI on its planning for the new museum on the National Mall in Washington, DC, was appointed deputy assistant director for cultural resources, and Truman Lowe, a recognized Ho-chunk sculptor and educator, was hired as the museum's first curator of contemporary art.⁴³ Although the NMAI had not yet actively committed to organizing exhibitions of living artists, a key opportunity arose at its New York venue and led to the development of the exhibition *Continuum: 12 Artists (2003–5)*, a series of solo installations.⁴⁴ This project set in motion an extraordinary sea change that not only engaged NMAI curators in selecting the artists, but also presented them through individual installations rather than within group exhibitions or juxtapositions of contemporary and historic works—then a standard practice. In 2003 Lowe, joined in 2005 by associate curator Kathleen Ash-Milby, also began to build the NMAI's collection by commissioning and acquiring works from NMAI exhibitions, and, later, by making independent acquisitions.⁴⁵

The success of *Continuum* led to a succession of influential exhibitions at the NMAI's New York venue, including *New Tribe New York: The Urban Vision Quest (2005–6)* organized by McMaster, which focused on Native artists living in the New York tri-state area; *Off the Map: Landscape in the Native Imagination (2007)*, an exhibition of unconventional work by five artists exploring their relationships to the land; and *HIDE: Skin as Material and Metaphor (2010)*, a two-part exhibition of work addressing issues of race, representation, historical and environmental trauma, and perseverance, both organized by Ash-Milby.⁴⁶ Unlike *Continuum*, the majority of the exhibitions that followed were supported by catalogues, important both as



Installation view, *Continuum: 12 Artists: Judith Lowry, National Museum of the American Indian, New York, 2004*, organized by Truman Lowe (artworks © Judith Lowry; photograph by David Sundberg/Esto © Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian)

approved after McMaster and Lowe were hired, but due to budget concerns and lack of a fine-art collecting plan, these seem to have been limited to works needed for the NMAI “permanent” exhibitions at the new Mall Museum, such as the mixed-media sculptural composition *War Shirt #2* (2003) by Bently Spang, and the painted ceramic work *Love and Luggage* (2002) by Tammy Garcia. Purchases from *Continuum* artists began in 2003, including the *Chief Joseph Series* (1974–76), a multi-panel painting series by WalkingStick. Curatorial Council Minutes, January–December 2003, National Museum of the American Indian, Office of the Registrar, Cultural Resources Center, Suitland, MD; W. Richard West Jr., former director of the NMAI (1990–2007), telephone conversation with Ash-Milby, October 28, 2016.

46. Ash-Milby initially worked for NMAI 1993–1999 as a research assistant and assistant curator. She returned to NMAI (New York) in 2005 after several years working as a freelance curator and serv-

records of the exhibitions and as forums for expanded discourse. Perhaps the museum’s boldest move at this time was NMAI curator Paul Chaat Smith’s organization of *Emendatio: James Luna*, a solo exhibition and collateral project for the 2005 Venice Biennale.⁴⁷ The project included a performance by the artist during the opening, followed six months later by a symposium, “Vision, Space, Desire: Global Perspectives and Cultural Hybridity,” which interrogated the role of Native and Indigenous art on the world stage.⁴⁸ Taken together, these initiatives demonstrated not only a solid commitment to the presentation of contemporary Native art, but also to the critical interpretive importance of the Native curatorial and scholarly voice.

The Ford Foundation had supported *Emendatio* and, following its success, awarded NMAI a five-year capacity-building grant to enable it to launch a major contemporary art initiative, which ran from 2005 to 2010.⁴⁹ With this critical support, the museum organized a second collateral project at the Venice Biennale in 2007, *Most Serene Republics: Edgar Heap of Birds*, cocurated by Ash-Milby and Lowe.⁵⁰ It also actively built the collection through continued acquisitions, published numerous catalogues and artist monographs, and organized scholarly symposia and exhibitions. The museum’s larger exhibition facilities in Washington, DC, did not have the same flexibility as the galleries in New York, but they served well as a site for bold solo exhibitions focusing on the work of major figures in the field, such as *Fritz Scholder: Indian/Not Indian* (2008), cocurated by Lowe and Smith, and *Brian Jungen: Strange Comfort* (2009), curated by Smith. Since the ending of Ford Foundation funding in 2011, the NMAI has continued its commitment



James Luna, *Emendatio*, 2005, performance, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice, Italy, June 2005, exhibition organized by Paul Chaat Smith and Truman Lowe (artwork © James Luna; photograph © Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian)

ing as the curator and codirector of the American Indian Community House Gallery (2000–5).

47. Paul Chaat Smith was initially hired in 2001 to work on the development of the inaugural mall exhibitions for the new museum facility on the Washington, DC, mall which opened in 2004.

48. *Vision, Space, Desire: Global Perspectives and Cultural Hybridity*, conference proceedings (Washington, DC: National Museum of the American Indian, 2006).

49. Program officer Elizabeth Theobald Richards (2003–10) established the Ford Foundation's first funding portfolio primarily focused on Native American cultures, entitled Traditional Knowledge and Expressive Culture, which included two initiatives: Strengthening the Field of Native Arts and Cultures (capacity building), and Advancing the Dialogue on Native American Arts in Society (supporting public discourse advancement through publication, exhibitions, and scholarship). NMAI, along with other organizations, received funding under both initiatives. Over seven years the Ford

to contemporary art. No longer constrained by concerns about undue influence on market value, it has shone a light on the work of promising young artists such as Jeffrey Gibson, Will Wilson, and Marie Watt early in their careers, as well as honoring the contributions of iconic senior artists like Allan Houser and George Morrison.⁵¹

Similarly bold gestures of inclusion were made by the National Gallery of Canada with a series of large retrospective exhibitions of five pioneering modern and contemporary artists: Marion Tuu'luq in 2002, Norval Morrisseau in 2006, Daphne Odjig in 2009, Carl Beam in 2010, and Alex Janvier in 2016.⁵² Since the 1990s, the NGC, which had accepted transfers of modern Inuit sculpture and prints from Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Canada, has also mounted continuing exhibitions of modern and contemporary Inuit art.⁵³ Key to the realization of this program was the Audain Foundation's endowment of an NGC curatorial chair for Indigenous art in 2007. The global scope defined for the new Department of Indigenous Art, headed by Greg Hill, the first Audain Curator, was manifested in the NGC's commitment to organize recurring quinquennial exhibitions of contemporary indigenous art from around the world. The first iteration, *Sakahān: International Indigenous Art*, coorganized by Greg A. Hill, associate curator of Indigenous art Christine Lalonde, and guest curator Candice Hopkins, was presented in 2013. The largest exhibition ever mounted by the NGC, it filled the suite of temporary exhibition galleries with work by Indigenous artists from Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Australia, India, Scandinavia, and elsewhere, and



Norval Morrisseau with his painting *Androgyny, 1983*, which he presented to the people of Canada at the opening of his solo exhibition *Norval Morrisseau: Shaman Artist* at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 2006, organized by Greg Hill (photograph from *Ottawa Sun* © Postmedia Network Canada Corporation)

invested more than \$20 million in direct support to Native organizations and cultural communities through these initiatives. Richards, e-mail to Ash-Milby, June 6, 2016.

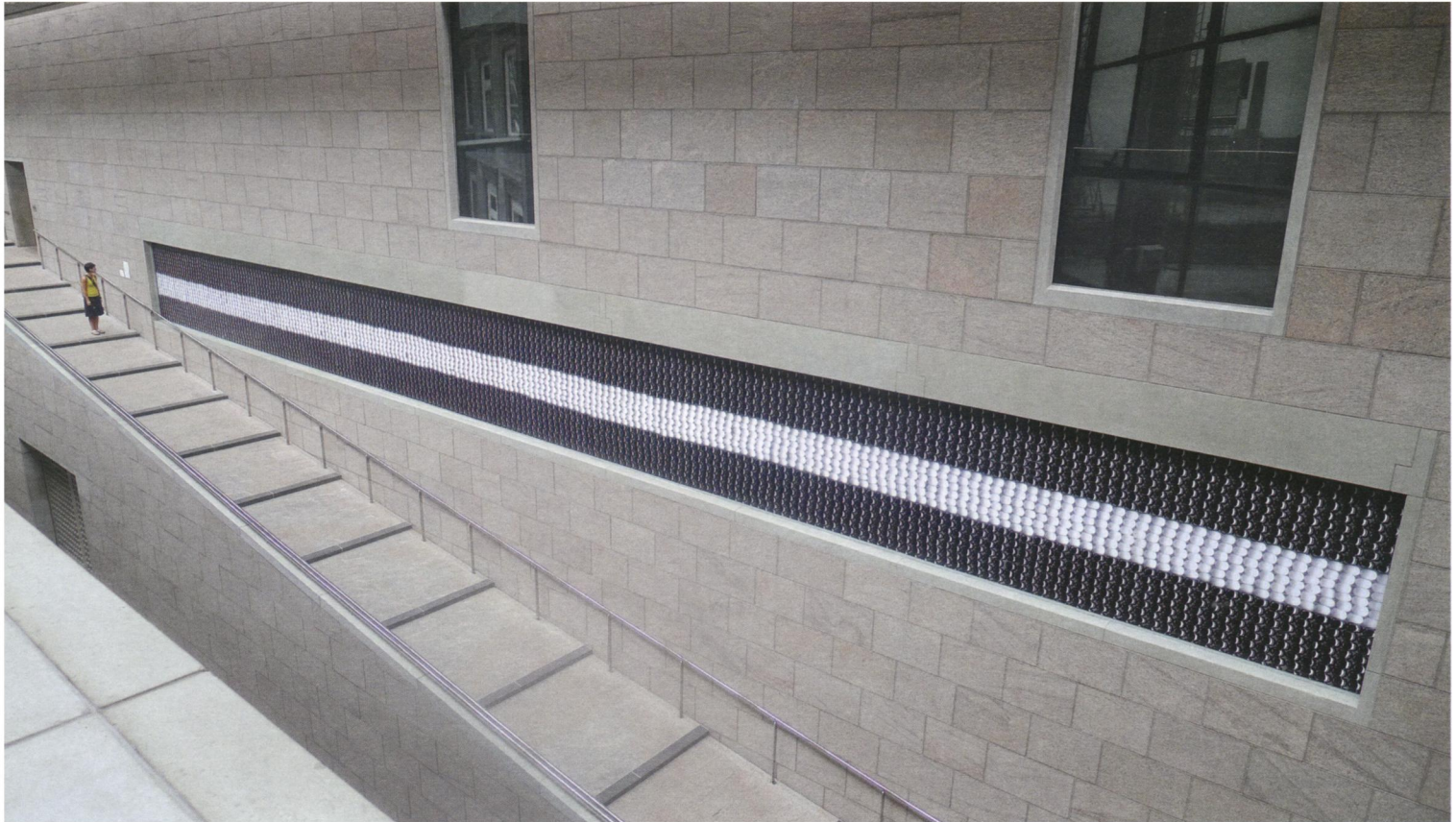
50. See Kathleen Ash-Milby and Truman Lowe, eds., *Most Serene Republics: Edgar Heap of Birds* (Washington, DC: National Museum of the American Indian, 2009).

51. A complete index of exhibitions at the National Museum of the American Indian in all locations is at www.nmai.si.edu/explore/exhibitions/past, as of July 21, 2017.

52. The exhibitions were *Marion Tuu'luq; Norval Morrisseau: Shaman Artist; The Drawings and Paintings of Daphne Odjig: A Retrospective Exhibition: Carl Beam; and Alex Janvier*. In 2007 the NGC also presented a touring exhibition of Haida contemporary art, *Robert Davidson: The Abstract Edge*, organized by the Seattle Art Museum. The Inuit exhibitions were organized by NGC curator Marie Routledge and are listed in the Exhibition

was complemented by satellite exhibitions at smaller galleries throughout the National Capital Region.⁵⁴

Toronto's Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), Canada's second largest art museum, has pursued a parallel path of increasing inclusivity, but has deployed other strategies and narrative approaches. Like the NGC, the AGO focused almost exclusively on Western arts until the 1990s, with the exception of its collections of twentieth-century Inuit art and several pioneering exhibitions and installations.⁵⁵ During the decade following the task force report the AGO, like the NGC, began to experiment with ways to expand its mandate. Assistant Curators of Canadian Art Richard William Hill and Anna Hudson mounted an innovative installation entitled *The Meeting Ground* in 2003, which juxtaposed Indigenous and settler arts and contextualized them through new kinds of didactics. This gallery was short-lived due to the comprehensive redesign and expansion of the AGO and its exhibitions, which began the following year.⁵⁶ But it was also a sign of a residual resistance to inclusivity that Hill resigned in protest over an important donor's refusal to have his collection of Canadian art exhibited alongside Indigenous art. Hudson also mounted *Woman as Goddess: Robert Markle and Joyce Wieland* in 2003, contrasting representations of the female nude by male and female artists who, though also Indigenous and non-Indigenous, had both moved through the late-twentieth-century mainstream Canadian art world. The AGO Canadian galleries became the responsibility of McMaster in 2005, when he was appointed Curator of Canadian Art. His approach integrated Canadian and Indigenous contemporary and historical works



Nadia Myre, *For those who cannot speak: the land, the water, the animals and the future generations*, 2013, installation view, *Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, 2013, organized by Greg A. Hill, Candice Hopkins, and Christine Lalonde (artwork © Nadia Myre, licenced by Copyright Visual Arts-CARCC, 2016; photograph by Brian Gardiner)

History section of the NGC website (see previous note).

53. This department had previously been known as Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and is now Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada—reflecting official changes of terminology from “Indian,” to “Aboriginal,” to “Indigenous.”

54. During this period, too, the National Gallery exhibited contemporary Indigenous art in other themed exhibitions alongside non-Indigenous art.

55. Most notable was *Norval Morrisseau and the Emergence of the Image Makers* (see note 41). In 1992 the AGO commissioned Robert Houle to make the site-specific work *Anishinaabe Walker Court* in response to its 1984 purchase of Lothar Baumgarten’s *Monument for the Native People of Ontario*.

56. Richard William Hill, “Meeting Ground: The Reinstallation of the Art Gallery of Ontario’s

around three themes: power, myth, and memory. When the gallery reopened in 2008, nineteenth-century settler paintings and sculptures were installed, often dramatically, next to historic and contemporary Indigenous works. In one gallery Kent Monkman’s commissioned painting *The Academy* conjured up a nineteenth-century art academy inside an Indigenous earth lodge, populated it with settler and Indigenous patrons, artists, and artworks, and rewrote the narrative of Canadian art history—from an Indigenous perspective;⁵⁷ the next room was anchored by Rebecca Belmore’s *Rising to the Occasion*, which embodies the impact of the colonial fur trade on her Anishinaabe ancestors in the form of a reimagined and crazily hybrid hooped-skirted eighteenth-century dress.

McMaster was succeeded in 2013 by Andrew Hunter, who has further transformed the AGO’s Canadian galleries, strengthening the presence of Indigenous arts and creating a series of strategic interventions that put settler and Indigenous works in dialogue with each other. Until 2017, visitors entered the Canadian section through a long corridor gallery installed with historic, modern, and contemporary Indigenous works in a range of media. Moving through the installations, they encounter major works by Morrisseau and Beam, which were frequently positioned as central focal points of the rooms in which they hung. In 2015–16 one of the AGO’s most revered works, Tom Thomson’s *The West Wind*, was placed adjacent to the Anishinaabe artist Michael Belmore’s *Breadth*, a cast bronze deer splayed, corpse-like, on a plinth, veins of copper—a powerful medicine in the Anishinaabe cosmos—shining through. The text panel, entitled “Into the Woods,



Installation view of *Meeting Ground*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Ottawa, ca. 2000, organized by Richard William Hill and Anna Hudson (photograph © Art Gallery of Ontario)

McLaughlin Gallery," in *Making a Noise! Aboriginal Perspectives on Art, Art History, Critical Writing and Community*, ed. Lee-Ann Martin, conference publication (Banff: Banff Centre Press, 2003), 50–70. See also Naohiro Nakamura, "The Representation of First Nations Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 45–46 (2012): 417–40.

57. See Phillips, "Modes of Inclusion," for a detailed discussion of Monkman's work.

58. On Bonnie Devine's installation, see Ruth B. Phillips, "Between Rocks and Hard Places: Indigenous Lands, Settler Art Histories and the 'Battle for the Woodlands,'" *Journal of Canadian Art History* 37, no. 1 (2017).

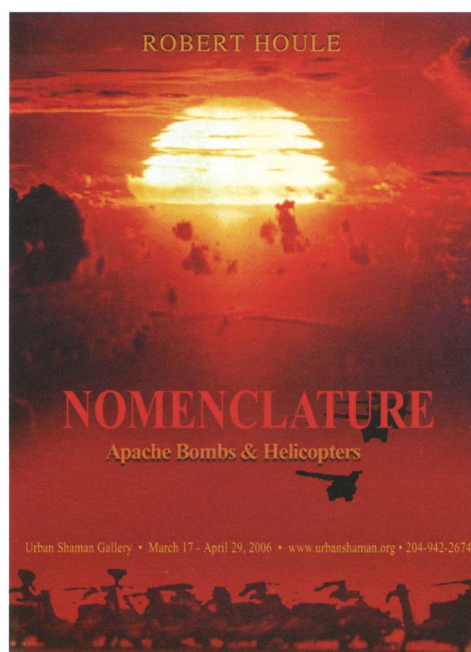
An Icon Revisited," demythologized the raw natural beauty depicted in Thomson's landscape by revealing the devastations of the land and its original inhabitants wrought by logging, industrialization, and colonialism. In another corner, a commissioned installation by the Anishinaabe artist Bonnie Devine integrated sculptural installations with a large map of the Great Lakes overpainted with ancestral animals and spirit beings from the Anishinaabe cosmos.⁵⁸ In 2016, also, the AGO established a new curatorial position in Canadian and Indigenous art and hired the Anishinaabe curator Wanda Nanibush to work with Hunter to increase the visibility and build the collections not only of Indigenous but also of other under-represented arts. Nanibush's exhibition *Toronto: Tributes + Tributaries, 1971–89*, shown in 2016–17, fully integrated and foregrounded Indigenous, African-Canadian, and other little seen works from the AGO's collections in a large show focusing on an innovative and culturally diverse period of the city's artistic production. Other major Canadian art museums are engaged in similar processes; virtually all provincial, urban, and university museums are actively acquiring and exhibiting contemporary Aboriginal art.

Nonprofit artist-run centers have played a particularly important role as incubators of contemporary Aboriginal art, nurturing artists whose works go on to be shown in the big institutions and allowing the organizers and artists space to experiment and formulate innovative curatorial premises. An outstanding example is the 2009 exhibition *Beat Nation: Hip Hop as Indigenous Culture*, which compellingly advanced the importance of urban street culture as a fertile source of

Installation view, Canadian galleries, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 2015, foreground: Michael Belmore, *Breath*, 2014, right: Tom Thomson, *The West Wind*, 1917, organized by Andrew Hunter (photograph © Art Gallery of Ontario)

Installation view of *Beat Nation: Art, Hip Hop and Aboriginal Culture*, Vancouver Art Gallery, 2012, from left, works by Dana Claxton, Skeena Rice, and Kent Monkman, organized by Tania Willard (photograph by Rachel Topham © Vancouver Art Gallery)





Poster for Robert Houle: *Nomenclature*, Urban Shaman Gallery, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 2006 (artwork © Robert Houle; photograph © Urban Shaman Gallery)

inspiration for contemporary Indigenous artists. Organized by curator Tania Willard for Vancouver's Grunt Gallery, the Vancouver Art Gallery remounted it as a nationally touring exhibition in 2012. The Grunt Gallery exhibits both Native and non-Native artists, but its exhibition archive shows a notable increase in the number of Indigenous exhibitions during the late 1990s. Winnipeg's Urban Shaman gallery was established around the same time, in 1996, but in contrast focuses exclusively on Aboriginal art. For two decades it has mounted a continuous series of exhibitions by artists "whose work hinges on experimentation in form and content," and can thus "challenge people's notions of 'Aboriginal art.'"⁵⁹

The direction of contemporary Native art exhibitions has also continued to evolve in smaller venues in the United States in recent years. Many of the community-based venues, such as the American Indian Community House Gallery and American Indian Contemporary Arts, have closed or ceased to support regular exhibitions. Even in their heyday, these small organizations struggled with a lack of funding, since few funders were oriented to the unique needs of these culturally specific, small venues. In the absence of stable funding, the activism and leadership of the individuals at these organizations made these venues rich and dynamic centers of Native art. They also provided critical opportunities for young and emerging curators to gain experience without the limitations of a more structured environment. As noted earlier, the Heard Museum was an important leader in the 1980s and 1990s, but wavered in its commitment to bold and innovative presentations of Native art after Archuleta left the museum in 2002.⁶⁰ But while these initial drivers in the field have fallen back, many regional museums, such as the Denver Art Museum, Peabody Essex Museum, and Minneapolis Institute of Art have increased their contemporary Native art programming. In 2013 the Philbrook Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which was previously an epicenter of activity as the host of the Indian Art Annual from 1946 to 1979, opened a new exhibition, research, and storage facility in downtown Tulsa in the Brady Arts

59. "Urban Shaman: Contemporary Aboriginal Art, at <http://urbanshaman.org/site/history>, as of May 16, 2016.

60. According to David M. Roche, appointed director of the Heard Museum in 2016, "the Heard must find a way to make American Indian art about the future, and work to once again be at the forefront of providing opportunities to living artists of Native background and to advancing American Indian art." To this end, the museum is adding a seven-thousand-square-foot gallery in 2017. Roche, e-mail to Ash-Milby, October 25, 2016.



Installation view of Virgil Ortiz: *Revolt, 1680/2180*, Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado, 2015, organized by John Lukavic (artwork © Virgil Ortiz; photograph provided by Denver Art Museum)

61. Philbrook Downtown opened with the survey *Identity and Inspiration: 20th Century Native American Art*, curated by Christina Burke.

62. For a discussion of the museum's reconceptualization, see Aldona Jonaitis, ed., *Looking North: Art from the University of Alaska Museum* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998).

63. Ellen Napiura Taubman and David Revere McFadden, eds., *Changing Hands: Art without Reservation 2; Contemporary Native North American Art from the West, Northwest, and Pacific* (Dalton, MA: Studley Press, 2005). The exhibition of the same name, organized by Taubman and McFadden, was on view at the Museum of Art and Design, New York, September 22, 2005—January 22, 2006.

District, housing a survey of its modern and contemporary art collection. It includes ongoing exhibitions developed with items from the Philbrook's Native art collection, both contemporary and historic.⁶¹ Another example is the University of Alaska Museum of the North, which opened its Rose Berry Alaska Art Gallery in 1998 with new displays integrating settler and Indigenous historic, contemporary, and modern arts. It has continued to showcase the arts of contemporary Indigenous Alaskan artists in special exhibitions.⁶²

The Institute of American Indian Arts Museum, renamed the Museum of Contemporary Native Art (MoCNA), has also risen to greater prominence in recent years. Patsy Phillips, former director of Atlatl and a driver of the contemporary art program at NMAI, was hired as director in 2008, and under her leadership the potential of the Santa Fe museum began to be realized. Chief curator Ryan Rice was recruited by Phillips in 2009, and over the next five years he created an intensive program of more than sixty exhibitions and three publications. MoCNA's rich and dynamic exhibition program reached beyond its former regional and student/alumni focus, including many artists from Canada. It has also hosted traveling exhibitions such as *Changing Hands: Art without Reservation 2*, circulated by the Museum of Art and Design in New York.⁶³

Another exciting addition to the scene is the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, which launched the Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art in 1999. The components of this ambitious and ongoing biennial include a monetary prize for the artists selected, a major exhibition of their art, a substantial catalogue, and purchase of works for the Eiteljorg's permanent



Installation view of *Counting Coup*, Museum of Contemporary Native Art, Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 2011, from left, works by Jim Denomie, Carl Beam, Marie Watt, and Jesus Barraza, organized by Ryan Rice (photograph © Museum of Contemporary Native Art)

collection. The lack of recognition of contemporary Native art in mainstream museums drove the creation of this active and tightly focused program, and created new opportunities to draw the Native arts community together. Funded largely by the Lilly Foundation, the Eiteljorg biennials have moved beyond the Heard Museum's invitational model by also providing substantial financial support to the artists, creating a scholarly forum, and enabling the Eiteljorg to build a substantial and highly visible collection.

Interlinkages: Art Museums, Art Schools, Art Markets

The importance of the Lilly Foundation to the Eiteljorg Museum, the Ford Foundation to the NMAI, and the Audain Foundation to the National Gallery of Canada signals the broader institutional context within which museums and galleries work. We have focused on the museum sector in this essay because of the primary role that exhibitions play in shaping public awareness and understanding of contemporary Native North American art. At the same time, it is important to note that exhibiting institutions do not operate in isolation, but are systemically connected to programs and practices developed in other institutions. On the one hand, the curricula, scholarly literature, and practices of research and critical evaluation formulated within the academy inform the approaches of museum curators and professionals. On the other hand, while funding agencies, foundations, and commercial galleries also respond to academic discourses, they exercise autonomous agency through their selection of artists and exhibitions to

support.⁶⁴ A comprehensive overview of institutional practices would need to map the specific ways in which these three sectors interconnect within the Native North American art world. It would also need to consider the ways in which institutions represent and interrelate historical and contemporary Native North American arts and the different mandates and practices that characterize Native-run and non-Native institutions. Although such a large task is beyond the scope of this essay, we note briefly several key developments in the educational and funding sectors that have accompanied and influenced the recent activities of museums and galleries.

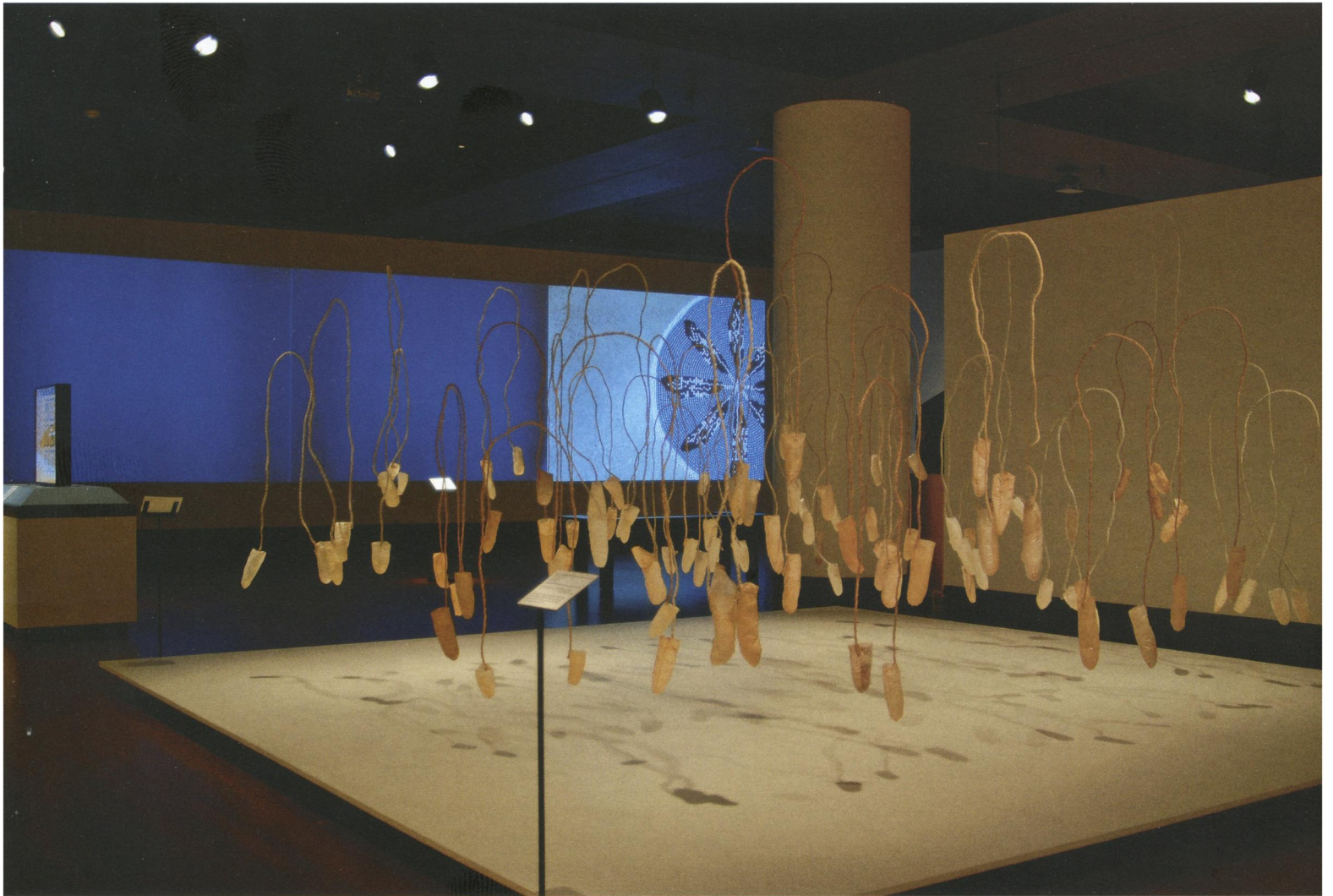
The dynamic growth of contemporary Native American art since 1992 is in part the product of parallel growth in educational opportunities and programs designed to support Native artists. The Institute of American Indian Arts has continued to guide and produce Native artists from the United States and Canada from its founding in 1962 to the present, and has played a fundamental role in offering professional modernist and contemporary art training to young artists. Other informal centers for Native art instructors and students have emerged in mainstream colleges and universities such as the University of Colorado, Boulder, and the University of California, Davis. Influential Native artists are also graduating from prestigious art schools across the country such as Yale and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In Canada, the past twenty-five years have seen a major expansion of educational programs specifically designed for Indigenous artists in both Native and non-Native postsecondary institutions. The Indigenous Fine Arts and Indigenous Art History program at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (now First Nations University) in Regina was developed by Bob Boyer after he became head in 1980. More recently, other Canadian art schools have increasingly supported Indigenous artists, and several have developed dedicated programs. Vancouver's Emily Carr University of the Arts, for example, established an Aboriginal office with expanded course offerings "that teach art and design from an aboriginal perspective," while the Ontario College of Art and Design University in Toronto launched its Indigenous Visual Culture Studies program in 2009.⁶⁵

The Canadian funding sector has played an equally important role. Following the formal adoption of the task force report by the Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Museums Association, federal and provincial government departments and agencies responsible for heritage, arts, and museums responded to its recommendations through the creation of new programs and policies. In 1994 the Canada Council for the Arts established an Aboriginal Arts Secretariat, which has unrolled a suite of specialized grants not only in visual arts, but also in music, dance, and media arts. Both contemporary and contemporary traditional arts are supported, the latter by the Aboriginal/Inuit Traditional Visual Art Forms Program for Individual Artists. Funding and staffing for these programs were significantly boosted in 1998–99, in keeping with the announced priority of the Canada Council to mount "programs that meet the particular needs of Aboriginal artists and arts organizations."⁶⁶ In addition, the Canada Council's Art Bank, which purchases works from contemporary Canadian artists and makes them available for rental and display in businesses and government offices, has actively purchased work from Aboriginal artists throughout this period and holds a substantial collection of contemporary Canadian Aboriginal art.

64. Joseph Alsop pointed out the triangulated relationship of art history, collecting, and markets in his exhaustive study *The Rare Art Traditions: The History of Art Collecting and Its Linked Phenomena* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 15–18.

65. "Emily Carr University: History and Evolution," at www.ecuad.ca/about/at-a-glance/history-and-evolution, and "OCAD: Indigenous Visual Culture," at www.ocadu.ca/academics/undergraduate/indigenous-visual-culture.htm, both as of June 19, 2017.

66. "Canada Council for the Arts: Grants," at <http://canadacouncil.ca/aboriginal-arts-office/find-a-grant?page=0>, as of April 19, 2016.



Installation view, *Diversity and Dialogue: The Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art, 2007*, foreground: Sonya Kelliher-Combs, background: Dana Claxton, organized by Jennifer Complo McNutt, Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, Indianapolis (photograph © Eiteljorg Museum)

In contrast, as we have seen, major initiatives in the United States have been launched primarily through private foundations. The Ford Foundation granted over \$20 million to contemporary Native American art programs in public organizations from 2003 to 2010, and seeded the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation, which began awarding grants in 2010. More recently, the Mellon Foundation has supported postdoctoral fellowships for Native American art curators at the Portland Art Museum, Denver Art Museum, and Peabody Essex Museum.

Finally, the importance of professional associations and institutions that bring artists and curators together needs to be noted. In Canada, the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective (ACC) succeeded SCANA as “a national arts service organization that supports, promotes, and advocates on behalf of Canadian and international Aboriginal curators, critics, artists, and representatives of arts and cultural organizations,” holding lively annual meetings and symposia, and disseminating information about its members’ curatorial practices and research on its website.⁶⁷ The Banff Center provides sites for discussion and creation through its artists’ residencies and the organization of thematic symposia. Numerous Aboriginal artists and curators have participated since the late 1990s in gatherings that have generated key articulations of distinctive Native American approaches to contemporary art practices and the roles of art institutions. The 2003 conference “Making a Noise! Aboriginal Perspectives on Art, Art History, Critical Writing, and Community” is a notable example.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, in the United States the activities of Atlatl—as an artist-service organization founded in 1977 to bring together and mobilize artists from across the country through national meetings and conferences, which successfully sourced and supported funding for numerous exhibitions during the 1980s and 1990s—have tailed off in the new millennium.⁶⁹

Incomplete Repositionings

Five hundred twenty-five years after the landing of three Spanish ships on a Caribbean island proved the prologue to a total war of colonization in the Americas, forward-thinking museums have begun to make an effort to include indigenous arts of those continents throughout their collections and exhibitions, and especially in their installations of American and contemporary art. The Newark Museum, Rockwell Museum, Brooklyn Museum, and Denver Art Museum have demonstrated commitment and success in varying degrees, each recognizing Native art as part of the national heritage and the history of world art and culture. The 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation is being marked by new exhibitions and reinstallations of the Canadian galleries of museums across the country. The NGC has redesigned and expanded its Canadian galleries—now renamed the Galleries of Canadian and Indigenous Art—and has organized its chronological survey to include settler and Indigenous arts from the centuries prior to contact through to the centennial year of 1967. Contemporary Indigenous arts have been introduced into these historical installations and are also prominently displayed in the galleries devoted to contemporary Canadian art.

Even so brief a survey of the past twenty-five years of exhibitions of contemporary art reveals a repeated pattern: in a wide range of museums throughout Canada and the United States, the increasing participation of Indigenous curators

67. “Aboriginal Curatorial Collective: Mandate,” at www.acc-cca.com/wordpress/about/mandate/, as of May 15, 2016.

68. See *Making a Noise!*, cited in note 56.

69. Unpublished report, 1998, Atlatl, national service organization for Native American arts (1977–97), Billie Jane Baguley Library and Archives, Heard Museum, Phoenix, AZ.

70. A prime example of a positive development, however, is the formation of the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective/Collectif des Conservateurs

autochtones (ACC/CCA), founded in 2006 as a national arts service organization that supports, promotes, and advocates on behalf of Canadian and international Aboriginal curators, critics, artists, and representatives of arts and cultural organizations. In addition to acting as a conduit for sharing information with Indigenous artists and curators, the ACC/CCA holds colloquia and other gatherings for the exchange of ideas and intellectual discourse in the field. See www.acc-cca.com.

71. According to Judith Ostrowitz, a former research associate in the Metropolitan Museum's Department of Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, a small number of contemporary traditional items, such as a mask by Robert Davidson, have been exhibited within the department's limited exhibition space. A print and painting by Jaune Quick-to-See Smith and two paintings by Kay WalkingStick were acquired between 1993 and 2008. Ostrowitz supported the acquisition of works by Edgar Heap of Birds and Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas in 2015. Judith Ostrowitz, e-mail to Ash-Milby, June 1, 2016. A sea change may be on the horizon, however. As of fall 2018, the Met will expand its display of historical Native American art with the inaugural installation of the promised gift of the Charles and Valerie Diker Collection of Native American Art to the museum's American wing. Discussions are also under way about featuring work by contemporary Native American artists across the Met in the near future. Sylvia Yount, Lawrence A. Fleischman Curator in Charge of the American Wing, e-mail to Ash-Milby, July 21, 2017.

72. At the Whitney Museum of American Art, the main exception is the inclusion of the artist Jimmie Durham, whose work has been shown in previous biennials and the museum's collection, and will be featured in a solo retrospective opening in November 2017, *Jimmie Durham: Art at the Center of the World*, organized by the Hammer Museum. Although his success and recognition on the international stage is laudable, his inclusion in exhibitions at the Whitney does not adequately represent the achievements of Native artists from the United States, and his claim to Native heritage has caused a flurry of recent criticism. For a summary and response, see Aruna D'Souza, "Mourning Jimmie Durham," Momus website, July 20, 2017, at <http://momus.ca/mourning-jimmie-durham/>, as of July 24, 2017. The collection of the Museum of Modern Art, likewise, has minimal representation of Native artists, with single works by Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Fritz Scholder, and Lewis de Soto.

73. Crystal Bridges has recently purchased works by Jeffrey Gibson and Emmi Whitehorse and, as of this writing, a major Native art exhibition is in early stages of development. Candice Hopkins, telephone conversation with Ash-Milby, October 28, 2016.

74. Robin Pogrebin, "Here Comes the Whitney Biennial, Reflecting the Tumult of the Times," *New York Times*, November 17, 2016, at www.nytimes.com/2016/11/18/arts/design/here-comes-the-whitney-biennial-reflecting-the-tumult-of-the-times.html, as of December 12, 2016.

and museum leaders has led to more innovative and progressive exhibitions of Native art. Thanks to the early activism of artists in the 1970s and 1980s and the work of numerous organizations large and small—including many not discussed here—a generation of Indigenous arts professionals has been able to seed the field. Although the number of positions that should ideally exist for Indigenous curators still far exceeds the number available, true partnerships and collegial relationships have proved effective in generating progress in the field.

While direct credit and leadership can be given to the Native curators whose work we have noted in this essay and to others we have not had space to discuss, many non-Native curators have also been leading change through their active collaborations with Native artists, curators, and scholars. Native art cannot be completely disentangled from the rest of the art world and, indeed, has never been fully separable. Look closely and you will notice that this issue of *Art Journal* joins the voices of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous professionals. To progress, we must continue to embrace the diversity of our field, not only by affirming the track record and ongoing need for Indigenous participation in all stages of exhibiting Native art, but also by recognizing the value of different views and strategies for defining the field and pushing it forward. Artists today have many options and are no longer uniformly pigeonholed by institutions using anthropological models. They can choose whether to work within their tribal communities or participate in a global art world, or both.

Yet as we noted at the beginning of this essay, the history of change we have summarized is uneven and remains far from complete. Although museums and galleries, large and small, have repositioned contemporary Native American arts in meaningful and important ways, there remain striking and troubling anomalies. In Canada, despite a vibrant and organized community of Indigenous artists and curators who are steadily driving the field forward, Indigenous people do not yet manage their own broadly based institution of art and culture.⁷⁰ In the United States significant collections and exhibitions of modern and contemporary Native American arts remain conspicuously absent from some of the country's largest and most important art museums—the Museum of Modern Art and the National Gallery of Art, for example—while in others, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, contemporary Native American arts tend to be tucked into departments of "Africa, Oceania, and the Americas," as tokenistic updates to the historic works on display.⁷¹ Most troubling has been the absence of Native American arts—historic, modern, and contemporary—from museums specifically dedicated to American art.⁷² This omission is especially striking in view of the marked efforts toward inclusion and collection building these institutions have made in the field of African American art, which for many years suffered a similar marginalization. Although we are aware, at this writing, of discussions under way at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, the past sins of omission in such leading American museums are telling of the great gaps in collections and representations that need to be overcome in order to remedy the long history of exclusion.⁷³ A glimmer of hope was the recent inclusion of works by the Native artist collective Postcommodity and Ho-Chunk artist Sky Hopinka in the 2017 Whitney Biennial, although there is much ground to make up following the decades of neglect.⁷⁴



Installation view of Jeffrey Gibson: *Said the Pigeon to the Squirrel*, National Academy Museum, New York, 2013, left, Gibson, detail of *Shield, No. 3*, 2012, right, Gibson, *She Walks Lightly*, 2012, organized by Marshall Price (photograph by Etienne Frossard © Jeffrey Gibson Studio)

As we also noted, however, quantitative measures do not resolve the underlying tension between the models of inclusion and of sovereignty that inform institutional practices. On the one hand, acts of inclusion do not in and of themselves respond to or resolve the decolonizing critiques expressed in the works of many contemporary Native American artists. The dream of Native American artists during the 1970s and the 1980s was to have a major exhibition in a mainstream art museum. That goal is now being achieved by the following generation, as evidenced by such major solo exhibitions as *Brian Jungen*, which toured from the Vancouver Art Gallery to the New Museum in New York in 2005, and *Jeffrey Gibson: Said the Pigeon to the Squirrel* at the National Academy Museum in New York in 2013. While such occasional successes should be applauded and supported, it has also become clear that the success of a few artists in major exhibitions at mainstream art museums and galleries does not solve the overriding issues of lack of visibility within the larger art landscape.

The debates and contradictions continue to play out in the positioning of contemporary Native American art within museums. They are highlighted by the outdated museological convention of exhibiting contemporary Native art within the confines of galleries of historic ethnic material—a problematic practice that occurs less and less. Thus, when the Nelson-Atkins Museum–Musée du quai Branly exhibition *The Plains Indians: Artists of Earth and Sky* was installed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2015 to general (even fawning) acclaim, the inclusion of contemporary artists in an exhibition focused on historical material struck many as both an injustice to the artists and a dated framing device. However important a showing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art is for

an artist, this mode of inclusion suggested that contemporary Native artists could enter its halls only if squeezed into the tail end of an exhibition of work from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁷⁵ While contemporary artists continue to draw on their ancestral traditions and belief systems, the “then and now” approach implies a need to justify the current work by its references to these traditions and reaffirms viewers’ common belief that the past is the only source of authenticity, perpetuating settler erasures of historical memory related to colonial oppression.⁷⁶ Further, it undermines progress in the representation of Native art and inhibits decolonization. It is, as Richard William Hill has so aptly stated, “not acceptable that we are constantly treated as novel and mysterious strangers on our own land, forever in need of an introduction to validate our presence.”⁷⁷

In recent years, the emerging discourse of Indigenous visual sovereignty has stressed the right of self-determination of Native artists, writers, and curators. A logical extension of this position is to suggest that instead of focusing on exclusion from the mainstream, the goal of Native artists should be to occupy their own space, because fighting for inclusion affirms the non-Native art world’s power of validation. Conversations among Native artists and scholars in public forums, such as the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association conferences, have reinforced this position, calling for the concentration of energies in home communities rather than abroad. This presents a dilemma for Native artists regarding the ramifications of participating on the global art stage by exhibiting in biennial exhibitions and selling their work through major commercial art dealers.⁷⁸

Jolene Rickard has, perhaps more helpfully, urged us to think about sovereignty as a relational concept. This is demonstrated on the National Mall in Washington by the very architecture of the National Museum of the American Indian where, as she observes, “the echoes of Southwestern canyons in the building are juxtaposed against classical European architectural tombs, creating a renewed Indigenous alterity.”⁷⁹ She argues that while political sovereignty and visual sovereignty are inextricably tied to each other, sovereignty should be understood as both processual and relational. As Rickard writes, “I’ve come to view sovereignty as an Indigenous tradition whose work is strategically never done. The emergent space of sovereignty within aesthetic discourse is not marked or theorized and needs to be articulated as a framing device to interpret the work of Indigenous artists.”⁸⁰ “Inclusion,” in other words, whether it takes the form of an autonomously governed museum within a larger system, or a separate gallery within a single institution, will remain the marked element as long as neocolonial power relations continue. Indigenous visual sovereignty necessarily evolves in relation to and alongside shifts from colonial, to postcolonial and—one day—to decolonized relationships between settlers and Indigenous peoples.

If, then, in this decolonizing world we take the historical consciousness museums work to create to be a key measure of institutional practices, the invisibility of Native arts in mainstream institutions has been as crippling for non-Native as for Native artists. Skinner, for example, refers to the continuing pattern of omission as a form of amnesia. He asks “what happens when settlers are encouraged to take responsibility for their position and privilege within settler societies, and to locate themselves in a way that disrupts the amnesia and invisibility that are central to settler colonialism. If invasion is a structure and not an

75. Judith Ostrowitz notes, “The Met made an important start to the process of inclusion for contemporary Native American and First Nations artists during my tenure there by including a gallery of recent works in the exhibition *The Plains Indians: Artists of Earth and Sky* (2015) in both ‘traditional style’ as well as in new media. I was able to add a number of paintings, photographs, and videos that were only on view at the New York venue of the exhibition and, as a result, some works were acquired for the permanent collection. However, a great deal needs to be done to continue this progress.” Ostrowitz, e-mail to Ash-Milby, June 2, 2016.

76. Skinner, cited above (note 7). A full critique of the exhibition development model used by the organizers of the Met exhibition, which follows an older anthropological approach of enlisting “consultants” (formerly “informants”) instead of partnerships or collaborations, was written by Joe Horse Capture: “Horse Capture: ‘Native People Have a Story to Tell—Their Own,’” at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/04/25/horse-capture-native-people-have-story-tell-their-own-160144>, as of April 25, 2015.

77. Richard William Hill, “Close Readings: *Before and after the Horizon: Anishinaabe Artists of the Great Lakes*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto July 26–Nov 23, 2014, and *The Plains Indians: Artists of Earth and Sky*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, March 9–May 10, 2015,” *C Magazine: Contemporary Art and Criticism*, Winter 2016, 38–41.

78. This viewpoint demonstrates that ideas about “success” in the Native arts community are not uniformly shared.

79. Rickard, “Visualizing Sovereignty in the Time of Biometric Sensors,” 465.

80. *Ibid.*, 478.

event, then settler-colonial art history is a way to start decolonizing art historical methodologies so that new ways of engaging with indigenous and settler art production become possible.”⁸¹ What is at stake, Skinner implies, is not just a more accurate understanding of history or a desire to achieve social justice through more equitable allocations of space in art galleries, but the transformative possibility that is offered by the openness to different concepts of aesthetic expression and cultural practice that comes with the consciousness of mutual responsibility and the sharing of land.

It is clear that better representation of Native art in museums should not be reduced to a choice between inclusivity in mainstream venues and institutional separation. Both approaches can advance the scholarship and serve the artist, but neither, on its own, can meet the need for the visibility that is lacking, especially if they continue to ghettoize or reduce necessary conversation between art worlds. Institutional practices that accurately reflect twenty-first century art worlds can only emerge when Native American and settler arts remain in dialogue, as was signaled in the title of the exhibition we discussed at the beginning of our essay—*Kay WalkingStick: An American Artist*. To see that exhibition at NMAI, in a space adjacent to the *Nation to Nation* exhibition on the history of treaties in the United States, and other exhibitions that testify to the millennia of Indigenous presence in North America, lent to the contemporary work on display a resonance unique to the venue. But it is also true that seeing the exhibition at the Whitney Museum of Art would have brought out the artist’s deep engagement with American traditions of abstraction, Pop, and landscape art during the second half of the twentieth century. Perhaps the last word should belong to the artist herself: When asked whether her retrospective at NMAI was somehow less than what she had hoped to achieve because it was at an ethnic museum, WalkingStick countered that it was in some ways much more. “Being honored by your own is huge. Having the exhibition at NMAI brought a richness of friendship, respect, and affection to the experience that I wouldn’t have had [at a mainstream museum].” Nevertheless, she says, one opportunity should not exclude the other. “Aren’t they both valuable and important to your soul?”⁸²

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81. Skinner, 167.

82. Kay WalkingStick, e-mail to Ash-Milby, May 27, 2016.