BODY LANGUAGE: INDIGENOUS PERFORMANCE ARTISTS ADDRESSING THE INSTITUTION

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Writing this was as much of a privilege as it was a deeply isolating experience. I wrote about community and bodily presence while my own existence narrowed to a series of word documents, videos, and microphones. I was writing while oil pipelines destroyed water and land that reservations relied on, people of color protested for their right to live only to have their lives unjustly stolen from them, COVID-19 ravaged communities, and suicides skyrocketed as others took their own lives out of despair. The hope that I clung to was that I was amplifying the voices and presence of people who needed to be seen and heard by writing something that mattered.

In the two years since starting this program, not just me, but the entire world has changed so drastically. I do not think those of us who have survived would have been able to do so without the people we find ourselves surrounded with today. To the support system that I had moved away from in California, I love each one of you for always making time for a phone call. Thank you to my family, Amanda Ballinger, Drew Musselman, and Hunter Jones for listening to me at my lowest moments and cheering me on during the happier ones. To each mentor, Moira West, Mariah Proctor-Tiffany, Karen Kleinfelder, and Fran Lujan, another thank you is needed because you have made this path a possibility for me. Lastly, thank you to the found family I have made in Stillwater, with a special thank you to b hinesley and Arlowe Clementine, who helped me find my footing when I was especially lost. As the first in my family to make it this far in higher education, everything was foreign and quite honestly terrifying, but it is thanks to Dr. Siddons' constant encouragement, Dr. Greenwalt's patience and presence, and Dr. Miller's insight that I was able to produce this paper. I hope I can make all of you proud and give back to the world all the love that you all have shown me.

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Abstract: Indigenous performance artists emphasize personhood, their individual experience under the institutional gaze, and provide space to negotiate trauma that breaks up the generalizing conversation surrounding colonization and museum spaces. I explore the function of the body in Indigenous performance art that critiques institutional structures using the language of decolonization. More specifically, I examine how the introduction of Indigenous bodies expands the existing framework of institutional critique to include ownership of institutional space. In researching these artists and the historical moments they are responding to, I am interested in how the individual's experience, provided to the museum through performance, shifts the conversation towards the expression of history through story to validate those narratives over anthropological ones typically seen in museums. Often there is a lasting rhetoric that places the materiality and the colonial history of the object before the personhood it represents in institutions' exhibitions on Indigenous works. The individual experience of the artists I cover, as expressed through performance art, brings attention to the unaddressed intergenerational trauma held in the cultural patrimony displayed in museums. I highlight these artists in this paper to further research on the compounding effects of Indigenous identity being reduced to objects whose acquisitions are poorly documented, if at all, as well as the research looking at the responses to harmful effects on the individual's lived experience.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Museums are enduring institutions: even as we question their function and recognize them as contested spaces, we do not often question their inherent value regardless of shifts in cultural values. They are places where tangible objects are presented publicly to define and solidify identity, culture, and history. Symbolic politics are developed from this process where the object becomes the representative for the real people being described through that object by the museum. Museums become contested spaces when these symbolic politics give authority to misrepresent real people. They reaffirm the misrepresentation as authentic through their authority as an institution. The representations are created by the museum to appeal to a generalized, imaginary audience crafted by museum staff responding to the need for simplicity and consistency, for fear of losing the audience's attention.[1] It is from this where the generalization becomes misrepresentation of individuals in order to appeal to this imagined audience created by the need to respond to a varied group of museum goers. This imagined audience is a

[1] For more on the construction of the museums' audiences through museum practices see: Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, United States: Museum 2.0, 2010. Further social science on identifying the museums' audience vs. individuals' experience in terms of museums can be found in: John H. Falk, *The Value of Museums: Enhancing Societal Well-Being*, United States: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2021.

product of institutional traditions and extends to virtually any museums functioning and working through the colonial traditions of display. These objects result in a debate over the representation that rises and falls over time to develop a larger public culture and identity made up of all these objects. Indigenous performance artists are crucial activists in addressing the museum by taking up the space with their bodies, removing the interpretive nature and sometimes reclaiming power over, the museum and reestablishing the personhood of Indigenous cultural property.

Museums, as colonial institutions, have a history of cultivating depreciative symbolic politics when defining Indigenous cultural property held in their spaces. This has traditionally happened through displays and language that embrace the visual interest of objects over their cultural significance using the European concept of aesthetics. This practice creates a long-lasting, reductive, and metonymic relationship between objects and Indigenous people that is exacerbated by the historical exclusion of Indigenous people from museums, as both staff and visitors. To emphasize how extreme this point is, Patricia Marroquin Norby (Purépecha), the first full-time Native curator was just hired in 2020 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.[2] This is a museum of global acclaim, one of the most recognizable and enduring institutions representing not only America's identity in a comprehensive manner, but multiple world cultures as an encyclopedic museum. In the attempt to define the world in snapshots, generalizations are made by individuals who have historically come from white, colonial backgrounds at the Met. It is not a unique

[2] "Patricia Marroquin Norby Named Associate Curator of Native American Art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art," *The Met*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 8 Sept. 2020, https://www.metmuseum.org/press/news/2020/patricia-marroquin-norby.

situation; this power imbalance left Indigenous people at a loss when it came to addressing misrepresentation, blatant or otherwise.

Thanks to the efforts of activists in the American Indian Movement during the 1970s, like Frank James (Wamsutta/Aquinnah Wampanoag), there was a call to action that pointed out how the continued misrepresentation of history from institutions like museums and media within the United States was actively harming Indigenous lives. His speech would mark the first National Day of Mourning commemorated in remembrance and spiritual reconnection to those lost as well as a protest of the racism and oppression experienced by Indigenous peoples. His speech was also censored on the day it was given, but his words were documented. On November 26, 1970, during the 305th anniversary of the European colonists landing at Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts, James stated:

> History wants us to believe that the Indian was a savage, illiterate, uncivilized animal. A history that was written by an organized, disciplined people, to expose us as an unorganized and undisciplined entity. Two distinctly different cultures met. One thought they must control life; the other believed life was to be enjoyed, because nature decreed it. Let us remember, the Indian is and was just as human as the white man. The Indian feels pain, gets hurt, and becomes defensive, has dreams, bears tragedy and failure, suffers from loneliness, needs to cry as well as laugh. He, too, is often misunderstood.[3]

James' words provide a lived context for the misrepresentative history that dehumanized lived Indigenous experience as a justification for colonization. He emphasizes lived experience through a point of relation using the bodily experience of pain, emotions, and universal life experiences. Most importantly, he highlights that those constructing this

[3] "Thanksgiving: The National Day of Mourning Text of 1970 speech by Wampsutta An Aquinnah Wampanoag Elder." *The Black Commentator*, no. 207 (November 23, 2006).

version of history are the "disciplined," the academic, who are aware of the symbolic politics they are constructing.

Starting in the 1980s, the museum field began to redress this history, from the founding of Native-led cultural spaces to the introduction of new curatorial practices that included communities in the process of interpretation.[4] As curators and community consultants were rethinking the presentation of material objects, artists began conceiving of more radical interventions into museum spaces, including performance art that put their bodies on public view. Indigenous aesthetics, when presented by Indigenous people, began the democratization of the museum. These actions helped to rectify the issue of misrepresentation by breaking down the interpretive limitations of the dominant, white majority in the administrative and upper management sectors in museums. Introducing Indigenous voices, and particularly Indigenous bodies, to museums addresses objectification in ways that are inaccessible to a non-Indigenous curator, collector, or director. Self-representation, especially through the presence of a living body, is a direct response to the symbolic politics created by museum practices attempting to summarize Indigenous identity.

I explore the function of the body in Indigenous performance art as it critiques institutional structures using the language of decolonization as bodily presence. This language predates performance art as performativity for colonial audience in order to

[4] By 1981 there were approximately 40 Native American, Inuit, and Aleut museums and cultural centers in the U.S. and Canada and would increase to more than two hundred legally constituted organizations in North America by 1991. See Nancy J. Fuller and Susanne Fabricius, "Native American Museums and Cultural Centers: Historical Overview and Current Issues," *Zeitschrift Für Ethnologie* 117 (1992): 223–37. For the full definition of museum that these facts are based around see: Museum Services Act, title II of the Arts, Humanities and Cultural Affairs Act of 1986, Public Law 94-462.

induce socio-political change. Body language in this sense means the presentation of a living body and the implications their presence has when interacted with by other people. This is clarified through my examination of how the introduction of Indigenous performance art expands the existing framework of institutional critique to include the effect of museum practices on the lived experience of Indigenous peoples. The artists I am highlighting demonstrate a generational and continuing practice of bodily response to museum practices. Their performances emphasize their personhood and their individual experience under the institutional gaze and provide space to negotiate trauma that breaks up the generalizing conversation surrounding colonization. The construction of exhibitions in museums following this tradition create lasting rhetoric that places the materiality and the colonial history of the object before the personhood it represents.[5] I am interested in the shifts made by these artists to create a conversation about the expression of history through individuals' stories to validate those narratives over anthropological ones typically seen in museums.

In each chapter of this thesis, I examine how an individual's experience brings attention to the intergenerational trauma of misrepresentation held in the cultural property displayed in museums. I expand this to include the compounding effects on representations of Indigenous identity and gender when reduced to objects whose acquisitions are poorly documented, if at all. I further investigate the manifestations of unaddressed colonial trauma alongside individual trauma, specifying these harmful

[5] Michael M. Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums*, 2nd ed. (Vancouver, BC: The University of British Columbia Press) 1992. Using Critical Race theory, Ames analyzes the relationship between institutions and Indigenous peoples points towards museums as a critical component in reifying harmful stereotypes developed by early anthropologists.

effects of the former extend on to individual people's lived experience. All said, I am a white, non-binary author looking at how Indigenous peoples have constructed their careers and self-image, so my view is limited to the texts, articles, interviews, and media that have captured their lives. This text is in no way, shape, or form a comprehensive examination of the Indigenous body and its relationship the Euro-American museum tradition. It is, however, an opening to examining how these artists have developed their own visual language both working together and in response the limitations and expectations imposed on them by the cultures that have occupied what has always been and always will be their land first.

The artists I have chosen are performing roles provided by settler-colonialism in thinly veiled mockery, a technique utilized by performance artists looking at institutional expectations. I briefly highlight James Luna's (Payómkawichum, Ipi, and Mexican American) *Artifact Piece* (1997) as his work sets the precedence for Erica Lord's reperformance of *Artifact Piece* that I cover through the remainder of chapter three. He is also one of the forerunners to introduce direct response to these museum practices through performance art while working in tandem with institutions he was critiquing. His methodology sets the standard Indigenous performance/critique by providing a unique chance for the museological institution in question to respond in real time.

Erica Lord's (Athabascan, Iñupiaq, Finnish, Swedish, English, and Japanese) reperformance of James Luna's work in *Artifact Piece, Revisited* (2008) demonstrates how one of the initial performance pieces directly engaging with institutional critique had

to respond to the present absence of contemporary Indigenous lives in museums.[6] Lord follows Luna, demonstrating a generational practice while expanding on the pre-existing knowledge his piece represented. Her re-performance of *Artifact Piece* reminded institutions and their audiences of their ongoing responsibility to those they are representing while paying homage to her community. My second artist follows Lord in emphasizing the feminine experience of Indigeneity. Rebecca Belmore's work, *Fringe*, defines the importance of the museum's responsibility as their failure directly harms the Indigenous body, in particular the Indigenous feminine body, through dual objectification and resulting dehumanization.

My closing chapter addresses Coco Fusco's 2013 performance of *Observations of Predation in Humans: A lecture by Dr. Zira, Animal Psychologist*. She performed the well-meaning anthropologist that reinforces negligent museum traditions through their biases. This is done through the character of Dr. Zira from the *Planet of the Apes* film series. She plays this part back to the museum in front of an audience via a lecture that separates the human species into categories organized into hierarchies of aggression and dominance typically reserved for zoological subjects. This is all done while distancing her anthropomorphic ape character as a superior species, unaffected by the same aggression and dominance tendencies she describes humans possessing. This anthropologist role, like the other performed roles I consider in this thesis, is an act of self-representation centered on the bodies most affected by the museums traditions and

[6] James Luna's career is covered in several interviews both oral and written across his life and reflections after his passing provide extensive primary documentation despite the artist's passing. Some interviews across his life have been included in the bibliography to add literature on the overall impact that Luna felt he had made in terms of dissolving institutional structures and how doing so affected him across his lifetime (see the works listed in the bibliography by Steven Durland, Jean Fisher, Jennifer Gonzalez, and William Richard Hill.)

talking back to them as a form of reclaiming that authoritative power. Their bodies' presence gives an undeniable visibility to the limitations of the museum's traditional nature while the acts are given validation within the Eurocentric discourse by performing their actions back at them in the spaces that this discourse takes its power from.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND METHODOLOGY

I will set out a brief history of institutional failure towards Indigenous peoples as authors such as Michael Ames, Steve Dubin, and Amy Lonetree have already covered this history extensively outside of this thesis in the field of museology writ large.[7] Before working with each of the artists outlined in the previous chapter, I will set up the foundation for what institutional critique through decolonization has looked like so far as it expands, as mentioned before, beyond performance art and into protest and occupation. It is important to note that there is an overlap between direct-action activism and performance art when discussing the relationship between museological institutions and Indigenous peoples as the activists pave the way for inducing change through the bodily presence I highlight in these artists' work. I discuss both the performance art and performativity through postcolonial and Tribal Critical Race theory to bring attention to the existing conversation about decolonization in institutional spaces that I am joining.[8]

[7] Just some of the extensive work these authors have down can be found in these sources: Michael M. Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums*, 2nd ed. (Vancouver, BC: The University of British Columbia Press) 1992.

[8] My methodology of adding to the existing literature by reading these artists through these authors and the artists' statement about their work is only possible due to the research of those who have written before me. As a result, my methodology and the existing literature are inextricable to reflect that.

Michael Ames is a white Canadian anthropologist who is one of the first to work within institutions to address the problematic relations between museum and Indigenous peoples. In fourteen essays, he provides an academic response reinforcing the need for museums to assess their function as a second-hand resource in the dissemination of Indigenous property through his own experiences working as the director of the Museum of Anthropology and a professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. In his writing he asks institutions if they are providing platforms for people to speak or are they speaking over those they claim to represent. This intra-institutional discussion between academia and museums calls attention to the lack of Indigenous self-representation made near inaccessible due to systematic racism, which is why my discussion on the institutional response begins here.

Ames documented the disturbing and dividing relationship that was fostered between First Peoples and the anthropologists that had mined Indian communities and placed them on public display providing a case study for how museum tradition was functioning and the response to those traditions.[9] On Monday, September 9, 1985, First Nations women, that Ames does not identify by name, occupied the classrooms at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia and challenged the existing curriculum to include contemporary Indigenous identity as well as the relationship between anthropologists and Indigenous people that had cultivated the historicizing iconography affecting their public image.[10] The women persisted in occupying the classrooms and demanding that the exploitative relationship cultivated thus

[9] Michael M. Ames, "Indians as Resources: The Changing Relationship between Indians and Anthropologists," *Wíčazo Ša Review* 2, no. 1 (1986): 10.
[10] Ibid, 10.

far as objects of anthropology be changed so that their voices were the authority on their own history and lives. With that action they would continue to teach in the classrooms working alongside Ames and others at the museum offering a new model for institutionally backed, community education. The shift in museum tradition happened when these women occupied the space with their bodies as a rejection of representation outside of their own. This is one of many accounts of Indigenous occupation that set the precedence for the language to be used in Indigenous institutional critique in Euro-American art spaces.

To decode the relationship between Indigenous identity and "primitivism," the Euro-American world would have to re-encode the cultural patrimony to include aesthetic tradition outside the linear progression, without dissolving into the hierarchy inherent to Euro-American aesthetic tradition, and without equating any of the variety of traditions as a singular identity. The role of the interpretive curator would ideally be dissolved and study collections, i.e., "visible storage," would be accessible to individuals interested in becoming familiar with their heritage held behind closed doors.[11] Ultimately, the interjection of these women into institutional spaces worked to dissolve hierarchical knowledge structures that begin within the academic institutions producing the museum professionals that reified the idea of paternalism and infantilizing of Indigenous knowledge and lived experience.

Their presence and assertion of Indigenous identities' contemporaneous existence was a deviation from the codification of Indigenous Northwest Coast aesthetics from the category of "primitive" or "vanishing." However, the contemporary art world, dominated

[11] Ibid, 92-97.

by Euro-American aesthetics, would recodify the aesthetics again. This particularly effected carvers of crest poles representing genealogical and religious history to create a market that would demand a certain set of aesthetics considered "authentic." Other expressions of Indigenous or mixed heritage identity would not even be considered as Indigenous aesthetic expression therefore removing the label of "authentic" and the value it had for the Euro-American art market.

During this same moment in time, the United States enacted their own policies of categorization. Following the appropriation of Indigenous aesthetics into contemporary art through "primitivism" and aestheticization of cultural patrimony, aesthetics from nations all over the United States were categorized racially by white hegemony both socially and legally with the passing of the *Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990*.[12] The aesthetics would be determined by Section 104, § 1159 (c)(2) "the terms 'Indian product' and 'product of a particular Indian tribe or Indian arts and crafts organization' has the meaning given such term in regulations which may be promulgated by the Secretary of the Interior." Meaning, under Section 102, that the aesthetics would have to fall under a government trademark to be approved of by the Secretary of the Interior for the work to be sold as Indigenous work. That trademark would be the seal of approval that the item is "authentic." That authenticity is barred by the definition of what that aesthetics mean due to the trademark. The work would only be authentically Indigenous if the artists' community is a registered tribe. No recognition, means no authenticity, means the artist in question cannot call their work Indigenous and sell it. This, however, does not work retroactively. All Indigenous work within museums, galleries, and collections across the

[12] Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990, Statutes at Large, Public Law 101-644, 101st Cong., (November 29, 1990).

world, acquired through colonization and theft, is historically Indigenous and can be bought and sold by the institutions claiming ownership over Indigenous heritage. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), would make the exception of funerary goods and the bodies ancestors, but it would not include the vast collections that do not use federal funding or is a part of a federal agency.[13]

This categorization of aesthetics complicates expectations for artists who wish to be recognized as Indigenous, despite the conflicting expectation to be experimental within the Euro-American art world.[14] Without the previous categorization's historicization removed, re-codification brought attention to cultural patrimony as art objects that pushed aesthetics to the forefront, failing to take in the consideration that that object's cultural context might not be suited to art objectification. The spiritual value and familial representations found in Northwest Coast aesthetics, to keep a consistent example, became decontextualized to fit into the focus on formal qualities of Euro-American art during the mid-to-late twentieth century, despite this aesthetics not falling into the typical abstract category. Museums would validate this understanding of Indigenous cultures through visual representation of this rhetoric:

> … there [are] standards asserted by art historians to be universally applicable... typically, that usually means art after the Western European tradition… Native arts are still seen to be somehow inextricably and harmoniously bound up with ceremonial systems, all part of an exotic tribal complex, that is actually impossible, conceptually illogical, and ethically improper to disentangle. It is further assumed that when particular Native social conditions cease to exist, the art associated must die as well since it is not imagined as having any legitimate autonomy of its own.[15]

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[13] Providing for The Protection of Native American Graves and The Repatriation of Native American Remains and Cultural Patrimony, Statutes at Large, Report 101-473, 2d Session, 101st Cong., (September 26, 1990). The Smithsonian is exempt from NAGPRA operating under: National Museum of the American Indian Act, Statutes at Large, S.978, Report 101-143, Public Law No: 101-185, 101st Cong., (November 28, 1989).

[14] Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes*, 60-61, 73.

[15] Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes*, 73.

The Native arts and Native social conditions being discussed are in reference to the intimate relationship between family crests seen in Indigenous Northwest Coast aesthetics and Indigenous cultural epistemology. When crest poles were initially marketed by the Euro-American art world, the primary focus was on fitting the graphic, stacked aesthetic of a crest pole to achieve an "authentic" look, but were decontextualized from being representative of genealogical histories. This removes the personhood and autonomy of the crest poles and as a result, the people they represent.

This becomes a vindication of stereotypes through equating non-Euro-American aesthetic expressions with those that are in Euro-American art world. The result is a separation of Native identity from Native people by defining the identity as marketable aesthetics. This is achieved through repeating imagery in institutions with power to control public perception, such is the influential power of museums as an authority on education The more prolific the inaccurate visual representation in museums and in media becomes, the harder it is to address and interpret.[16] Stereotypes become real as representation is diluted down to easily shared, generalized elements that become the expectation carried by the public.[17]

Philip Joseph Deloria is a Yankton Dakota author, historian, and scholar who holds the title of first tenured professor of Native American history at Harvard University. His work is crucial to the construction of stereotypes, and they became so pervasive within American culture, then inflicting themselves on living people. He begins

[16] Philip Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas) 2004, 3-5.
[17] Ibid.

by showing the reader an image of Red Cloud Woman with her head underneath a hair dryer while a nail technician attends to her hands. While this is typical, codified behavior for women across America during the 1940s when this photograph was taken, Deloria mentions that this image is often met with laughter.[18] Pushing further he investigates why the image is met with laughter, pointing out that we are met with two conflicting, even oppositional, expectations based on our acculturated cues surrounding indigeneity. Ultimately, Red Cloud Woman's presence as a Native woman within the salon is unexpected and oppositional based on assumptions. These assumptions are cultural expectations and cues are tools of domination, or, more plainly, stereotypes that reify white, hegemonic structures. While he mentions the chuckle that the image usually elicits is not malicious or hatful, but the expectations surrounding the image are based in a history of misrepresentation and racism.[19]

Deloria sets the stage to explain how expectations create dangerous situations that have taken Indigenous lives simply because of the construction of violence in 20th century movies and how these representations become iconic in the ideas of American history. The Western movie genre is centered around the time period of intense violence as colonizers spread into the Old West during the latter half of the 19th and early 20th century. The mythic version of the American West created a binary where the cowboy or gunslinger was the protagonist in a story against the harsh wilderness. This wilderness was often personified through Indigenous resistance casting them as the instigators of violence that our protagonist had to overcome. Most popular for perpetuating this "wild

[18] Deloria, 4.
[19] Deloria 3-4.

West" narrative were entertainment shows like the Buffalo Bill Cody shows that were re-coded as historical narratives rather than the generous fiction that they were.[20] Indigenous people became monolithic in their existence within the history of the American West where the shows often forgo the nuances of the expansive communities across the Americas. Always the foil to the cowboy, and when defeated the movie moved forward into the future creating the expectation that Indigenous people while a part of the American past, they stayed in the American past. However, Indigenous people here were performing of their own volition to their economic benefit by playing into the stereotypes Buffalo Bill crafted for them, often to the extreme mocking the absurdity of its construction.[21]

It would be the violence and conflicting narrative that would extend into real world expectations in court cases like *Encounter between Sioux Indians of the Pine Ridge Agency, S-Dak., and a Sheriff's Posse of Wyoming*. It became a conversation about resources and land between colonizers and Indigenous people who continued to hunt and live on the reservations per their treaty. When Hope Clear, and 18-year-old Oglala Sioux girl, and Peter White Elk, an 11-year-old Oglala Sioux boy, rode ahead of their group just outside of the reservation, armed white men saw the children as a threat and claimed to be enforcing the law when they shot and killed Peter White Elk along with eight other

[20] Deloria, 56-57.
[21] This type of subversive mockery would continue well into the 20th century as Indigenous performers would say obscene or comic lines in their native language mocking the stereotyping of the film industry and creating an entirely separate movie than the intended one for of the Indigenous people watching. For more example in film during the latter half of the twentieth century: Jeremy Agnew, *The Creation of the Cowboy Hero: Fiction, Film and Fact*, (United States: McFarland Incorporated Publishers) 2014.

people.[22] They were not charged with the murders further validating that the narrative legally that the land belongs to the American nationalist gunslinger, the colonizer, has permeated into law pointing to the nature of systemic racism validated through media and foundational ideas about American identity.

Indigenous people continued to confront expectations for moving into the late 20th century. Assimilation was forced re-codification of Native identity that happened within boarding schools in the U.S. and residential schools in Canada. Despite attempted assimilation into an idea of whiteness, it created new Native worlds, by fusing the diverse cultures of Native children. In their acts of survivance, a term coined by Anishinaabe critic and writer Gerald Vizenor, with their given "American" identities they developed entirely new identities while they were held hostage away from their families.[23] Sports became a way for Native men to participate in colleges and move away from the harsh environment of the boarding schools. Soon Native men found themselves being scouted for their “super abilities” despite being told they had inherent deficiencies as Indigenous people limiting their access to the full range of choice their white counterparts would’ve had.[24] These men became incredibly successful building a community in the college's sports fan base pushing Indigenous identity into modernity within the public consciousness, their bodily presence denial of expectations.

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[22] U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Indian Affairs, *Encounter between Sioux Indians of the Pine Ridge Agency, S-Dak., and a Sheriff's Posse of Wyoming*, S. Doc. 128, 58th Cong., 2d sess., 27 Ian. 1904, pp. 16, 25, 110, 132-33 (hereafter cited as S. Doc. 128).

[23] Survivance is summarized as a combination survival and resistance but is ultimately the multifaceted response and denial of victimization while acknowledging the work it takes to recover culture and history in the wake of colonial genocide. For more examples and the nuances of survivance see: Gerald Vizenor, *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*, (United Kingdom: University of Nebraska Press), 2008.

[24] Deloria, 121-122.

This visibility would only increase with access to cars, to mobility off the reservation. However, the popular photographs like *Geronimo at the Wheel* (1904) by Walter Ferguson would raise the same response as the image of Red Cloud Woman at the salon.[25] Deloria expands where the creation of the unexpected comes from by explaining two, conflicting symbolic systems; one system that exists in the past representing Native Americans and one that exists in the present representing American "progress" into a future dominated by white Americans. One system finds its roots in the movies and mass media popularizing the blurring between history and the other system combines this with the fantasy of the frontier thesis proposed by Frederick Jackson Turner. Turner argued that the foundation of American democracy depended on colonization and pushing the American frontier across the continent based on the idea that the land was free for the taking or, in other words, terra nullius. This idea of terra nullius stimulates false histories that work to remove Indigenous sovereignty to justify colonization and the occupation of stolen land. This idea is further pushed through the erasure of history and the creation of an ethnographic past in media and art that is validated in authoritative spaces like museums.

The reception of the constructed expectation received through media, print or virtual, is repeated, and reified through that repetition, many times over, so that deviations from these expectations are genuinely unrecognizable to audiences with a limited worldview.[26] The representations cultivated as "noble" or "savage" in media and

[25] See Deloria, 149 for the image: "Geronimo at the Wheel", photograph by alter Ferguson, 1904, (National Archives, 75-1C-1).
[26] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, (London: Macmillan Education) 1988, 274.

"vanquished/vanished" within museums as products of genocide are a re-presentation of the reality of contemporary Indigenous existence more visible than said reality.

Understood through the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, this re-presentation as a dominant authority within the cultural climate both speaks for and portrays as a constructed identity designed to reflect the "Other" as "an object of knowledge, leaving out the real Others."[27] Spivak is a feminist, Indian literary critic and theorist that presents this idea through her deconstruction of how Euro-American culture talk about non-Euro-American cultures. Ideally, the individuals would be able to represent themselves to break down the categorizations being created and upheld in institutional spaces, but if these individuals fall too far outside of the expected set of representations, their identity is deemed "inauthentic."[28] This inauthenticity is produced by the inculcation of Euro-American academic research that aims to benefit Euro-American economic interests.[29] When the repeated misrepresentation is given authority by academic voices and spaces like museums, the misrepresentation becomes accepted as truth leading to erasure of colonial acts of violence. The economic benefit comes in through the false justification of colonization's theft of land and other vital resources to use to the benefits of a capitalist society under white hegemonic rule. Spivak presents that research is inherently colonial as the collection of knowledge is hierarchical and categorized through language such as "other." Through bodily occupation and reassertion of the control of space that holds dominant sociopolitical sway like museums, the artist/author/activist uses the "othering"

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[27] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues,* edited by Sarah Harasym, (New York: Routledge) 1990, 63.
[28] Jean Fisher, "In Search of the 'Inauthentic': Disturbing Signs in Contemporary Native American Art," *Art Journal* 51, no. 3 (1992): 45.
[29] Spivak, 72-74.

to the advantage to point out that conversation is happening around them despite the active presence of their bodies. Their occupation denies the colonial fantasy of the hierarchical categorization challenge false representations by presenting their body as present rather than other or over there as Spivak has discussed.

Judith Butler's writes about gender, saying that "style is never fully self-styled, for living styles have a history, and that history conditions and limits possibilities."[30] When they are read utilizing Tribal Critical Race theory, or TribalCrit, the set of expectations are an expected performance superimposed over individuals who have been Othered. There is also a distinct response to individuals that fall outside of the expectations: denial of validity and the possibility of being subjected to harm.[31] Butler is queer, non-binary, American gender theorist, so their point of reference for their research is not intended to be superimposed over Black and Brown bodies, but I present instead an academic validation of the inextricable nature between performance and performativity. They provide a way to discuss the action of performativity through the construction of gender. As stated, there exists a set of shared set of social structures that have been developed over a shared history.[32] That shared history contains a visual language that has been used to define gender through expected visual cues which, from the point of Butler, make up the language of drag, a performativity as performance and, these are my words, art in its careful construction and subsequent consumption by an audience reading the visual cues that make ideas of gender. In drag that overlap between performance and

[30] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 520.
[31] Jean Fisher, "In Search of the 'Inauthentic': Disturbing Signs in Contemporary Native American Art," *Art Journal* 51, no. 3 (1992): 45.
[32] Butler, 521.

performativity is thin provided the body is built up of acculturated cues, but the choice in which clues to include result in the expression the body presents.[33] Those cues extend beyond gender and sex as there exists a set of acculturated cues around the concept of Indigeneity and Black and Brown bodies as a whole due to repeated (mis)representation and fascination with the Black and Brown body in media and the Euro-American culture.

The difficulty of dissolving false representations is not only combatting the power of repetitive imagery, but as stated previously, the power of institutional spaces as dominant authorities as educational and influential powerhouses within the Euro-American world. Sociologist Steven Dubin has addressed the power institutional spaces hold as enduring cultural icons that reify larger social identity, morals, and values.[34] Furthermore, he provides that these spaces have the potential to disrupt colonial identity. Dubin demonstrates this through analysis of the public and institutional response to the failed exhibitions *Harlem on My Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America, 1900-1968* in 1969 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which did not include works by any Black artists, and *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820–1920* at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in 1991, which exercised the persuasive and incendiary power of contradicting hegemonic ideology about American identity. When the institution points the finger at itself, it fractures the historical solidarity between these spaces, and settler colonial thought provides a place to further wedge the two apart and claim those spaces for their respective community.

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[33] Judith Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's Second Sex," *Yale French Studies*, no. 72 (1986): 37.

[34] Steven Dubin, *Displays of Power: Controversy in the American Museum from the* "Enola Gay" *to* "Sensation," (New York and London: New York University Press) 1999, 3-5.

Homi Bhabha is an Indian English postcolonial theorist who takes the psychoanalytic idea of "ambivalence," wanting one thing while also wanting the opposite, and interweaves it into colonial discourse.[35] His concept of ambivalence works to define the overarching theme in the relationship between colonizer and the people subjected to that colonization. Ambivalence, the Bhabha, defines the expectations and social cues I have discussed so far that result in the colonizer's exoticization and diminishing of the people that exist outside of their zeitgeist. Bhabha further describes this relationship from the people being subjected to colonization are both actively resistant and desire to being included in colonial society. Under the lens of the relationship that he describes, those being colonized with always being "almost the same but not white" when mimicry of the colonizer is performed to become a part of said society.[36] Bhabha's point of reference is coming from the colonial relationship between the British and the Indian subcontinent, but as an expression of colonial relationships can be expanded to all colonial relationships where there is a subjector and people being subjected to colonization. To speak about Indigeneity is to speak about the history of colonization that Indigenous peoples on a global level have experienced. Meaning, the experience of Indigeneity can be expanded to include all Black and Brown peoples who have labored under the conditions and violent actions of colonization that continue presently.

Mimicry emphasizes the contradictory fetishization, the desire to claim culture belonging to Indigenous peoples, and infantilization or repulsion of Indigenous peoples

[35] Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *October, Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis* 28, The MIT Press, (Spring, 1984), 126-133.
[36] Bhabha, 126.

by the colonizer or colonial hegemony as a fabricated, one-sided relationship. Bhabha's framework, based on the colonization of identities within the Indian subcontinent, describes the possibility of an individual who emphasizes their colonial experience/identity without ever assimilating entirely to maintain identity separate from colonization disrupting the control of the colonizer by using the tool of mimicry against them.[37] This concept is further developed when Coco Fusco used this tool, subversively, by reversing it and playing into the expected cues of the colonial society, stereotypes, surrounding Indigenous identities. Her collaborative performance with Guillermo Gómez-Peña, to be covered in more detail later, colloquially known as *The Couple in a Cage* (1992/93) (Fig. 10), developed into a performance about performativity.[38] They achieved this via playing into the caricatures created by stereotypes while mocking the function of the mimicry by pointing to the "almost the same but not white" seen in communities affected by colonial advances. While dressed in in mock-Indigenous outfits, they play the part of the "Other" while performing mundane tasks that break those stereotypical expectations such as watching television and working on a laptop. This is the purposeful satire to elicit the same chuckle as Red Cloud Woman's picture at the salon mentioned earlier. In doing so, they re-established a value system that focuses on the humanity of misrepresented peoples through humor, and the roles they are expected to perform, rather than the materiality of their cultural production and the stereotypes

[37] Bhabha, 129. See: "…mimicry is not the familiar exercise of dependent colonial relations… The *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority."
[38] Coco Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," *TDR*, Spring, 1994, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Spring, 1994), pp. 143-167 Published by: The MIT Press,

they labor under. All of this is to show ingrained fallacy that Indigeneity is not at odds with contemporary identity.

To expand further on what I mean, mimicry, when viewed through the reclamation process detailed by Coco Fusco in her work *Observations Dr. Zira* to be explored in the third chapter, is a response to ensure safety and validation within settler-colonial society, but with the pointed difference of self-awareness and the awareness of others' perceptions. Under the normal circumstance, mimicry in colonial settings prioritizes Euro-American culture as the default to be assimilated into to ensure safety. Pointed performance of these roles reveals the fabrication of settler-colonial ideology that there is a default or hierarchy to begin with. In doing so, the performance disempowers the hegemony while reinforcing that the power dynamic will always be in the favor of people who navigate outside of colonial hegemony. Individuals forcibly put on display for a white audience are playing a part within the audience's theater of the mind due to the set of expectations and the horrific treatment of individuals in circumstances such as the staged environments seen throughout Europe moving from the late fifteenth century to the late twentieth century into modern day exploitation and appropriation, all for profit and entertainment of Euro-American fantasy.[39] The audience disregards discrepancies as they search for validation of their worldview leading to a non-consensual performance of identity.

Fusco lists individuals that have been subjected to this non-consensual performance in her examination of this phenomenon that occurred during *The Couple in*

[39] Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," 150.

a Cage: Two Amerindians Visit the West with artist-scholar Guillermo Gómez-Peña.[40] This theory sets the beginning of institutional critique and performance art well before the early twentieth-century Dada movement that is typically credited by art historians and curators with the invention of this art form and critique.[41] Fusco, however, brings up the concept of performing identity based on expectations, meaning the individuals subjected to these conditions are aware that there are a set of expectations even if they are dislocated from the culture those expectations are being cultivated within.

Luna, Lord, Belmore, and Fusco are all operating under all these systems; symbolic politics, misrepresentation, historical context, legal definitions and identity, mimicry, gender, and authenticity all surround these artists, each with their own set of often conflicting expectations. How do you communicate the lived experience of navigating all these spaces and developing the language for that navigation both within community and to a larger, likely misinformed audience? They communicate through their bodies in ways that allow them to have multiple conversations with their communities and the museum's imaginary audience all at once. Each does so with the skill of individuals who have had to move through language, bodily or otherwise, their entire lives. I hope to do their work justice by examining and documenting the ways that they have shifted and developed visual language both within performance art and institutional critique to resiliently take up space and make it theirs' again.

[40] For the full list of individuals, and their names when the archives permit, across this time span see Fusco, 146-147.
[41] Tate, 2022, "Performance Art," Art Term, Last modified January 10th, 2022, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/performance-art.

CHAPTER III

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE FROM WITHIN AND THE MUSEUM'S AUDIENCE

When museums give control of the space to Indigenous artists, this is one successful solution to remediating the history of colonial failure. The highly visible act of self-representation is validated in a colonial society through the institutions support of Indigenous occupation of authoritative spaces. Only through the institutions' response can the critique be considered a solution, otherwise it is just stagnation on both ends.[42] The artists covered so far have used institutional critique as a tool to address representation through their bodily presence while working with the spaces they are critiquing. The solution that critiques the institution then needs to have a conversation on multiple levels; the audience as it is, the imaginary audience crafted from museum tradition, as well as the artist's community need to become involved. Only by involving as many voices as possible can there be enough engagement to generate change on an institutional scale. The documentation of institutional critique often failed to establish a history of Indigenous artists' contributions, comprehensive or otherwise, in developing

[42] Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique," *Artforum* 44, no. 1 (September 2005): 100–06 is just one example of many that works to detail how institutions and artists performing institutional critique have worked in tandem to varying results.

language found in twentieth and twenty-first century institutional critique leaving out these voices. Fusco and the Kantonens all provide that the language of social practice performance art is developed outside the Euro-American canon through solidarity of Indigenous people subjected to a settler colonial gaze.[43]

I would like to add to the discourse by emphasizing that the language of decolonization is asserted through performance art and protest. Furthermore, these are the most legible forms of critique available to the settler colonial gaze due to the aforementioned history adding complexity as these ideas are communicated bodily. James Luna's *Artifact Piece* opens the conversation for Erica Lord's institutional critique, which complicates the conversation on colonial trauma when the objectification happening in museums extends itself to the female presenting body.[44] Lord's re-performance builds on Luna's, demonstrating a generational practice, which is why I begin by briefly covering Luna's *Artifact Piece*.

James Luna, Payómkawichum (Luiseño), Ipi (Kumeyaay), Mexican American artist, scholar, and educator, confronts the stereotypes of spectacle built up over years of abuse and trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples put on display for Euro-American audiences. His work across his career addresses the "authentic" or "real" in terms of Native identity. When Native identity is repeatedly misrepresented in museums and

[43] Lea Kantonen and Pekka Kantonen. "Indigenous Knowledge, Performance Art and the Faltering Act of Translation." *RUUKKU - Studies in Artistic Research*, 11, 2019.

[44]Aruna D'Souza, "The Fourth World and the Second Wave: On (Non)Encounters Between Native Women and Feminism," in *Art for a New Understanding: Native Voices, 1950s to Now*, by Besaw Mindy N., Hopkins Candice, and Well-Off-Man Manuela, 62-73. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2018. This work further describes the compounding effects I describe as not only misogynistic, but also racist stereotypes that Native women are forced to navigate through defining solidarity through the language of community and shared experience. This compounded effect further alienates the actuality from the fabricative tropes of feminine Native identity.

media, stereotypes surrounding Native identity become a reality to the general public who see the misrepresentation through authoritative institutions. Luna saw Kumeyaay cultural patrimony at the San Diego Museum of Man, renamed the Museum of Us on August 2, 2020, representing Kumeyaay cultural patrimony within dioramas depicting them as a part of the surrounding land's past and no longer the area's present. He performed *Artifact Piece* in 1985 and would continue to re-perform the piece through the end of the decade, placing his living body in a shallow, sandy vitrine alongside other expressions of his identity, which become categorized as no longer a part of the living world (Fig. 1). I begin with Luna as he is one of the first to use his bodily presence, inside the institution that defines him, to make the point that his life is directly impacted by the visual language normalizing the removal of Indigenous people from their ethnographic present. The contemporary existence of the communities that pottery, textiles, and regalia belonged to was dislocated through the diorama style exhibitions with their origins in the anthropological field. They attempted to demonstrate the objects within cultural context but failed to recognize that these objects have a contemporary presence and function. This museum practice described a present incompatible with Indigeneity, creating two separate symbolic systems in which one is an unavoidable Euro-American future, and the other is a disappeared Indigenous past.[45]

Erica Lord documents her experience as a contemporary Indigenous artist through photography, sculpture, installation, video, and, in this case study, performance. Lord, in

[45] For more on the construction of the symbolic systems that become constructed around Native American identity and aesthetics see Philip Deloria, "Representation" and "Technology," in *Indian in Unexpected Places*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas) 2004, 53-108 and 136-182.

describing herself, begins her story in Alaska, but identifies a permanent shift when she moved to Michigan and was adopted. Since then, she describes her experience of home and culture as "[existing] somewhere in between, amongst, and within a mixed cultural legacy," or a "cultural limbo."[46] This is complicated by her description of this shift as rootlessness and—through constant movement—as being part of the larger history, from the genocides at contact to the forcible, violent removals and assimilation that led to the Native diaspora, and the lasting and continuing effects of colonization in the twenty-first century. Her work reifies the validity of Native diasporic existence and works to dissolve the description of an individual split between two worlds through documentation of her life as an "overlapping and blurring of borders; the multiplicity of selves becomes indivisible, not split or partial, not singular, but a flexible amalgamation of many."[47] Like Luna, she presents a mixed heritage experience that differs with each generations' exposure to the worlds around them. The simplification in symbolic politics does a disservice to lived experiences which are larger and far more complex. As Lord writes: "My experience may be multiple or mixed, but I am not incomplete in any location. My art explores the next wave of cultural examination, an evolution of new ways to demonstrate cultural identity beyond the polar ideas that exist within a strictly two-worlds discourse."[48]

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[46] Erica Lord, interview by Dasha Shleyeva for *Contemporary North American Indigenous Artists*, March 2010, https://contemporarynativeartists.tumblr.com/post/1016307462/erica-lord-inupiaq-athabaskan.

[47] "Home," Erica LORD, OtherPeoplesPixels, Accessed November 17, 2021, https://ericalord.com/home.html.

[48] Ibid.

In 2008 at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), three cases were lit from overhead against a teal wall that curved away from the cases in the photography documenting this exhibition (Fig. 2, 3, 4). The light dissipated abruptly at the edge of the cases opposite the wall. In the dim room, the audience was semi-obscured; their darkened figures loomed near the cases avoiding the bright, overhead light. Two cases bookended a larger one in the center; they were similar in organization—both filled with clothing surrounded by pictures and assorted objects. The topless center vitrine, filled with sand, held the living body of artist Erica Lord as she performed *Artifact Piece, Revisited* (2008) (Fig.2).

Luna provided a counter-narrative to the historicization giving Lord the opportunity to expect a more critical response from the audience and their relationship to her representation. She engaged the audience by intentionally setting out to include things that were important to her, while the didactics describing those objects were blatantly misinterpreted by imaginary anthropologists. She is quoted in an interview with Dasha Shleyeva for Contemporary North American Indigenous Artists Blog, saying: "And yet [I included] other things I imagined to be misinterpreted by these 'anthropologists.' For example, I included photos of my friends who are 'ethnically ambiguous,' who were either part Native or others who were simply often mistaken for Native."[49] Lord captures the attention of the audience by taking the spectacle that has been applied to other representations of Native-ness in institutional spaces, like Luna, and interjecting her contemporary existence into the historicized space to mock its expectations.

[49] Erica Lord, interview by Dasha Shleyeva for *Contemporary North American Indigenous Artists*, March 2010, https://contemporarynativeartists.tumblr.com/post/1016307462/erica-lord-inupiaq-athabaskan.

The first case I am addressing is farthest away from the viewer in the figures (Fig. 3) included. It features a muted green t-shirt with "Pixies" emblazoned across the chest. The font suggests that it is the logo for the American alt-rock band popular in the early 1990s. Hung jauntily over the right shoulder is a tousled blond wig, arguably a pixie cut, in a play on the shirt's logo. Attached to the frame holding up the shirt are thick, ridged, gold hoops; their style places the viewer in the 1980s or '90s. Presumably following the trend of the captured pop culture seen in the apparel, CDs, DVDs, pictures, and books take us through the timeline of Lord's life. A DVD of the movie *Paris, Texas* is propped up in the center, produced when Lord was just six years old, next to an exhibition catalog of James Luna's *Emendatio* that happened three years prior to Lord's performance. The contrast between these two pieces of media provides us a timeline that moves us from the culture that influenced her to the culture being created in the contemporary moment. The inclusion of the catalog has the added effect of paying homage to Luna as the original performer of *Artifact Piece* (1985-1987), presenting a master-student lineage often used to validate the production of "fine art" objects within the Euro-American canon of art history.[50] However, pointing out this relationship serves more than one purpose. By placing Luna and Lord within the canonical tradition of art and artists, it renders them recognizable to the museological and educational institutions and their audiences. This establishes their work as art not artifact within museological institutions, drawing our attention to the irony of labeling the Indigenous contemporary body and the culture they produce as located in the past. Secondly, it points out the systems informing institutional

[50] "James Luna: *Emendatio*," Smithsonian Institution, https://americanindian.si.edu/explore/exhibitions/item?id=921.

knowledge have actively ignored that the master-student relationship within the art canon is nearly identical to the practice of Indigenous generational knowledge that has instead been categorized as craft, such as weaving, quillwork, and beadwork to name a few.[51] When cultural patrimony is placed in environments upholding aesthetics alone, privileging the practice rather than the artist as the foremost information in describing a work, a translation is created for the audience educated under the Euro-American canon. It moves from the cultural property representative of a person into a singular art object separate from generations of cultural expression.

More apparel surrounds the media; hanging from the tallest positioned CD case, a pair of heavy, black glasses with square lens draw the eye downward towards a patterned platform. The platform is brightly designed with an abstracted bird and sun just below a non-representational pattern of primary colors framed with black lines. Another pair of large, this time flattened, gold hoops sit in front of the platform, held inside one of the pair of scuffed, black pumps with a tan interior. Accompanying the earrings within the shoe, is a set of photos varying in size; one is a polaroid photo with a dark-haired figure. They raise their hand and smile at the camera while a smaller photo-booth-style strip features two smiling figures holding each other close, one image stacked on top of the other. On one side of the shoe sits yet another pair of thick gold hoops, while just opposite a small, book-style frame holds two black and white photos featuring two more figures. This frame is placed in front of a larger framed image of a face staring deadpan at

[51] Cynthia Fowler, "Materiality and Collective Experience: Sewing as Artistic Practice in Works by Marie Watt, Nadia Myre, and Bonnie Devine," American Indian Quarterly 34, no. 3 (2010): 344–64, https://doi.org/10.5250/amerindiquar.34.3.344. expands on the discourse of craft versus art in a more thorough way that the conversation here demands.

the audience. The audience is introduced to a cast of individuals expressing a variety of emotions, each with their own lives just as colorful and varied as the apparel that surrounds them. A polaroid camera, possibly even the one that created the photo displayed, sits in near mint condition at the very edge of the collection. The camera's ability to capture a snapshot of a moment in the long life of an individual adds to Lord's critique that any version of a person, let alone an entire community, is just a glimpse into her life.

This case forms a person made up of all these objects and the experiences they convey, such as growing up watching an abusive, drunk, white man as tragic hero in *Paris, Texas*, listening to the alt-rock sounds of the Pixies as a teenager, the bright blond wig and jewelry all from an era in which feminine beauty standards were Eurocentric, focusing on beauty standard that leaned towards thin, light-skinned women often with blond hair. The 1990s era of alternative-rock/post-punk was dominated by white artists like Nirvana, Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Pearl Jam to just name a few. Their influence towards "iconoclastic, anti-commercial, and anti-mainstream" themes add to absence of seeing people like Lord in both these "anticommunities" and normative communities.[52]

The photos and objects stand as evidence of Lord's life during this era and move us towards her present as an incredibly successful contemporary artist working with other artists at a nationally acclaimed museum and ultimately an individual identity saturated by and a part of the same pop culture experiences as the audience looking at her. This identity is still separated as a fractured version of Lord. The individual in the "Pixies"

[52] Michael D. Vogel, "What's Old Is New Again – Alternative Radio's Move towards Harder Edge Music," Vogelism (Radio & Records Magazine, March 13, 2009).

shirt is represented by Euro-American aesthetic and cultural influences, but it is split from the Athabascan dress in the next case to be discussed. Whether the division based on visual appearance is separated into the next case, as if representing a different individual. This is done by dissecting the identity of an individual into past and present categories instead of showing that an individual is multifaceted with private, public, familial, professional, and personal identities. Furthermore, the categorization ignores that identity formed throughout one's lifetime and generations. These cases demonstrate the effect of categorizing identity without context, Native femininity in the context of Lord's work, further emphasizing the institutional power museums must control to affirm public perception.

The next case, same in color and style, houses a much smaller arrangement of apparel and photos. A traditional Athabascan/Dene dress is detailed by a beaded, floral pattern along the yoke in a variety of colors, primarily blues with small accents of greens, and reds, against the natural color of the split-grain leather. The pattern is partially obscured by what looks like a tight, five-strand, dentalium and glass bead necklace that is slightly shorter than the three-strand necklace arranged in a looser pattern made with what looks like the same materials. Framing the yoke is a line of dark fur accented by a tuft of the same fur on the left shoulder. Fringe about three inches in length comes down from the dark fur leading the eye towards another polaroid of a young child smiling, placed next to another tuft of fur hanging from a pink string connecting it to the tuft on the left shoulder. A matching pair of gloves lie folded, exposing the beaded white and floral pattern, edged in an off-white fur. In an embossed, silver frame, a group portrait of five individuals embracing one another is cradled in the folds of the dress just opposite

the gloves. Just above the frame, more beaded floral design can be seen along the edge of the sleeve. The photos and the gloves are placed atop the edge of the dress that comes down and provides a thick barrier between the objects and the green fabric platform, almost cradling the objects above it. More of the same fringe, thicker than what is along the collar, and fur line the edge of the shirt. The sparseness of the objects in comparison to the variety in the case opposite this one creates an intimacy and importance about the items that are included.

It is as if we are viewing an internal expression of a person rather than the visual external forces developing the split version of Lord seen in the other cases as her response to the binary identities provided by museum traditions. The split of the singular identity into the two that bookend the center vitrine, provides a visual description of the effect that the center vitrine has caused on the lives of Indigenous people; an Indigenous identity that is separate, even incompatible, with a Euro-American identity because the descriptions of Indigenous cultures in museum settings as historical and non-existent in the present, Euro-American-dominated world. This is the discourse of the "Other" that Luna provided audiences in his original 1985 performance at the Museum of Us. Lord's visual language focuses on the gaze: not in the potential for it to be returned by the objectified Indigenous body in Luna's case, but in the way that the gaze's desire objectifies Indigenous femininity through the traditions of anthropological language and display in museums.

The topless center vitrine is raised up roughly three feet off the ground on wooden legs that provide a platform for the glass walls that hold in the few inches of sand supporting Lord's body. The vitrine is just long enough to accommodate her body and the

six didactics which describe her for the audience. She is clothed in raw edged, roughly cut, and unadorned leather entirely dissimilar to the dress in the farthest case. It covers her chest and groin, emphasizing these areas by the lack of coverage elsewhere. The only other apparel are pieces of jewelry such as her hoop earrings, green necklace, a single silver bracelet on her left wrist, and a blue stone ring on her right ring finger.

The sparse adornment on her body presents a version of Lord entirely separate from the person described by the sheer number of objects in the "Euro-American" culture case and the visible labor seen in the adorned dress and gloves representative of her Athabascan heritage, or in the typical museum style separating white identities into a section separate as the "Other." The vitrine uses six authoritative didactics to emphasize various aspects of her body in relation to her sexuality and her gender as irrefutable aspects of her identity. Starting from her head, the mounted didactics first racialize and historicize her identity stating that her piercings, ears and, less visibly in the pictures, her nose, are "non-traditional" separating her visually as "other" than the contemporary and near universal practice of piercing. Her actions are further othered by describing another universal practice of gifting and trading to acquire the jewelry she is wearing as "traditional" rather than a widespread practice experienced contemporarily and historically by all individuals regardless of culture, race, or ethnicity. She is further sexualized in the description of her body as endomorphic with wide hips, therefore, suitable for childbearing. The didactic uses anthropological language common in museum settings, and by doing so, establishes the sexualization as academic and therefore acceptable due to its formal authority. The language also further moves her body from animate to an inanimate object to be examined for its function. All the way

down to her feet, Lord demonstrates that no aspect of her identity and body escape sexualization. The function of her colored pedicure is described as attracting the gaze of a mate. The other language continues in this same didactic style using the word “ritual,” non-Euro-American tradition in anthropological language, to describe the practice of painting her toenails. Once more, on a more extreme, dehumanizing, level the didactic uses the term “mate,” a term used to describe relations between animals, to describe the sexual partner she is supposedly trying to attract. This is done despite being clearly labeled, with the implication she is visually non-human, as “Homo sapiens" or human in another didactic. The anthropological language used to describe Lord contradicts itself in its attempt to turn Native feminine bodies, and Native peoples writ large, into non-human, objects for Euro-American consumption. More importantly, she presents the audience with her lived, bodily experience because of this language. Lord brings attention to the sexualization of not just Native femininity, but femininity within Euro-American culture. There is a persistent magnification of this sexualization and objectification by the anthropological tradition of objectification of Native women’s bodies and the way the feminine Native body is equated to cultural patrimony representing Native femininity in museum settings taking the work a step further than Luna would have been able to as a Native man. The glass vitrine she is placed in, along with split identity in the other cases, is an expansion on Luna’s work that established the performance as an “artifact” is not just racialized contradiction to the lived, present experience of Indigeneity, but an active presence in the way that people sexualize and understand Lord’s identity through her bodily presence as a Native woman before anything else.

Lord elucidates real representations that she grew up with through the photos documenting her life and then demonstrates the effects of stereotypes on the lived feminine Indigenous body documented in *Artifact Piece Revisited*. This museological and anthropological process diluted her identity down to easily shared, generalized, and sexualized elements that became the expectation carried by the general public. I read Lord in her performance of *Artifact Piece, Revisited* as a mockery of the colonial museum practice that has attempted to make her an inert object for public visual consumption that points out the blatant, gendered sexualization. In doing so, I see her also highlighting the very real danger that objectification and sexualization when normalized in the power of museum spaces present to living Native women's livelihood. Her relationship to the audience through this fetishizing gaze can be compared to the fetishization of Indigenous aesthetics.

When thinking of Indigenous cultural patrimony as a living object that did not consent to being placed on display, Indigenous identity was never intended for the museum purposes for which it is used. The object's intention, like identity, is removed by being kept in glass cases, unused, while its aesthetics become more valuable than its purpose under Euro-American frameworks described in the beginning. Similarly, the bodies in a museum, the traditional vessels both woven and clay, find themselves described in terms of the body carrying trauma in similar ways to women's bodies. Everything existing in a museum display, whether it be on the wall or in the case, has an implied interaction based on the provided aesthetic distance. The construction of aesthetic distance is made apparent by Lord's living body acknowledging and rejecting the objectification of her body and the material surrounding her, though mimicking the ways

the materials are displayed. Lord's re-performance demonstrates a particular fetishization and dehumanization through the exposure of her body in the contrast to all the apparel that surrounds her and focuses on that exposure. This is all functioning within institutional space, so when the Indigenous feminine presenting body leaves the space the aesthetic distance and "sanctity" of the white-walled museum dissolves. Now the body of a person is all that remains, but with the distance dissolved and the objectification and sexualization reified, the Indigenous feminine body is dehumanized in the Euro-American culture that they now must navigate. When the person is assaulted, abused, or otherwise harmed, there is a reinforced indifference to their rights being violated as they have been culturally dehumanized. This actively puts these individuals in harm's way and makes it that much more difficult to seek, apply, and enforce policy change that would protect Indigenous women and female presenting bodies.

CHAPTER IV

FEMININE BODIES: THE INDIGNEOUS FEMININE EXPERIENCE ON DISPLAY

Rebecca Belmore is an Anishinaabe author, academic, and internationally recognized multidisciplinary artist. Like the artists mentioned already, their bodies, and the Indigenous feminine body in the case of Lord, are the primary vehicles for conversation. Belmore uses her body in institutional and public spaces to highlight her bodily experience as directly related to the "political and social realities of Indigenous communities."[53] There is an established connection between her identity as an Indigenous woman and reflections of it in the culture around her through the way she will be perceived cultivated through years of imagery and stereotypical readings in media and museums. In short, just by existing, she will already be encountering racial and gender biases before she can even introduce herself. Belmore addresses these biases and the history behind them in her 2007 photograph, *Fringe*.

Belmore's *Fringe* has been displayed in two contexts, each with distinct connotations, but I will only be discussing the first iteration which went up on a billboard

[53] https://www.rebeccabelmore.com/bio/

(Fig.5).[54] The first iteration was in 2007 as a part of the ad hoc project *Plan Large* (2001–2009) in Montreal's *Mois de la Photo* event. Sitting atop a two-story building, the billboard depicting *Fringe* nearly spanned the length of the building's wall that it sat above. Against the night sky, the image of a young woman's body on white sheets was lit from behind, its bright glow standing out like a beacon. The figure pictured is identified by Belmore as a female that represents Belmore's body and experience as an Indigenous woman. She reclines on her side, facing away from us, on a white fabric-covered platform with her head resting on a pillow.[55] Another white fabric is draped across her hips, landing just above her knee, pulls the viewer's eye down and across the length of her body.

The young woman's reclining body is seen from behind, her back bisected diagonally by a beaded fringe that recalls the fine beads seen on works like bandolier bags or a decorative elements of dance regalia (Fig. 6). The beadwork on a bandolier bag, typically made by a woman and worn by a man, would have clean, neat curves of floral and vegetal motifs. Belmore takes this tradition of Indigenous femininity and sews up the wound along her back, but the effort to do so shows in the nest of loose threads spiraling away from the skin (Fig. 7).[56] She puts that effort of recovery on display, proud of the progress, but makes the still healing wound visible to the world that gouged the wound

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[54] The other iteration which is used in this paper for the clarity of the image, is a transparency within a lightbox that mimics the original iteration. This is one lightbox in a set of three that is owned by the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

[55] Rebecca Belmore, in conversation with Kathleen Ritter, Vancouver Art Gallery, April 19, 2008. https://www.rebeccabelmore.com/fringe/

[56] The tradition of beadwork, Anishinaabe feminine identity and recovery is extensively researched in the work of Red Rock First Nations, Muskellunge Clan author Lana Ray: Lana Ray, "'Beading Becomes a Part of Your Life': Transforming the Academy Through the Use of Beading as a Method of Inquiry." *International Review of Qualitative Research* 9, no. 3 (November 2016): 363–78. https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2016.9.3.363.

along her back in the first place. Belmore makes visible the unseen pain of generational trauma: the process of relearning traditions and embracing a feminine Indigenous identity that colonialism and forced assimilations tried to erase.

Rape and domestic violence were rare in Indigenous communities prior to colonization, but the normalization of the sexualized Indigenous woman's body through colonization has led to a continuing crisis where their bodies have been dehumanized into sexual objects.[57] With imagery that tried to justify colonization, sexual violence was also justified through these images resulting in a long lasting, metonymic relationship threatening the lives and well-being of Indigenous women. The statistics today reflect that relationship with murder being the third-leading cause of death among American Indian and Alaska Native women with those rates of violence increasing up to ten times higher than the national average.[58] In a study done by the Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center, it was found that ninety-two percent of Native girls who have had sex were forced against their will but outdated federal policy supersedes how tribal governments can address the problem. With colonization, Indigenous bodily autonomy is threated due to the limitation of tribal jurisdiction through The *Major Crimes Act of 1885* that gave the federal government control over major felony crimes, including rape.[59] This makes the rape and murder of Indigenous women legally permissible because tribal governments are unable prosecute the non-Natives who are

[57] Muscogee-Creek law professor Sarah Deer details a pre-contact history where Lakota communities enforced a woman's bodily autonomy and punishments for rape included banishment or death: Sarah Deer, *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America*, United States: University of Minnesota Press, 2015, (145-146).
[58] Urban Indian Health Institute, Seattle Indian Health Board (2016). Community Health Profile: National Aggregate of Urban Indian Health Program Service Areas, 2.
[59] Major Crimes Act of 1885, Criminal Resource Manual 601-699 § (1885).

committing the majority of these crimes.[60] In 2013 there was a slight shift with the Violence Against Women Act.[61] As of 2013, tribes now are able to prosecute crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, or violation of a protection order when related to violence against women. However, if an "intimate" relationship between the assaulted women and the abuser cannot be proved, they cannot be charged with further crimes like child abuse, resulting in increased generational trauma. How does one woman carry all this history on her back and make people see and hear that each and every instance of representation matters? Belmore captures this history in *Fringe.*

Her position is familiar to the Euro-American art world as the reclining nude; she is a sexualized object created for the male audience's pleasure. However, the positioning and bedsheets is reminiscent of the reclining odalisque which reached a peak during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in the Euro-American art canon. With of European colonial expansion into the Middle East during this period, the type was coded Turkish in early iterations but was soon used to represent any non-European woman.[62] Thus exoticized, the odalisque was also overtly sexualized by her reclining pose and nudity—an objectification made socially permissible through the exoticization of the Other. Non-Western femininity then becomes visually representative of land in Euro-

[60] "Racial Discrimination and Denial of Equality under the Law." Racial Discrimination and Denial of Equality Under the Law | Indian Law Resource Center. Indian Law Resource Center. Accessed May 23, 2022. https://indianlaw.org/safewomen/racial-discrimination-and-denial-equality-under-law.
[61] S.47 - Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Public Law No: 113-4. 113th Congress, (February 12, 2013).
[62] For more the odalisque and its origins see: Jennifer Meagher, "Orientalism in Nineteenth-Century Art," in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–, (October 2004), http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/euor/hd_euor.htm.

American art that is available for colonization.[63] The pose takes on the history of not only colonial expansion into the Middle East, but also the colonization of the Americas in the case of Belmore's reference through the Indigenous woman's body.

The history of the sexualization of Indigenous women goes back to before first contact for European colonizers. Netherlandish artist Johannes Stradanus (Jan van der Straet) created the "The Discovery of America" around 1587 roughly, depicting the European colonizer Amerigo Vespucci naming the female allegory for America with the feminized version of his name (Fig. 8). She is represented as a sexually available, Indigenous woman to Vespucci through her posturing and surrounding environment that suggest she is Indigenous, though she is visually described by Stradanus as having Eurocentric features. Since Stradanus had never been to the Americas and neither had his audience, the image that was widely distributed as one of the first depictions the people described in the letters written by European colonist Amerigo Vespucci (Fig.8).[64] America is shown sitting in a hammock with her legs open towards Vespucci, her nakedness accentuated by what is little more than a string around her hips, a calf adornment and a cap. Lord shows the way that nudity was translated into nakedness for Indigenous women in the way she decorated her body referencing the history of that visual language seen here. In contrast to the nakedness, Vespucci is overdressed with multiple layers of clothing obscuring his body and carrying a staff topped in crucifix in one hand and a mariner's astrolabe in the other. Surrounding the two opposing figures are

[63] More on the connections between the odalisque and its connections to colonization and imperial practices: Ivan Kalmar, "The Jew and the Odalisque: Two Tropes Lost on the Way from Classic Orientalism to Islamophobia," *ReOrient*, vol. 4, issue 2, 1 April 2019: 181-196.
[64] Susanne Zantop, 'Domesticating the Other: European Colonial Fantasies: 1770-1830', *in Encountering the Other(s) – Studies in Literature, History and Culture*, ed. by Gisela Brinkler-Gabler (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 269-283 (p. 272).

more reifications of racial stereotyping on top of the sexualization with images of cannibalism in the background. This is done to further visually justify to a European audience that America, the land itself, the people, and all the resources it held, is available for the taking and should be since the image reinforces European racial biases and contradicts gender moral codes.

To return to presentation of non-white femininity as inherently sexual in the odalisque, the visual language of the odalisque describes her as white women but the inherent sexualization comes from her exoticization. Meaning, the pose itself is deeply based in the gender and racial biases that make up the Euro-American canon's construction of non-Western femininity. Belmore's positioning brings up this history of sexualizing non-European femininity and the extension that happens to real women's bodies.

In an interview from October of 2020 for Aperture magazine, Wanda Nanibush, curator of Indigenous art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, interviewed Belmore about her shift in medium over her career:

> WANDA NANIBUSH: You started out in sculpture and then moved into performance. Can you speak a little about the connections between them?
> REBECCA BELMORE: My recollection of that time, in the late '80s, was that there was a lot of appropriation going on in contemporary art. I was a young artist in the middle of this rushing river, where I thought art was a safe place... was a turbulent time in terms of having a better understanding of what my role would be. That is how I gravitated toward performance art. So my practice began when I started thinking about how to be in that moment.
> …[on her move from performance to photography]
> NANIBUSH: Is the creation of an image a performative act?
> BELMORE: It is a performative act for me because it is live in the space.[65]

[65] Wanda Nanibush,"In Performances and Photography, Rebecca Belmore Faces the Monumental," Aperture, Aperture Foundation, October 15, 2020, https://aperture.org/editorial/in-performances-and-photography-rebecca-belmore-faces-the-monumental/.

Regardless of the medium she has utilized, it is the active process of creation where Belmore puts together the value of her works. The process of putting together the elements of body, presence, and gaze is what gives her works their meaning. Fundamentally, Belmore's practice has not changed. The set pieces for her statements have shifted from sculpture to performance to photography, but the final product seen in museums, or on a billboard, are just as alive as when she creates them and should be treated as active as a performance. Her photography is documentation of performance, not unlike the images of Lord's and Luna's performance, but Belmore documents the performance herself taking complete control of the process and how she is curated.

The period of art in the late '80s that she is describing saw a rise in pulling together past imagery and a solidifying of archetypes through the questioning of their effects. These archetypes had been developing through the constant inundation of media imagery, their reality reinforced by their repetition, as a result the of the global economic boom fostering the new age of consumerism that redefined Euro-American culture.[66] What happens when people like you are not represented in Modernism? What does an artist pull from and appropriate to have the conversation about identity with their peers and the culture that surrounds them? The Pictures Generation, made up of iconic American artists like Cindy Sherman and Barbara Kruger, pulled from this existing visual language in consumerism to explore the reception and consumption of their feminine bodies and identities in Modernism through their post-modernist responses. Another American artist, David Wojnarowicz, explores the same themes of reception and

[66] For more on the effects of the rise of consumerism and its effects on cultural perception of self within it see: Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," United Kingdom: Duke University Press, 2013.

consumption using collage and video to talk about queer experience during the era of extreme prejudice at the height of the AIDS crisis. Jean-Michel Basquiat, Julian Schnabel and so many more doing similar work of examining and confronting the consumption and reception of identity, gender, race, and sexuality all through popular iconography of the human body. Centered in this conversation was the "Neo"; Neo-Conceptualism, Neo-Expressionism, Neo-Pop and many other variations and subcategories to try to identify and define culture, commodity, and their intersections all using visual language developed from previous art movements and popular culture.

Modernism lacked a visual vocabulary for Native American identity that existed outside of romanticized ideas of cultural tradition in popular media. Meaning the presentation of Indigenous bodies was primarily through was Navajo weaving, Pueblo pottery, and Plains beadwork or headdresses, but the Indigenous body had become a cliche. The previous decade of the 1970s saw a response to the generalizations by, most recognizably, Luiseño artist Fritz Scholder and Kiowa artist T.C. Cannon's work. In 1973, Scholder told the Chicago Tribune: "Oh, they like their own conceptions of the Indian — usually the Plains Indian, romantic, and noble and handsome and somehow the embodiment of wisdom and patience. But Indians in America are usually poor, sometimes derelicts outside the value system, living in uncomfortable surroundings. We have really been viewed as something other than human beings by the larger society."[67] The popular media that they are starting from, and ultimately what Belmore is left with when looking at sources like that of her peers in the 1980s, are tropes seen in Edward Curtis' photography and George Catlin paintings' that places Native American identity in

[67] Lynne Burdesen. Waugh, "The Artistry of the American Indian," *Chicago Tribune Magazine* Feb. 25, 1973: 18-23.

an era so visually separate from these artists' contemporary reality. This leaves her and other Indigenous artists with a constructed visual language, a stereotype, that places the living Indigenous body as non-existent. Before Belmore can even have the conversation of political and social recognition of the trauma experienced by Indigenous feminine bodies, a theme in her work, Belmore makes her body present, both temporally and literally, through performance art. Belmore is recalling when her career had just begun in her conversation with Nanibush, but this theme, the necessity of visual presence, continues into her photography. Though she would return to photography as her medium in *Fringe*, it is just as alive as her performance art and for good reason.[68]

Through the history of abuse and sexualization of the Indigenous woman's body that I have just briefly covered, the common themes attached to this history is one of victimization rather than one of resilience. Belmore already denies the categorization of victim through the perseverance required to stitching up her back with thread and beading acknowledging the seen and unseen damages caused by the generational trauma of colonization. Unlike the most popular image of the odalique, Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres' 1814 "The Grande Odalisque", Belmore exposes her back fully rather than twisting around to meet the eyes of the viewer, denying them a reprieve from the visual stimulation of the large gash. This is reinforced by her choice to look away from the audience giving the wound the space it needs to confront the audience with its recovery. She does not offer her eyes, her face or any real reprieve from the stitched-up scar, bleeding beads onto the white environment that takes up most of the billboard. In doing

[68] Wanda Nanibush,"In Performances and Photography, Rebecca Belmore Faces the Monumental," Aperture, Aperture Foundation, October 15, 2020, https://aperture.org/editorial/in-performances-and-photography-rebecca-belmore-faces-the-monumental/.

so, there is a reclamation not only of her body as her own to heal as she wishes but refusing this gaze also forces the viewer to interact with the visibly painful recovery that she and other like her, are going through.

I would like to note that alongside a reading of perseverance is here there is the dual conversation of a gentleness and a cradling of her body from the white sheets and the plush pillow that allow for a story of contemplative healing rather than one of constant perseverance. The choice to include the clean bed sheets gently draped over her hips, honors the extreme effort taken to consistently persevere when working through cultural loss and recovery while existing in a world that is actively hostile to your body. Her choice to make that effort visible, offers solidarity to others like her going through the difficulty of persevering and the gentleness required to have with oneself when going through such a process.

The reclamation of Belmore's body is not just one from generational trauma, but it is also reclamation of her body as a queer woman outside of the male gaze. Belmore refuses to depict herself as victim and takes control of her flesh through bodily mutilation, though it is special effects make up, so it is imagined. Her work resonates with the actual bodily mutilation seen in Catherine Opie's *"Self-Portrait/Cutting,"* (1993) (Fig. 9). The conversation between comfort, violence, sexualization is complicated by the possibility of a queer gaze and the queer body. Rather than the meticulous stitching of the wound seen as a violent, painful act, there is pleasure in molding the flesh to make it her own as an act of self-love. Opie's work depicts a similar self-love and gentleness even as the domestic image on her back bleeds. The simple lines depicting the scene of two stick figures, presumably women through the abstracted

triangles to represent dresses, holding hands in front of their home under sunny sky. The violence on the queer body is sexualized to appeal to the queer gaze's interest in unabashed intimacy.

While Belmore is responding to the history of the Indigenous feminine body's presentation in museums and speaking to those traditions, a separate conversation is held with those whose body has experienced the same pain, in other words, a dual conversation. The neutral tones of the image are interrupted by the bright red beads dangling from a gash that stretches from the figure's left shoulder to her right hip, just disappearing under the white sheet. The line itself de-objectifies the feminized and fetishized Indigenous body by bringing attention to the trauma inflicted on her body during lived experience, of being subjected to the voyeur's gaze. The body's extraction from the colonizer's gaze has inflicted irrevocable damage, but not irreparable as the wound, which—despite its severity—has been closed shut and coded as Indigenous through the beads and fringe technique used. Belmore describes the body in *Fringe*, saying:

> ...it is a wound that is on the mend. It was not self-inflicted, but nonetheless, it is bearable. She can sustain it. So it is a very simple scenario: she will get up and go on, but she will carry that mark with her. She will turn her back on the atrocities inflicted upon her body and find resilience in the future. The Indigenous female body is the politicized body, the historical body. It is the body that does not disappear.[69]

However, the fringe's kitsch coding created through tourist art has a history of essentializing of Indigenous identity through commodified and appropriated aesthetics.[70]

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[69] Rebecca Belmore, "Fringe," Rebecca Belmore, Accessed May 25, 2022, https://www.rebeccabelmore.com/fringe/.

[70] Kitsch and tourist art/media have a long, well-documented, and dysfunctional relationship to Indigenous cultural property and identity relating to ignorance and distortion of Indigenous identity in the global contemporary culture writ large. For more on this see: Jack Davy, "The "Idiot Sticks": Kwakw aka'wakw

Through the medium of this woman's body, Belmore highlights the centrality of Indigenous existence. Using the European coding for sensuality and interrupting it with visceral imagery of pain, Belmore actively embodies the fetishization and denial of objectification in one image. The ability of dual visual language is found in the acknowledgement of the situations the Indigenous body has experienced and their public quality of their performance demand acknowledgement of those situations. The imaginary audience of the Euro-American museum, natural, history, art, or other, is entering a cultivated environment where the experience of the Indigenous body on display for visual consumption has been normalized or compared to pottery, regalia, or otherwise equated with inanimate objects. This leaves actual audiences at a disadvantage when trying to understand a breaks in this pattern to re-present an alternative to without doing the work of reintroducing the people they've misrepresented; this situation as uniquely demanding of the bodily presence, a undeniable reality, as the efficacy of the museum's power is diminished through contradiction of centuries worth of museum practices and reification of stereotypes. Museums, audiences, artists, representations are not monolithic, but patterns developed into societal norms break hard. They break most successfully when a living person gives the museum the privilege of allowing the

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Carving and Cultural Resistance in Commercial Art Production on the Northwest Coast." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 42, no. 3 (2018): 27-46 and Santiago Guerra and Eric Perramond, "Get Your Kitsch on Route 66: The Construction of the Indian," (2019). This is not to summarize the production of Indigenous art for non-Native audiences did not include Indigenous peoples creating and selling art to their economic benefit. Examples of re-appropriation to the benefit of Indigenous North American communities can be found in: Janet Berlo and Norman Vorano, "Introducing the Newest Curator of Inuit Art: A Dialogue between Native arts studies professor Janet Catherine Berlo and Canadian Museum of Civilization Inuit art curator Norman Vorano," *Inuit Art Quarterly* 21.3, Fall 2006, p. 21. More materials can be found in: Gerald R. McMaster, "Contributions to Canadian Art by Aboriginal Contemporary Artists," *In Hidden in Plain Sight, Contributions of Aboriginal Peoples to Canadian Identity and Culture*, ed. by David R. Newhouse, Cora J. Voyageur, and Dan Beavon, (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 156.

conversation to happen through their living body in those spaces to present an undeniable reality.

Through the undeniable visibility of an Indigenous feminine body on display in an advertising space, Belmore responds to the commodification of Indigenous bodies. *Fringe* superimposes the history of commodification and fetishization over a woman, communicating that it is both a personal experience in relation to body and a public concern due to the broader implications of bodily harm done to Indigenous women. Belmore centers the contemporary Indigenous body on a billboard in plain view of a public audience, reinforcing the urgency that this harm is contemporary and demands that it be addressed. When the history is coupled with the original exhibition choice of a billboard, it demands recognition and the effects of commodification and sexualization carried by Indigenous women in Euro-American societies.

The duality of the visual language is emphasized in the performance of pain; it speaks to community through recognition of shared trauma between artist and community. Belmore takes on a shared trauma of fetishization and the actions of colonization by visualization of it as a physical trauma to her body holding space for those who share it. She places the pain and the shared resilience to it in the public space demanding that people look. This demanding of acknowledgement addresses both a collective unwillingness to look at the negative effects of colonization, and by extension, the effects misrepresentation within museums and media has had on the Indigenous feminine body. She addresses that this trauma does not go away, that the wound is still present and visible. In this, there is space created for misunderstanding or

misinterpretation of the billboard as an advertisement or something other than what it is as the wound stays whether the audience understands it or not.

It is the lack of context beyond her body and the wound that calls for an onlooker to pause, pointing to the power the body has over our visual attention. This simple pause reinforces the effectiveness bodily presence has in holding the door open to have the conversation. This door is open because of the uniquely demanding acknowledgement that bodily presence holds, an undeniable reality that a person is there experiencing something in front of you and you have the power to react. Luna, Lord, and Belmore have all separately contradicted centuries worth of education and reification just by giving museums the privilege of their presence and voice. Their bodily presence raised above the buildings and lit up against the night sky or just put plain-to-see centered in a national museum are effectively breaking those norms by inducing that crucial and momentary pause. Without Indigenous peoples taking space within institutional arenas like museums and media, the cultural zeitgeist continues the shared legacy of institutional violence by removing Indigenous peoples from the land and memory.

CHAPTER V

THE AUTHORITY ON EXPERIENCE

The previous chapters addressed how the work of Lord and Belmore speak to the museum's tradition of reading people through colonial timelines, traditions, and the effect of those traditions. Rather than occupying the position of the person being read through these traditions as a subject, echoing what Lord and Belmore had done in their critiques, Coco Fusco speaks as an academic, the subjector, who is a part of the institutional authority in her performance. She plays the academic stereotype, an individual who is reading and presenting people through that curated, authoritative lens, in her performance as Dr. Zira from the *Planet of the Apes* films in *Observations of Predation in Humans* (2013–2016) at the Studio Museum in Harlem, an American art museum specializing in artists of African descent. Though, as social scientist John Falk suggests, this is separate from the actual audience consuming this performance who would have varied in race, class, education level, etc.[71] Meaning, it is not their varied, and therefore elusive,

[71] John Falk is social scientist and biologist whose focus on free-choice learning, the type of education happening in museums where the audience actively makes the choice to educate themselves, has helped develop my personal understanding of how identity becomes diluted by colonial institutions for consumption by an imaginary audience. His work on the field differentiates between this imaginary audience that those institutions are responding to and the actual audiences. See: John H. Falk, *Identity and The Museum Visitor Experience*, United Kingdom: Left Coast Press, 2009, 27-29.

interpretation that I am examining, but Fusco's performance in conversation to the museum's traditions. Her performance was inspired by the Euro-American scientific field's history of collecting and categorizing non-European peoples, as detailed in the introduction of my thesis. However, this is not her first foray with the theme of sub-human categorizations both within academia and in her practice as an artist.

Born in 1960, Fusco is a Cuban American, contemporary artist, interdisciplinary scholar, curator, and writer.[72] Her name is a dominant one within the fields of feminism, gender, identity, and colonial studies, so to list her contributions is near impossible, as she has presented at the most prominent global art festivals, taught in some of the most prestigious universities, and has been the awardee of numerous fellowships and grants.[73] I state this without specifics because to do so would be superfluous; I mention her affluence to point out that even at the highest echelons of academia where her name is a household one amongst the fields listed, there will always be a tension between the academia she participates in and her identity due to its construction under the same institutional traditions influencing museums. She puts her discussions on race, identity, and gender, her personal experiences, on display to the benefit of these fields. It is thanks to her extensive engagement in the realm of academia and her ability to communicate her personal experiences through her performances that she can play the part of the stereotypical academic, having encountered it her entire career. Through her personal

[72] Fusco describes her identity in more detail than this, but I have summarized this portion from her description. For Fusco's self-identification see: Coco Fusco, "Bio," Coco Fusco, Accessed May 25, 2022, https://www.cocofusco.com/bio.
[73] Coco Fusco, "Bio," Coco Fusco, Accessed May 25, 2022, https://www.cocofusco.com/bio.

and professional navigation between her identity and academia, she can speak to Indigeneity's treatment in museum spaces allowing for her mimic-mockery.[74]

Feminist theorist and technoscience philosopher Donna Haraway introduced the performance by explaining that the anthropomorphized chimpanzee Dr. Zira, played by Fusco dressed in special effects makeup, narrowly escaped the death that audiences were shown in the third film from 1971, *Escape from the Planet of the Apes*. Since then, she has been living in hiding and observing human behavior through their visual culture. In her lecture, Dr. Zira draws from primatology, neuroscience, and evolutionary biology to address human aggression and predatory behavior for the accumulation of resources in post-industrial societies. Dividing Homo Sapiens into categories humans often use to study other species, she shows the way economic disparity is a form of violence, primarily enacted by the dominant "alpha" males and females against the majority "beta" population. She also compares their behavioral pattern with that of other members of the Homo genus, demonstrating the human shift from empathy towards what she calls "aggressively individualistic behavior," markedly reflective of Euro-Western cultures' favoring of the individual over community in a capitalist society.[75]

As Fusco selects Dr. Zira as the character to perform this critique, she is also bringing attention to the history that inspired the films' themes; from the late 1960s to the early 1970s the New Left and student radicalism stemmed from growing unrest surrounding the Vietnam War, free speech, the environment, and racism. The Black

[74] Mimic-mockery will be the term used for this chapter to summarize Fusco's performances in relation to Bhabha's description of mimicry as discussed in my introduction.
[75] Elia Alba, "Coco Fusco," BOMB Magazine (Betsy Sussler and Libby Flores, July 15, 2014), https://bombmagazine.org/articles/coco-fusco/.

Power movement paved the way from the Red Power Movement and Chicano Movement. This raising racial consciousness in America encouraged pride in each of their communities respectively and as whole in responding the hierarchy developed through systematic racism in America.[76] As a result, this era saw large scale revolutionary determinism and self-determination reflecting one another. These organizations and movements gained power from each other and started national discussions on Indigenous land sovereignty due to the hyper visible actions through the popular media documentation of these activist group. For example, the Indians of All Tribes staged a nineteen-month-long Occupation of Alcatraz (November 20, 1969 – June 11, 1971) and the Brown Berets, a Chicano-rights organization, occupied Catalina Island for three weeks, starting on August 30, 1972.[77] The documentation of these events serves as a demonstrative reflection of Luna's, Lord's, Belmore's, and Fusco's practices as they are pulling from the historical documentation Black and Brown bodily presence. This documentation of presence, as I have previously discussed in my introduction, has been the most effective at creating avenues for amplifying their communities' voices.

The *Planet of the Apes* films take those themes and develops them through the perspective a white-male lead who unknowingly travels forward in time into a post-nuclear apocalypse Earth. This Earth is now inhabited and controlled by hyperintelligent,

[76] The nuances of intersectionality as a term have been discussed as falling under the ever-growing lists terms that are decontextualized for trendy usage in political or economic campaigns. Crenshaw addresses this shift and her positioning on how the term has been appropriated in: Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Race to the Bottom, The Baffler, no. 35, June 2017, https://thebaffler.com/salvos/race-to-bottom-crenshaw, accessed June 15, 2022. As a result, I talk about her terms under the idea of mutually raising racial consciousness and supporting one another through their shared actions to increase the visibility of Black and Brown peoples through protest.

[77] General detail on the movements listed, key protests, and the political climate of America during this period can be found at: American Archive, https://americanarchive.org/exhibits/first-amendment/protests-60s-70s.

humanoid primates who have organized their society by genus; gorillas are military, orangutans are religious and political leaders, while chimpanzees, such as Dr. Zira, occupy the roles of research and medicine. Humans in this future are mute and seen as lesser beings to the primates, again speaking to themes of how Black and Brown communities have been viewed and spoken about both historically and presently in white hegemonic society. The humans in the film are subsequently experimented on and kept in cages by the primate society. This situation is not dissimilar to the prejudicial viewpoints and treatment of Indigenous and other enslaved peoples by colonizing European countries as elucidated by previous examinations of museum and anthropological practices as well as ethnographic showcases as described in the introduction.[78] Instead of the viewpoint of the individual subjected to these practices, as Fusco has performed before in *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* (1992-1993) (Fig. 10), colloquially known as *Couple in A Cage*, she instead plays the role of the one doing the "Othering."

Before Fusco, Franz Kafka, a German-speaking Bohemian writer, began his 1917 short story "A Report to an Academy" with, "Honored members of the Academy! You have done me the honor of inviting me to give your Academy an account of the life I formerly led as an ape!"[79] The story is intended to be the testimony of a man named Red Peter from the Gold Coast of Africa who had lived for several years on display in Germany as a primate. The relevancy of Kafka's performance is seen in the *Planet of the*

[78] It is important to note that, in an interview with Elia Alba, Fusco cites that her inspiration comes from her courses on Afrofuturism that she has taught, but I am expanding the work to include an overarching theme in Fusco's career of responding to the experience of colonial subjugation. For the full interview see: https://magazine.art21.org/2014/08/05/uncaged-coco-fusco-and-planet-of-the-apes/#.YoVaz-jMLb1

[79] Kafka, Franz. "A Report for An Academy." Translated by Ian Johnston. Franz Kafka Online. kafka-online.info, 2007. https://www.kafka-online.info/a-report-for-an-academy.html.

Apes films through the categorizations and resulting defense of one's identity as valid. Fusco's performances, though fictitious like Kafka's and the films, was created by a for white colonial audiences as humorous exaggeration or satire, one of the reasons I think it reaches audience successfully.[80] is breaking Kafka's work is one of many literary allusions to the real history of ethnographic exhibition of human beings that has taken place in the West over the past five centuries as previously discussed.

Fusco, in performing the colonial fantasies about Indigenous identity as imaginary peoples from Guatinau called Guatinauis, during *Couple in a Cage* (1992–1993) with Guillermo Gómez-Peña, pointed to the strategically erased violence in the Euro-American cultural memory.[81] She describes the origins of this performance as a "counter quintenary project" recalling initial interactions, or lack thereof in their performance, between Indigenous peoples and Christopher Columbus citing the first voyage in 1493 when several Arawak people were kidnapped and one of individuals were permanently trapped at the Spanish Court until they died just two years later.[82] Fusco's own Cuban heritage is brought to mind, and though she claims no Indigenous heritage, I point back to the concept of Indigeneity expanding to cover all Black and Brown bodies who have had to negotiate their identity with colonial expectations. The history of Taíno identity in Cuba is a story not dissimilar the histories of Indigenous identities I have spoken about so far.[83] It is a history of subjugation, assimilation, genocide, stereotyping, and appropriation

[80] Fusco, 145. Here she states the long history of satire and humor as a successful tool to approaching and denying popular opposition.
[81] Fusco, 144.
[82] Ibid.
[83] The term Taíno for the Indigenous peoples of the Greater Antilles and surrounding islands is based the reports of Columbus and Dr. Diego Alvarez Chanca (a physician who traveled on the second voyage) as the term that the Indigenous peoples used when differentiating themselves from the Caribs. The Ciboney (or Siboney) is considered a to be a distinct Indigenous population but is related to Taíno communities as a

for political or economic gain by colonial invaders.[84] Indigenous populations in Cuba—including but not limited to the Ciboney and the Taíno, as there may have been other communities who have been lost to written history—were forced in to reservations during the Spanish and Portuguese subjugation of Cuba. The island was not immune to the experience of boarding schools and reservations on mainland North America. Guanabacoa was one of the more famous reservations and today exists as suburb of Havana.[85] The children of this reservation that came from the relationships between the colonizers and the Indigenous people were labeled as mestizos, but the community called them Guajiro, which translates as "one of us" reclaiming the generalization of "other" made by the colonial community's labeling. Those members of the reservations would also intermix with the enslaved African peoples, interweaving Indigenous and Black experiences of colonialism, who were brought to Cuba via the slave trade up until 1886 when the institution of slavery was finally abolished in Cuba.[86]

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neo-Taíno community. The term Island Arawak, or simply Arawak, are the larger cultural group that Taíno and Ciboney lie within that extends past the Greater Antilles into South America. For more on the construction of Taíno identity and the political and cultural ramifications this has had within Cuban culture see: Larry Catá Backer, "From Hatuey to Che: Indigenous Cuba without Indians and the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," *American Indian Law Review* 33, no. 1 (2008): 201–38. https://doi.org/10.2307/20455380 (citing Juan Arrom*, Introduction to the English Edition,* in "Fray Ramón Pané, An Account of the Antiquities of the Indians: Chronicles of the New World Encounter XI," edited by José Juan Arrom, translated by Susan C. Griswold, 1999.)

[84] Catá Backer, "From Hatuey to Che." This work also documents the canon and artifice that develops around Hatuey, a Taíno leader who revolted against the invading Spanish Conquistadors, as his identity was leveraged and superimposed on contemporary figures for political gain, reflecting the history of Indigenous leaders in the U.S. and Canada in popular media like Geronimo/Goyathlay (Chiricahua, Bedonkohe band of the Apache people) (1829–1909).

[85] Jane Landers, "Africans and Native Americans on the Spanish Florida Frontier," in *Beyond Black and Red: African-native Relations in Colonial Latin* America, edited by Matthew Restall, United States: University of New Mexico Press, 2005, 63-64. This source further elucidates the history of the area as an Indigenous reservation for two hundred plus years but highlights the Florida Natives and their exile to Guanabacoa in 1763. The assimilation into Cuban colonial society came later as generations being branded with the term mestizo, or mixed, effectively erasing the Indigeneity in the vernacular and relabeling them as "other."

[86] "Cuban Slavery Documents Collection." Brown University Library. Brown University Library . Accessed July 30, 2022.

Fusco recalls this history in creating imaginative versions of the Indigenous people, playing into a constructed "other" to which white identity could use to define itself through semiotics systems that "other" was associated with through prejudice and stereotype. Performing the imaginative "other" gives voice to the metaphorical and actual violence through intended self-reflection by a Euro-American audience's construction of whiteness and colonizer identity around the fantasy of an "other."[87] Fusco's and Gómez-Peña's performance is a demonstration of the effects of colonial traditions of separating identity and cultural property that perpetuated and reified by institutional power. This separation is also referring to the bodily violence, not just the cultural one as the history of ethnographic showcases continue to play a part in the contemporary objectification of Indigenous bodies.

Fusco acknowledges the tradition of the Euro-American academic as the primary voice in institutional traditions and developing the imaginary audience in choosing Dr. Zira, a character who mimes the practices of eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth-century anthropology, to perform in *Observations*. In the same breath, she denies the institution as the primary authority in the dissemination of information on Indigenous experience by performing the institution as this fictional character with fictional authority. The cultivated exclusivity of the visual language, the formality of her outfit, the podium, and stage, references the echo chamber who would all have the privilege of accessing to the institutional space. Her power comes from the authority of that space and

https://library.brown.edu/collatoz/info.php?id=482#:~:text=Cuba%20stopped%20officially%20participating%20in,other%20ways%20of%20obtaining%20workers.

[87] Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," 152.

her title as "doctor." Fusco also acknowledges the power she has in institutions as she is a part of the academic and institutional systems, she is critiquing by choosing a character with the same title as herself. She acknowledges that all words shared from that stage are inherently perpetuating the power of the "institution" through participation in the authority that museum spaces have. However, participation from all members, intra- and extra- institutional peoples, is necessary in order to create egalitarian spaces so playing an "other" is required. Fusco does so by blatantly referencing the non-human categorization that museums employ by playing an anthropomorphized chimpanzee. In so doing, she reorganizes the power of space by using all these tools. Reorganization of space, decolonization, as institutional critique needs to respond instead to the construction of expectations and categorizations being displayed, as Fusco does when she plays the Dr. Zira. She occupies in her career as an academic while acknowledging and critiquing the institution she is a part of through mimic-mockery. The visual language of the stage with a gallery behind the audience puts her in a unique position that uses the rarified quality of museum aesthetics, while acknowledging the effects by discussing the larger socio-political sphere (Fig 11). In her discussion of creating a value system between hoarding in animals and humans, she is equating them to baboons. The baboons will stuff their cheek pouches with food to store the excess, whereas humans, she points out, "Lacking cheek pouches, human beings share the baboons' approach… [in] resource gathering... Humans store extra resources in their *ingenious* personalized containers. These really are amazing!"[88] She recalls ethnocentric language used by anthropologists that other Indigenous people and talk down their achievements through language reinforcing

[88] *Coco Fusco: Observations of Predation in Humans: A Lecture by Dr. Zira, Animal Psychologist (2013)*, *YouTube* (The Studio Museum in Harlem, 2014), https://youtu.be/Eg_yPMapPEM.

paternalism. The language emphasizes the infantilization Indigenous and enslaved peoples by the colonizer or colonial hegemony is a fabricated, one-sided relationship where these same peoples are aware of the part they play in the colonial mind and can make fun of it.

To quote Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "The desires of white, non-white, immigrant, postcolonial, and oppressed people, are entangled in resettlement, reoccupation, and reinhabitation that actually further settler colonialism."[89] Though Tuck and Yang argue against the metaphorization of the problems within the institution as it makes possible a set of evasions, or "settler moves to innocence." Decolonization as I have used the practice within this paper, more closely resembles the metaphorization they argue against. The decolonization I am arguing for is the occupation of the institutional settings and taking advantage of the authority it gives to control the conversation as the dominant voice through self-representation. While this is not actual land, behavior and authority play just as much a role in enforcing colonial systems as I have pointed to throughout the paper. Individuals who find themselves labeled and defined by institutional power, can play into the identities that come a set of expectations (mimicry) and reclaim the authority the white hegemonic system suppresses by developing new systems (mockery). In doing so, it recalls the power to address more complex and detrimental effects of colonialism on Indigenous identity and livelihood outside of misrepresentation. Decolonization, actual return of land and resources, can only happen through active engagement to reclaim suppressed authority through capital and

[89] Tuck, Eve and K. Wayne Yang. "Decolonization is not a metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): abstract.

intellectual gains. This due to the over arcing system of capitalism where people's lives and economic wealth are so deeply connected. When the system that reinforces colonization is primarily led by those whose generational wealth and privilege are related to the color of their skin, active return of land and resources will be denied by those in charge of the system who wish to retain their privilege.

To go more into detail about the academic character Fusco plays and tropes she is pulling on, Dr. Zira's character is recognizable as the "well-meaning" anthropologist. This anthropologist is seen in early interactions between European countries and the people subjected to that colonization. The role is colonizing researcher who interacts intimately with the people they are encountering/subjugating, but embodying Bhabha's point that the colonizer see the people they are colonizing as "almost the same but not white" enforcing a hierarchy, exoticization and fetishization. Looking at the work of early twentieth century German scholar Aby Warburg provides an example of the well-meaning anthropologist. He approached Hopi peoples as a "primitive and pagan humanity" separate from his own culture that he viewed as the evolved version of the Hopis' culture.[90] This philosophical doctrine, Primitivism, was not uncommon as this time period as it was colored by the aesthetic idealization of non-European cultures. Warburg idolized Hopi culture and was a foundational member in the European art history canon to propose that Indigenous arts be included in that art historical canon. However, this was all done under the pretense that the aesthetics of the work be separated from the culture as a tool to talk about how all art evolves into the religious themes and

[90] Aby Warburg, "Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America," in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Donald Preziosi, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) 162.

icons in European cultures. Despite his fascination and advocacy for the validity of Hopi cultural productions as a form of art, he did so while infantilizing them under European culture.

The films develop a character for Fusco to play off, meaning there is an existing canon set up through the themes and story they provide. Dr. Zira mimics the sentiments of Warburg when she goes on to have a lightbulb moment in the first film where she recognizes the white male lead as competent after a demonstration of written language, a sign of intelligence as understood by Euro-American culture often used to delineate intelligent from non-intelligent cultures during colonization.[91] Here she performs the well-meaning anthropologist, the originator of negligent museum traditions, highlighting the ability of written language as the definitive mark of intelligence by this sub-(human) primate now demonstrating they are worthy of treatment as an equal. Although not quite. Preconceived notions and biases created through constructed prejudice, as described in the brief explanation of stereotypes in my introduction, led to an initial interaction where the researcher is already looking at the fully formed individual as a child or child-like. This infantilization of non-European peoples is where the researcher sees themselves as a parental figure to educate and take an authoritative position over what they perceive as a less intelligent being separate entirely from themselves despite being similar in every way except for appearances.

Fusco begins her performance by playing into that role: “I just wanted to say as I begin my lecture tonight, that well, I like you. Once I got over the shock of encountering

[91] Sidney I. Dobrin and Christian R. Weisser, *Natural Discourse: Toward Ecocomposition*, United States: State University of New York Press, 2012 pg.64-65.

my first speaking human subject, I could begin to appreciate how much easier my research would be here. I especially like your moving pictures… the last one well, it is all about language! Imagine!"[92] This role she performs, as pointed out by this quote, plays into the interactions between European colonizers and Indigenous peoples through infantilization of non-European modes of living and education by having a white male lead, and the "born-again-sexy" white female lead, act out a safe version of the very real and often violent assimilation seen in boarding schools.[93]

Dr. Zira is steeped in academic prejudice that comes with the colonizer mindset I previously described and comes with a history of presenting the humans in an ethnographic show. Fusco evokes the history she refers to in *Couple in A Cage* by choosing this character and takes advantage of the academic caricature to reassert control of the narrative to point out the fallacy of academia through the satire as a chimp. Luna, Lord, Belmore, and Fusco have demonstrated the role of the one being subjected to these practices in performance to communicate to the audience the severity of colonial impact on the Indigenous body, culture, and wellbeing by literally occupying space. As previously discussed, Dr. Zira provides a way to communicate through fantasy hyperbole, to bring attention to an issue firmly rooted in reality. Fusco points out in a 2013 lecture given for MIT is Comparative Media Studies' podcast that one of the primary hurdles she

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[92] *TED Ethology: Primate Visions of the Human Mind*, *Video Data Bank* (School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2015), https://www.vdb.org/titles/ted-ethology-primate-visions-human-mind.

[93] The "born again sexy" trope seen in media across genres and culture is first delineated in a video essay by Pop Culture Detective (https://youtu.be/0thpEyEwi80) rather than an academic source. This trope is further explored in a short article by Rachel Sampson. Sampson, in short, describes the trope as sexualized adult woman with a child-like level of intelligence or extreme naivete who falls under the parental guidance of an average white male who grooms her into being his love interest using the woman's naivety to his advantage. This role is included, but not limited to, Indigenous colonization and Hollywood Wild West Films in which the Indigenous female lead is cultivated for the white male lead through means outside her control as seen represented by the role of Nova, the mute female human under subjugation along with the initial white, male lead, George Taylor.

confronts is "how to actually bring people into a conversation because when they come to an art experience where performance… has become a very trendy art form."[94] Fusco describes the need to find a way to both entertain and educate in order discuss racialization and racist political structures. In this same lecture, she points to mass media representation that present false realities that she has found to be successfully combated with sci-fi. The relatability, the pop culture, then becomes a tool to discuss the decline of empathy and deterioration of cooperative social systems (Fig. 11). I chose to bring *Observations* into the conversation on Indigenous bodily representation because the hyperbole of an anthropomorphic chimp explaining humans to humans is objectively silly as seen by the wide smiles of the audience (Fig. 12). Hyperbole and humor create an access point for the audience to laugh at themselves and re-assess their behavior rather than shutting down and becoming defensive at flat critique. Furthermore, *Observations* has serious connotations when looking at it as a critique on the way humans talk about other humans as subjects, creating hierarchies and reinforcing them, rather than speaking and existing as equals. After looking at work describing the experience of being the subject, work that speaks from the position of subjector shows the continuing power of institutional authority. This power stays despite the cacophony of voices describing lived experience, even as that authoritative voice comes from mouth of an anthropomorphic chimp.

The portion of her performance of *Observations* that discusses these social systems is based in the research of American neuroendocrinologist Robert Sapolsky.

[94] Coco Fusco, "Podcast and Liveblog: Coco Fusco, 'A Performance Approach to Primate Politics,'" *Podcast and Liveblog: Coco Fusco, "A Performance Approach to Primate Politics"* (October 25, 2013).

Fusco, through Dr. Zira, contrasts the aggressive tendencies of human populations surrounding resources management with Sapolsky's research on a troop of baboons. These baboons had survived the trauma of the losing most of their alpha male population who had eaten trash contaminated with tuberculosis, shifted towards a cooperative, horizontal social organization with their loss. It is important to note that Fusco, again, is playing a part though pointedly talking about contemporary social issues. She states that a human matriarchal future is not the solution:

> Ultimately, I do not think a matriarchal order will solve the current social and economic crisis. Increased government regulation of corporate power would be a step in the right direction. Greater investment in the public sector is also important. But the capacity for empathic behavior and cooperation is not gender specific. It would be very difficult to bring about a generalized change of behavior in America. The irresponsibility and unfettered power of the wealthy is not the only problem. We live in a society that promotes self-centeredness and hyper-specialization and, as a result, few people want to do anything for others or know how to take care of themselves."[95]

Fusco takes this information from Sapolsky's work and puts it into a fantasy hyperbole performance to speak to the way resources and systemic racism relate to one another in a way that is accessible to audiences without diluting the information. Dr. Zira speaks to wealth accumulation, resulting class division, hoarding, and how social mobility is related.

This points back to my previous point that decolonization, the return of resources and land to community control, is determined by those in control of capital meaning behavior and authority play a crucial part in decolonization as they decide how the systems will shift. Those in control of capital reflect the aggressive nature of the male

[95] Alba, "Uncaged: Coco Fusco and Planet of the Apes."

baboons, by enforcing social hierarchies that benefits those already in power, and in the case of humans, are racially biased, colonial hierarchies. Dr. Zira, Fusco, points towards immigration control and segregation redlining as manifestations of territorialism seen in the male baboons. In the podcast lecture, Fusco states that the influence for this work comes from the political demonization of universal healthcare or the funding of public education, in America specifically, pointing to it as a decline of empathy as a larger social trend. Through humor she recultivates that empathy and more seriously point to the downfall of the aggressive resource guarding and territorial nature of the male baboons as a devolving of humanity away from collectivizing our resources and altruistic tendencies.

The larger conversation on identity and humanity as it functions in the 21st century in America and other colonial-capitalist societies, reinforces the need for Black and Brown bodies to be visible to larger media audiences and performances. The bodily presence of Fusco, with the addition of carefully constructed conversation interjected with humor makes difficult conversations approachable and breaks down biases through the cultivation of empathy.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

All these artists are highlighted out of the others in their generations to show that there is an Indigenous art history developed around the language of bodily presence each preforming and building that visual language. Even though they are not directly responding to one another, they have developed a method of response to institutional history of denying the Indigenous body. Their presence in these spaces is an undeniable as person with a lived experience, not as an object to be read through didactics as Luna and Lord point out. Here is the denial of an ethnographic present in museum spaces using their institutional power to reify contemporary Indigenous lived experience, complicating that historical narrative.

Deloria's work points back to the images and popular media built up to create like a pseudo, romanticized Indigenous identity. Those types of images becoming reality for individuals when conceptualizing Indigeneity and that romantic cliché is now a fixture of the American zeitgeist. Lord presents an alternative; she is not only responding to the way that Indigenous identity has been curated in museums as Luna had but she also presents feminine gender as another hurdle by navigating her body being sexualized,

whether she dress in a Pixies shirt or regalia. She amplifies what the museum traditions and Euro-American gender roles have done to Indigenous femininity to make the work accessible to a general audience who is aware of the popular tropes in the zeitgeist. When the tropes are exaggerated to the point of absurdity then overlaid a living body rather than abstraction of it, it breaks down those biases by showing how incongruent they are with lived reality. Indigenous femininity does not necessarily exist in museums outside of pots and baskets often described by museums. Lord critiques this construction and the pop culture vision using the authority given to her by Luna and the inherent cultural authority of the museum space**.**

The canon she is speaking to, that all the artists I have highlighted are speaking to, is based in the colonial anthropology I describe in my introduction. It is an anthropology that talks about people through objects alone, aestheticizing people into baskets, blankets, regalia removed from the body, that can be owed, traded, and talked about in way that justifies their collection and the larger actions of colonization. Indigenous femininity gets reduced in this canon as mate to a male, the experience of childbirth and later the experience of motherhood. That categorization places them as reproductive objects. They are not only sexualized but reduced to a heterosexual counterpart for the masculine Indigenous body or solely for their reproductive abilities. Lord's performance identifies all the three categories of representation that happens for indigenous femininity in this canon, but all three of these leave out the fact that those categorizations move from an ideological violence to literal violence. This is when Belmore steps in to discuss the recovery and perseverance through that violence to reclaim the Indigenous feminine identity through the body.

Fusco's *Couple in a Cage* so successful is because people saw the academic voice through the museum space alone, and they see the authority, and they took it as a literal representation of Indigenous peoples. Why would an institutional space offer anything but the whole truth? When Fusco performs this academic voice in the character of Dr. Zira, even though it is done in a literal costume, it still comes across as having authority of truth due to the years of institutional power the museum field has maintained. My point is that museums have an authority regardless of what is presented in their space, so they have a responsibility to representing people correctly. That change happens most dramatically through self-representation as seen in works of Luna, Lord, Belmore, and Fusco.

With the addition of Coco Fusco there is a complication to the definition of identity of the North American Indigenous that Luna Lord and Belmore have already spoken about. The experience of the Indigenous artist is always going to be colored by having to respond to institutional colonialism. This effectively defines the Indigenous artist as anyone whose heritage has been exploited by colonialism. This would expand Indigenous identity to all non-Euro-American identities that have experienced that exploitation. With this, the institutional critique surrounding the Indigenous body expands to include Fusco's Cuban American identity as well as the identities of all Black and Brown artists who have had to respond to their identity meeting misrepresentation, commodification, and microaggressions as they navigate the world.

My frustration comes from a place separate from the general public who has not spent hours mulling over the history of museums and representation looking for egalitarian shifts. Throughout the process of writing this, people have pointed out that

even the communities I talk about are not as meticulous when it comes to terminology or really even care what is happening in museums because concern has spread into systemic racism that affects people economically to the point of exhaustion. All that aside, it still plays a part in how people will interact with those of Indigenous heritage as general populace still sees the academic space as having this ultimate air of authority. They will see that as an authority over people writing, talking, an even going so far as the artists I've highlighted to performance those roles to point out their absurdity. As actual audiences engage with these artists, they are engaging in that history and adding to it just by witnessing When these artists step up and give the museum the privilege of their time, voice, and presence, it says: "This is my life and that is irrefutable."

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APPENDICES

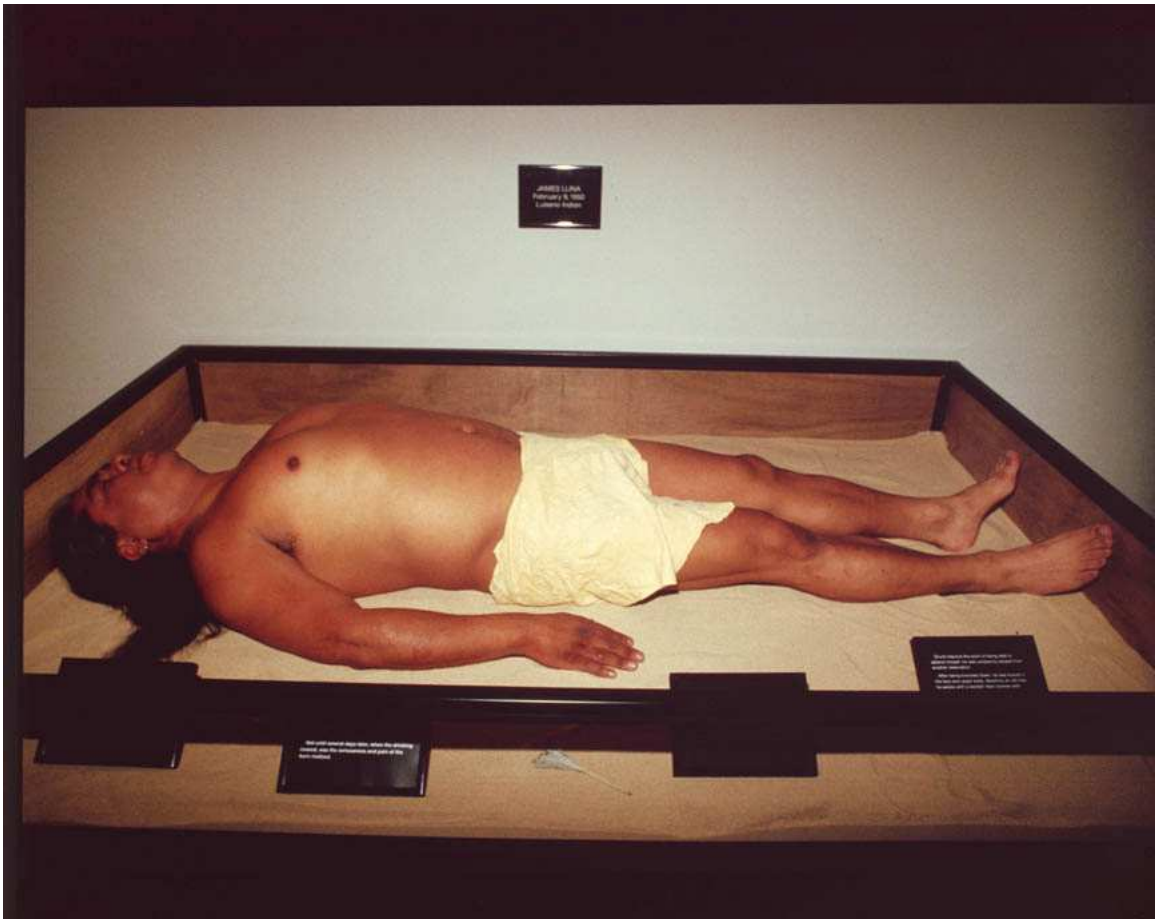

Figure 1:

James Luna (1950-2018, Payómkawichum (Luiseño), Ipi (Kumeyaay), Mexican American), *Artifact Piece*, first performed in 1987 at the San Diego Museum of Man (Museum of Us). Photo courtesy of Canadian Art.

Figure 2:

Erica Lord (1978-present), Athabascan, Iñupiaq, Finnish, Swedish, Japanese, English). "Artifact Piece, Revisited," 2008. Photo courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian.

Figure 3:

Erica Lord (1978-present), Athabascan, Iñupiaq, Finnish, Swedish, Japanese, English). "Artifact Piece, Revisited, (Detail 1)" 2008. Photo courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian.

Figure 4:

Erica Lord (1978-present), Athabascan, Iñupiaq, Finnish, Swedish, Japanese, English). "Artifact Piece, Revisited," 2008. Photo courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian.

Figure 5:

Rebecca Belmore (Anishinaabe), “Fringe”, 2007, Plan Large, Quartier Éphémère, Montreal, PQ , billboard, photo taken by Henri Robideau, Guy L’Heureux.

Figure 6:

Rebecca Belmore (Anishinaabe), “Fringe”, 2007, transparency in lightbox version (one of an edition of three), Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of funds from Donna and Cargill MacMillan Jr., 2010.56.

Figure 7:

Rebecca Belmore (Anishinaabe), “Fringe” (detail), 2007, transparency in lightbox version (one of an edition of three), Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of funds from Donna and Cargill MacMillan Jr., 2010.56.

Figure 8:

Johannes Stradanus (Jan van der Straet, Netherlandish), “The Discovery of America,” c. 1587–89, Pen and brown ink, brown wash, heightened with white, over black chalk, 19 x 26.9 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 9:

Catherine Opie (American), “Self-Portrait/Cutting”,” 1993, Chromogenic print, 40 inches x 29 7/16 inches (101.6 x 74.8 cm), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York Purchased with funds contributed by the Collections Council, with additional funds from Mr. and Mrs. Aaron M. Tighe and the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, 2012, 2012.11.

Figure 10:

Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña. *The Year of the White Bear and Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*, 1992-1994. Performance. Courtesy the artist and Alexander Gray Associates.

Figure 11:

Coco Fusco. *Observations of Predation in Humans: A Lecture by Dr. Zira, Animal Psychologist*, 2013. Performance at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY, 2013.

Figure 12:

Coco Fusco. *Observations of Predation in Humans: A Lecture by Dr. Zira, Animal Psychologist* (Audience Detail), 2013. Performance at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY, 2013.

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