Unsettling American Art History: Perspectives from Native American & Indigenous Studies

Co-Organizers

Sascha Scott, Associate Professor of Art History, Syracuse University

Amy Lonetree (Ho-Chunk), Professor of History, University of California, Santa Cruz

Abstract

Histories of the U.S. and Canada are defined by violence conquest and continued occupation. Indigenous studies scholars recognize dominant institutions—from legal to cultural—as fundamentally colonial and understand colonialism as ongoing as Indigenous peoples continue to fight against cultural invisibility, exploitation, and misrepresentation, threats to their land and water rights, and for sovereignty.

This symposium gathers an interdisciplinary group of scholars, artists, and curators whose work both engages with 19th- and 20th-century Indigenous art/history and is framed by the field of Native American and Indigenous Studies. Indigenous studies scholars adopt diverse tactics for challenging settler structures and narratives, including decolonial (or anti-colonial) calls for restoration, restitution, and reparation; truth-telling and ethical research methodologies; Indigenizing dominant structures via Indigenous presence and voices; recognizing Indigenous sovereignties through consultation and partnerships; embracing story-telling and storywork as powerful methodologies; and considering place, relationality, community, and kin, both human and more-than-human, as central to Indigenous knowledges.

Over the course of two days, various speakers will highlight current approaches to and research on 19th- and 20th-century Indigenous art; illuminate how Indigenous studies is critically unsettling histories of American art; and accentuate how Indigenous studies' twin projects of decolonizing and Indigenizing are productively reshaping museum practice. Together, the speakers aim to unsettle colonial narratives and practices that are still prominent in stories about and collections of both Indigenous and settler art.

Session 1: Indigenous Visual and Material Culture

Philip J. Deloria (Dakota descent), Leverett Saltonstall Professor of History, Harvard University

The Matter of the Material in the Art of Mary Sully

Dakota artist Mary Sully, working in relative anonymity across the long 1930s, made what we can now interpret as a compelling claim on an early Indigenous modernism. Her tripartite works place in dialogue symbolism, representation, and design, with images that fuse geometrical and other forms of abstraction together with gestures toward popular iconography, conventions emerging from ethnographic illustration, and Native visual strategies grounded in Dakota localism, though also adventurously intertribal in nature. This paper will consider the materiality of Sully's aesthetic, drawing on her history as a maker and her interest in the techniques of Native women's material culture production to argue that her visual imagery bears substantial traces of material practices observed during her upbringing, reinforced in her engagements with ethnography, in visible in her continued interest in models and facsimiles. Sully helped her sister develop beading looms, made models of tipis that she sought to market, may have produced a facsimile Ghost Dance shirt, created her own heavily beaded regalia, and even crafted earrings and other jewelry. Such practices shaped both the unknown and lesser-known aspects of her work—experimental images of bejeweled animals, for instance, and her efforts at illustration—as well as the representations of materiality and technique found in her "personality prints."

Philip J. Deloria is the Leverett Saltonstall Professor of History at Harvard University, where his research and teaching focus on the social, cultural, and political histories of the relations among American Indian peoples and the United States. He is the author of several books, including *Playing Indian*, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, and *Becoming Mary Sully: Toward an American Indian Abstract*. Deloria received the Ph.D. in American Studies from Yale University in 1994, taught at the University of Colorado, and the University of Michigan before joining the faculty at Harvard in January 2018. He is a member of the American Philosophical Society and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Emily Moore, Associate Professor of Art History, Colorado State University

Naas-Shagee-Yeil: Claiming the "Seattle Pole"

In 1899, Seattle businessmen stole a monumental cedar pole from a Tlingit community in Alaska and erected it in their downtown Pioneer Square, where a replica still stands today. The heist of "the Seattle Pole" is well documented on the Northwest Coast, but the efforts of Tlingit people to reclaim their clan at.óow in the early twentieth century is not. This paper highlights the work of Tlingit members of the Taant'a kwáan Gaanax.ádi clan to reach a settlement for the stolen pole, including a high-ranking woman named Anisalaga (AKA Mary

Ebbets Hunt), who claimed the pole in Seattle newspapers and eventually commissioned a new version of the pole in her home community.

Emily Moore is associate professor of art history at Colorado State University and Associate Curator of North American Art at CSU's Gregory Allicar Museum. Raised in Ketchikan, Alaska, Emily continues to work with Lingít, Ts'msyen, and Kaigani Haida communities to research historical and contemporary arts from the Northwest Coast. She is the author of *Proud Raven, Panting Wolf: Carving Alaska's New Deal Totem Parks* (University of Washington Press, 2018).

Alicia Harris (Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes, Assiniboine), Assistant Professor of Native American Art History, The University of Oklahoma School of Visual Arts

Wíya Oda Snonya: Quilting Traditional Ecological Knowledge to Help Us Remember

Cotton star quilts became a quintessential aspect of 20th- and 21st-century Native life in the Great Plains region, appearing at weddings, anniversaries, funerals, spiritual ceremonies, and celebrations. But beyond their current cultural prominence and significance, they also encode sophisticated ancestral values and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). This paper focuses on one such star quilt, the *Red Bottom Tipi Quilt* (ca. 1968), made by Almira Buffalo Bone Jackson (Assiniboine). The quilt is currently held at the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. It was commissioned as part of a collection of hundreds of quilts by an American settler woman, Florence Pulford, in the 1960s. Using oral history accounts and rooted in Assiniboine cosmology and epistemology, I demonstrate how the *Red Bottom Tipi Quilt*—one of many in Jackson's oeuvre, and in context of the huge corpus of Native star quilt makers—encodes historical memory, retains information about the movements, social structures, and epistemologies of the Assiniboine people, and functions as an index of TEK via site specific kinship practices. This paper echoes the move toward reviving Native ancestral knowledge systems and values, evident as they are encoded in our ancestral art forms.

Alicia Harris is an assistant professor of Native American Art History at the University of Oklahoma, which is where she received her PhD. She is invested in studying the many various ways Native American artists represent their relationships with the land in visual form and expressions of kinship with human and non-human relatives. Her research areas also include Native American women and feminisms, Native political activism, curatorial representation of Indigenous peoples, photography, and the historicity of Native identity. Alicia is Assiniboine and is an Associate Member of the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes.

Session 2: Contemporary Art and the Presentness of the Past

Dylan Robinson (Stó:lō/Skwah), Associate Professor, University of British Columbia School of Music

Resting, Hearing, and Speaking with: Indigenous Public Art's Relationships with the Life of Land

From insurgent refusals/removals of colonial monuments to other activist forms of social arts practice, public art's relationship to its publics has received renewed attention. While questions regarding the relationship between public art and its publics have always been central in the discourse about public art, the question of public art's relation to its non-human "publics" has not been addressed. This presentation examines how public artworks touch, rest upon, and are structurally supported by land as a living being, among other non-human relations. I will discuss how public art's structures and form are often oblivious to the life of land, but also how they may demonstrate reparative care toward land's life.

Dylan Robinson is an Associate Professor at the University of British Columbia in the School of Music, and a xwélmexw (Stó:lō/Skwah) artist, curator and writer. He is the author of the book *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (2020) that examines Indigenous and settler colonial practices of listening. With Candice Hopkins, he is also the curator of *Soundings*, an internationally touring exhibition with Independent Curators International, that features an ever-growing number of Indigenous art scores and performances. Robinson's current research examines public art's interpellation of the public as settler and Indigenous subjects.

Andrea Carlson (**Ojibwe), Artist**

The Land Art Returned

Many contemporary artists, including myself, contribute to the Land Back movement in what is now North America. Activists in this longstanding movement have focused on reclaiming Indigenous lands and placing them in the hands of Indigenous stewards to maintain or re-establish Indigenous sovereignty. I am among the Native artists and curators who have used their art and influence to return privately held land to tribal trust. In this talk, I will discuss how Indigenous mounds have influenced my paintings, as opposed to the work of Native and non-Native contemporary Land Art. Citing examples of artists and curators working toward returning land to tribal trust, I will also outline my own search for a land-based practice and strategy toward supporting Indigenous futurity through image making.

Andrea Carlson (b. 1979, Ojibwe) is a visual artist who maintains a studio practice in northern Minnesota and Chicago, Illinois. Carlson received an MFA from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design in 2005. Her work has been acquired by institutions such as the Denver Art

Museum, the Minneapolis Institute of Art, and the National Gallery of Canada. Carlson was a recipient of the 2008 McKnight Fellow, a 2017 Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors grant recipient, a 2021 Chicago Artadia Award, and a 2022 United States Artists Fellowship.

Sherry Farrell-Racette (Algonquin/Metis/Irish), Associate Professor, Department of Visual Arts and Faculty of Media, Art and Performance, University of Regina

The Resurgence of Traditional Media and Acts of "Doing" in Contemporary Indigenous Art

In *Learning Together* (2013) Keith Goulet unpacks Nehiyawak concepts of knowledge as a merger of doing, being, becoming and acting. Beadwork's shift from domestic and community spaces into art galleries has been followed by the revitalization of hand-tanned hide and a turn toward porcupine quillwork and hair tufting. Hide camps in urban and 'bush' spaces, and tanning collectives, such as Dene Nahjo, are forming across Canada. They are merging spaces of artmaking, language-learning, and education with the broader task of activating Indigenous knowledge in the 21st century. It is a future-focused practice with roots in the past. Artists are leading a virtual explosion in the collaborative reclamation of re-learning and have opened galleries, residencies, and studios to the big, messy, labour-intensive practices of processing natural materials. The hide tanning space set up a few steps away from the National Gallery of Canada's entrance for *Abadakone* 2019 marked a dramatic shift in Indigenous knowledge's place in art spaces. The Manitoba Museum Quillwork Collective's video/object installation at the Remai Modern's recent *Storied Obects: Métis Art in Relation* (2022) was a further step in honouring the acts of doing and becoming that lie beneath the tethered and woven surfaces.

Sherry Farrell Racette is an interdisciplinary scholar with an active artistic and curatorial practice. She was born in Manitoba and is a member of Timiskaming First Nation in Quebec. Prior to her doctoral studies, she had an extensive career in Indigenous education beginning as a teacher of art and Native Studies, working with incarcerated Indigenous youth, moving to teacher education. Her work as a cultural historian is grounded in extensive work in archives and museum collections with an emphasis on Indigenous women and recovering aesthetic knowledge. Beadwork and stitch-based work is important to her artistic practice, creative research, and pedagogy.

Session 3: Unsettling Settler Art Histories

Scott Manning Stevens (Akwesasne Mohawk), Associate Professor and Director of Native American and Indigenous Studies, Syracuse University

Two Indigenous Perspectives on Landscape

My presentation considers the complex relationship that exists between Native American visual artists and the Euro-American landscape painting tradition. While the appreciation of

natural beauty may be a universal, the representation of landscapes within the visual arts is culturally bound. Various forms of idealization became the hallmarks of the European landscape tradition, with elements such as the pastoral, the picturesque, and the sublime marking the various historical contexts in which that art was created. By the time such a visual practice became widespread in North America, Romanticism was the ascendant style of the day. With its love of the sublime, American landscape art demanded a brooding and unknown wilderness devoid of people. That meant that Indigenous communities were either cast as savages or erased altogether. For this reason, many Indigenous artists have ignored or turned away from landscape painting in their art, but I wish to analyze the works of two contemporary female Indigenous visual artists who directly engage with the landscape and by doing implicitly critique the Euro-American landscape tradition. These artists Kay WalkingStick (Cherokee) and Teresa Baker (Mandan/Hidatsa) have notably different practices and work in different media, but both engage with the notion of landscape, one through representational art, and the other through abstraction.

Scott Manning Stevens (Akwesasne Mohawk) is Associate Professor and Director of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Program at Syracuse University, where he also teaches in the art history program. Dr. Stevens' areas of interests also include the political and aesthetic issues that surround museums and the Indigenous cultures they put on display. He is a coauthor of Art of the American West and co-editor and contributing author for Why You Can't Teach United States History without American Indians. As a recent Radcliffe Institute fellow, he worked on completing a monograph titled, "Indian Collectibles: Appropriations and Resistance in the Haudenosaunee Homelands."

Amanda Cobb-Greetham (Chickasaw Nation), Professor, Department of Native American Studies, The University of Oklahoma

Unsettling Settler Colonial Narratives: The Oklahoma Land Run in Public History and Memory

This paper explores current contestations arising from commemorations of the Oklahoma Land Run of 1889, the organized race for "free land" through which Indian Territory was opened for white settlement. Such commemorations include regular reenactments of the land run as well as the Centennial Land Run Monument, one of the largest bronze sculptures in the world, which features 45 larger-than-life-size figures of pioneers, in wagons and on horseback, running for "free land." The use of a "land run" was, in and of itself, a commemoration—a reenactment, if you will—of the entire history of the settlement of the American West. Indian Territory became home to dozens of Tribal nations who were forcibly removed from their ancestral homelands as a result of the passage of the U.S. Indian Removal Act of 1830, with the treaty-bound promise that this new home would never become a state. The "free land" for which white settlers raced came at great cost to Tribal nations for whom the Land Run represents broken treaties, land loss, settler colonial erasure, and the diminished exercise of tribal sovereignty. Today, Native communities are contesting the cultural erasure memorialized by the Centennial Land Run Monument through the planning and development of a counter-memorial.

Amanda Cobb-Greetham, Ph.D. (Chickasaw) is a Professor of Native American Studies at the University of Oklahoma. She served as NAS chair and founded the OU Native Nations Center. She received a Harvard Radcliffe Fellowship (2021) for Bright, Golden Haze: Oklahoma/Indian Identity in Myth and Memory, co-edited The National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations with Amy Lonetree (2008), and received the American Book Award for Listening to Our Grandmothers Stories (2002), and edited American Indian Quarterly for nine years. She led the Chickasaw Nation's efforts to launch the Chickasaw Cultural Center (2007-2012) and the Chickasaw Press (2007). She serves on the Board for the Harvard Honoring Nations project and served as a Trustee of the Smithsonian NMAI. She received the Chickasaw Nation's Dynamic Woman Award (2018).

Sascha Scott, Associate Professor of Art History, Syracuse University

A Conspiracy of Silences: Unsettling Histories of U.S. Modernism

Focusing on the U.S. modernist Georgia O'Keeffe, this paper engages with the growing interest in agnotology, or the study of the production of ignorance. Agnotology, as conceived by Robert N. Proctor and Londa Schiebinger, examines forms of knowledge that have "'not come to be,' or disappeared, or have been delayed or long neglected." These ignorances are not simply omissions or gaps in knowledge, but rather often actively constructed, deliberately engineered, and vigorously maintained by those in power, including settler states and their institutions. In settler states, such ignorances have been fueled by capitalism and have justified Indigenous dispossession, land theft, and forms of genocide. Focusing on O'Keeffe's work in New Mexico, New York, and Hawai'i, this paper illuminates how modernists participated in the erasure of Native peoples; interrogates how and why scholarship on U.S. modernism has both perpetuated and actively fueled this conspiracy of silences; and addresses what these silences reveal about the presumed audiences of histories and exhibitions of U.S. modernism. The paper will end by addressing current interventions that have disrupted this conspiracy of silences and how this critical scholarship has been received by institutions in the United States and Europe.

Sascha Scott is an associate professor of art history at Syracuse University, where she is also faculty in the Native American and Indigenous Studies Program. As a scholar of both Indigenous art and U.S. modernism, her critical practice is rooted in Native American and Indigenous Studies. Scott has published a book and numerous articles about representations of Indigenous peoples by both Native and non-Native artists, including in *Art Bulletin, American Art,* and *Arts.* She is currently working on two book projects. One critically resituates the work of Georgia O'Keeffe within contexts of colonialism, ecological imperialism, and wartime technological disruptions. The other is about modern Pueblo painting, colonialism, aesthetic agency, and Indigenous visual sovereignty.

Session 4: Ethical Stewardship and Practices in Museum & Archives

Amy Lonetree (Ho Chunk), Professor of History, University of California, Santa Cruz

Indigenous Storywork and the Visual Archive: Centering Narratives of Ho-Chunk Survivance, 1879-1960

This paper considers the process of writing a visual history of my own Indigenous community, the Ho-Chunk Nation, that draws upon Indigenous storywork methodology. My book project explores family history, tourism, settler colonialism, and Ho-Chunk survivance through an examination of two exceptional collections of studio portraits and tourist images of Ho-Chunk people taken between 1879-1960. What I have witnessed in practice while working on the book is the "storywork of historical photography" and the ways these photographs are working to help us understand connection to community, history, Ho-Chunk knowledge and culture, kinship, and our responsibilities to one another. Jo-Ann Archibald (Stó:lō) and her collaborators in their scholarship on storywork as methodology argue that, "Indigenous storywork is action, it is process, it is the seeking of meaning in community… [it] traverses new theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical realms where Indigenous stories, experiences, and understandings are the core of the meaning-making process."[1] As we engage with the photographs and the stories that they inspire, we are reminded of the central importance of storytelling as method and how these images are mobilized in the present to "re-right and rewrite" history and reclaim connection to family, place, and tribal nation. My paper will explore the significance of Indigenous storywork methodology as it relates to broader theoretical and methodological questions in the field of Native American art history, and the powerful stories photographs elicit.

Amy Lonetree is an enrolled citizen of the Ho-Chunk Nation and a Professor of History at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She received her Ph.D. in Ethnic Studies from the University of California, Berkeley, and her scholarly research focuses on Indigenous history, public history, and museum studies. Her publications include *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (2012); a co-edited book with Amanda J. Cobb, *The National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations* (2008)*;* and a co-authored volume, *People of the Big Voice: Photographs of Ho-Chunk Families by Charles Van Schaick, 1879-1942* (2011)*.*

[1]Jo-Ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, and Jason De Santolo, "Introduction: Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology," in ***Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology***, ed. Jo-Ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, and Jason De Santolo, with a forward by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (London: ZED Books Ltd, 2019), 11.

Kendra Greendeer (Ho Chunk), Ph.D. Candidate in Art History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Paul Mellon Guest Predoctoral Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art

Rematriation as Aesthetic Praxis

To reclaim Native lands and assert Indigenous femininity, contemporary Indigenous women artists are invoking Rematriation. This woman-led movement of restoring pre-settler-colonial land ethics foregrounds the significance of the feminine within a process of return that allows for every aspect of Indigenous culture to be restored to pre-settler colonial practices. In our current post-NAGPRA period, the artwork of Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (a member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes) has marked Indigenous femininity within the museum for decades and continually recentered Indigenous presence on Turtle Island (or more specifically referred to as the United States). This talk explores her work of Rematriation alongside other contemporary Native women artists whose art enacts Indigenous placemaking in ways that restructure settler-colonial spaces.

Kendra Greendeer, a member of the Ho-Chunk Nation and descendant of the Red Cliff and Fond du Lac Bands of Lake Superior Ojibwe, is a Ph.D. Candidate in Art History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Paul Mellon Guest Predoctoral Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art. Greendeer received her BFA in Museum Studies from the Institute of American Indian Arts and MA in Art and Museum Studies from Georgetown University. Greendeer will join Oklahoma State University as an Assistant Professor in Art History in the fall of 2023.

Heather Igloliorte (Inuk-Newfoundlander (Nunatsiavut)), Associate Professor of Art History and Co-Director, Indigenous Futures Research Centre, Concordia University

Care and Intervention: Curatorial and Artistic Engagements in the Stewardship of Collections

In this paper I explore the diverse practices of Indigenous curators, academics, and artists who engage with collections through such Indigenous methodologies as visiting, intervening, reclaiming, rematriatiating and other strategies in order to safeguard, respect, engage with, and work towards the return of our ancestral collections. How are Indigenous artists and curators challenging colonial collecting, keeping, and displaying paradigms? What daring strategies are currently being deployed by and with Indigenous peoples within institutions, either in collaboration, intervention, or protest? Drawing on case studies from throughout North America and internationally including from my own work as an independent curator, this presentation examines the best practices, creative strategies, and curatorial activism leading new conversations on the ethical stewardship of Indigenous collections in museums across Turtle Island and beyond.

Dr. Heather Igloliorte, and Inuk-Newfoundlander, is the University Research Chair in Circumpolar Indigenous Arts at Concordia University in Montreal, where she is an associate professor in the Department of Art History, directs the Inuit Futures in Arts Leadership Project, and Co-Directs the Indigenous Futures Research Centre. Igloliorte has been a curator since 2005 and has worked on more than thirty curatorial projects including nationally and internationally touring exhibitions, permanent collection exhibits, festivals, and public art installations. In addition to her curatorial practice, Igloliorte teaches curatorial studies, critical museology, and global Indigenous art history. She has devoted much of her scholarly and curatorial career to fostering and amplifying the voices of Inuit and other Indigenous artists, writers, curators, and cultural workers.