2020

Beyond Interventions: A Case Study of the Denver Art Museum's Native Arts Artist-in-Residency Program

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Abstract

The Denver Art Museum's Native Arts Artist-in-Residency Program is an inter-departmental project dedicated to the collaboration between the museum, artists, and visitors. The residency and the physical studio were established to formalize artist involvement in the museum. There is no written mission statement for the program, but visitor engagement is central to the organization of the program and experience of the artist. This thesis explores the question: What can the experiences of the artists and museum professionals involved in the Native Arts Artist-in-Residency program tell about the residency's contribution to critical museology and decolonization? Through exploring the definitions of critical museology and decolonizing practices, examining the history of artist interventions, and identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program, this thesis provides a discussion of the role a Native artist residency program plays in expanding democratization in museum spaces through self-representation and social practice art. This research found that the Indigenous perspective does not have to replace the curatorial view, but it can augment the contexts and themes that can make the art more relatable and alive for audiences. Both artists and curators are making compromises in practice. This type of program does not have the ability to influence the atmosphere of Indigenous inclusivity significantly outside the residency.

Document Type

Thesis

Degree Name

M.A.

Department

Anthropology

First Advisor

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Keywords

American Indian art, Artist residency, Critical museology, Decolonization, Fine arts museum, Self-representation

Subject Categories

Anthropology | Art and Design | Indigenous Studies | Museum Studies | Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies | Social and Cultural Anthropology

Beyond Interventions: A Case Study of the Denver Art Museum's Native Arts Artist-in-Residency Program

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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by

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June 2020

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Title: Beyond Interventions: A Case Study of the Denver Art Museum's Native Arts Artist-in-Residency Program
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Degree Date: June 2020

ABSTRACT

The Denver Art Museum's Native Arts Artist-in-Residency Program is an inter-departmental project dedicated to the collaboration between the museum, artists, and visitors. The residency and the physical studio were established to formalize artist involvement in the museum. There is no written mission statement for the program, but visitor engagement is central to the organization of the program and experience of the artist. This thesis explores the question: What can the experiences of the artists and museum professionals involved in the Native Arts Artist-in-Residency program tell about the residency's contribution to critical museology and decolonization? Through exploring the definitions of critical museology and decolonizing practices, examining the history of artist interventions, and identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program, this thesis provides a discussion of the role a Native artist residency program plays in expanding democratization in museum spaces through self-representation and social practice art. This research found that the Indigenous perspective does not have to replace the curatorial view, but it can augment the contexts and themes that can make the art more relatable and alive for audiences. Both artists and curators are making compromises in practice. This type of program does not have the ability to influence the atmosphere of Indigenous inclusivity significantly outside the residency.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals deserve thanks for providing me with both encouragement and intellectual support during the research and writing of my thesis. First, I would like to thank the University of Denver Department of Anthropology for the opportunity to conduct research and further my education. Second, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Christina Kreps, for her guidance through each stage of the process. I want to thank my thesis defense committee members: Dr. Esteban Gómez and Dr. Frédérique Chevillot.

I am grateful to all of those I had the pleasure to work with during this thesis project. I would like to thank the Denver Art Museum faculty and staff members for being open and willing to work with me and contribute to my research. I would like to extend special thanks to each individual that participated in my research. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me and share your insights.

I would like to extend a special thank you to Dr. heather ahtone for inspiring me at the beginning of my academic career. Thank you for taking a chance on me an choosing me as an intern in 2011. Working with you was one of my most rewarding experiences, and you helped to set the course for the rest of my education.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family and husband, Matthew, for being a constant source of support and love. Without the generosity and patience of each person involved in my research and personal life, this thesis would not have been possible.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Denver Art Museum's Native Arts Artist-in-Residency Program is an inter-departmental project dedicated to the collaboration between the museum, artists, and visitors. The residency and the physical studio were established to formalize artist involvement in the museum. Since the first residency in 2012, there have been thirteen individual residents, and one collaborative residency of three past residents. It is not necessarily designed to resemble a retreat or a quiet space to work like other artist residencies in the United States. The museum does allow time for the artist to seclude him/herself in order to push their practice, complete a project, or research in the collections, but, ultimately, the mission is visitor engagement. There is no written mission statement for the residency program, but visitor engagement is continuously central in the descriptions of the program by the museum professionals and artists involved.

I became interested in the topic of American Indian art in fine art museums during my undergraduate education at the University of Oklahoma. I interned for the former Assistant Curator of Native American and Non-Western Art, Dr. heather ahtone, at the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art. She introduced me to the museum profession, and she taught me about collections and curation. She was an inspiring mentor for me at an influential time in my academic life. I believe that she helped to set the course of my future education and influenced my decision to choose the Native Arts Artist-in-

Residence as the topic of study for my master's thesis research. Dr. ahtone is a proud citizen of the Chickasaw Nation and is of both Chickasaw and Choctaw descent. Working for a curator of American Indian art who is a Native person herself was rewarding and enlightening. She showed me a way of curating that I have not encountered since.

I would like to acknowledge the ways in which my own experiences and positionalities influenced this research. I approached this inquiry into American Indian art and artists as a non-Native person who identifies as a white woman. I recognize the complex history of the anthropological study of Indigenous peoples, the unequal power dynamics between non-Native researchers and Indigenous communities, and the exploitation of Indigenous peoples and their belongings. I also acknowledge that I am the main beneficiary of this research, because this thesis fills a partial requirement for a master's degree.

I am also approaching this research from inside the museum field. My academic education has focused on Museum Studies, and through the years, I have worked at a number of museums and other cultural institutions. I am not affiliated with the Denver Art Museum; however, I am still on the inside of the museum profession examining a program that was created by and is managed by museum professionals. This makes Laura Nader's theory of "studying up" important to the research design and analysis of this research. "Studying up" as a research method "attempts to get behind the facelessness of a bureaucratic society, to get at the mechanisms whereby far away corporations and large-scale industries are directing the everyday spaces of our lives" (Nader 1969, 228). She encourages anthropologists to research their own institutions to see the connections

between groups and individuals in relation to the greater process of social change (Nader 1969, 228). During my research, I interviewed the museum professionals involved in the program and researched the history of the institution as a way to illuminate the structure upon which the residency program is built. For example, when I first saw the program, I thought it might be an example of self-representation in museum galleries promoting multivocality, and through my research, I learned that the structures of resident selection and the focus on visitor engagement meant that the program which promotes transparency still consists of invisible elements that hinder the democratization of the American Indian art gallery and studio space.

When I began my research in 2018, information specifically about the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program – such as the history of its creation – was not readily available through the museum's website or publications. There are promotional materials and interviews with artists and curators about their projects and goals available on the museum's blog, and on the "News and Stories" tab of American Indian art collection's webpage, but an in-depth, interpretive analysis of the workings and outcomes of the program itself were not available. This research sought to examine the Native Arts Artist-in-Residency program as it relates to critical museology and decolonizing practices to expand the anthropological conversations of contemporary museum practices, specifically regarding how artists engage in self-representation and institutional critique. I approached the research with a broad research question: What can the experiences of the artists and museum professionals involved in the Native Arts Artist-in-Residency program tell about the residency's contribution to critical museology and decolonization?

Through interviews, archival research, and a critical analysis of theory and practice, I found that when paired with other decolonizing practices, the Native Arts Artist-in-Residency program contributes to a larger objective of shared authority in representation. It cannot stand on its own as a decolonizing practice, but when it works in combination with other practices, such as indigenization of collections, co-curation of exhibitions, and the hiring of Indigenous scholars as museum professionals, it can further the conversations of visibility and representation is important; however, to note that representation is just one part of the larger movement toward decolonization in museums.

One of the most notable benefits of the Denver Art Museum's Native Arts Artist-in-Residency program is that it offers artists a space for self-representation through art in combination with face-to-face conversations with the public. As I learned from some of the artists during my research, one of the obstacles for Indigenous artists to overcome is the issue of invisibility. Contemporary Indigenous art is a visual statement that undeniably reminds the American people that American Indian communities are still here and thriving today. By bringing socially involved artists into the galleries, the American Indian art gallery becomes a place of negotiation and self-representation. The artistic process is one of active creation and inspiration. By having the opportunity to witness the creative process of American Indian artists, viewers can connect with the people and ideas behind the art. This makes for more meaningful interaction with the art and a broader understanding of the people who make such art.

The Indigenous perspective does not have to replace the curatorial view, but it can augment the contexts and themes that make the art more relatable and alive for audiences

(Hill 2000, 67). Due to their dedication to both visitor engagement and Indigenous self-representation, I found that both artists and curators are making compromises in practice. The residency program is composed of elements that can lead to meaningful change, but the location of the studio in 2018 and the prioritization of visitor gain, the program, so far, has not provided a balancing of authority or access. It does not appear that the program has significantly influenced the atmosphere of Indigenous inclusivity outside of social practice artists. However, there are many benefits to the program. For example, the work being done by the artists and staff members places the individual artists and their stories at the center of their artwork.

This research had two primary limitations: the closure of the North building and limited interaction with previous residents. Due to the closure of the North building in 2018 for renovation, where the artist studio and Native Arts residency takes place, I was unable to complete all aspects of my proposed research. This limitation will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter Two provides a background for my research. It explores the history of the Denver Art Museum (DAM), the Native Arts Department, and the Native Arts Native Artist-in-Residence Program, as well as a brief history of American artist residency programs. There is a general overview of the founding of the museum and milestone decisions made in the early years of the institution that still influence decision-making within the museum today. After introducing the DAM, I discuss the development of the Native Arts Department and the role of key members and donors. Next, I discuss the

formation and early days of the Native Artist-in-Residence program followed by a short explanation of residency programs in the United States, their history, and role in promoting the creative process.

Chapter Three offers a review of the literature that informed this research. I explore the literature on museum exhibitions and artist performances to better understand the impact of display and representation. The Native Arts Artist-in-Residency Program is a visitor engagement program operated by museum staff within museum walls, but it speaks to the larger concepts, such as the politics of display, artist interventions, social practice art, and decolonizing practices. This chapter examines these four themes and methods as they relate to the work of museums as sites of representation and the artwork as sites of social discourse.

To better understand the residency program in a larger context of critical museum practice, in Chapter Four I provide the theoretical framework that guided my research and analysis. I discuss the theories of critical museology and the methods of "studying up," museum ethnography, and institutional critique. Then, I continue a discussion of decolonizing practices while examining the concepts of self-representation and Native voice as they pertain to Indigenous artists working and representing themselves in the DAM's American Indian art gallery.

Chapter Five presents the research design, and Chapter Six discusses the findings and results. I state my research goals and objectives for this thesis and explore the results of my research. I present the results of my interviews, secondary analysis, and archival research, first by the institution and then by the experiences of the artists. This is

followed by an examination of how the artists and museum professionals discuss the program and how each reflects on the past and future of the program. These topics lead to the next chapter that will further explore the larger themes and findings revealed from the interviews.

Chapter Seven is the conclusion of the research, and it offers the reflections of the participants as well as my conclusion of the research. I readdress the discussions of critical museology and decolonizing practices as they relate to the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program. I then address the limitations of my research and a discussion of how the research can be expanded. There are avenues for further research in the Denver Art Museum pertaining to their unwritten mission of making art more personal and alive.

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND

The History of the Denver Art Museum

The Denver Art Museum (DAM), founded in 1893, currently claims to have one of the largest collections of art between Chicago and the West Coast (Denver Art Museum 2019b). The museum also expresses an interest in bringing living artists into museum spaces to enhance museum experiences (Denver Art Museum 2017). In "Down the Rabbit Hole: Adventures in Creativity and Collaboration," a report on the current state of creativity in the museum in 2017, it is stated that:

> Over the years, our programming has grown to include working with artists and creatives who we believe play a critical role in re-imagining the museum environment and thereby enhancing the individual and collective experiences of all stakeholders: visitors, DAM staff, and the artists and creatives themselves. (Denver Art Museum 2017)

In addition to two types of artist residency programs at the museum, Native Arts Artist-in-Residence and Creative-in-Residence, the DAM hosts an educational artist studio and a monthly event curated by local artists called *Untitled: Final Friday*. In a way, this focus on the artist is a return of the museum's roots, because it was founded by the Artists' Club of Denver.

On December 4, 1893, the Artists' Club of Denver was formed with the mission to increase exhibiting opportunities for the artists of Denver (Harris 1996, 56). The club would later become the Denver Art Museum, and it was founded in the studio of local

Denver artist Emma Richardson Cherry (Harris 1996, 156). There, in the studio, the members drew up a constitution that defined the mission of the club as an "advancement of the art interests of Denver" (Constitution of the Artists' Club, Article 1, 1893). This broad statement would lead to almost eighty years of annual shows scattered through the city, agreements and negotiations with other Denver institutions, a handful of long term, but temporary homes, a budding collection, and finally a permanent home in 1973 next to Civic Center Park across from the Colorado Capitol Building (see Figure 1) (Harris 1996).

Figure 2.1: Civic Center Park (foreground), Denver Public Library (left), Denver Art Museum, South Building (middle), and Denver Art Museum, North Building, built in 1973 (right). (Photo by Callaghan O'Hare/The Denver Post 2015).

During the first years of the club, the focus was on hosting an annual, juried show open to all Denver artists (Harris 1996, 58). The inaugural exhibit took place in the Fine Arts Building of the University of Denver. This space was secured by Margaret Evans, President of the University of Denver's Art Department's Board of Control and the wife

of former Colorado governor, John Evans (Harris 1996, 61). For the first few years, the instability of installing temporary exhibits in any available space was enough to accommodate the current club mission, but in 1896, the constitution was amended, and there became a new focus on building a permanent collection (Harris 1996). For the next five years, the club was able to secure exhibit spaces that would allow for year-round display, and just after the turn of the century, the club began negotiations with the Colorado Museum of Natural History (Harris 1996). At the time, the natural history museum was planning to build a permanent structure. The Denver Artists' Club wanted to secure a space in the proposed building, but after years of discussion, the club was unable to earn a permanent exhibition space at the new museum. Finally, in 1925, the Denver Artists' Club and Denver Allied Arts acquired the Chappell House in a Denver City initiative to promote and support the arts (see Figure 2) (Harris 1996). The downstairs housed the clubs' headquarters, and the second floor was dedicated to exhibitions (see Figure 3). While operating out of the Chappell House an artists' club changed into an art museum.

Figure 2.2: Woman standing outside the Chappell House. (Photo by Harry Mellon Rhoads/Denver Public Library Western History Collection c. 1920-1930).

Figure 2.3: Second floor exhibition space in the Chappell House. (Photo by Harry Mellon Rhoads/Denver Public Library Western History Collection c. 1922-1930).

Originating from an artists' coalition was not unique to the Denver Art Museum. In 1866, a group of Chicago artists met to discuss the foundation of an art institute called the Chicago Academy of Design (Volberg 1992). By 1869 the Academy was granted a

charter, and by 1870 they opened a new building to hold classes and exhibitions (Volberg 1992). The Academy was renamed the Art Institute of Chicago in 1882.

In addition to their origins, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Denver Art Museum share a similarity in leadership. In 1921, the Denver Artists' Club, then known as the Denver Art Association, was in search of permanent exhibit accommodation. The previous director of the Art Institute of Chicago, George Eggers, assumed leadership, and it was under his guidance that the Association acquired their first real property in 1922, the Chappell House (Harris 1996, 63). In 1923, the name was changed to the Denver Art Museum (Harris 1996).

In a catalogue dedicated to celebrating the centennial anniversary of the Denver Art Museum published in 1996. there are chapters dedicated to the Artists' Guild of Denver and their role in founding the museum; however, through time, the DAM drifted away from the local artist. In 1930, Cyril Kay-Scott became the Director of the DAM (Harris 1996, 86). At an executive committee meeting in 1933, he issued a new standard for collecting that tightened the criteria for what should be collected and accepted from donors (Harris 1996, 89). In 1935, ten paintings were accepted as a donation by Horace Havemeyer (Harris 1996, 91). Among them were a Corot figure study, Courbet landscapes, and other works by European masters (Harris 1996, 91). The museum had been collecting works by European artists as early as 1917, but in the 1930s and 1940s there was a rise in this type of collecting.

As of 2018 when the gallery spaces in the North Building closed, local work was no longer what was primarily on display, but over the last few decades, this distance

between artist and museum professionals has begun to close. Starting in smaller museums, and spreading to larger institutions, innovative programs have been developed to bring the artistic process back into the museum and available for visitors to experience (Volberg 1992, 128-29). Museums, once again, are dealing directly with artists and not just their finished products. This return to the artist can be seen in two ways at the Denver Art Museum. Their artist-in-residency programs are bringing living local, regional, and national artists into the museum galleries, and there has been a major effort to collect contemporary, locally relevant work.

The Native Arts Collection and Department

By 2011, with the reinstallation of the American Indian art gallery, the Denver Art Museum had nearly 20,000 works of art in their American Indian art collection (Dobrzynski 2011). According to Dobrzynski, the DAM devotes more space to American Indian art than many other American art museums (Dobrzynski 2015). It is also set apart by its long history of collecting American Indian art based on aesthetics, rather than ethnographic value (Harris 1996, 82-83). The DAM's American Indian Art Collection recognizes the contribution of American Indian art to a larger American art history (Chayka 2011). Factors, such as the location of Denver, the collecting interests of its donors, and the affinities of curators, past and present, have contributed to the types of work collected and helped to shape the collecting policies of 2020.

In 1999, James Brooke, a correspondent for the New York Times, published an article titled "Indian Country Finds a Capital in Denver." In the article he cites the numerous American Indian gatherings that take place during the year, such as the Denver

March Powwow. Brooke also references the fifteen national Indian groups located in Denver as indication of how Denver has long been a crossroads for American Indian people to meet and exchange goods and ideas (Brooke 1999). The land where Denver now sits is the unceded territories of the Cheyenne and Arapaho people and ancestral homelands of the Ute and many other tribes (Nelson et al. 2008). The location near the foothills of the Rocky Mountains and on the confluence of the Platte River and Cherry Creek allowed for economic and cultural interaction with a wide network of surrounding areas (Nelson et al. 2008, 1). These interactions helped Denver develop into a "hub" of the West. However, this is not to say that the city developed without conflict. As European settlers moved into the lands already occupied by American Indian communities, the city flourished at the cost of the local tribes (Nelson et al. 2008, 3).

In the 1950s, American Indian people were encouraged to leave their reservations and find work in cities (Smith 2014). Denver was an attractive destination, particularly for the Navajo of the Southwest and the Lakota of South Dakota (Smith 2014). According to the 2010 census, over 107,000 American Indians live in Colorado with eighty percent living in the Denver-metro area (Smith 2014). It is this number and the representation of almost 100 tribes in Denver that led Walter Pourier, Executive Director of the Stronghold society, and previous Denver Art Museum Native Arts Artist-in-Residence, and Darius Lee Smith, Director of the Denver Anti-Discrimination Office, to agree with the 1999 *New York Times* article that Denver serves, to a degree, as a capital of Indian Country (Smith 2014).

The Denver Art Museum, like the city of Denver, has been influenced by the American Indian communities living in and around the city. When the DAM first started building its permanent collection, the early acquisitions were largely made up of American Indian works of art (Harris 1996). For example, the first major collection to be purchased with museum funds consisted of forty-six Navajo textiles in 1925 (Harris 1996, 81). This focus on American Indian art continued through the years and remained strong since there was a series of donors and curators who were devoted to building a world class collection of American Indian art.

In 1926, Anne Evans, then a trustee and artist herself, was made the head of a committee with the specific mission of building an Indian Art Collection (Harris 1996, 81). Daughter of Governor John Evans and First Lady Margaret Evans of Colorado, Anne Evans, had a personal interest in American Indian art. In the 1920s, she traveled to Hopi Land to conduct research for her article, "The Art Impulse of the Hopi Indians" (Sternberg 2011, 302). Similar to other research regarding American Indian communities at the time, Evans' writings about the Hopi people can now be viewed as problematic. Most of her work is overly generalized and offers a discussion of the intriguing "other" (Sternberg 2011, 302-303). Anne Evans' work is further scrutinized, and somewhat ironic, due to her father's involvement in the Sand Creek Massacre. At the time of the massacre, Governor Evans was in Washington petitioning for statehood (Sternberg 2011). His desire for statehood motivated his actions to rid the Colorado Territory of its American Indian populations (Sternberg 2011, 69). This, among other factors of the time, helped to lay the foundation for the Sand Creek Massacre (Sternberg 2011, 69).

As governor, Evans inherited the Fort Wise Treaty that was signed a year before he took office (Sternberg 2011). The Fort Wise Treaty violated the Fort Laramie Treaty in that it reduced the size of the land that was previously granted to the Cheyenne and Arapaho. The Fort Wise Treaty was created in response to the rising tensions between the American Indian nations and the Colorado settlers, but instead of easing the pressure, the new treaty only added to the tensions (Sternberg 2011). Just prior to the Sand Creek Massacre, Governor Evans called a military regiment to fight the supposed American Indian threat (Sternberg 2011, 70). Although Anne Evans was not responsible for the tragedy, it is worth mentioning her affiliation with Governor Evans and the Sand Creek Massacre when considering her personal passions in American Indian Art and contributions to the Denver Art Museum. It gives context to the donation that considers Anne Evans' privilege as a governor's daughter and proximity to the tragedy of the Sand Creek Massacre.

As previously addressed, although Anne Evans' approach to American Indian art may appear problematic today, she can still be seen as a key figure in establishing the Native Arts Collection at the Denver Art Museum. In her article, "The Art Impulse of the Hopi Indians," Evans unpacks the concept of "art for art's sake" and its relation to the Hopi artists (Sternberg 2011, 307). To Evans, the creative process she observed while visiting Hopi lands was similar to that of the artists producing "fine art" (Sternberg 2011, 307). It was ultimately Evans' donation of her personal collection to the Denver Art Museum that launched the Native Arts Collection into the academic and public eye (Sternberg 2011).

Figure 2.4: Photos of the members of the Artists' Club of Denver from an unspecified year will Anne Evans pictured on the left. (Photo by Rose & Hopkins/Denver Public Library Western History Collection c. 1900).

The large donation of Anne Evans' personal collection to the Denver Art Museum required the creation of a Curator of Indian Arts position. Frederic H. Douglas was hired in 1929 (Kent 1958; Denver Art Museum 2019a). Through the 1930s, the museum regularly exhibited American Indian art, and Douglas worked to acquire new works. Douglas' passion for art originated in his childhood spent in the West and Southwest, and it was supported by the access he had to American Indian artists in the Denver area (Kent 1958). During his life, Douglas built a personal collection of thousands of works of art, and he maintained relationships with the collectors, dealers, and artists (Harris 1996, 83). Through the professional connections made during these shows, the DAM acquired more than 250 works of art (Harris 1996, 82). In 1951, the museum began to annually exhibit works made by living American Indian artists (Harris 1996). He focused on the aesthetics of the objects more than their ethnographic or cultural significance. Based on the foundation laid by Douglas, Evans, and the other trustees of the 1920s and 30s, the

Denver Art Museum, maintains its interest in promoting historic and contemporary American Indian art and artists.

In 1968, another Denver Museum, the Denver Museum of Natural History (later the Denver Museum of Nature and Science or DMNS) received a large donation of American Indian objects (Colwell-Chanthaphonh, Nash, and Levine 2013, 307). Between 1971 and 1974, the Department of American Ethnology (later the Department of Anthropology) developed a permanent exhibition for the Crane Collection of North American Indians (Colwell-Chanthaphonh, Nash, and Levine 2013, 307). The exhibit was designed to "emphasize the relationship between culture and environment […] so that the visitor would tour the cultures of North America, visiting different geographic areas and learning how Native Americans had adapted to different ecosystems" (Colwell-Chanthaphonh, Nash, and Levine 2013, 308). Patty Harjo (Seneca and Seminole), a conservator and liaison to the Native American Advisory Council established in 1973 was an advisor on the development of the exhibition (Colwell-Chanthaphonh, Nash, and Levine 2013, 309). The museum's Native American Advisory Council (later the Native American Resource Group) was formed to provide a formal panel of Indigenous community representatives to advise on collections care and exhibit design (Colwell-Chanthaphonh, Nash, and Levine 2013, 312-13). Compared to other museums at the time, this council was unique because it formalized the relationship and the role Indigenous collaborators played in museum practice (Colwell-Chanthaphonh, Nash, and Levine 2013, 313).

One of the highlights of the new *North American Indian Cultures* exhibit at the DMNS was the Cheyenne camp diorama set in the 1860s along Sand Creek (Colwell-Chanthaphonh, Nash, and Levine 2013, 309). The diorama featured an extended family using period specific objects. The mannequins were sculpted by Susan Raymond, and they were modeled after local Cheyenne people (Colwell-Chanthaphonh, Nash, and Levine 2013, 310). The creation of this diorama was unconventional for the time, because it featured the faces of living Cheyenne people.

In 1995 Richard Hill (Tuscarora) observed the American Indian galleries at the DMNS and the DAM (2000). Hill is a scholar, artist, museum professional and photographer that specializes in analyzing and critiquing American Indian depictions in museums and multi-media. His comparative, critical analysis of the exhibition approaches at the two institutions was published in 2000 with the title "The Museum Indian Still Frozen in Time." The essay highlighted the different ways American Indian peoples are represented in art and ethnographic exhibitions respectively, and how both end up portraying their cultures as timeless and static (Hill 2000). In the critique, he addressed the dioramas at the DMNS and the arrangement of newer and older works together at the DAM. In the 1970s, dioramas were popular education tools in natural history museums (Hill 2000). They were designed to display objects in context with each other and with the users/makers. At the time, this was a technique used to tell a more holistic story of an object; however, through time, dioramas have lost much of their appeal, especially to Native Americans who have been featured in them proved to be problematic (Hill 2000).

Based on his observation in 1995, Hill wrote that "The diorama is alive and well at the DMNH" (2000, 44). He recognized the strengths of the DMNS diorama for its use of real faces and presentation of the male figure without any of the "noble chief" of "warrior preparing for battle" tropes (Hill 2000, 44). Diorama were innovative for 1974, he notes, and they work to provide context for the objects, but along with many other scholars, Native and non-Native, he points out how the placement of Indigenous people with flora, fauna, and other environmental elements contributes to the idea that these people are part of the natural world (Hill 2000). Hill addresses the role dioramas play in museums:

> On one hand, dioramas can provide important context for learning how art functions within societies, even, in fact, the society of the diorama makers. On the other hand, dioramas tend to keep Indians in the natural history arena, next to the stuffed animals and frozen specimens. (2000, 40)

By showing cultures as static and in the past, these representations give the impression that their lifestyles have remained unchanged for centuries (Simpson 1996, 35). This can create an unwelcoming space for American Indian people and a barrier between museum and community.

Also, in 1995, Hill participated in planning sessions at the DAM that gave a group of American Indian community representatives free reign to re-envision the American Indian art gallery. Out of their brainstorming four themes emerged: the creative process, Native views of arts, history of Indian art, and the impact of Indian art on the American Art Movement (Hill 2000, 61). It was important to the members of the roundtable discussion that the exhibit should connect the visitors to the experiences that led to the

creation of the art and the history that informs contemporary experiences. Hill describes the ideas for the renovation:

> The exhibit needed to 'flow' through the space like a river. As the art moves through time, it borrows from the environment and creates a flowing movement through the gallery. In this way, the historic objects are seen as 'islands' along the way and the 'shoreline' represents the next adventure in the art of living. (Hill 2000, 63)

While not common in art museums, the panel agreed that contextual labels were necessary for the American Indian art gallery because it is important to know the history and context of both contemporary and historical American Indian art pieces. Hill recognized that there was no single formula for successfully exhibiting American Indian life and work, but he suggested that the future of museum development lay in creating spaces for American Indian communities to present their own views of themselves (2000, 67). The Indigenous perspective does not have to replace the curatorial view, but it can augment the contexts and themes that can make the art more relatable and alive for audiences (Hill 2000, 67). Hill's assessment of the 1995 American Indian art gallery made an impact on the future renovations of the exhibit area.

The combination of the new and the old was present in 2018 Indian art gallery when I conducted my research. The addition of the residency program added to efforts to remove stereotypes of American Indian artists being people of the past. However, the work of American Indian artists is still mostly confined within the American Indian art gallery. This thesis focuses on the role the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program contributes to self-representation of Indigenous artists in museum spaces, but the Denver Art Museum hosts other events that support Native voice within the museum, such as

events, lectures, symposiums, and the Annual Friendship Powwow. The Friendship Powwow is one of the longest running events, and in 2019 the 30th powwow was held to celebrate American Indian cultures (Scott 2019).

The Denver Art Museum and Native Arts Department have long offered a range of programming to serve as a platform for celebrating and supporting American Indian artists. For example, the Friends of Native Arts: Douglas Society is a membership support group of the DAM that was established to honor the work of curator Frederic H. Douglas and to ensure that recognition of the artistic achievements of American Indian artists endures (Denver Art Museum 2020a). The Douglas Society sponsors events that take place at the DAM each year, such as lecture series, exhibit and collection tours, artist demonstrations, and an annual dinner (Denver Art Museum 2018). In 2012, the year of the first Native Arts residency, the group hosted a lecture on the history of American Indian art at auction, a talk by Will R. Wilson on his work (Denver Art Museum 2013).

The museum also organizes symposiums and publishes edited volumes to advance scholarly dialogue on American Indian Art (Denver Art Museum 2020b). In 1990, Nancy Blomberg was hired as associate curator of Native Arts, the department dedicated to the work of American Indian, African, and Oceanic artists, and she made it a priority to work closely with members of American Indian communities (Heinrich 2018). Her work contributed to the DAM's success in building a leading American Indian art collection and emphasized the importance of collaborative production (Denver Art Museum 2018).

One of her achievements was the reinstallation of the American Indian art gallery in 2011 that focused attention on American Indian works as aesthetic creations rather

than anthropological artifacts (Denver Art Museum 2018). This artist-centered exhibition received the Outstanding Permanent Collection New Installation Award from the American Association of Curators (AAMC) (Denver Art Museum 2018). She also edited three Denver Art Museum publications based on symposia held at the DAM and that focused on advancing the conversations of contemporary American Indian art and artist agency; *[Re]inventing the Wheel: Advancing the dialogue on Contemporary American Indian Art* (Denver Art Museum 2016), *Action and Agency: Advancing the Dialogue on Native Performance Art* (Denver Art Museum 2010), and *Breaking the Mold: The Virginia Vogal Mattern Collection of Contemporary Native American Art* (Denver Art Museum 1992). Dr. Polly Nordstrand (Hopi), Curator of Southwest Art at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center at Colorado College, was an Associate Curator of Native Arts from 2004 to 2009. In 2009, she co-authored an article with Nancy Blomberg, Jessica Fletcher, and Carl Paterson, "The Role of Context in the Conservation of Contemporary American Indian Ceramics." She also contributed chapters to *[Re]inventing the Wheel: Advancing the dialogue on Contemporary American Indian Art* (Denver Art Museum 2006) and *Action and Agency: Advancing the Dialogue on Native Performance Art* (Denver Art Museum 2010), she produced the video "Inciting Memory: The Creative Process of HOCHI EYE VI Edgar Heap of Birds" (Denver Art Museum 2006).

When Blomberg suddenly passed in 2018, John Lukavic, then the Associate Curator of Native Arts, assumed the role as Curator of Native Arts, and Dakota Hoska (Oglála Lakȟóta) was hired in 2019 as the new Assistant Curator of Native Arts. Before coming to Denver, she was the curatorial assistant for the *Hearts of Our People: Native*

Women Artists exhibit at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, and she wrote five essays for the exhibition catalogue.

The Native Arts Artist-in-Residency Program

In the years leading up to the 2011 American Indian art gallery renovation, there were a handful of artists who worked in the gallery space to showcase their creative process (Heather Nielsen, unpublished transcript, October 2018). The Native Arts Artist-in-Residency program and physical studio were established to formalize artist involvement in the museum (Heather Nielsen, unpublished transcript, October 2018). The first part of the museum's mission states that "the Denver Art Museum is an educational, nonprofit resource that sparks creative thinking and expression through transformative experiences with art" (Denver Art Museum 2019c). The Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program enhances the mission with its focus on celebrating art, promoting the creative process, and enlivening the museum experience (Denver Art Museum 2017).

One of their experiments with visitor/artist encounters at the Denver Art Museum was with *Untitled: Final Fridays*. *Untitled* is a monthly event that features local artists for an evening of engagement and artistic celebration (Denver Art Museum 2012). It was established in 2007 and is still active today (Denver Art Museum 2012). Then, in 2011, Roxanne Swentzell created *Mud Women Rolls On* in the elevator landing of the third floor in the American Indian art gallery (see Figure 5). She constructed the sculpture out in the open and with the assistance of the visitors. The sculpture is so large that in 2018 it still sat in the location it was created (Swentzell 2011). The success of Swentzell's

combination of performance art, sculpture, and the role of artist as teacher helped to bring focus to both the active agency of the living artist and the work they create.

Later that year, the American Indian arts gallery space underwent a major remodel and reinstallation (Denver Art Museum 2012a). Nearly 20,000 square feet of gallery space was renovated and curated to center around the individual artist instead of a tribe or culture area (Denver Art Museum 2012a). In 2012, the Denver Art Museum earned a $50,000 grant from the National Endowment of the Arts to promote the creation and presentation of new and existing works to audiences. Native Arts focused on highlighting the creative process and the funds contributed to the establishment of the Native Arts Artist-in-Residency (Denver Art Museum 2012b).

Melanie Yazzie, printmaker, painter, and sculptor was the first resident in June 2012 (Denver Art Museum 2019d). She had consulted during the renovation, because at that time, she had recently completed her own redesign of her studio space at the University of Colorado, Boulder. In the summer of 2012, the residency was underway. According to Heather Nielsen, Chief Learning and Engagement Officer, Melanie Yazzie was also an ideal candidate for the first residency because she was willing to share her practice with the public (Heather Nielsen, unpublished transcript, October 2018). During her time at the Denver Art Museum, she hosted four workshops – two for printmaking, one for relief printing, and one for making monotypes. The main focus of her residency was to be one-on-one engagement with visitors (Jodie Gorochow, unpublished interview, August 2018).

This kind of visitor engagement became one of the embedded missions of the program. There is no written mission statement for the residency program, but visitor engagement is continuously central in the descriptions of the program (Jodie Gorochow, unpublished interview, August 2018). Before starting a residency, it is made clear that the artist is obligated to dedicate their time equality to artistic creation/research and visitor engagement (Jodie Gorochow, unpublished interview, August 2018). Due to the diversity in mediums and artistic process, this commitment to visitor engagement is the only requirement of every residency. Each residency looks different because each artist requires different resources, planning, and staff assistance.

The residency program was created in the Learning and Engagement Department, and it was designed to bring creativity to the fore of the visitor experience (Denver Art Museum 2012a). Through artist encounters and behind the scenes stories, visitors were to be inspired to explore their own creative expression. In the description of the program on the museum's webpage, it states "this program showcases and celebrates the work of contemporary native artists, highlighting the ongoing creativity and artistic diversity of the American Indian community with an aim towards engaging museum visitors through each artist's creative processes" (Denver Art Museum 2019d). As of 2018, the Native Arts studio space hosted thirteen individual artists and one collaborative residency.

The History of Artist Residencies

The history of the Denver Art Museum is one of artists and museum collaboration. Through the Native Arts Artist-in-Residency there is a sharing of space and a sharing of ideas. One of the ways that museums are working to bring living artists

back into the museum is through artist-in-residency programs. These programs bring artists into museums to research and creatively explore new media and projects. By offering stipends and a physical space to work, away from their lives and other responsibilities, residency programs give artists time to create (Badham 2017). Residencies were once seen as a way for artists to work alone and to escape from the responsibilities in their daily lives; however, over the past two decades, there has been a focus on communal development in residency programs (Badham 2017). The residencies at the DAM are examples of programs that "aim to provide opportunities for socially and politically motivated artists to develop site-responsive projects for public interaction with local community members" (Badham 2017, 1-2).

In the last century, there has been an explosion in the number of in artist residencies. Two of the oldest forms of artist residencies are artist retreats and colonies (Lubbren 2001). Artists left the cities to seek the inspiration of utopian landscapes and to put distance between their artistic process and their everyday lives (Badham 2017). In her book, *Rural Artists' Colonies in Europe 1870-1910,* Nina Lubbren observes that "colonists developed a form of sociability that promised them a sense of belonging at the same time as appearing to guarantee artistic and personal freedom" (2001, 17-18). Artist colonies are characterized as communities of artists who work and live in a certain place for a specified period (Lubbren 2001, 2). A majority of artist colonies were founded in Western Europe with the first recorded being formed in the 1820s in France and Germany (Lubbren 2001). In the 1880s and 1890s, artist colonies were in their prime with villages numbering from thirteen residents to five hundred (Lubbren 2001). The two notable

colonies in the United States are the MacDowell Colony founded in New Hampshire in 1907 and the Banff Centre near the Canadian Rocky Mountains that was formed in 1933 (Badham 2017).

While some artists were taking refuge in rural colonies, there were other artists who were thriving in "urban bohemias" (Badham 2017b, 1). These "bohemias" were prominent in Europe and gained popularity in mid-century United States (Badham 2017b). It was at this time that the phrase "artist-in-residence" was first coined (Badham 2017b). The term was used to describe a building in New York City that housed new work-live artist studios (Badham 2017b). Artists were not only working together, but they were working alongside audiences in the public sphere (Badham 2017, 7). Public engagement took hold in the 1940s, and it has remained, because "the socially engaged artist often breeds personal connections that last longer and deeper than the programme itself" (Badham 2017b, 7). By being sites of collaboration and inspiration, residency programs allow artists to expand their work, and by placing these residencies in the public connections can be formed and action can be inspired.

While the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program at the DAM looks different from the residencies of the past, it offers artists the same means to expand their creative process in a space outside their normal lives. By being in a public place, the DAM's American Indian art gallery, they can both bring awareness to the "humanity" of art and importance of education and engagement. The artists at the Denver Art Museum are not participating in a residency that separates them from people, such artist escapes, but it

places them in a busy area with the opportunity to engage with people in a meaningful way.

In 2017, residency program was put “on hold” while the Martin Building in which it has been housed was being renovated. The closure of the building had implications for the research on which this thesis is based, which will be discussed further in the research design in Chapter Six and in the conclusion chapter. While scheduled to re-open in June 2020, the re-opening of the building has been delayed due to measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to explore the literature on the representation of art and culture in museums, especially as it pertains to Native American or Indigenous art and culture. Important to this discussion is what has come to be labeled "the politics of display," which dominated the scholarly and professional museum studies literature up until relatively recently, and it continues to affect practice. I also address different genres of artistic practice common to the Native Arts Artist-in-Residency Program, such as social practice art, institutional critique and interventions, and how they are meant to intersect with visitor engagement. I begin with a brief overview of the history of the representation of non-Western cultures and art in museums and how it has been changing over time in response to critiques from Native and other communities as well as from scholars. Such changes can be seen as part of the decolonization of museums, which has become a main force behind change in museums today.

Museum History and the Politics of Display

Museums began as personal cabinets of curiosities of the wealthy and elite, but as their collections grew and became more complex, they shifted from private ownership to public and local governments (Ames 1992, 17). It was in these museums that anthropologists researched objects, developed theories of human diversities, and exhibited their findings to the public in the form of exhibitions (Ames 1992). During the nineteenth century, American collectors and anthropologists were obtaining

environmental specimens and human-made objects from nearby Indigenous communities and abroad to understand the peoples of the world and preserve their items to educate future students (Ames 1992, Lonetree 2012). Collecting in a settler-colonial nation like the United States, and the impulse to remove objects from their place of origin in Native American communities was driven by the practice of "salvage" anthropology, based on the ideology that Indigenous peoples were "vanishing" (Lonetree 2012, 10) Their material culture needed to be documented and collected before what was considered by scholars at the time "too late" (Lonetree 2012, 10). This type of collecting is known by scholars as "salvage collecting" or "salvage anthropology" (Cole 1983). Because of the devastating impact of Western expansion, large scale development projects such as the building of railroads, and aggressive assimilation policies and programs, American anthropologists, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, believed that the American Indian peoples and their culture would disappear (Cole 1983, 287). We know that this assumption was inaccurate and harmful to the people whose objects were misappropriated.

Salvaged collections were often housed in natural history museums and displayed and categorized by the scientific typologies common at the time, such as evolutionary models of cultural development (McDonald 1998). According to Robin Boast, museums were "institutions that created the ordered representations that contained, objectified, and reduced the colonized world for the paternalistic imperialism that characterized the 19th and early 20th centuries (2011, 64). These practices became the standards of an evolutionary paradigm of collections management and exhibition display that existed

within museums for decades (McDonald 1998). It was not until a new theoretical paradigm was adopted by anthropologists that the method of display changed to be more contextual and mindful of relativity.

Franz Boas, one of the founders of American Anthropology who worked in museums at the beginning of his career, determined that each culture has its own unique history (Patterson 2001). The anthropological theory of cultural relativism, developed by Boas, suggests that the values and practices of a culture should be understood in the context of the culture's own history and values (Patterson 2001). Despite this shift in perspectives and embracing of a contextual approach to display, anthropology and museums were still the study of what makes "us" (Euro Americans) different from the "other" (Kurin 1997). It was not until later, the 1960s and 1970s, that museum theory and practice would become concerned with reflexivity, inclusivity, and collaboration (Boast 2011, 56).

Early American museums were influenced by the invention of the printing press, which boosted the distribution of knowledge to the middle class (Ames 19992, 16). With the Industrial Revolution, there was increased migration to the cities (Ames 1992, 16). This gave rise to a need for social reform and greater access to education (Ames 1992, 16). During this time, the development of museums paralleled the changes in the industrial world. Anthropologists were building their theories around the objects in museum collections, and museums served as venues to disseminate anthropological theories to the public (Kreps 2020, 2). This lasted until the 1950s when anthropology began to recede from museums in favor of universities. Museums were still repositories

for objects and places of public learning, but they no longer were the primary host of anthropologists and theorists (Ames 1992). It was not until the 1970s, and especially the 1990s that the anthropological gaze was focused back on museum collections and museums as a topic of scholarly inquiry (Kreps 2020, 2). This new focus came in the forms of museum anthropology and a renewed interest in the study of material culture (Kreps 2020, 38)

Anthropologists served primary roles as curators through the history of museums. As academics, curators were significant in the creation of the knowledge that was disseminated through exhibitions (McDonald 1998, 3). Richard Kurin writes that:

> Curators stand at the crossroads of understanding the celebrations of self, nation, and humanity. The curatorial art is combining the juxtaposing analysis and memory, celebration and revelation, heritage and history. Like brokers, curators are always at the border, engaged in efforts of cultural translation and symbolic transformation, making meaning for the disparate audiences and constituencies who have a stake in what they do. (1997, 82)

Scholars and museum professionals presume that curators interpret collections and make information accessible to students and members of the general public through exhibitions. This role is important because these objects and exhibitions can connect people to the world outside of their neighborhoods (Svasek 2007, 39). Robert Stein explains that:

> As repositories of the world's greatest creative endeavors, museums provide a tremendous workshop for exploring creative genius both past and present. If one were to look for a place where creativity can be learned, studied, examined, and replicated in all its forms, you could scarcely do better than by exploring the collections at your local museum. (2015, 220)

Creativity is thought to have boundless constructive potential (2015, 220). By housing and exhibiting objects and curatorial interpretations, museums are locations of education, negotiation, and cross-cultural interaction (Kurin 1997).

Interpretations of objects provided by museums can connect the past to the present through reconnecting stories to artifacts (Svasek 2007, 244). This connection can inspire a sense of community that encourages civil engagement and participation in policy and social change (Svasek 2007, 244). To some scholars, this influence is known as the "soft power" of museums (Lord and Blankenberg 2015). Gail Dexter Lord and Ngaire Blankenberg define "soft power" as the foil to "hard power" in their book *Cities, Museums, and Soft Power* (2015). While "soft power" has influence over hearts and minds, "hard power" is defined by the tangible properties of force and finance (Lord and Blankenberg 2015, 9). "Soft power" is "the ability to influence behavior using persuasion, attraction or agenda setting" (Lord and Blankenberg 2018, 9). The concept operates in terms of ideas, knowledge, values, and culture. Museums exercise "soft power" in communities by providing stability in forms of stewardship of memory, a forum for the exchange of ideas, and a place to create lasting relationships among cultural workers and civil society (Lord and Blankenberg 2015, 19-20). By inspiring the public's involvement, museums can be involved in shaping the communities surrounding them. This power to influence is also affected by the larger historical and social context of museums.

Ivan Karp observed that museum exhibitions are based on a series of historical, institutional, and individual assumptions (Karp 1991, 12). These assumptions include the intentions of the object creators, cultural significance, aesthetics, expectations of the audience, and the experience of the museum professionals (Karp 1991, 12). Everyone involved with a material object during its creation and life has an influence on the item

based upon their own experiences and values (Karp 1991,13). As Richard Kurin states, social institutions and workers are culture brokers (Kurin 1997). They are negotiating between their perspectives and those of the institution, object, and artist.

> Professionals in the cultural fields who engage in the public representation of culture through museum exhibits, performance programs, documentary films and recordings, the creation of Web sites, public lectures, and the writing of ethnographies (for an audience beyond specialized technical experts) are brokering culture. [...] Culture brokers study, understand, and represent someone's culture (even sometimes their own) to nonspecialized others through various means and media (Kurin 1997, 18-19).

According to Kurin, "culture" is a broad concept that is not clearly defined in one way to all people. Today, the term describes three general groups – entertainment, scholarship, and politics (Kurin 1997, 15). For entertainment, culture is seen in music, dance, visible, material, and intangible creation (Kurin 1997, 16). In politics, culture is in the means people express their values, identities, and interests (Kurin 1997, 16). In social science scholarship, culture is approached in a far more nuanced and abstract manner. It is something that cannot be bought, consumed, or measured, because it exists in contexts, interactions, and contemplations (Kurin 1997, 16). In the diverse field of the humanities, "'brokering" also captures the idea that these representations are to some degree negotiated, dialogical, and driven by a variety of interests on behalf of the involved parties" (Kurin 1997, 19). Successful "brokerages" build important relationships and "active, respectful engagement" that can be an "honest way" of conveying meaning (1997: 23).

The Native Arts Artist-in-Residency program is a site of negotiations between the perspectives of the Native Arts curators, the Learning and Engagement Staff, the artists

who identify as American Indian, and the visitors to the museum. The representation of the artist is conducted in a way that is agreed upon by each "broker" involved. For example, the Curator of Native Arts selects an artist whose work he or she believes fits into the museum-wide program theme, the Learning and Engagement Department informs each resident artist in the requirement of visitor engagement, and the resident artists represent themselves and their creative process in a way they believe to be best suited for themselves, the goals of the museum, and for the benefit of the visitors. By choosing the resident artists without an application process, the residency program can ensure a "good fit" for the museum-wide interpretive plan, but it also sets the terms of engagement. Each residency is a site of negotiation and compromise based on the larger context and politics of display. This chapter will explore these aspects of display and artistic performance as critiques of power and knowledge, and Chapter Seven will further examine the implications of the artist selection process.

Museums operate within a society made up of other institutions, associations, and communities of people (Karp 1992, 4). Defining the specific community of a museum is difficult, because communities are constantly changing due to knowledge, demographics, identities, practices, access and location (Watson 2007, 4-8). There are some museums that develop out of the communities they serve, such as the RedLine Contemporary Art in Denver, and there are museums that must work to identify and connect with existing communities nearby (Watson 2007, 8). While the Denver Art Museum emerged out of the artist community of nineteenth-century Denver, it no longer primarily serves that community. The DAM's communities are more varied, imprecise, and vast.

American museums started to take notice of their responsibility to their communities after World War II, primarily in the 1960s and 1970s (Watson 2007, 13). The civil and human rights movements and activist politics of this period encouraged awareness of the role museums play in their society. One example is the 1968 counter-exhibition *Invisible Americans: Black Art of the 30's* that protested the exclusion of black artists in the Whitney Art Museum's *The 1930's: Painting and Sculpture in America* (Wallace 2015, 5; Watson 2007, 13). Museums have been responding to such criticisms over the decades, making changes in the way objects, arts, and people are represented in exhibitions and programming. They have also been changing their approaches to how exhibitions are planned and executed.

The Art/Artifact Distinction

One of the most well-known examples of an exhibit that sparked debate around the politics of display was the *Primitivism in 20th-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* exhibited at the MOMA in from September 1984 to January 1985. The exhibit displayed African, Oceanic, and American Indian artworks alongside works by prominent modernist artists, such as Pablo Picasso and Paul Gauguin (Clifford 1988). In his critique of the exhibition, James Clifford, who wrote an extensive review of the exhibit, argued that by presenting the "affinities" between Western and non-Western objects, instead of recognizing the differences, the exhibit celebrated the generous spirit of modernism and its artists over the individual creativity of the non-Western artists (1988). He wrote that if "the tribal is modern" than "the modern is more richly, and more diversely human" (Clifford 1988, 151). The issues that rose from the exhibit were based

in the false assumptions that primitive people make primitive art, quality "primitive" art is not being produced in the present, and the "other" can be identified and distanced (Clifford 1988). At the MOMA exhibit there was no cultural context given for the tribal art pieces. Due to the lack of context, the audience may not have been able to understand the factors that contributed to the creation of the object and the politics of its display (Clifford 1988). Clifford concluded that museums do not need shows of celebration, but rather they need exhibitions that question the boundaries of art and the art world (1988).

In her study of the conceptualization and representation of "primitive art," Sally Price, in her book *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*, like Clifford, observes tension in the art vs. non-art discussion of its value of non-Western art (1989). She explains that art appreciation has two paradoxical principles: the true lovers of art that carry an innate and unconscious ability to experience a "true aesthetic reaction" and the well-defined authority of people who are charged with recognizing "intrinsic beauty" (Price 1989, 15). Both principles assume an inherent quality of art, rather than the socially constructed value.

> The change in a viewer's 'recognition' of an object as it is redefined from masterpiece to fake helps educate the contribution that contextualization makes to *every* experience of viewing. 'Contextualization' enters the experience in a wide range of ways, many of them so subtle that viewers hardly notice their presence. In addition to explicit didactic messages in catalogs or museum labels, hints about how to 'read' an object are lurking all around – its ornate gilt frame, its location in a flea market, the presence of crowds pressing eagerly for a view of it, its resemblance to something once owned by the viewer, the knowledge that it is made by a 'tribal' artist, a tag telling its price, or perhaps soft gasps of admiration or disapproval from viewers (Price 1989, 21-22)

Price's book focused primarily on the distinctions made between anthropology and art history's approaches to the interpretation, representation, and valuing of mainly non-

Western art within the "art/culture system" of the West (Clifford 1988), and how the *context* in which objects are shown, i.e., art or natural history/anthropology museums greatly determines how they are understood by audiences.

Maruska Svasek places the art vs. non-art distinction in the context of changing historical and contemporary power relations (2007). By exploring the classification practices used to distinguish between art, craft, kitsch, propaganda, and pornography, Svasek also describes "art" as a category of exclusion (Svasek 2007, 54). She notes that through time and space art has stood in contrast to "non-art" objects to reflect the current social and political atmosphere (Svasek 2007, 154). While there were different artistic styles classified as "art" during different socio-historical and political atmospheres, there was one constant, and that is the belief in an exceptional quality or power of fine art (Svasek 2007, 188). With the rise of feminist theories and the cultural struggle for equal access, the boundaries between art and non-art started to blur (Svasek 2007, 189).

As seen through the critique of dioramas, the debate of art vs. non-art, and the controversies of prestige, museum displays are locations of disagreement, negotiation, and compromise. In this way, museum collections and exhibitions can be seen as "contact zones." Based upon the initial conceptualization by Mary Louise Pratt, James Clifford defines contact zones as places of consultation, confrontation, and open dialogue (Clifford 1986). The introduction of the concept of "contact zones" was a call for museums to reexamine the centrality of their perspective and to recognize themselves as places of transit, struggle, and construction (Clifford 1986). According to Clifford, work inside "contact zones" is more than consultation and cultural sensitivity; it is about shared

authority, authorship, and curation (Clifford 1986). He states that "When museums are seen as contact zones, their organizing structure as a collection becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral relationship—a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull." (Clifford 1997, 192-93) When approached as a "contact zone," the way objects are displayed in museums is the product of the struggle between assumptions, identity, power, and the creation of knowledge (Karp 1991).

According to Pratt, "contact zones" are "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts with highly asymmetrical relations of power" (1991, 34). In an article that revisits the concept of "contact zones" as they apply to museums, Robin Boast offers a critique of the "contact zone" that addresses the issue of unbalanced power (2011). In the article "Neocolonial Collaboration: Museums as Contact Zones Revisited," Boast argues that museums set the terms of collaboration and that "The institution that controls the calibration and use, controls the resource" (2011, 65). He begins the article by explaining that "On one hand, I welcome the new collaboration, and, on the other, I raise a serious concern that the neocolonial contact zones could destroy the very empowerment that it is meant to engender" (Boast 2011, 57). By examining each part of the definitions of "contact zone" provided by Pratt and Clifford, his own experiences, and the experiences of other scholars, Boast concludes that "the contact zone is a *clinical collaboration*, a consultation that is designed from the outset to appropriate the resources necessary for the academy and to be silent about those that were not *necessary*" (Boast 2011, 66; emphasis in original).

Pratt's definition of "contact zone" recognizes the asymmetry of power but Boast explains that the inequality exists not only during the negotiations, but it persists into the outcomes (2011, 66). He explains that, "Thus, always, is the contact zone an asymmetric space where the periphery comes to win some small, momentary, and strategic advantage, but where the center ultimately wins" (2011, 66). The flaws of "contact zones" are not rooted in the inequality of power among the participants, but rather that they are found in the use of "contact zones" "instrumentally as a mean of masking for more fundamental asymmetries, appropriations, and biases" (Boast 2011, 67). The biases located in museum structures are present in all aspects of practice, including collaboration, exhibit design, and object interpretation. Therefore, the challenge of museum exhibiting is the responsibility to present information with context and resources that allows the viewer to make their own interpretations (Karp 1991).

Ivan Karp writes that "the subtle messages communicated through design, arrangement, and assemblage" in installations "can either aid or impede our appreciation and understanding of the visual culture, social, and political interests of the objects and stories exhibited in museums" (Karp 1991, 13-14). To this Karp adds:

> Museums and their exhibitions are morally neutral in principle, but in practice they always make moral statements; even the assertion of 'art' is exempt from moral, social, and political judgements implies ideas about what is and is not subject to certain forms of criticism. The alleged innate neutrality of museums and exhibitions, however, is the very quality that enables them to become instruments of power as well as instruments of education and experience. (1991, 14)

The Native Arts Artist-in-Residency program can be seen as one of the instruments of the "poetics and politics of display" (Karp and Lavine 1991, 1). Display is inherently

political, because it is influenced by the people making the decisions, the stakeholders, and the larger social context (Karp 1991, 13). The residency program exists within many different overlapping contexts. There are decisions being made from museum-wide to artist. The program is additionally affected by each community the DAM tries to serve, the larger programming themes, artists' perspectives, and the visitor experience. While navigating the politics of display, the residency program is also an exercise in negotiation and compromise.

Artist Interventions

As previously discussed, the artist protests of the Whitney Museum of Art in the 1960s and 1970s were directed at exposing the missing voices in an exhibition (Tate 2020). First appearing in the 1950s, artists commented on "institutionalizations" by staging artist interventions (Cabañas 2008, Marstine 2017). The Tate defines art interventions as "art designed specifically to interact with existing structures or situations, be it another artwork, the audience, and institution or in the public domain" (Tate 2020). These types of interventions generally include performance art, juxtaposition, and/or "mining" of museum collections (Marstine 2012).

The work of several of the Native Artists-in-Residence at DAM falls into these categories of art. For example, during Gregg Deal's residency at the Denver Art Museum in 2015, he staged two interventions. One outside of the museum's front doors and another in the temporary exhibition, *The Western: An Epic in Art and Film* (Gregg Deal, unpublished interview, August 2018). Even when artists are not intentionally making interventions, the residency in the American Indian art gallery still prompts the concepts

seen in interventions, because the artists are bringing their outside experiences and social situations into the museum space.

One of the earliest examples of performance as institutional critique was with Yves Klein's 1958 Paris exhibition *Specialization of Sensibility in the Raw Material State of Stabilized Pictorial Sensibility* or *Le Vide (The Void)*, for short (Cabañas 2008). In this performance, he called the concept of a gallery into question. Klein criticized gallery spaces for their "white walls" that restrict active engagement between art and place and demonstrate total spatial control (Cabañas 2008).

In 1986, Brian O'Doherty offered a critique for what he called the "white cube." According to O'Doherty, museums create the facade of an unchanging space and a singular reality (1986). Artwork rotates and new exhibitions are installed, but the white wall remains consistent. The favoring of white walls was derived from the assumption that art can speak of itself in an unobstructed display (O'Doherty 1986). However, displays are rarely completely unobstructed (O'Doherty). For example, social factors led to the selection and its display. There are pros and cons to all display methods, but art does not exist in a vacuum. The "white cube" can create the sensation of sterility and the absence of a lived past (O'Doherty 1986). O'Doherty explains the phenomenon as:

> The spotless gallery wall, through a fragile evolutionary product of a highly specialized nature, is impure. It subsumes commerce and esthetics, artist and audience, ethics and expediency. It is in the image of the society that supports it, so it is a perfect surface off which to bounce paranoias. (1986, 79-80)

By denaturalizing exhibit practice and critiquing the "white cube" of art museum galleries, Klein and O'Doherty offer a broader conversation of social context and

responsibility. Galleries are more than just their walls, their art, or their creators. They are aggregate spaces where design, culture, politics, and perspectives take place.

In 1969, the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) hosted *Raid the Icebox 1 With Andy Warhol* (Halle 1993). The show was conceived by John and Dominique de Menil, who upon visiting Providence, wanted to draw out and display some of the objects from the RISD's basement collections (Robbins 1970). Pop artist Andy Warhol was asked to explore the storage areas and select objects he found to be interesting (Robbins 1970). The objects were then collected and transported to Houston, where they were exhibited at Rice University (Robbins 1970). This exhibit is an early example of an artist intervention. In the exhibition catalogue, the director of the RISD, Daniel Robbins, wrote "the art that [Warhol] choose from our reserves will reverberate with all the repressed meaning that the passage of time has left adhering to each piece; [...] Andy Warhol's choice will have become part of their ever expanding meaning" (1970, 15). Through performance art, Warhol was able to bring attention to the decisions that are made about exhibitions and collection.

Perhaps one of the earliest and most well-known performance art pieces and interventions by a Native American artist was James Luna's *The Artifact Piece*, first performed in 1987 (Evans 2010). During the performance at the San Diego Museum of Man, he put himself on display inside a museum case surrounded by his personal items placed in vitrines (Evans 2010). He and his items were accompanied by museum labels similar to those used for historic American Indian objects in natural history museums. The way he positioned himself on a platform that resembled a museum case gave the

appearance that he was a specimen or replica for a diorama (Evans 2010, 65). Laura Evans states that *The Artifact Piece* was "part of a wave of indigenous peoples talking back to the institutions that have represented them to non-indigenous audiences" (Evans 2010, 63). While performing in an anthropological setting in the Museum of Man, Luna critiqued the power of the museum to represent the American Indian body and possessions (Evans 2010, 68). Evans explains that the exhibit's power was that it "collapsed historical memory and living memory in a jarring moment of realization for an unsuspecting public" (2010, 66).

The performative aspect of *The Artifact Piece* has led to new conceptualizations of performance within Western museums, (Evans 2010). For example, Evans explains that while performance has long held validity as a form of knowledge distribution in American Indian cultures, it was not always accepted by Western institutions (2010, 70).

> Performance artwork can potentially be viewed as occurring along a spectrum of Indigenous performative activities that have continuously acted as a valid means by which to accomplish multiple purpose: for reliable transmission of knowledge, as internal social activism, and for reification of esteemed cultural values. In other words, performative acts are not for entertainment purposes, but are serious social, intellectual, and even spiritual acts that function in very complex ways. In some respects, they may dismantle or critique failings in society, uncover injustices, etc., but performance works can also work to build, rebuild, and theorize new possibilities. (2010, 70)

She writes that the power of performance has sustained *The Artifact Piece*'*s* relevance for over thirty years (Evans 2010, 68). Luna's work has inspired other artists to engage in performance that comments on social justice and equity in representation.

In 1992, artist and activist Fred Wilson, produced the seminal exhibition, *Mining the Museum*, at the Maryland Historical Society (Marstine 2012). According to Marstine,

working within the museum, its collections and exhibits, Wilson performed a disruption to bring attention to the norms and standards of display (Marstine 2012, 38). He used color, juxtaposition, and spatial relationships to illustrate the missing and forlorn representations of African Americans in the history museum's exhibits. He used both empty space and collections to illustrate the moments of history that were missing (Marstine 2012, 47). As the name of the exhibition suggests, Wilson played both the role of archaeologist and artist. His mission was to discover the objects that could illuminate the unaddressed "hard truths" of Maryland's history (Lonetree 2012, Marstine 2012). As Howard Halle writes in his review of the exhibit, "by excavating the site of institutional racism and retrieving forgotten African-American artifacts and heroes, Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum* brings to light a history and a cultural presence that have been buried beneath layers of neglect and deliberate exclusion" (Halle 1993). Wilson used the museum's permanent exhibitions and objects from its own collections to invert the narrative and tell a related, but new, story (Marstine 2012).

Wilson was able to highlight to the Maryland Historical Society and its guests that there was an institutionalized bias toward representation of African American minorities and Native Americans in their museum (Marstine 2012). Since his first institutional intervention, Wilson has conducted other, similar projects, and his innovation spurred a new type of performance art and museum critique that has now become widely used and accepted. At first museums tolerated the work that he did in their exhibitions and collections, but as the popularity of his work grew museums began to seek out interventions (Marstine 2012). Interventions have become so common, that scholars, such

as Janet Marstine, warn that museums are shifting the burden of institutional critique and reflexivity away from the museum professional and onto artists (Marstine 2017, 9). While interventions still serve the purpose of exposing bias, they are also programming and promotional opportunities.

Also, in 1992, performance artists Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña launched their Guatinaui World Tour with their *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit* performance, also referred to as the "Couple in the Cage" (Taylor 1998). They chose to perform in countries that historically mistreated Indigenous peoples, such as the United States, Australia, Spain, Argentina, etc. (Taylor 1998). The pieces addressed the colonialism and domination of the Indigenous body (Taylor 1998, 162). Taylor writes that "the monumentality of most museums emphasizes the discrepancy in power between the society which can contain all others, and those represented only as remains, the shards and fragments salvaged in miniature displays" (Taylor 1998, 164). Their work echoed the "human zoos" of the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, in which Indigenous peoples were put on display as specimens within their "natural habitat" (Taylor 1998). The critique focused on the "othering" of museum exhibitions that display objects in a way that makes them "exotic."

In Guillermo Gómez-Peña's most recent performance with the La Pocha Nostra troupe on February 12, 2018 at the Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) he offered a critique of the current presidential administration. In an article by Matt Stromberg in the *Hyperallergic Magazine*, a forum dedicated to a rethinking of art in the world today, Gómez-Peña was quoted as saying "more than ever, in the Trump era, artists

need to recapture, by any means necessary, a central role in society, as ombudsmen, experimental linguists, reverse anthropologists, radical pedagogues, utopian thinkers, and vernacular philosophers" (Stromberg 2018). Artists are critical thinkers that work in the public sphere, and in a time where it appears that civil rights are threatened, they can offer examples of alternatives and images that incite the urge to take action toward change. Artist interventions are part of the larger approach of institutional critique and critical museology. These larger theories and methods will be further discussed in the next chapter, Chapter Four, "Theoretical Framework."

Social Practice Art

The work of artist interventions and the alternative perspectives they bring into museum spaces is linked to the fundamental concepts of social practice art. In general, social practice artists work in and are inspired by the public (Alberro 2009). Akin to social practice art is what Nicholas Bourriaud calls "relational aesthetics." He defines relational aesthetics as the process of making art inspired by human relations and social context (1998). Relational art is created in response to a "world-wide urban culture" and the "urbanization of artistic experiment" (Bourriaud 1998, 14-15). By describing artists as "producers," Bourriaud characterizes them as facilitators of ideas between art, artist, and viewer (1998). By working so closely with the dilemmas of humanity, the artist's "role as spokesperson for multiple points of view and advocates for a critique of society, artists may well be understood as public intellectuals – those who believe in and take seriously the importance of the public sphere" (Becker 1997, 18). Through interaction with art, artist, and each other, audiences experience more than expanding awareness.

They experience interactivity and transitivity (Bourriaud 1998, 25). Transitivity is the continuous process of art being made and remade by interactions and experiences through its life (Bourriaud 1998, 25). There is no specific "place for art," because relational aesthetics is heavily influenced by context (Bourriaud 1998, 26). To Bourriaud, relational aesthetics is:

> A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space. (Bourriaud 1998, 113)

In relational aesthetics there is an exchange between people and art and an exchange between the art and the gallery. For example, the historic and contemporary artworks by American Indian artists displayed around the artist studio at the Denver Art Museum potentially have an influence on the art made during each residency.

When socially active artists are invited into museum spaces, they arrive with the entirety of their life, and the museum is made vulnerable by that outside perspective (Alberro 2009). In 1996, when artist interventions were gaining wide popularity in American museums, Hal Foster issued a warning, similar to Marstine, against relying on artists to provide analysis of practice instead of professionals reflecting on themselves and their institutions. He noted what he called an "ethnographic turn" in contemporary art (Foster 1996). In this shift, the concepts of anthropological methodology, such as alterity, culture as its object, contextualization, holism, and self-critique, can now be seen in the fieldwork of contemporary art (Foster 1996). These new techniques have been instrumental in deconstructing museum practice, but there is also the danger of a "quasi-anthropological scenario" (Foster 1996, 77). Foster discusses the convergence of the two

fields that remained separate until now, despite a shared interest in art and what it can say about a person or a time in history (1996).

As actors of social critique, artists can influence how people perceive their work, and they can contextualize the objects of the past. Carol Becker explains that beyond being creatives, artists are socially concerned citizens (2015). She emphasizes a commitment to the creative approach to understanding the complexity of our world (Becker 2015). Artists can use a visual medium to bring attention to issues and inspire active civic identities in audiences (Becker 2015). Museums hold collections in public trust; therefore, they are in the public domain (Becker 2015). Interventions and collaborations allow artists to work alongside museum professionals to bring alternative perspectives into museums. Artists build on the civic influences museums already hold by evaluating, commenting on, and supplementing museum exhibitions (Becker 2015).

Decolonizing Practices

The definition of decolonization as it applies to museums varies depending on time, location, and purpose. Decolonization has become a popular word among museum studies and museum anthropology. It describes methods of decentering the authority of museum practice (Kreps 2020, 51). Christina Kreps writes, "As museums have been pressured to relinquish their positions as self-appointed guardians of people's cultural heritage, they have increasingly been sharing curatorial authority with those whose cultures are represented in museums" (Kreps 2020, 37). The continuous collaborations and sustained relationships have been part of reforming the way museums think about their role as caretakers in a way that contributes to the "liberation of culture" from the

Western epistemologies governing curation and collections management (Kreps 2003). Museums, with their roots firmly set in imperialism and colonialism, may never be able to be decolonized completely, but the gradual institutional changes influenced by the process of decolonizing practices are examples of meaningful change.

For Linda Tuhiwai Smith in her *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People* (1995), decolonization is more than repositioning the responsibilities of government or scholarship (Smith 1995, 175-77). It is the long-term process of engaging with bureaucracy, cross-cultural relations, language, and the psychological trauma of colonization (Smith 1995, 175-77). By emphasizing decolonization as a methodology, Smith accentuates decolonization as a process (Smith 1995, 57). Therefore, Smith writes that "decolonization must offer a language of possibility, a way out of colonization" (1995, 324). The space made by "language of possibility" allows for constructive discussions, strategic choices, and a reimagination of the world (Smith 1995, 324).

The conversations of decolonization in the museum world began around the 1960s and 1970s. As previously mentioned, the period after World War II in the United States was a time of radical policy changes and social activism movements (Watson 2007, 13). Indigenous and First Nations People were taking action to make their voices heard. Multiplied by the politics of the time, issues of self-representation and self-determination in museums were becoming apparent to museum professionals (Pohawpatchoko et al. 2017). A more reflective approach to work was developed. Change in museum policy influenced by productive collaborations is hard, if not

impossible, to objectively measure. Still, through the decades, it appears that partnerships work to mitigate institutional authority and provide new opportunities for greater representation of Native voice, engagement with audiences, and education for the next generation of Indigenous youth (Pohawpatchoko et al. 2017). Source communities hold the information and access to knowledge that museums value to enhance their exhibitions, and museums can be beneficial to Indigenous people by offering spaces of training, education, empowerment, and conversation (Peers and Brown 2003, Lynch 2013). "Source" communities are the communities of the original creators of the objects, and they are essential stakeholders in museum collections, exhibitions, and programs (Peers and Brown 2003).

The different stakeholders, such as source communities, means that decolonizing practices must acknowledge that exhibits are more than research, design, and display (Lonetree 2012, 170).

> Developing community-collaborative exhibitions demands more than just being well versed in the scholarly literature on respective topics or the latest in exhibition practices. It is about building trust, developing relationships, communicating, sharing authority, and being humble. (Lonetree 2012, 170)

Through case studies of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinaabe Culture & Lifeways, and the Mille Lacs Indian Museum, Amy Lonetree argues that effective decolonizing processes begins with addressing the complexities of history and the historical trauma that still affects American Indian people today (2012). She proposes that museums have the means to be sites of recovery from the harm of colonization, but only if the tragedies of colonialism are addressed openly and frequently with Indigenous voices and perspectives (Lonetree

2012, 171). In the ways that the institution engages with difficult histories, she concludes that the Ziibiwing Center exemplifies a decolonizing museum (2012, 123-67). The center's exhibits privilege oral tradition and present the complex histories of the Saginaw Chippewa tribal nation. Its museum work is informed by the scholarship of historical trauma and the broader theories of Native American studies and critical race studies (Lonetree 2012, 166).

> Decolonizing museums by transforming what museums are all about has been – and continues to be – a process. What is happening in the museum world for Native peoples has not been a dramatic takeover but is the result of a long history of activism and a persistent push to honor and privilege Native voices, perspectives, and understandings. (Lonetree 2012, 172)

Lonetree recognizes that institutional change is a slow process. Actions taken by curators and other members of the staff contribute to overall institutional reform, but the efforts are cumulative (Lonetree 2012). Power and relationships can be rebalanced, but the history of the museum and its collections will always be colonial (Lonetree 2012).

Jennifer Shannon has drawn similar conclusions to those of Lonetree. In referring to her time working and researching at NMAI before the opening in 2004, she states that the connection to the historical and the contemporary is essential to the efficacy of decolonization efforts. Based upon her own experiences and research, Shannon defines decolonization as:

> I do, however, think that museums are useful, meaningful, and worthwhile for Native and non-Native people alike. And decolonizing the museum is not just about how a museum represents Native people or whether it makes its collections and resources available to originating communities. Decolonizing is also about how Native people unsettle researchers and curators, [...]. Decolonization is a rebalancing of historical relationships (which is never complete) in the present interactions between people, not just the big-picture ideas of how representation is

> changing or whether a display adequately represents genocide and colonialism. (Shannon 2014, 191)

When it opened, the NMAI was at the center of the decolonization discussion. At the time, it was the most highly publicized museum committing to decolonization through collaboration in the United States (Shannon 2014, 191). The scale and prominent location on the National Mall contributed to its high profile. It was thought to be the institution that would set the example for decolonizing practices, but as stated by Shannon, "a nontribal museum can never be completely decolonized" (2014, 191).

As museums are increasingly sharing their authority through collaboration, they are also inviting Indigenous perspectives into the care of collections. Through engaging with individuals, museum professionals have been exposed to new ways of understanding the roles of objects within their social contexts (Kreps 2020, 41). Patricia Erikson observes that "the goals [are] not only to preserve the artifacts but also to preserve the living culture" (Erikson 2002, 184). In her research at the Makah Cultural and Research Center, established in 1979 to house the objects from the Ozette archaeological site, Patricia Erikson observed that the collaboration between the archaeologists, the people of Neah Bay, Washington and the Indigenous run cultural center enabled the Makah people to reconnect with themselves and their ancestors. The physical aspects of objects are just one aspect of an object's broader place in culture. With the growing use of collaboration, collections management is becoming more person-oriented (Erikson 2002).

Ruth Phillips refers to the incorporation of Indigenous knowledges and methods into museum practice as "indigenization" (2011). The theory of indigenization blends materiality and agency:

> In a literal sense, indigenization refers to the incorporation into the mainstream museum world of concepts, protocols, and processes that originate in Aboriginal societies. These concepts include ways of thinking about key issues that are central to museum work, such as the nature of materiality, spirituality, community, and history. (2011, 10)

She explains that the indigenization of museum practice can lead to a kind of hybridization in representation that encourages negotiation (Phillips 2011, 10). Based on the atmosphere of negotiation, the hybridization works in two ways. First, it brings Indigenous people into museum processes, and, second, it nurtures constructive relationships between museum staff and community members (Phillips 2011, 13). Museums greatly benefit from the "creative, innovative, hybrid, and effective solutions contributed by Indigenous collaborators out of their historical experience and knowledge of traditional principles, protocols, and practices" (2011, 14-15).

The success of a collaboration between museums and source communities hinges on the quality of the negotiations and the amount of community involvement. All collaboration is not equal (Lynch 2013). For example, in her study of public engagement in 12 museums across the UK, Bernadette Lynch observed:

> When we invite others into our space, from the outset the relationship is permeated with the power effects of difference – them and us – us and them. Thus, while an illusion of creative participation is what is on offer, decisions tend to be coerced or rushed through on the basis of the institution's agenda or strategic plan. (2013, 451)

She recommends a collaborative exploration of assumptions that will contribute to a more mutually beneficial approach to working together, because "when museums use public participants simply as a means to rubber stamp existing plans, they are in danger of not only disillusioning participants, but also of robbing people of their active agency as

citizens, and preventing them from realizing their capacity" (Lynch 2013, 452). By allowing for the time to look back and consider assumptions and past actions, museums can become more aware of the subtleties of the active power structures within their relationships between departments and cultures (Lynch 2013, 450).

According to Lynch, the key to effective collaboration is an awareness of developments in social justice, conflict resolution, and effective dialogic techniques (2013). She states that "a process of shared, open and participatory critical appraisal demonstrates that the only way engagement can be both embedded, and therefore effective in museums, is through a commitment to ongoing reflective practice" (2013, 445). Reflexivity is not a one-time evaluation of methods and standards, but rather it is an ongoing negotiation of positionality and practices.

When the artists agree to a residency in the American Indian art gallery, they agree to be a participant in museum programming. In the same ways that successful collaboration is determined by mutual benefit, the success of the residency relies upon the artist's positive experiences. This success will differ between artists, and it depends on what they were hoping to get out of the residency experience. Decolonization and collaboration are about democratizing space and access. In the next chapter, I will discuss the role of critical museology and institutional critique in shaping museum practice based upon anthropological understandings of human diversity. Furthermore, I will again discuss decolonizing practices with a focus on self-representation and Native voice as they apply to the residency program.

CHAPTER FOUR: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to scholars, such as Alfred Gell, theory and practice are inseparable (Gell 1998). Praxis, or taking practice into theory and theory into practice in a methodological circle, allows for a deeper understanding of why and how we do things (Gadamer 1986, xix). Anthony Shelton writes, "by distinguishing between applied and intellectual knowledge we obscure the close relations between them and the way they are mediated through social relations" (2013, 14). The link between theory and practice means that "praxis inherently involves critical thinking and reflection on what we do, why we do it, and whose interests are being served by our work" (Kreps 2020, 15).

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Denver Art Museum's Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program brings alternative narratives into the space and gives access to Native voice by "raising awareness about Native experiences" through the words and voices of Indigenous peoples (Shannon 2004, 28). To better understand the residency program in a broader context of critical museum practice, I will first explore the theories of critical museology and the methods of "studying up," museum ethnography, and institutional critique. Then, I will continue a discussion of decolonizing practices while examining the concepts of self-representation and Native voice as they pertain to Indigenous artists working and representing themselves in the DAM's American Indian art gallery.

Critical Museology

Critical museology is now a prevalent discourse in contemporary museology, and it began to take hold in the 1990s (Ames 1992; Shelton 2013). Like the New Museology of the twentieth century, critical museology challenges the foundational assumptions embedded in museums (MacDonald 2006). Michael Ames, author of *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums*, 1992, was one of the first scholars to recommend the use of analytical anthropological theory within museums, and he "called for a 'critical, reflexive museology' and a 'critical theory of museums and anthropology,' which he saw as a prerequisite for making both more socially relevant and publicly engaged" (as cited by Kreps 2020, 6).

New museology was "new" as it offered more theoretical and critical ways to approach museum practices that took communities and the subjectivity of value into consideration (Kreps 2020, 12). New Museology is considered by some scholars to be the precursor to critical museology of the 1980s and 1990s. Kreps explains that "New museology is often credited with setting into motion what has become the on-going critique and radical reassessment of museums as social institutions" (2020, 12). New museology and critical museology have become the leading theories that determine museum practice and the scholarly study of museums.

> Essentially, it has emphasized the democratization of museums, in principle and practice, and challenged them to be more socially relevant, responsible, and engaged. At the center of the movement was the argument that museums needed to diversify their audiences and develop strategies to be more inclusive and accessible to their various publics, particularly historically socioeconomically disadvantaged and marginalized groups. (Kreps 2020, 12)

These types of engagement-based practices that encouraged museums to reflect on their ideological biases and assumptions are characteristic of the "new museum" and what is now often called is now called "critical museology" or "critical museum practice" (Ames 1992, Kreps 2020, Shelton 2013).

In the article, "Critical Museology: A Manifesto," Shelton reflects on his twenty-five years working in the museum field (Shelton 2013). He concludes that museology is influenced by three epistemologies: "critical," "praxiological," and "operational" (Shelton 2013, 7). He states that "critical" museology is the study of "operational" museology, or the "body of knowledge, rules of application, procedural and ethical protocols, organizational structures and regulatory interdictions, and their products (exhibitions and programs) that constitute the field of 'practical' museology" (Shelton 2013, 8).

> As a field of study [critical museology] interrogates the imaginaries, narratives, discourses, agencies, visual and optical regimes, and their articulations and integrations within diverse organizational structures that taken together constitute a field of cultural and artistic production, articulated through public and private museums, heritage sites, gardens, memorials, exhibition halls, cultural centers, and art galleries. (Shelton 2013, 8)

Through the "interrogation" of long held exhibition, curation, and educational paradigms, the standards can be deconstructed and reassembled in "a new disciplinary response to demystify them and assist in liberating and reharnessing their full creative and explosive potentialities" (Shelton 2013, 20).

In 2008, Christina Kreps discussed the concept of "appropriate museology" in "Appropriate Museology in Theory and Practice." According to Kreps, "appropriate

museology is an approach to museum development and training that adapts museum practices and strategies for cultural heritage preservation to local cultural contexts and socioeconomic conditions" (2008, 26). This framework is based on the participatory elements of critical museum practice. In the same way that visitors are asked to engage with the creative practice in an artist residency program, museum professionals are invited to engage with the larger cultural contexts of source communities and the objects themselves (Kreps 2008). By acknowledging the culturally specific meanings, values, and practices involved in object creation, use, transit, collection, retention, and display, museums are engaging in a process to redress the colonial past of museums and move forward in the process of democratization, reflection, and inclusion (Kreps 2008).

This movement is part of the decolonizing practices that is the work to balance the historical power structures. This model for understanding stresses the importance of cultural competency, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and the application of theory to practice (Hodge 2018, 143). In the study of critical museology, there are methods that are used to better understand the deconstruction of the inequality of power and authority over material culture and knowledge. These methods are "studying up" and museum ethnography

"Studying Up" and Museum Ethnography

In anthropology, scholars use a technique called "studying up" to better understand institutions and the people within them who make decisions (Nader 1969). In 1969, Laura Nader published "Up the Anthropologist: Perspectives Gained from 'Studying Up'" to discuss the method of researching in one's institutions and decision-

makers (1969). She studied fellow anthropologists to understand why and how they conduct their research. Nader writes that studies of one's own institution are "attempts to get behind the facelessness of a bureaucratic society, to get at the mechanisms whereby far away corporations and large-scale industries are directing the everyday spaces of our lives" (Nader 1969, 228). She encourages anthropologists to see the connections between groups and individuals in a society and the greater process of social change. By "studying up, down, and sideways," substantial questions about "responsibility, accountability, self-regulation, [...] social structure, network analysis, library research, and participant observation" are raised (Nader 1969, 288). Museum professionals can also be researchers in a place of power to make decisions about what is displayed and how it is displayed.

To better understand the inner workings of museums, specifically, Mary Bouquet suggests the use of museum ethnography to study museums themselves as anthropological fieldwork sites (2012, 9). This places museum professionals and practices in the role of the "natives" to be studied (Ames 1986, 61). Ames was one of the first proponents of this type of work, and he saw that it had the potential to study a museum in a more detached and impartial manner (Ames 1986). Museum ethnographies engage with important areas of theory, such as agency, exchange, brokerage, actor-network theory, the question of authorship, cultural production, consumption, semiotics, and narrative. This serves to distance the researcher from their own experiences and knowledge of museum practice. It helps to make the familiar, unfamiliar (Bouquet 2012). The change in perspective helps to illuminate aspects of practice that are taken for granted and accepted as standard without question (Bouquet 2012). Mary Bouquet writes

that “The general aim of ethnographic analysis is to explain actions and ideas that might, at first sight, appear inexplicable and to grasp the texture of a particular lifeworld” (2012, 95). Museum ethnography helps to dislodge the preconceptions of the researcher and practitioner. By making standard practices feel unfamiliar, museum ethnography acts in a similar way to artist interventions because, by distancing themselves, museum professionals might be able to view their practices from a perspective similar to that of an outsider looking in.

Institutional Critique

Of Shelton’s three epistemologies of museology, “praxiological museology” is closer to the work of artists and museum outsiders who engage in “institutional critique” (Shelton 2013, 8). One way is to maintain a check on the responsibilities as caretaker and interpreter of collections is by reexamining one’s assumptions and standardized practices through institutional reflexivity, and another is through outside critique. As seen in the discussion of artist interventions in the previous chapter, the challenging of museum practice by artists can expose deeply problematic definitions of value and power (Alberro 2009, 3). This method is known as “institutional critique” (Alberro 2009, 3-4). The term “institutional critique” was first used in print by Mel Ramsden in “On Practice” in 1975 (Alberro 2009, 8). He observed that the capitalist structure of the modern art market had been internalized by the people working within it (Alberro 2009, 9). External forces working in combination with the institution could reexamine the “careerist mindset” (Alberro 2009, 8). The questions that arise from institutional critique are visuality, seeing, and speech and how they contribute to dismantling the structure from within (Alberro

2009, 8). This technique is often seen in works of performance art within gallery spaces (Marstine 2017, 4). Artists intervene in the current state of museum practice by using objects, speech, or performance to illuminate a different perspective.

> The underlying belief of these interventions is that the injustices that presently characterize the institution of art can be altered and corrected if the institution's internal contradictions – the discrepancy between its ideal self-understanding and presentation and the current reality – are exposed for all to see. (Alberro 2009, 14)

Art museums are institutions of the public sphere, and they exist outside their cultural, economic, or political situation. The identification of biases and institutionalized norms cannot always be conducted by the people closest to the problem (Alberro 2009). There are complex systems and history that surrounds each museum and its collections.

Furthermore, in her new book, *Critical Practice: Artists, Museums, Ethics*, Janet Marstine defines institutional critique as the "systematic inquiry into institutional (often museum) structure, policy and practice" that has been "widely recognized as a key strategy of engagement for artists since the late 1960s and early 1970s" (2017, 6). In this way, the artists are in a place where they can contribute to museum ethics by encouraging self-reflexive museum practice (Marstine 2017, 4). According to Marstine, institutional critique reveals what a museum is on a level that is deeper than the physical structure and its exhibits (2017). It helps reveal protocols, habits, and standards that are acceptable behaviors (Marstine 2017, 6). It makes the familiar unfamiliar, both for the museum visitor and the museum practitioner (Marstine 2017, 7). Marstine explains how the critique functions within museum theory:

> Drawing on [Judith] Butler and [Maria] Lind, I conceptualize institutional critique as both an ethical questioning of the systems of power underpinning institutions and an ethical gesture towards reconciliation between museums and their publics.

> Within the domains of art museums, institutional critique interrogates the elitist underpinnings that have shaped and continue to shape its very fabric. (2017, 7)

For art museums, the importance of the canon that is influenced by the "elitist underpinnings" obscures the social realities behind works of art and the role they play in society and in the museum (Marstine 2017, 7).

When an artist performs an intervention, a method of institutional critique, they are actively opposing elements of museum practice that are motivated by colonial structures still in place and hidden within the "standards" of practice. The performance of artist interventions is interruptive and obvious, but there are other types of interventions that more subtly disrupt practices that are taken for granted. These are the theories of self-representation and Native voice.

Decolonizing Practices

In the previous chapter, I discussed the literature pertaining to decolonization and the processes of negotiation among different ways of thinking about museum spaces and collections. This section examines the theory of self-representation and its potential role in democratizing space and balancing authority. The artists who participate in the Native Arts residency program have the opportunity to represent themselves as Indigenous artists in the American Indian Art gallery. They have the chance to interact directly with audiences, museum professionals, and donors. By speaking about themselves and their artwork, mostly on their own terms, they can share their own image of themselves.

Self-Representation and Native Voice

The Native Arts Artist-in-Residency program offers two types of representation. The first is through artists presenting their work to the public and being their own

negotiators with the museum during the planning process. The second is through their art, because “Memory is a powerful experience, and as artists seek to express the relationships that bind them to their families, communities, and cultures, some act generously to share their most potent and vulnerable memories with viewers” (ahtone 2020, 42). Many of the past residents specialize in art that reflects their lives, values, and experiences. According to Linda Tuhiwai Smith, the importance of self-representation is in that “Reclaiming a voice in this context has also been about reclaiming, reconnection and reordering those ways of knowing which were submerged, hidden or driven underground” (1999, 134).

In 2020, the “Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists” exhibition organized by the Minneapolis Institute of Art brought together artworks by female artists through time and space (Ahlberg Yohe and Greeves 2020). The exhibit explores the individual artist achievements of American Indian women and the ingenuity and innovation that has always been central to their art (Ahlberg Yohe and Greeves 2020, 12). In the edited volume the accompanies the exhibit, female scholars, artists, and museum professionals explore the topics of legacy, relationships, and power as they relate to Indigenous art what it means to be an Indigenous female artist. Dr. heather ahtone explains the role making plays in her life and the lives of other Indigenous women as a “divine gift” in her essay “Making Our World: Thoughts on Native Feminine Aesthetics” (2020, 38). She states that, “All of the making is part of who we are as individuals, acknowledging our relationships, our history, the order that guides the world, and the change that is part of our cultural vitality” (ahtone 2020, 38). The artists who created the work that is included

in the exhibit have enduring influence on the art, the audience, and the world around the artwork.

According to Dr. Jill Ahlberg Tohe, when an artist name is unknown, there is still a connection between the object and the intentions of the artist (2020). In her essay, "Animate Matters: Thoughts on Native American Art Theory, Curation, and Practice," she writes that, "It is important to note that Native art and material culture embody sovereign knowledge and experience" (Ahlberg Yohe 2020, 173). The power of the object is that its "potency" extends beyond itself (Ahlberg Tohe 2020, 177). The connection to the artist and the power of the object suggests that the creator cannot be disconnected from her creation (Ahlberg Tohe 2020, 178).

> I would suggest that many Native people do not view these works as *anonymous*. The maker may not be known, but her creations certainly are not considered anonymous or detached from her or her community. Instead, individual artworks are tied to intricate personal and cultural webs of meaning and history and tied to a particular maker's intentions. (2020, 178; emphasis in original)

To understand the Indigenous epistemologies that surround the creation and materiality of an object, Ahlberg Tohe introduces the idea of "verstehen" (2020, 169). "Verstehen" is a German word that loosely translates to "empathetic understanding" (Ahlberg Tohe 2020, 169). Ahlberg Tohe explains that "verstehen" means more than empathy in that it is about working to "uncover a *Native point of view*" in a way that brings interpretation closer to the ways that community members think themselves (Ahlberg 2020, 169; emphasis in original). This concept has the potential to create interpretations that have a more accurate framework of understanding than the meaning derived by a scholar from an anthropological perspective (Ahlberg 2020, 169).

> In short, the phenomenological approach that centers on the experience of interacting with objects as subjects aligns with Indigenous epistemologies. It offers an alternative to conventional Western frames of knowledge in Native art studies – to acknowledge that the objects studied are always embedded in social relations, and these relations must be respected whether the object is displayed or stored in the darkness of a cabinet drawer." (Ahlberg Tohe 2020, 179)

Ahlberg Tohe quotes Julian Thomas' definition of the foundation for the phenomenological approach as "the understanding that the 'subjective' aspects of experience are not superficial elements constructed on the bedrock of an invariant materiality, but are the means through which the material world reveals itself to us" (Thomas 2006, 43; as cited by Ahlberg Tohe 2020, 175). By revealing the subjective elements embedded in materiality, Ahlberg Yohe argues that there are alternative ways of knowing that can center audience interactions and artist intent in the object interpretations.

An acknowledgement of an alternative epistemologies can contribute to a deeper understanding of American Indian art and the artists who are behind the artworks (Ahlberg Tohe 2020, 178). Ahlberg Tohe explains that "incorporating Indigenous perspectives into scholarship and curation creates an opening to gain deeper respect for the materials that museum professionals curate and care for, but for the Indigenous people who created the work" (Ahlberg Yohe 2020, 173). This deeper understanding can also extend to the viewers, because "engagement with Indigenous modes of understanding gives viewers richer and more nuanced ways to engage with objects in collections and exhibitions" (Ahlberg Yohe 2020, 170). The presence of Indigenous ways of knowing in collections and exhibitions creates layers of interpretation that can give

museum visitors the opportunity to interact with the subtleties and complexities of American Indian identities and experiences.

Moira Simpson explains the importance of integrating Indigenous voices and knowledge into collections and exhibitions:

> Today many institutions are developing closer working relationships with the communities whose cultures they interpret and are proving that museums have a relevant and functional role to play in the contemporary issues which face indigenous and other ethnic groups. (1996, 247)

Through her research into the collaborations between museum curators and Indigenous curators in the U.S., Canada, and Britain, Simpson concluded that:

> In the twenty-first century museums can play a new role in supporting and contributing to processes of cultural renewal. This involves serious consideration of why we preserve things and for whom. It requires museum staff to look beyond the walls of their own institutions and the local community and recognize the values and needs of source communities, and to consider the contribution that museums can make to society as a whole, not just to museum visitors and the academic community. (2009, 128)

Her holistic approach to museum practice creates pace for work that focuses more on the lives and stories of people than the material and formal aspects of objects (Simpson 2006). According to Simpson, presenting multiple perspectives can help to "counteract the impression that the museum is the sole voice of authority" (2006, 60). In her work, she observes that objects are more than their physical forms. Her response to the politics of display is recognition for the curator's role to change from keeper of collections to facilitator of narratives through object-based learning (Simpson 2006). In this way, she promotes a museum practice that deconstructs standards and moves toward a more multicultural and multivocal approach to collections management and exhibition development (Simpson 1996).

In her case study of the exhibition "Our Lives" at the National Museum of the American Indian, Jennifer Shannon, like Simpson, emphasized the importance of Native voice in exhibit making (2004). As previously mentioned, Shannon's work at the NMAI prioritized co-curated exhibit development and a focus on contemporary Indigenous individuals (2004, xiii). She explains that "Native voice was not just the authored text in the exhibit" or the use of Indigenous performance within museum spaces (Shannon 2004, 183). It is more about responsibility and accountability (Shannon 2004, 183). Shannon describes her work with Native voice, "It also included the anxiety, commitment, and advocacy that NMAI staff and Native co-curators brought to the process – interacting with one another and being responsible for one another within their own communities" (2004, 183). She further explains that "the advocacy-versus-translation conceptualization of the museum's purpose" created "reconciliation" and a "civic space" (Shannon 2004, 185). Native voice works to decenter the curator's academic voice, but it also brings lived experiences into discussions of equity (Shannon 2004). Native voice and art work together to represent the identities of Indigenous artists.

Identities and experiences can be represented through art, because there is power in an image to make and evoke meaning (Leavey 2015, 227). Art is "conscious raising" (Leavey 2015, 227). Leavey writes, "there is a grid of socially constructed narratives that together constitute what becomes 'socially visible; as acceptable identity" (2015, 229). As citizens, artists are ideally positioned to use their own experiences to create artwork that inspires alternative ways of understanding and approaches to social issues. According to James Haywood Rolling, as cited by Leavey, images in visual culture can

contribute to a person's identity (2015). He makes it clear that this is particularly evident in the African American experience as the "other" (Leavey 2015).

bell hooks illustrates that "representation is a crucial location of struggle for any exploited and oppressed people asserting subjectivity and decolonization of the mind," because art plays both a role in locating resistance and in generating an identity (1995, 3).

> I think about the place of art in black life, connections between the social construction of black identity, the impact of race and class, and the presence in black life of an inarticulate but ever-present visual aesthetic governing our relationship to images, to the process of image making. (hooks 1995, 57)

hooks believes that by "using images, we connect ourselves to a recuperative, redemptive memory that enables us to construct radical identities, images of ourselves that transcend the limits of the colonizing eye" (1995, 64). These scholars identify the importance of the power of visual art to influence social value and identity systems.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH DESIGN

A primary aim of this study is to provide a deeper understanding of the Denver Art Museum's Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program, and to explore the larger contexts of museums, artists, and the artistic process. Heather Nielsen, the creator of the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program and current Chief Learning and Engagement Officer at the DAM, explains that the residency was created to engage the visitors with the humanity of art and to enhance the visitor experience through engagement with the artistic process (unpublished transcript, October 2018). When the program is viewed as an ethnographic subject, Native Arts Artist-in-Residence is a site of culturally influenced production, diverse life experiences, and meaningful interaction. In order to better understand the general questions of differing perspectives, core values, social impact, and the realities of experience, this research focused on the general question of: What can the experiences of the artists and museum professionals involved in the Native Arts Artist-in-Residency program tell about the residency's contribution to critical museology and decolonization? In order to answer this question, it is broken down into three more specific questions:

1. When artists are not specifically performing an intervention, are they still contributing to an institutional critique?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the residency?

3. Does the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program contribute to the decolonization of the American Indian art collection?

Through visits to the museum and semi-structured interviews with the Native Arts Curator, Chief Learning and Engagement Officer, Manager of Artist and Studio Programs, and the Coordinator of Artist and Studio Programs, I attempted to understand the Native Arts Artist-in-Residency program within the context of the Denver Art Museum and contemporary museum practice. Then, by using semi-structured interviews with artists Gregg Deal and Kevin Pourier, along with secondary sources and archives from other residencies, I analyzed themes, experiences, and memories. This analysis allowed me to make conclusions about the structure of the program and how it contributes to self-representation and the decolonization of the American Indian art collection at DAM.

Participants

The main criteria driving participant selection for this study was involvement in the Native Arts Artist-in-Resident program. That list was further divided into two categories, museum professionals and artists. To understand the program, I identified the staff members who could best discuss the creation, artist selection, theoretical core and values, active management, and day-to-day business of the program. This included: Heather Nielsen, John Lukavic, Jodie Gorochow, and Erin Cousins. While I contacted all previous residents, I only received a response and was able to have face-to-face interviews with Gregg Deal and Kevin Pourier. To fill in the gaps, I used the videos produced by the residency team while the artists were working inside the gallery and their

other interviews about their work and artistic practice. The residency videos can be found on the DAM's website, and they were made for sharing the artists' experience as residents with the public. This resource does have limitations, but overall, the videos do contribute to understanding the experience of the artist while working within the museum.

John Lukavic is the current Curator of Native Arts. He attended the University of Oklahoma for his Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology. His Ph.D. dissertation examined Osage artists and their relationship to their arts. He was hired at the DAM in 2012 as the Assistant Curator of Native Arts and has been involved with the program since the American Indian art gallery reopened after renovation in 2011.

Heather Nielsen joined the DAM in 2005, and the program was created in her vision. For the years leading up to the renovation in 2011, her team researched other artist-in-residency programs from around the world and conducted visitor studies of projects that would later influence the structure and strategy of the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program. She is no longer closely involved with the project due to the new position as Chief Learning and Engagement Officer, she assumed in 2019.

Jodie Gorochow is the Manager of Artist and Studio Programs in the Learning & Engagement Department. She is responsible for managing all programs dedicated to artists and work in the galleries. She has been involved with the program off and on since its beginning. She worked with Melanie Yazzie during her first residency, moved to another project, and then returned to work with the last two residencies before the North building was closed for renovations. The last two residencies were those of Wendy Red

Star and an alumni project featuring a collaboration between Melanie Yazzie, Gregg Deal, and Walter Pourier, all previous resident artists at the DAM.

Erin Cousins works closely with Gorochow as the Coordinator of Artist and Studio Programs. She is a member of the museum staff who works daily with the artists in meetings and the studio. She has been at the DAM since 2016. Specifically, for the Native Arts Artist-in-Residency program, she worked with Wendy Red Star during her residency, and with Gregg Deal, Melanie Yazzie, and Walter Pourier during the collaborative alumni project. She is also involved with other artist programs, like the first-floor artist studio and Untitled. These are programs in which a handful of artists that participated in the gallery specific residency also contribute their time and talents. Yazzie often revisited the museum to demonstrate her work in the Artist Studio, and Deal curated an Untitled in 2019.

Gregg Deal is an artist and activist who lives in Colorado Springs. He uses his art to provide an alternative perspective to his contemporary social, cultural, and economic situation. Trained in painting but working in the mediums of spray paint and printmaking for many years, he is returning to his roots and painting once again. He has held many residencies in a variety of museums, and he is actively involved in the mascot debates surrounding the Washington Redskins.

Kevin Pourier is a jewelry and buffalo horn artist. He works from his studio in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, with his wife and fellow artist, Valerie Pourier. He has earned acclaim in numerous art shows, including *Best of Show* at the 2018 Santa Fe Indian Market. He uses buffalo horn as a medium because he believes it connects him to his

ancestors. The images he carves are closely linked to his contemporary experiences of being an Indigenous man in the United States.

Geoffrey Shamos is the Director at the Vicki Myhren Gallery. Before coming to the University of Denver, Shamos was the Development Director at RedLine Contemporary Art Center in Denver. Shamos is not an employee of the Denver Art Museum, and he is not connected to the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program, but his experience at RedLine gives an insight to another Denver artist residency program. RedLine hosts resident artists in on-site studios for a term of two years. When compared with the residencies at the DAM, RedLine is a local example that can be used to highlight the elements of the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program that are different from other artist residencies that are available in Denver.

Research Methods

Semi-Structured Interviews

Anthropology today, especially museum anthropology, is more of an "anthropology by appointment" (Hannerz 2010, 76). This research was conducted in much the same way. I introduced myself to each participant by email, and most of my interviews took place during work hours and in professional offices, except for meeting with a few interviewees in coffee shops near their offices and a phone interview. The interviews followed the guidelines of semi-structured interviews. The interviews were used to elicit individual experiences and reflections of the participants. The goal was to ask each participant the same set of questions, but the research design allowed for flexibility to make minor changes to the questions to follow the stories of personal

experiences and creative processes (see Appendix 1). There was one question that I asked verbatim to every participant: “In your perspective, what is the mission of the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence Program?” This was to allow for direct comparison during the analysis of the data. All but one of the interviews was conducted in the summer and fall of 2018. The last was in August of 2019.

Secondary Analysis

Neil Harris, Marline Chambers, and Lewis Wingfield Story wrote a comprehensive history of the museum using archival documents and insider knowledge, *The First Hundred Years: The Denver Art Museum* (1996). This secondary source increased my understanding of the museum’s inner workings and its complicated beginnings as an artists’ club. Another useful secondary source was the annual reports released by the Denver Art Museum. These date back to late 1989 and are available through 2017. These reports revealed that steps toward a holistic, interpretive plan for visitor engagement have been actively taken at the DAM for more than thirty years. Since the study conducted in 1989, the overall programming, exhibition, and curating objectives have remained mostly the same with a goal to connect the creative process back to the art hanging on the walls.

Archival Research

I used the Denver Public Library’s Western History Collection to examine the original documents recorded by the secretary of the Denver Artists’ Club, Henrietta “Nettie” Bromwell. She compiled her notes into a scrapbook, and that book is held in the

archives at the library. The historical images and are from her collection of materials from her time with the Denver Artists' Club.

Data Analysis

I used Atlas.ti to analyze and code the transcripts of my interviews. The first step was to identify the most commonly used words to expose preliminary themes. These common words became apparent in a word cloud generated by Atlas.ti:

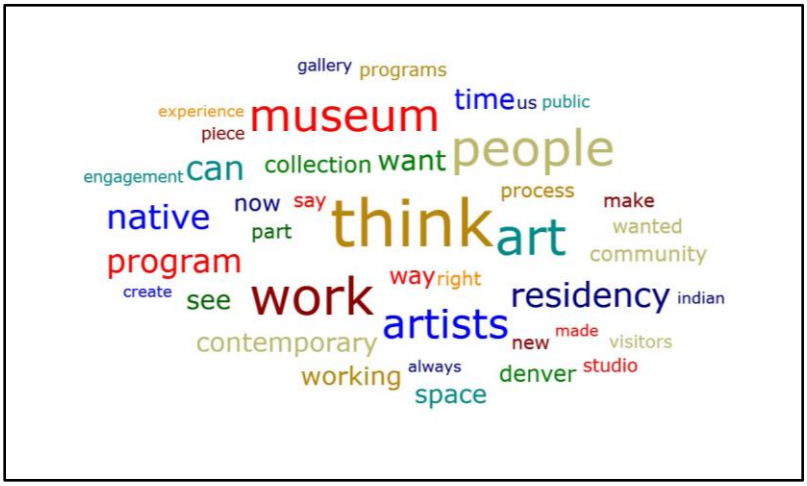

Figure 5.1: Word cloud of most frequently used words in interviews (Image by Madison Sussmann/Atlas.ti 2019)

From this list, I selected the words that contained additional meaning as overall themes: community, collection, engagement, and process. From further analysis of the context of these words, I developed the themes of art as social change, flexibility, reflection, and representation. Upon coding for these four themes throughout all interviews, video transcripts, and DAM annual reports, I was able to distinguish how the museum and artists approach each of these topics and how they directly relate to the mission of the program, the museum, and the city of Denver.

Ethics

My research was guided by two sets of professional codes of ethics—those for anthropological research and museums. With the addition of a monitoring body to ensure that the participants were not being exploited, the researcher is held accountable for the risks and must obtain informed consent (Fleuhr-Lobban 2002). Informed consent involves educating participants about the goals and methods of the research and giving them the opportunity to remove themselves if necessary. When reaching out to participants, I was clear about the objectives of my research, intent to refer to each participant by name, and potential outcomes.

Aside from ensuring that the participants were not subjected to unjust risk or exploitation, I was aware of the role I play as the anthropologist in the final product of my research. Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes that "representation is important as a concept, because it gives the impression of 'the truth'" (Smith 2013, 83). Indigenous peoples and their native knowledge systems cannot always be seen in the text. They are the focus of the study, or they are left out of generalizations about a population.

Anthropology and museums alike have their own codes of ethics. Each museum has its own version of the guidelines; however, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) has a code that applies to all institutions. There are eight parts with one reading "museums work in close collaboration with the communities from which their collections originate as well as those they serve" (ICOM 2017). Like the objects in collections, culture "is lived and experienced" (Hooper-Greenhill 2000, 19). People have historical and personal relations with objects and their meanings. These people with a vested

interest and special understanding are the stakeholders, and they must be consulted when planning an exhibition (May 2002, 32). Museums no longer have the sole authority to tell another person's story, and the "insider's point of view" is becoming more prominent as a reminder that "outsiders do not have the final word" (Ames 1992, 57). The reality is that museums cannot wholly cast off their own professional perspective, but they must recognize the constraints that place upon them. "No museum can say it all," and they should work in partnership with cultural organizations and indigenous peoples to present an exhibition that is respectful and culturally appropriate (Ames 1992, 58).

There is one other body of stakeholders that needs to be addressed. Those are the museum donors and the current funders, such as the Virginia W. Hill Foundation and the Douglas Society. They may have had no intention of being involved or connected to a museum program with an advocacy mission, and I do not want to threaten the funding for the program or sway decisions that will harm the museum. I intend to understand and illuminate.

CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS AND RESULTS

In Lakota, when we say, 'Taku skan skan wakan,' it literally means 'something holy is moving' (Walter Pourier, interviewed by Carleen Brice, 2017).

In this chapter, I discuss the main themes found in the interviews I conducted with artists, curators, and museum staff involved in the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence Program. These include the themes of Indigenous self-representation and the importance of illuminating the individual artistic process behind the final product of art. This chapter is separated into two parts, one focusing on the institution, and the other concentrating the artist experience. I compare interviews to highlight individual perspectives of the museum staff and artists, and then I reconstruct elements of experience and lasting effects. With the closure of the North building for reconstruction in 2018 these results will serve as a reflection of the program and contemplation of potential future growth.

The Institution

On October 3, 2018, I sat down with Heather Nielsen to ask about her experience creating the program and her reflections on its current and future status. In response to a question about the emphasis on the presence of the creative process, she responded that:

> The Native Arts Artist-in-Residency is really part of a much larger institutional philosophy around our commitment to inspiring creativity in our visitors, but also exploring creativity with our visitors. It doesn't matter what collection or what gallery; we are very motivated by that idea. (Heather Nielsen, unpublished interview, October 2018)

Curator of Native Arts John Lukavic also explains that the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence Program is closely tied to the larger DAM's objectives to humanize art by engaging audiences with the artistic process (John Lukavic, unpublished interview, August 2018). As discussed in Chapter Three, "Literature Review," art can be seen as an expression of the lived experiences of the artist, but, when it is displayed on a wall, along with other finished works of art, the artistic process, the life, and the individual perspective of the artist can be overshadowed by elements such as form, time, and culture area (Karp 1991). In Lukavic's opinion, the primary objective of the artist residency in the American Indian art gallery is to encourage visitors to see past the finished artwork and to engage with living artists. He believes that the residency firmly places the individual at the center of the creation of art (John Lukavic, unpublished interview, August 2018). Jodie Gorochow explains this outcome:

> The residency was really born out of the interpretive plan of the collection and to put forth the stories and the names of artists and to really tell the story from the artist's point of view. By doing that, they realized that part of the strategy would be bring working, living, contemporary artists that identity as Indigenous or Native into the gallery. (Jodie Gorochow, unpublished interview, August 2018)

When visitors interact with artists inside the museum, they are better able to imagine the individual creative artist behind the other works in the American Indian art gallery and the other galleries in the DAM.

The DAM aims to present comprehensive interpretive programming related to Native art throughout the entire institution; however, as of 2018, the location of the studio space where the artists present their work during their residency was inside the American Indian art gallery. When the artists are working on a project within the studio, the

museum guests found the American Indian artist in the American Indian art gallery. This situation can create the appearance first that they are Indigenous and then that they are contemporary artists.

Despite being physically separated from the rest of the museum, the programming that takes place during an artist's residency is created to complement the larger interpretive plan of the DAM. This is made possible through an existing structure of interdepartmental collaboration of team-based exhibition development. This team-based approach was influenced by the trends in museum practice of the late 1980s and 1990s. For example, in 1991, John Terrell, a curator at the Chicago Field Museum, published an often-cited article on the importance of the interdisciplinary team approach to exhibition development titled "Disneyland and the Future of Museum Anthropology" in the *American Anthropologist*. In this article, he described this technique as "putting a museum educator, a science curator, and an exhibits designer together in the same room at the same time and actually getting results" (1991, 151). This approach was then taught to other museum professionals by the Director of Education at the Field Museum, Carol Blackmon (Terrell 1991).

Terrell explained that the success of the team approach was evident in the success and popularity of the exhibits that were produced, the 1986 "Te Maori: Maori Art from New Zealand," for example. At the end of the article, Terrell concluded that it was the end of department segregation (1991, 152). He suggested that future museum decisions be made by those who know best rather than who was in a specific department (1991, 152). Terrell further states that "museum curators owe one to the museum visitor" (1991,

152). It appears that the late 1980s was a critical time in transforming the landscape of museum work and integrating not only collaboration with source communities, but with visitors as well (Terrell 1991).

In 1989, there was an initiative to create labels throughout the DAM that focused on the experiences and lives of the artists who created the artwork. The interpretive labels to accompany the objects were created and installed by a team that consisted of a member from the curatorial, education, and exhibit development departments (McDermott-Lewis 1990). The project had two primary objectives: (1) "to develop a conceptual framework for creating interpretive materials [...] to help novices become more expert in, and more rewarded by, their encounters with works of art" and (2) "to create thirteen experimental label and gallery guide projects based on this framework" (McDermott-Lewis 1990, 1). While the second goal pertains only to the completion of the evaluation, the framework laid out in the first goal is still evident in the way DAM employees describe the objectives of exhibitions, programs, and events.

Once the installation was complete, a research team tracked viewing patterns to assess which objects attracted and held visitor attention (McDermott-Lewis 1990). The researchers positioned comment card boxes to solicit written questions from guests and surveyed visitors about their backgrounds and interpretive needs (McDermott-Lewis 1990). The team also experimented with labels in the museum's American Indian collection. They decided that to "bridge the gap" between the minimalistic object labels and the specific human-centered information, they would need to provide more interpretive labels that focused on the "human aspects of certain objects" (McDermott-

Lewis 1990, 81). It was determined that there are two primary recommendations for writing contextual labels in the intercultural context. They were "baseline humanistic information," such as why the artist created the work, how it was used, and how it was created, and a "leitmotif," or a recurrent theme for which the visitor can identify and construct an understanding (McDermott-Lewis 1990, 81). After the installation of six interpretive labels specifically for the research, there was an evaluation phase in which two focus groups reviewed the American Indian art gallery (McDermott-Lewis 1990). It was concluded that visitors enjoyed the greater dearth of information provided about the objects and the artists (McDermott-Lewis 1990, 81). The observations made during the study resulted in the publication of *the Denver Art Museum Interpretive Project* (McDermott-Lewis 1990). This report spurred the museum-wide steps toward engagement and interdepartmental cooperation in exhibition development and programming (McDermott-Lewis 1990).

At the time of the reinstallation of the American Indian art gallery in 2012 all the artist programs and exhibitions at the DAM were created by a team that includes a representative of the Learning and Engagement Department. This was intended to ensure that education programming focused on the material culture of the exhibit. Nielsen explains that:

> As an educator, all of my work has been about inviting behaviors into a museum experience that is a departure from what we traditionally think. From the content perspective and the anthropological and critical museum practice side of things, it has also been about how we infuse galleries with voices, messiness, process, dialogue, and relevance. (Heather Nielsen, unpublished interview, October 2018)

According to Heather Nielsen, the educational programming inside the museum is closely connected to the exhibits, the objects, and the artist voice (Heather Nielsen, unpublished interview, October 2018).

The 1989 experiment set the precedent for what would become the new American Indian art gallery upon reinstallation in 2011. While the 1988 reinstallation supplemented object labels with humanistic context, the 2011 renovation placed the individual artist in the forefront:

> The interpretation was artist centered. There was a lot of effort to think about the role of artists in their communities. We wanted the artists to be the protagonists of the story. When we opened those galleries that was a real moment for us. (Heather Nielsen, unpublished transcript, October 2018)

The American Indian art gallery set itself apart by referring exclusively to the artist (John Lukavic, unpublished transcript, August 2018). There were no more labels that gave the illusion that a work of art was created by a community, such as just using "Cheyenne" in the space reserved for artist name, but rather, they intentionally use "Cheyenne Artist" to signal to the visitor that each piece was made by a unique creative being. Something this simple is one of the strongest examples of "humanity" in a collection where the artists have been lost to history and anthropology. As of 2018, these types of teams are still used by the DAM in exhibition development, and in interviews with me and media outlets, teamwork is often praised as the facilitator for well thought out and engaging exhibitions.

After the success of the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program, other similar programs were instituted in the museum, such as the Creative-in-Residence, the Artist Studio, and program dedicated to Latinex artist interventions into the ancient Americas galleries (Heather Nielsen, unpublished interview, October 2018).

> We did the Native Arts Artist-in-Residency, and it was successful. Then, we developed the Creative-in-Residency program as a result of another grant and that continues. Creative-in-Residence becomes a really interesting opportunity to work locally with artists of a broad set of disciplines, backgrounds, life experiences. Due to these successes, I do think you will see living artists, locally and nationally, in the reinstallation of our New World collections. (Heather Nielsen, unpublished transcript, October 2018)

In her role, at that time, as the Director of Learning and Engagement and Experience and Interpretation Specialist for Native Arts and New World, the scope of Nielsen's work was not bound to a single gallery or department. She explained that Roxanne Swentzell, though not an artist-in-residence by name, was a key figure in expressing the DAM's pursuit of engagement:

> We didn't call [Roxanne Swentzell] a Native Arts Artist-in-Residency, but if you think about DAM as always prioritizing working with living artists, Roxanne is another example of that. Early in the development process of commissioning of her work, we talked about the importance of an artist. Since we were commissioning an artist to do this work, why wouldn't we invite her process into the gallery? Why should we open the gallery with a finished work of art when we could actually open the gallery with her working?' That took nine months. When we opened the new gallery, everything pristine and brand new, we opened an empty elevator lobby with her and her sister plastering the walls and mixing clay. (Heather Nielsen, unpublished transcript, October 2018)

The DAM received an NEA grant to fund the first residency with Melanie Yazzie for 2012. Continued commitment to the program lead to additional funding through the Virginia Hill Foundation and the Douglas Society. While the Native Arts Artist-in-Residency program was first started on an experimental basis to engage the creative process in gallery spaces, it has endured because it is part of a larger initiative to pursue community involvement and active visitor participation.

> What I have seen is that artists can push our thinking and our understanding of our community. Every time we work with an artist, there is an "oh" moment. I

> hope that our expertise and our practice of visitor engagement helps push the artist practice, too. (Jodie Gorochow, unpublished interview, August 2018)

When discussing the creation of the artist residency, Nielsen refers directly to the study from "thirty years ago" (Heather Nielsen, unpublished interview, October 2018). She explained that the efforts to combine dynamic, individual voices with static final products was put into motion long before there was a studio to house working artists inside the museum.

> Now we are going back twenty or thirty years to review the research educators have done at the DAM in terms of how to best engage visitors with objects. The kind of creative process seen now is just part of a long history that began with research that made us see that the artworks don't speak for themselves. One of the ways to support meaningful engagement with works of art is through the human connection. Who is the person behind the work of art? That's why, thirty years ago, the museum was doing experiments around different types of labels. That eventually led into how we bring in artist voices, perspectives, and images into the gallery. (Heather Nielsen, unpublished transcript, October 2018)

Based on this report and the influence it still carries among museum staff, the DAM was participating in the critical thinking and methodologies of the critical museology movement that was taking hold in the 1980s and 1990s.

An example of how the residency program fits into the DAM's broader programming themes was the exhibit *Spun: Adventures in Textiles* of 2013. Two years after the first resident artist, a museum-wide annual report was released discussing the "creativity" among residents, visitors, and staff. The 2014 report, *Tapping into Creativity & Becoming Part of Something Bigger*, addressed questions for the future of artists working inside the museum.

> We were at a new threshold in our understanding of the power of art museums in people's lives. And we had new questions. What would it mean to be a museum that was about culture and creativity as well as art history and art appreciation?

> What might that look like? How do visitors respond to the new experiences we're creating? Do they enjoy them? Does a focus on creativity attract new visitors? Are we adding value for individuals and for Denver with a creativity focus? (Denver Art Museum 2014, 19)

In 2013, shortly before this report was published, evaluators examined the multi-departmental exhibition *Spun: Adventures in Textiles* as a case study for how an interdepartmental exhibit focusing on creativity can "break down the barriers some people feel about Art with a capital A" (Denver Art Museum 2014, 22). *Spun* was a "wide-ranging look at textiles from pre-Columbian weavings to Navajo blankets to an examination of clothing in art and photography in the campus-wide exhibition" (Denver Art Museum 2019f). The objective of *Spun* was to create a wide range of in-gallery "moments." One such "moment" was a sewing circle hosted by Native Arts Artist-in-Resident, Marie Watt. Her residency was folded into the much larger institutional mission. The report concluded that by making art more accessible, the visitor experience was more meaningful and memorable (Denver Art Museum 2014, 22). One aspect that made this evaluation different from others at the DAM was that it was an investigation into an overarching *idea* rather than an exhibition or exhibition element.

Marie Watt's project was uniquely apt for the residency program and inclusion into *Spun*, because it requires visitor engagement and community involvement. Her project would later be titled *Blanket Story: Confluence, Heirloom, and Tenth Mountain Division*, and she "was interested in how blankets are these objects that we take for granted, and they have these extraordinary histories of use" (Watt 2013). In an interview she explained that community involvement was inherently at the core of her project:

> My process in collecting blankets evolved over time. When I first started, I was getting the blankets from thrift stores, and I had friends come over, and they would say, 'Oh, I used to have a blanket like that,' or 'My grandmother had a blanket like that,' and they would launch into a story. It struck me very early on in my process that blankets were markers for memory and story. I became more and more interested in that, and eventually started thinking about how I could collaborate with communities directly and have blanket stories that were attached to specific blanket and maybe a blanket as a placeholder for a story. The blankets behind me were collected in collaboration with the Denver Art Museum. They came from people in the community, but I also think they came from points beyond Denver, and points beyond Colorado, as well. (Watt 2013)

Watt's project needed the public as much as the museum needed her to interact with the public. The program's staff makes a great effort to inform each incoming resident that engagement with the public is a vital aspect of their residency. Jodie Gorochow explained in an interview that "the word 'residency' was used, because we wanted sustained artist engagement," but the residency at the Denver Art Museum differs from other residencies associated with fine art (Jodie Gorochow, unpublished interview, August 2018). It is not necessarily designed to resemble a retreat or a quiet space to work. The museum does allow moments for the artist to seclude him/herself to push their practice, complete a project or research in the collections, but, ultimately, the mission is visitor engagement. For Marie Watt, this was no issue. Her artistic process was based on her success with meeting and collaborating with and collecting from the museum visitors and people of Denver.

The Artist Experience

Based on my interviews with artists and staff, there are three primary aspects to a successful residency: flexibility, time, and transparency. Each artist was selected for their particular artistic practice and ability to work with the public. I discuss the artists'

experiences starting with selection, the planning phase, their time at the museum, and their reflections upon leaving the studio. Each artist had a different experience due to their own artistic process and art form, as well as the flexibility of the museum programming.

Generally, the artist is chosen by John Lukavic for how well their style fits into the larger museum theme at the time:

> There is no template for how the residency works. We don't get a mass of applications. The artists are hand selected and invited to come and be artists-in-residence. The main reason we do that is because we are trying to make smart decisions about strategic planning and a strategic synergy between the artist-in-residence program and other things that are going on in the institution. (John Lukavic, unpublished interview, August 2018)

The decision to select residents individually, rather than by application is different than most of the residency programs in the United States. It is even different from the other program at the Denver Art Museum. The system of choosing artists as residency is strategic in that it ensures a "good fit," but it also sets the terms of engagement in favor of the institution. The Creative-in-Residence program was designed around the success of the Native Arts residency, but it selects its artists by an application process.

The artist selection is based on the opinions and needs of the institution, but the process of planning and organizing the residency becomes a collaborative process after an artist is selected. Jodie Gorochow describes what the early days of residency preparation look like:

> We start with the artist and their practice. What are their goals for their residency? Do they want to create a new body of work focus on this topic? Do they want to call attention to a work of art in our collection? Do they want to research pieces in our collection? Do they want to look at other collections in comparison or in relationship to the American Indian Art Collection? What kind of work do they

> want to create? From there, we create shared goals to think about the entry point for visitors. I really think about who is going to be impacted by the work. How do we make sure that visitors get that experience with the artist or see a different viewpoint on the creative practice and what it means to be a contemporary artist? Even though the artists identify with being Native or Indigenous, it does not mean that they are not contemporary artists working in the contemporary art world. I think one of the values is dialogue. (Jodie Gorochow, unpublished interview, August 2018)

Despite being chosen for how well they fit into museum programming themes, the artists have the flexibility to mold the residency into whatever form most benefits their own goals. This has the potential to be seen as a co-authorship of program goals. Gregg Deal, a contemporary artist, two-time resident, and curator of an *Untitled*, explained that:

> We had a round table discussion where we came up with a couple of goals. I had a very large, eight feet by twelve feet panel that I was going to paint. We set a space aside and made precursor goals and decisions on additional resources, like paint and canvases. Some of it we ended up doing, and some of it we didn't. They were flexible with me, which for me is good. (Gregg Deal, unpublished interview, August 2018)

From Deal's perspective, flexibility is a key component to working collaboratively. In part, it was the willingness to adjust to the needs of the artist that allows for the residents to use their time as a resident in a way that was beneficial to both them and the museum.

Residency positions are valuable for artists professionally. They allow artists to work in a professional environment, build their relationships with museums and collectors, and to add to their body of work.

> Denver Art Museum to me was being in a space that promoted high art. It was a chance to be listed among the artists that have participated in their program, such as contemporary Native artists that work in the domain of 'high art.' I felt like the residency was a big deal for artists because, in a way, it validates their work. (Gregg Deal, unpublished interview, August 2018)

Residencies build prestige and esteem, but they also build relationships with institutions, collectors, and other artists. Public-facing residencies, such as the ones at the DAM, carry the added benefit of amplifying ideas and sharing knowledge and creativity with a wide audience. For example, Kevin Pourier, contemporary artist known for his work with buffalo horn and jewelry, described what it was like to be a resident during a donors' event:

> People were crowding in, and they were so interested. I was talking the whole time. That was when the donors were there and members of the museum. It was amazing. I was answering a question to the left, and then to the right, and then there was another one. It was really fun. It was about making connections with a lot of people. I felt like I was actually doing something. In my business, I talk about my work, I show my work, and I interact with public people. (Kevin Pourier, unpublished interview, August 2019)

Through the residency, the museum can fulfill its mission to engage the visitors with the humanity behind the art, but the artists are also able to leverage the program in a way that best suits their needs, be that a videographer, a print studio, a platform to have their messages heard, or a way to connect with donors and potential collectors.

While Kevin Pourier's experience was overall a positive one, it was different from that of the other artists. He was a last-minute replacement for an artist who had canceled (Kevin Pourier, unpublished interview, August 2019). Instead of being given a year in advance notice of the residency and six months of hands-on planning, museum visits, and staff meetings, he only had one month to prepare (Jodie Gorochow, unpublished interview, August 2018). He also said that he had to sandwich the residency between a show in New York City and one in Santa Fe (Kevin Pourier, unpublished interview, August 2019). He explained that the lack of time to prepare made it impossible

for him to complete a project during his residency, mainly due to the limitations of the studio and the medium of his work, buffalo horn. However, he was able to make the most out of the experience, and he dedicated his time to designing, something that he rarely does at home in his studio at Pine Ridge (Kevin Pourier, unpublished interview, August 2019). The differences in his experience and reflections of the program provide me data to compare against the accounts of the more "normal" planning and residency phases of the other artists.

Generally, the goal is to have an artist selected a year in advance with the planning beginning in earnest three to six months before the artist is scheduled in the studio (Jodie Gorochow, unpublished interview, August 2018). The artists are asked to come up with a proposal and a materials list (Jodie Gorochow, unpublished interview, August 2018). Based on these needs, the museum assesses whether or not they can accommodate the project. In the instance of Gregg Deal, due to ventilation issues in the studio, he could not use spray paint, a signature medium of his work. He describes how working around that restriction was inconvenient, but it was also a way for him to reconnect with his training and techniques of his past:

> I went to college for painting, but most of the painting I was doing up to that point had not been brush to canvas. When I got to the studio, there were a lot of restrictions on spray paint. I couldn't use spray paint inside that studio, because of the collections in the gallery. I had to pick up a brush and make it work. I had done that before; it just had been a while. That helped me to think about that type of work again. Now I am doing more brush to canvas then I have done since college. In those situations, you have to be adaptable. I don't see that as a compromise. It was just taking things I have done in the past and bringing them to the forefront. There are restrictions of space, and you have to make it work. (Gregg Deal, unpublished interview, August 2018)

Part of the residency at the DAM is about working around the restrictions of the space and the primary objective of visitor engagement. Through coding my interviews, I discovered that the theme of engagement was most frequently introduced in my interviews when talking about the artistic process. Despite the overwhelming connection between engagement and the museum collections quoted by the museum staff members during the interviews when asked to describe the residency program's mission, the tie between the concepts engagement and process is far more prominent in textual analysis.

When talking to Heather Nielsen, Jodie Gorochow, and Erin Cousins, they each expressed the importance of transparency when inviting the artists to be residents. Heather Nielsen explained that "we have to be very upfront and honest with the artist, about what the goals, the mission of our program is [sic], so they can also decide for themselves" (unpublished transcript, August 2018). She further explains that the central role of visitor engagement was not always clear. The team had to learn how to be transparent as possible from the beginning (Heather Nielsen, unpublished transcript, October 2018). Jodie Gorochow offered a similar explanation.

> I think the most important thing that we have learned over the years, is that the clearer and more upfront that you can be with an artist and the more transparent and to create shared goals together. This can help to maneuver around obstacles or bumps in the road that come up. (Jodie Gorochow, unpublished interview, August 2018)

The reason for the attention to transparency is that certain projects do to fit into the criteria of visitor engagement. For example, while being a significant tool of institutional critique, "mining the museum" is a creative process that is not easily shared with the public. In these types of situations, museum professionals can use transparency to

generate a more constructive collaboration, and in many ways, this is seen at the DAM. However, Gorochow explains that the vision of the artist drives the residency, but when it comes to project selection and planning, the primary mission is almost always visitor involvement.

> At the end of the day, we want to try as much as possible to accommodate and fulfil and artist's vision. That can't always happen, and it is a very tight knit community of artists that are Native and Indigenous, and we want to make sure that we continue to have a supportive reputation in the field. I think that just happens when you are very transparent about how this is not a traditional residency where you move in for a month and you just create work in a studio space. (Jodie Gorochow, unpublished interview, August 2018)

The reason for the attention to transparency is that certain projects need to fit into the criteria of visitor engagement. For example, while being a significant tool of institutional critique, "mining the museum" is a creative process that is not easily shared with the public. It is important to note that there is no written mission for the residency program that has been agreed upon and published. The Department of Learning and Engagement created the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program, and the objectives of that department remain prevalent in the current practices. The residency exists under the purview of both curation and programming; therefore, there are compromises among each epistemology.

Two of the past residents, Wendy Red Star and Marie Watt, are examples of two artists who use two methods that highlight curation and educational interpretation's different objectives. Red Star worked in the collections of Crow material, and, as previously discussed, Watt used the DAM's community relationships to build a collaborative tower of quilts. On the one hand, Red Star was "interested in diving deeply

into the objects and letting her work come from that" (Erin Cousins, unpublished interview, October 2018). There was overall support for her work in the interviews I conducted with the museum staff, but it was noted that her work presented a challenge in filling the visitor engagement objective. On the other hand, Watt's artistic practice at the time of her residency is based on collaboration and community sewing circles. The DAM gave her access to people she otherwise would not have had a connection to, and the museum was able to benefit from designing programs around her work.

Each resident had an objective they wanted to achieve while at the DAM. Walter Pourier wanted a platform to widen the reach of his message of supporting youth movements. Melanie Yazzie, Jan Jacobs, Kevin Pourier, and Linda Aguilar wanted to focus on their practice while having meaningful conversations with visitors about identity. Gregg Deal needed a performance space and somewhere to reconnect him with a past process. Will Wilson and Rose Simpson wanted a studio to develop a new series of work, and Jeffrey Gibson needed a supportive crew and an installation space. In the same way that each artist differed in their approach to the residency, they each had a different experience.

When asked, either by me or another interview for a DAM video produced as an overview of their residency, that artists' responses clustered into three themes: (1) the uniqueness of the experience, (2) their inspirations through working with visitors, and (3) the chance to research and expand their artistic practice. Gregg Deal has had many residencies around the United States, such as with the Smithsonian. He explained that the "[The Native Arts residency] was unique in that most places have a preconceived notion,

or idea, of what they expect an artist, particularly a native artist to do" (Gregg Deal, unpublished interview, August 2018). He continued by saying that "Censorship can come up in those situations, as well as just the fact that Western understanding of indigenous people, and by extension indigenous art ends up being canonized into a set of expectations that the artists are often forced into" (Gregg Deal, unpublished interview, August 2018).

While all artists worked with the public as required by the program, two found the interaction with audiences to be especially inspiring and beneficial. The Native Arts residency was Kevin Pourier's first experience in a residency that focused on visitor engagement. He explained that he was initially intimidated by the guests "peaking in," but he said that "I would go out and invite them in. Then, it was like, "Oh, wow." They were actually participating and seeing what was going on and had a million questions (Kevin Pourier, unpublished interview, August 2019). Another artist that was inspired by work with visitors was Walter Pourier. He said "The Denver Museum's Artist-in-Residency program has just been a really big thrill for me. We could reach thousands of people in here with stories that are coming out of Native country and prophecy talk" (Brice 2017).

Other artists used their time at the DAM to conduct research and expand their practice. For example, Wendy Red explored the American Indian collections to discover who those artists were and what they could tell her about herself and her community. She was interested in conducting research inside museum collections because, as she says, "I want to draw a connection between them and my culture" (Cousins 2017). While Red

Star was taking advantage of the unseen elements of the museum, Melanie Yazzie used her time in the residency to create a new body of work that expanded on self-empowerment and identity (Denver Art Museum 2017b). To view longer descriptions of the artists' experiences, see Appendix 2.

With the North Building being closed for renovation and the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence being put on hold, one of the hardest things is to recreate a day-in-the-life of a resident artist. Some, such as Gregg Deal, treated the space as an office and was there from nine o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the evening, while Kevin Pourier flew in to stay a few days before heading back to his home in Pine Ridge, North Dakota. Wendy Red Star spent months researching in the collections, and Gregg Deal staged multiple interventions. Despite the differences in one residency to the next, one common feature was the studio and the opportunities, restrictions, and challenges it posed.

Working with the public could be very taxing. Artists like Gregg Deal and Walter Pourier were accustomed to engaging in challenging conversations with people, but other artists found it overwhelming. In an anecdote, Gregg Deal describes an encounter he had with a guest during his residency at the DAM. In these types of situations, museum professionals can use transparency to generate a more constructive collaboration, and in many ways, this is seen at the DAM. However, Gorochow explains that the vision of the artist drives the residency, but when it comes to project selection and planning, the primary mission is almost always visitor involvement. As Deal relates:

> A man came in and he had a lot of questions. It was clear that he was seeing something that he had never seen before, and he was having a hard time processing it. He asked me, 'Can I ask you some questions?' I said he could. He starts asking me many questions, and they were tame. I am knowledgeable

> enough and articulate enough that I was able to talk to him and answer his questions. At one point he cut me off mid-sentence, and said 'I have to tell you, that when I talk to you, I don't really feel like I am talking to a Native American. I feel like I am talking to a white person. You speak so well.' In that moment, I had a decision. I could get super pissed, because that is a rude thing to say, or I could realize that he had never talked to someone like me before. Maybe, he is shocked at what he is confronted with, that maybe he comes by it honestly. In that moment a conversation could happen. I could correct those things, because I didn't think that he is being malicious. I feel like the conversations Natives have with non-Natives are really important, because Americans, in general, have no frame of reference to a modern, living, indigenous person or what that even means. (Gregg Deal, unpublished interview, August 2018)

This is an example of an artist representing himself as a Native person. Deal was able to explain, in his own words, what it is to be "a modern, living, Indigenous person" (Gregg Deal, unpublished interview, August 2018). Deal is also a social practice artist, and he feels that it is his duty to make a difference and change perceptions.

In 2016, Gregg Deal performed *Ethnographic Zoo* at the Denver Art Museum (Deal 2015). The performance intended to "deconstruct the commodification and consumption of the Indigenous image" (Deal 2015). Dressed in an assortment of "traditional" wear and costume pieces, he represented the stereotypes of American Indian people (Deal 2015). American Indian people have a particular place in the American imaginary, and the images have not changed in hundreds of years (Deal 2015). Deal discusses the images of American Indians as a fiction.

> And you must understand that it is fabricated through hundreds of years of selling the American Indian through romantic notions projected through prisms of colonialism, romantic nationalism, and propagandistic patriotism, justifying land grabs, dehumanization, forced assimilation, and served with a side of imposed racial, cultural, and social inferiority. (Deal 2016)

His performance addresses museums' roles in marginalizing Indigenous people, and by placing himself outside the front doors of the Denver Art Museum, visitors could not

ignore his critique of images and representations of other cultures and ethnic groups (Deal 2015). His place in front of the museum was strategically chosen, because he wanted to influence how the visitors would experience the rest of the museum (Deal 2015). By confronting the guests with a surprising but compelling image, Deal was creating a moment for them to reorganize their assumptions before entering the museum (Gregg Deal, unpublished interview, August 2018).

The Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program does bring elements of first voice into the American Indian art gallery, but while discussing their time as a resident, one feature was always mentioned when asked what it was like to create art in a museum. The studio is a classroom converted to accommodate artists' work and the walls facing the gallery space completely made of windows. Deal address the windows and the history of Indigenous people being put on display:

> There are windows, and I felt like I was on display. It was like 'Look, the Indian is painting.' I found it really funny, but at the same time, it's almost a novel idea. You have an Indian artist that is painting live, and that is amazing. How is that any different than any other artist? It is, because of the novelty and the romanticism of Indigenous people. There is a novelty to this just in the way that the culture is set up. (Deal 2015)

By creating the feeling of being put on display, the "fishbowly" aspect of the studio reminded Kevin Pourier of the ethnographic zoos of the late 1800s (Kevin Pourier, unpublished interview, August 2019). In 1893 the Chicago World's Fair hosted the largest ethnographic exhibition of United States history. People and their cultures were put on display for the consumption of fair guests. This mass exploitation of peoples is still present in the consciousnesses of Indigenous communities.

In an interview with Jamie Powell of the University of Chapel Hill in North Carolina, John Lukavic explained the importance of being mindful of the "fishbowl effect" when the artist studio is placed in a windowed space inside the gallery (Powell 2018). He further explained that it was not their intention to make the artists feel that they are on display (Powell q2018). Heather Nielsen interprets the space as being very intentionally placed to make it clear to the visitors in the American Indian art gallery that these artists are not from a "vanished" people (Heather Nielsen, unpublished transcript, October 2018). While being in danger of making the artists feel that they are on display for the museum visitors, she thinks that self-representation supersedes the awkwardness.

Many of the artists stated that they recognized that the fishbowl effect was not a malicious act of the museum. Gregg Deal said, "there was this weird observation thing that would happen, but I don't think that was the intent of the museum. I think that sometimes you set these things up, you don't know how these things will happen or how things will turn out" (Gregg Deal, unpublished interview, August 2018). There have been multiple efforts made by artists and museum staff to make the space more accessible. During Melanie Yazzie's residency, she converted it into a living room. While Will Wilson was a resident, the space was filled with a fishing tent that he used as a darkroom to develop his photographs (Heather Nielsen, unpublished transcript, October 2018; John Lukavic, unpublished transcript, August 2019). Deal mentioned that rather than worrying about the space, he left the studio to more fully engage with the DAM collections and the visitors (Gregg Deal, unpublished interview, August 2018). The museum gave the artists a place to work that concretely connected contemporary Indigenous artistic process with

the works on display in the American Indian art gallery. An unfortunate byproduct was the “fishbowl” effect.

Overall, each resident reflected on their experience in an overwhelmingly positive light. It appears that the Denver Art Museum allows for enough freedom in design and practice, that the artist does not feel that he/she is on display or performing for the museum. The program has shortcomings of space, time constraints, and competing missions of artist empowerment and visitor engagement, but there are also constructive elements of flexibility, collaboration, and self-representation that can be built upon.

CHAPTER SEVEN: REFLECTIONS

We are not just decorating people's houses anymore. We are doing art that has meaning and power (Kevin Pourier, unpublished interview, August 2019).

Yes, you kind of have to let go of control a little bit. I think, again, that is where we have really pushed ourselves and created skills around what it means to be open, but, also, what it means to own your expertise (Jodie Gorochow, unpublished Interview, August 2018).

The theories and methods of critical museology, such as "studying up," museum ethnography, and institutional critique and the concepts of self-representation and Native voice as decolonizing practices explain that the intentions of the artist endure whether or not the artist name has been recorded (Ahlberg Yohe 2020), there is power in art to express identity and memory (ahtone 2020; hooks 1995; Leavey 2015), artists can use the power of art to influence museum practices (Alberro 2009; Marstine 2012), and the process of decolonization is an ongoing conversation about the locations of power and how they manifest in collaborations, exhibitions, and museum programming (Shannon 2014, Simpson 1996).

At the time my research was conducted the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program was on hiatus due to renovations that began in 2018, and it was a convenient time for those involved to reflect on the program. There is no institutionally approved

mission for the Native Arts residency program, but when asked, “What is your perspective of the mission of the program?” the answers given were quite similar, and there was a common link between collections and living artists. Erin Cousins emphasized the “contemporary voice for this historical collection” because “This isn’t history; this is now” (Erin Cousins, unpublished interview, October 2018). Heather Nielsen shared a similar opinion:

> Present American Indian art is contemporary. Present American Indian art is happening today, and it is thriving. Living artists are a way to bring their process into the museum experience. All of my work as a museum educator has been about inviting behaviors into a museum experience that is a departure from what we tend to think. (Heather Nielsen, unpublished transcript, October 2018)

The people involved in the program are dedicated to expanding what a museum is and what happens inside museums. They want the visitors to be more connected to the art, because that makes them more relevant to the broader themes and contexts present in the art and the artist’s creative process. Curator John Lukavic stated this clearly when I spoke to him about the mission of the program. He said, “The idea in many ways is to humanize the artist themselves, because when you do so, visitors can connect to the art more” (John Lukavic, unpublished interview, August 2018). The information imparted by an exhibit is only as good as what the visitors remember and take away with them.

As of 2018, Jodie Gorochow became the person responsible for the planning and execution of the residency program. As such, she is at the center of reflecting on the

program and planning its future. When I talked to her in August 2018 about the program after the renovation, she said there were no definitive plans for how the program will be different upon the reopening of the North building. But she maintained that the future goals are similar to those defined by past evaluations and discussions:

> The mission is really tied to the interpretive plan of the collection. I think it is about creating the space, the dialogue, the opportunity for visitors to be exposed to artists' practice, and specifically that there is this perspective, especially within the American Indian art world, that it is all in the past and not in the present. The goal is really to show that bridge between past, present, and future. (Jodie Gorochow, unpublished interview, August 2018)

The organization and development of exhibitions at the Denver Art Museum are closely related to the institution's history. The makeup of the museum today reflects the decisions made in the museum's past. The Denver Art Museum was founded by artists who proposed to enliven the artistic community of Denver, and the collections were heavily influenced by geography and the inclinations of local donors, such as Anne Evans. Certain institutional structures can be seen in both the strengths and weaknesses of the Native Arts Artist-in-Residency program.

For centuries, the contemporary voice of Indigenous peoples was left out of the museum in favor of completed sequences of type and stylistic change. The Denver Art Museum is a large fine arts museum that refers to itself as an "encyclopedic museum," but its commitment to American Indian as art separates it from other similar museums

(John Lukavic, unpublished transcript, August 2018). While contemporary American Indian art is still largely separated from contemporary American art, the Denver Art Museum is taking steps to reduce the authority of Western interpretations of non-Western art. The resident artists use their presence to signify Indigenous survivance, humanity in art, and the importance of art in the broader sociopolitical debate. Art provides an alternative perspective to reality, and the Denver Art Museum's Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program gives the artists the microphone to say that Indigenous people are still here.

One of the most notable benefits of the residency program is that it offers artists a space to represent their own work through face-to-face conversations with viewers. Self-representation is an important component to democratization, because it has the potential to decenter the museum authority of curatorial voice over the interpretations of art. In my research and analysis of interviews, I found that self-representation was also closely linked to the power of the artist to provide alternative perspectives that can play a role in the larger contexts of social change. For example, according to Kevin Pourier, social activism is nearly inseparable from his artistic practice:

> I have done pieces about being oppressed and how we turn on each other when we have been oppressed for so long. Those are my stories that I am dealing with, and they are behaviors that I run into around the country. When I see other artists do a scene that looks like it came out of the 1800s about chasing buffalo, I think

> they are nice, but those are our ancestors' stories. Two hundred years from now when people go into museums and see my work, I do not want them to think I was out chasing buffalo or doing battles, I want them to see what we were going through as Native people in 2019. (unpublished interview, August 2019)

Experiences inform art, and the struggles for recognition, identity, and equality constitute a significant part of being an American Indian in the United States. Melanie Yazzie reminds us that this is not an issue of the past. She said, "We're in a changing time politically in this country that some people feel that they have been losing power or losing voice or losing identity" (Melanie Yazzie, interview, Brice 2017). Art is part of the artist's life, and it is a physical expression of themselves and their circumstances. Dr. Jill Ahlberg Yohe writes, "The object's agency is intermingled with the maker's intentions; the maker remains present" (Ahlberg Yohe 2020, 177). Self-representation is important in that it brings Native voices into contemporary conversations of identity and active participation among multiple communities.

Gregg Deal further explains the importance of art in social change, because American Indian people are often left out of conversations about unequal opportunities and access.

> Contemporary art is important, because you are expressing something, your art is your life, and there is oftentimes a statement being made that relates back to you being the person that you are. One of the biggest obstacles we face as Indigenous peoples, is trying to prove to people that we still exist. Contemporary art is a really good way to do that. (Deal 2015)

Art inspires conversations, and these conversations encourage people to reconsider the present norms and their own assumptions of what is "normal." A large part of Gregg Deal's career is about having the hard conversations and addressing the issues that Indigenous and minority people face today:

> When you actually have a conversation, and when you actually start breaking down each of the little bits and pieces of it, it begins to make more sense, and people begin to think more critically, and they begin to open their hearts and their minds to the idea that something else exists other than what they believe or are in their preconceived notions. (Deal 2015)

Art is a discourse between the artist, the self, and the viewer, and in the circumstance of the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence program, the conversation is no longer an abstraction. It is a space for face-to-face dialogue.

A well-established example of an art institution being deeply integrated into Denver's artist community is the RedLine Contemporary Art Center. RedLine is a facility that generates a constructive community of creatives and, in turn, plays an active part in the social development of Denver. Redline serves as a useful comparison to the Denver Art Museum, because it is more closely tied to the needs and policies of the city. RedLine was founded in 2008 by the artist and philanthropist Laura Merage (Geoffrey Shamos, unpublished transcript, October 2018). She wanted to create a space for artists to expand their practice free from constraints. The institution, itself, is situated in the Five Points, Arapahoe Square, RiNo area of Denver in a retrofitted vacuum repair warehouse

(Geoffrey Shamos, unpublished transcript, October 2018). The location of RedLine is central to the municipal services that assist the homeless population. When these services were created, they were clustered and placed on, what was at the time, the outskirts of town. As of 2019, this area is experiencing a boom in development and rapid gentrification. RedLine was founded on the theory that artists benefit from community and the community benefits from artists (Geoffrey Shamos, unpublished transcript, October 2018).

Geoffrey Shamos, the former Development Director of RedLine and now Director of the Vicki Myhren Gallery at the University of Denver, explains that it is "a cycle of building community among artists" and that "having some of these opportunities will keep them networked together, but it will also promote artists staying in Denver" (unpublished transcript, October 2018). Community support is central to the museum practice at RedLine. Both RedLine and the Denver Art Museum emerged from the local community of artists and entrepreneurs, but they each have their own conception of the role social practice art and the creative process of resident artists plays in the community.

Artists who earn residencies at RedLine through a competitive application process are not only encouraged to push their practice, but they are expected to participate in multiple community outreach and empowerment programs. They offer drop-in hours that

mainly serve individuals facing homelessness. For the people that attend regularly and show a particular interest in artistic expression, there are positions in a "core group" that grants its members access to exhibition spaces and RedLine resources (Shamos 2018). The program requires all residents to participate in social justice art classes taught in collaboration with a local art teacher. Working with students broadens the artists' understanding of their audience and the impact of their work. At the same time, the teacher can connect and collaborate with another creative and build new technique and curriculum. For the art teacher, it builds capacity and brings another creative person into their sphere. It helps them to think through how they might be different as teachers, and then the students get to amplify their voices and understand how they can be creative change agents (Geoffrey Shamos, unpublished transcript, October 2018).

During these programs, the contemporary art center reaches beyond its institutional walls to work directly with the Denver community and inspire social change. RedLine was founded in reaction to the trend of artists leaving Denver for Chicago or New York. It focuses on community, internal or external, drives all practice (Geoffrey Shamos, unpublished transcript, October 2018). The mission of RedLine states, "RedLine Contemporary Art Center fosters education and engagement between artists and communities to create positive social change" (RedLine 2019). Social change is a result

that is hard to measure. It is not impossible, but there are no numbers as in cases of economic gain. When asked about measuring the success of adhering to the mission, Dr. Shamos responded:

> We are going to foster relationships, and we are going to rethink the creative process, but we are not going to try to measure, we say, positive social change, but that is not the – we don't want to take credit for, you know, I don't know, things that happen out in the world, necessarily, especially, if it was pretty indirect. We don't have a specific issue. (Geoffrey Shamos, unpublished transcript, October 2018)

Through this type of social practice art, artists have become part of efforts to rebalance the voice of authority inside museums. Museum collection policies and displays are inherently political, because they are continuously being formed and reformed by the pressures of social context and changes in museum theory (Karp 1991).

The social change inspired by art is not something that can be measured, but the artists that make social practice art their life and career argue that it does play an active role in social change. Deal believes that "Half of the way change is made is through dialogue and discourse. Creating avenues with which to facilitate that discourse with people, I believe, helps enrich the conversation and helps progress things forward" (Gregg Deal, interview, Brice 2017). Awareness is the first step in change. In an interview, Gregg Deal noted that schools in the United States lack substantial context and history for the Indigenous condition. He observes that "Learning American history is not

learning about indigenous history unless it validates American history" (Gregg Deal, unpublished interview, August 2018). This creates obstacles for expanding the way that non-Native citizens perceive Indigenous art. According to Kevin Pourier, the conversation inspired by art can lead to education and critical thought that can help the visitor better understand the Indigenous perspective and identity:

> There is interaction with contemporary art. It pulls people in, and then we are talking and educating. There is an understanding between two different cultures, and art is doing that. That is what I love about being an artist. There is a reaction. I don't want somebody to buy my art and just hang it, because it matches the color of their couch. I want to create this conversation. If they are mad about it or if they love it or whatever, I want that interaction. Maybe that describes my whole residency at the museum on the second floor. I didn't want to sit there by myself. I wanted the interaction with people. I wanted to talk and educate them. I wanted to put my story out. I want to have a voice. Having a voice is really important to everybody. For me, art has really saved my life. Now I have this voice, and I am going for it. (Kevin Pourier, unpublished interview, August 2019)

One of the substantial obstacles for Indigenous artists to overcome is the issue of invisibility. While other historically oppressed and minority groups are disenfranchised by institutional racism and prejudice, they are still present in contemporary American consciousness. Due to the history of settler colonization, Indigenous communities are often left out of the conversations of empowerment and equality for marginalized groups, because, as sovereign nations, they do not fall under this category of "minority." Contemporary Indigenous art is a visual statement that undeniably reminds the American people that American Indian communities are still here and thriving today. When a guest

is talking to an artist and watching a work of art come together, it is impossible to ignore the reality that American Indian peoples are actively participating in contemporary society while maintaining and reforming their own cultural identities.

When first observed from the outside, the Native Arts residency program appeared to satisfy both the needs of visitor engagement and artist self-representation, but does the program go far enough in terms of self-determination and inclusivity to be considered part of decolonizing practices? After an exploration of the museum's past, research into the current systems operating the program, analysis of interviews with artists and museum professionals, and reflection upon the theories and methods of critical museology and decolonizing practice, I have concluded that while the program accommodates artists' voices, it does not go far enough in decentering museum authority over the American Indian art gallery to be considered a decolonizing practice on its own. When accompanied by other practices, such as indigenization of collections and co-authorship in exhibitions, a program of this type can elevate Native voice, but the Native Arts residency does have its weakness in terms of insufficiently promoting inclusivity and democratization.

As previously discussed in Chapter Six, the artists are selected to be residents by the Curator of Native Arts. There is no request for proposals or a juried show with a

selection committee. The way the artist selection is organized, as of 2018, allows for the curator to choose an artist that he/she may already have a relationship with or be interested in working with. This can ensure a good fit, an effective selection process, and a focus on local artists; however, this also sets the terms of engagement in favor of the museum. One of the potential manifestations of this type of selection is the exclusion of lesser known artists and authority over who has a chance to participate in conversations of how the residency program operates and what the experience is like for the participating artists. Without a juried selection process, the residency may be more exclusive than it is inclusive.

As previous discussed, visibility is an obstacle for Indigenous artists. In conversations of access and equity, they are often ignored or forgotten. For this reason, a residency program in a large art museum can be beneficial for artists who have messages and want to reach a large number of people. However, in a collaborative situation of asymmetrical power, mutual benefit must be remembered. Other benefits cannot be forgotten at the cost of visibility. As professional artists, interaction with potential clients and collectors is important, but visibility for the sake of visibility does not help them to grow their own business or client bases.

As advised by Robin Boast in his analysis of museums as "contact zones" the Native Arts department may have more power in both the interactions and outcomes of negotiations with Indigenous artists (2011). The program is located within museum walls, and the institution has the final say in deciding what will happen during a residency. Deal explained what it was like to navigate the residency and the associated events:

> I have been to openings, and they are pretty 'bourgie,' but if they are creating that space for you and they are welcoming you with open arms, then you don't have to worry about it too much. Those expectations are not as glaring as they could be, but you still have to participate. You have to be willing to talk to everybody and anybody in those situations, because people need to understand the work. You have to be a willing participant. (Gregg Deal, unpublished interview, August 2018)

The museum has certain responsibilities toward its donors and members, and that requires certain types of activities. Institutions, like the Denver Art Museum, can make every effort to break the expectation and address the decisions made behind actions and "standards," but moving away from what is expected from an art museum is at this time impossible. Museums that hold collections cannot completely remove the colonial influence from their organizations, and institutions cannot easily break free from the long-held perceptions of engaging in elitism.

The Native Arts Artist-in-Residency program emerged out of the collaboration between the Native Arts department and the Learning and Engagement department. It is not surprising that the primary focus of the residency program is on visitor experience.

The interaction between artists and viewers can inspire meaningful conversations and influence the way visitors view the other works of art in the museum. The experience reminds the museum guest that there are individuals behind each final product. This helps audiences understand, on a personal level, that American Indian people are still creating, thriving, and changing in the contemporary United States. However, in the situation of a residency with an artist working, in some case, almost constantly in the open and under the eye of the public, the burden of engagement with and enlightenment of the viewers falls on the artist.

The residency program is composed of elements that can lead to meaningful change and decolonization; however, the location of the studio and the prioritization of visitor gain makes balancing authority or access challenging. There is a museum-wide dedication to equalizing power and promoting co-creation between staff and the community. The Native Arts Artist-in-Residency program has created a specific museum practice around this. However, I observed, besides the implementation of other artist programs within the museum, the influence of the artists during their residency does not extend far beyond the American Indian art gallery. It does not appear that the program has significantly influenced the atmosphere of Indigenous inclusivity outside of the residencies of social practice artists. There are many benefits to the program, and the

work being done by the artists and staff members contributes to bringing humanity back into the art; however, there is space to build toward equity in voice and authority that extends beyond the residency.

Limitations of This Project and Recommendations for Future Research

This research had two primary limitations: the closure of the North building and limited interaction with previous residents. First, approximately two months before I began my research, the entire North building of the Denver Art Museum closed for renovation. While the Creative-in-Residence program, the Studio, and *Untitled* were still able to function within the South building, the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence is site specific. This did allow for insights into the future of the program and reflections on the past; however, I was not able to see first-hand a resident working in the space. I was able to see the studio and the gallery multiple times before the closure but never an artist resident. That is why it was very important to elicit information about the day-to-day activities of the program from the artists and the museum staff. From the interviews, visits to the Studio, and observations of *Untitled* and the Creative-in-Residence program, I believe that I was able to get a sense of the way DAM programs are organized and how they are received by visitors. Second, I contacted all past residents; however, Gregg Deal and Kevin Pourier were the only ones I was able to talk with one-on-one. Fortunately, the DAM has video archived interviews with the artists during their residencies. I was able to use these to fill in the gaps of my limited artist participant sample. Due to this, the number of museum staff participants outnumbers the artists.

For future research, I would like to have a more comprehensive sample of the people involved with the program. Additionally, I would like to examine the other residency programs and how the Assistant Curator of Native Arts, Dakota Hoska, who was hired in 2019, influences the way that the Native Arts department approaches future residencies, programs, and exhibitions. In total, future study into this topic could benefit from a broader and institution-wide approach.

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APPENDIX A: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Museum Staff

What is your involvement in the Native Arts Artist-in-Residence Program?

How did the program get started? What there a specific program or type of program from which the residency program was modeled?

How do you think the program compares to others of its type?

Could you construct a picture for me of the months leading up to a resident's arrival? their time here? the months after they leave?

What is your personal mission?

What is your perspective of the mission of the program?

What do you think is one of the strengths of the program?

What do you think is the importance of showcasing the creative process inside the museum?

Would you say that prioritizing artist voice has influence on expanding museum practice?

What effect, if any, do socially active artists have on audiences and museum practice?

Do you think the residency can have reach outside museum walls and into the community?

Why do you think artists come back and participate in multiple museum programs?

Is there anything you would like to add, just about the program in general, or personal experiences, or funny stories?

Artist

How did you get involved with the Denver Art Museum, and how did you become a resident?

What was the day-to-day like in the studio working with the guests?

What do you think about the focus on visitor engagement? Do other museum residencies have a similar focus?

How were you approached to do the residency?

What was the planning process like before the start of the residency?

From your residency, is there anything in particular that sticks in your mind?

What would you say is one of the strengths of the program?

In your perspective, what is the mission of the program?

Do you feel like it prompted you to push your process?

Did working inside the American Indian art gallery have an effect on your work or your creative process?

Do you have any suggestions for the museum staff concerning future residents?

In your experience, what role does art play in social change?

Do you think that bringing different people to work in the artist studio contributes to the inclusivity of the museum?

Do you think that the Denver Art Museum has reach beyond its walls?

APPENDIX B: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE ARTISTS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Gregg Deal:

> I have done a couple of residency programs, and the Denver Art Museum's residency program is unique, because they essentially said here's your budget, here are the keys to the studio, go forth and make art. Nobody informed anything. They didn't tell me – they told me what they were interested in, but I wasn't beholden to that. At the time the Fritz Scholder exhibit was up, and they had not had a painter in their studio for any of the art residencies up to that point, and so they were like we would really like you in here for painting, but we realize that you do this other stuff too. They just kind of let me do what I wanted. It was unique in that most places have a preconceived notion, or idea, of what they expect an artist, particularly a native artist to do. What ends up happening in there are restrictions. Censorship can come up in those situations, as well as just the fact that Western understanding of indigenous people, and by extension indigenous art ends up being sort of canonized into a set of expectations that the artists are often times sort of forced into. (Gregg Deal, unpublished interview, August 2018)

Kevin Pourier

> That one wall is all windows. I kind of felt like we were a part of the museum display, so like Indian on exhibit, which was kind of a joke among us Native artist. You know, we are in a museum and people peak in and look, and the doors were closed on the studio most of the time, so I would go out and invite them in. Then, it was like, 'Oh, wow.' They were actually participating and seeing what was going on and a million questions followed. (Kevin Pourier, unpublished interview, August 2019)

Walt Pourier:

> The Denver Museum's Artist-in-Residency program has just been a really big thrill for me. We've had the ability to reach thousands of people in here with stories that are coming out of native country and prophecy talk and stuff like that. (Brice 2017)

Wendy Red Star:

> We are really interested in the Crow women's objects, mainly because as a mother, I want to pass things down to Beatrice, and I want to learn as much about how the women made a lot of the material objects, as I can. I discovered that the museum hired WPA workers to come in in the 40s and all the way up into the 70s to come in and draw each of the objects on the catalogue cards. There are these exquisite drawings, watercolor drawings that depict each of the objects, and that is something that I was really drawn to. It is another artist that has had intimate time with each of those objects. I am really interested in finding out who those artists were, more about that program, and that is an important part of our history. I want to draw a connection between them and my culture, as well. (Cousins 2017)

Rose Simpson:

> I initially went up to Denver to explore a new series of work that I was really interested in pursuing, and that was working on empowering the self and the body through the physical manifestation of self with armor or objects of adornment that could be worn and experienced by myself and others. I did this by creating busts, life-sized busts, in my studio in Santa Clara, and then welding bases for them so that they were at different heights of live size. I would sit down in the morning in the studio, and I would do sketches, and I would draw, and then I would cut the leather to form these pieces that would potentially be used on the busts themselves and also preparing for the performance that would be the culmination of the experience at the Denver Art Museum. Meanwhile, as I traveled up to Denver, I would travel back down to New Mexico, to Española, I was working on refinishing a 1985 El Camino. I was making this car into an object of power, a power object. The intention, or one of the ideas behind the residency, was to be able to bridge this power, power object, or powerful thing that was car with the vessel that is the body empowered, as well, and it being a juxtaposition that I really just wanted to experience. (Denver Art Museum 2014)

Melanie Yazzie:

> One of the things I wanted to do within the space was to also let people know that there is a woman in here and to have a female presence and energy within the space. What is really nice is that both Walt and Gregg are very respectful of that, and they always take time to listen and hear my voice. The pieces that I am working on this summer at the Denver Art Museum are a series of panels, and the panels are circular in form in a sense to speak about that whole ideas of things coming full circle, and also taking into account the passing of time, and how, in olden days, as native people, we would count time by the presence of the moon. I come from a matrilineal society, and women play this role that, I think that in other communities, it might be overlooked or might not be noticed. It is also about my journey with living with type 2 diabetes. The riverways and pathways that show up in a lot of my drawings are simulating the digestive track and looking at how things come in and move through my system. (Denver Art Museum 2017b)