The Museum, Gallery and Other Institutions in Contemporary Canadian First Nations Art

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by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of

Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment

Of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

In Canadian Art History

Carleton University

OTTAWA, Ontario

20 September 2006

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-18291-8
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-18291-8

Abstract

This thesis examines how First Nations artists in Canada have used the museum as a medium and as a subject in a form of postmodern art known as institutional critique or, as I have coined the closely related term, institutional commentary. I argue that the contributions of First Nations in this area which emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s is unique on account of the historical and conventional relationship of First Nations to the fine art gallery, the museum and other institutions of art. Institutional commentary is a means of addressing that history and its impact through contemporary artistic expression. In doing so, First Nations artists have been able to reveal problems of the past, re-think the present. Some forms of institutional commentary have even functioned as a collaborative means of initiating change in the relationship of First Nations artists and to the institutions of art.

Acknowledgements

There is an old African proverb which says "It takes a village to raise a child." That may be true, but it took half of Ottawa (and small portions of the rest of the country) to help me complete this thesis. I would like to thank the following "village" for their assistance. Should I have forgotten anyone, it is merely because my brain has melted under the heat and pressure of completing this thesis – your contributions are no less valued and appreciated.

Thank you to Keith Jamieson, Ryan Rice, Ruth Phillips, Lee-Ann Martin, Greg Hill for being sounding boards at different stages of this thesis and for offering advice, suggestions, kind and comforting words. I'm also much obliged to Arthur Renwick who helped me track down his photograph at the last minute! Special thanks to Ruth Phillips for allowing me to raid her bookshelves and to Ian Bell for making sure I didn't get eaten by a computer.

Thanks and kindest regards to Pam Brown at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology and Judy Harris at the Woodland Cultural Centre, for providing unpublished images of works of art and archival material. As always, I am indebted to the staff at the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives for their assistance in locating research materials. Special thanks also go out to the staff at the Indian Art Centre, Indian and Northern Affairs - Doreen Vaillancourt and Vivane Gray - who accommodated me at a most inopportune time in their schedule so that I could research. In the "village square" a special monument is being erected in honor of Gail Fikis, Registrar at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery, for going above and beyond the call of duty to provide suggestions of artists and their works to include in this thesis.

My deepest appreciation to Joane Cardinal-Schubert, Phillip Monk, Shawn Hunt and Gerald McMaster for taking the time to discuss their work with me – it was an honour and a pleasure!

Thanks goes out to Lauren Walker whose editorial prowess pulled me through the thesis in its final stages – it was a brave soul who dared to attempt a reading of that earlier draft – my un-dying gratitude is in your possession.

Speaking of brave souls; extra, extra special thanks to my co-supervisors Dr. Ming Tiampo and Dr. Allan Ryan who were courageous enough to take me on. A graduate student is quite fortunate if they have a supervisor who is kind, supportive and encouraging. It is a very fortunate student indeed who can say that they had two such supervisors who also worked so beautifully together.

I gratefully acknowledge the time and consideration of my thesis board, including Professors Jill Carrick and Mitchell Frank and Viviane Gray, for their recommendations and insight.

Thank you to my parents Melvin and Jean Gosse and my in-laws, Sam and Natalie Parsons, for their love and support, now and always (even though they still aren't sure what it is I do). A heartfelt thanks to Cagney – a most remarkable muse.

And finally, the last word is for my husband, Stewart Parsons, who made so many sacrifices so that I could pursue this degree. Thank you for your love and never-ending support.

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The Museum, Gallery and Other Institutions in Contemporary Canadian First Nations Art

Introduction

A children's plastic toy set of an "Indian village" sits in a museum display case. Names of First Nations groups are written directly on a museum wall. "Authentic" Native artifacts are wrapped in plastic. A pair of "Pocahontas' panties" are neatly hung and labeled in their own fictitious museum. What could these disparate and unusual materials have in common? Each is an element of a larger contemporary art work. Each of these works in turn reflects some of the ways in which contemporary First Nations artists have engaged the museum, the art gallery and similar institutions of art in the latter part of the 20th century.

Contemporary First Nations artists have created works that look more like exhibitions, used the walls, collections, site-specific space of the museum or gallery, re-created objects from permanent collections and created museums of their own. These are just some of the approaches taken in what is known as institutional critique. Artists have been engaged in critical commentaries concerning the museum and gallery in institutional critique for much of the last half of the 20th century. Art historians and critics have been writing about their work in this genre since the late 1970s, yet there has been limited mention of works by First Nations artists.[1]

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[1] *Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect* (2001) and *Art and Artifact: The Museum as Medium* (1999) both examine contemporary art that treats the museum as its subject or uses it as its medium. The exhibition and accompanying catalogue *Deep Storage: The Arsenal of Memory* (1998) looked at artists' responses to

This thesis looks more closely at the involvement of contemporary Canadian First Nations artists in institutional critique (or, as I have chosen to coin the term, institutional commentary, a closely related term that offers a broader examination of the museum, gallery or other institutions as explored by artists in their work) placing it within the particular context of postmodern art. My purpose is to demonstrate how First Nations have contributed to this area and compare and contrast those contributions to those of other artists who have worked in a similar vein. This thesis also takes into account the various influences that account for this type of work and its functioning in the wider context of First Nations art in Canada.

I argue that institutional commentary by First Nations artists is unique because of the historical and sometimes difficult relationships First Nations have had with institutions such as the museum and art gallery. Institutional commentary has been used as a means of addressing that history and reflecting institutional practices and policies back on to themselves– in other words, creating representations of the representor. However, I argue that institutional commentary is also a vehicle through which contemporary First Nations artists have addressed broader social and political issues as well. The manner in which First Nations have used institutional commentary is an important part of the participation of contemporary First Nations art within the larger discourse of postmodernism. This topic will be explored as follows:

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archives and collecting. While each examined works from artists throughout Europe and North America, none provided examples of works by self-identified North American indigenous artists.

Introduction: Along with setting out the scope, terms and methodology for this work, background information is provided in a literature review and a section titled *A Brief History of Institutional Critique* which describes the wide variety of forms that have been created by artists throughout Europe and North America from around the 1950s onwards. This establishes the context for the discussion of First Nations contributions in this area.

Chapter 1: This chapter looks at a number of institutional commentary examples by contemporary First Nations artists focusing on the ethnological/anthropological museum as subject. In this chapter, I explore questions such as: what works have been created by contemporary First Nations artists that could be considered institutional commentary? How are they considered to be so and what are the similarities and distinctions between those works and those by artists who form the "canon" of institutional critique? I argue that art of this type by First Nations artists differs from institutional critique because of the historical relationship of First Nations people to the museum; a relationship that has not always been egalitarian. Included is a case study of work by artist Joane Cardinal-Schubert to examine how institutional commentary can be used to address contentions about the museum and its activities.

Chapter 2: This chapter continues the previous one by looking at works that address the art gallery and other related institutions of art. Most of the works discussed in this and the previous chapter were created during the late 1980s and early 1990s. I argue that the reason we see institutional

commentary emerging at the time that it does is because of cultural and political events. This chapter examines what was happening in the world of Canadian art, museums and politics. Furthermore, these events help to explain why the themes being addressed by First Nations artists in institutional commentary are so different from those of other artists doing similar work at this time. This chapter also looks at a specific type of institutional commentary – the intervention - which uses the museum or gallery as a forum for addressing issues not only within the institution but outside of it as well.

Chapter 3: Chapter 3 examines more closely the functioning of interventions. The application of James Clifford's concept of the museum as a "contact zone" (188-219) to a second case study, Gerald McMaster's *Savage Graces: After Images* (which was first mounted at the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology in 1992), provides insight into questions about interventions: how do they affect the conventional relationships of artist and curator? Why do museums or artists choose to engage in interventions and how effective are they as a means of addressing the relationship of First Nations to the museum?

Literature Review

This thesis focuses on institutional critique by contemporary Canadian First Nations artists. Writings by authors such as Benjamin Buchloh, Douglas Crimp, Hal Foster and

Craig Owens are most often associated with institutional critique[2]. Usually the focus of their writing has been on individual and canonical artists (such as Michael Asher, Daniel Buren, Marcel Broodthaers, Hans Haacke, Andrea Fraser and Louise Lawler to name but a few) as opposed to theorizing on institutional critique as a movement or concept (Peltomäki 1-3). Nevertheless, their writings prove insightful as reviewed by Kirsi Peltomäki in her own contribution, *Institutional Critique in American Art* (2001) in which various strategies of institutional critique are examined. Peltomäki argues that the legitimacy of art that critiques the institutional spaces of art is derived from the very institutions they critique in the first place.

Various authors such as Jennifer Gonzàlez and Lisa Corrin[3] have traced the historical predecessors of institutional critique in reference to contemporary artists currently engaged in the practice, such as American artist Fred Wilson who has interrogated museums through his interventions. James Putnam in *Art and Artifact: The Museum as Medium* (1999) offers one of the most extensive surveys of institutional critique by looking at the relationship of artists to museums and examines the nature of museums and their role over the course of the 20th century.

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[2] For example, Douglas Crimp wrote in his essay *On the Museum's Ruins* that postmodern art consists of practices such as those engaged in by artists such Daniel Buren, Marcel Broodthaers, Hans Haacke, Sherrie Levine and Louise Lawlor (examples of work by each of these artists is discussed in *A Brief History of Institutional Commentary* at the end of this introduction) which revealed the social and material conditions of art's production making such work incompatible with the museum space thus making the museum an "outmoded institution" (285). Hal Foster's work, *The Artist as Ethnographer* (1996), which addresses the issue of critical distance in contemporary art is addressed in Chapter Three of this thesis.

[3] Gonzàlez, Jennifer. "Curatorial Turns." Fred Wilson: Objects & Installations 1979-2000. Baltimore, MD: University of Maryland Baltimore County, 2002. 23-30 and Corrin, Lisa. "Mining the Museum: Artists Look at Museums, Museums Look at Themselves." Mining the Museum An Installation by Fred Wilson. Lisa Corrin, ed. Baltimore, MD: The Contemporary in cooperation with the New Press, New York, 1994.

Works of art that address the museum or art gallery (whether they be theorized as institutional critiques or not) have also been the subject of exhibitions and their related publications. Many of the same artists (and some of the same works) that have been discussed in literature relating to institutional critique appeared in the exhibition *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect* (1999) curated by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, which focused on the feeling and opinions artists have had towards the museum, how they have changed over time and are made manifest in the artists' production.

While Canadian artists have also engaged in this genre of art, there is limited literature on their efforts. Most writings, while providing Canadian examples, examine well known American and European examples as well. Most notable is *The Museum in a Number of Recent Works* (1994) by Jacqueline Fry, who takes the contemporary art museum as her primary concern. Her work focuses on Canadian artists such as Michael Snow, General Idea and others (including canonical and non-Canadian examples such as Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke etc.) to determine whether or not such examples could provide insight into diverse attitudes concerning the art museum as one part of "a museographic whole" (111) and reveal anything about possible underlying ideologies. In addition, *Museums by Artists* (1983, edited by Peggy Gale and A. A. Bronson) published by Art Metropole in Toronto, Ontario, broadly addressed the relationship of artists and museums through art produced in the 1960s and 1970s. While numerous Canadian artists (such as artist groups, N.E. Thing Co., General Idea) are discussed, the bulk of the examples are provided by artists such as Duchamp, Broodthaers and Michael Asher.

Yet most discussions of institutional critique make little or no mention of First Nations contributions at all. Most disturbing is the lack of inclusion in such exhibitions as *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*. The most notable exception is Peltomäki's work (written in 2001) which includes a discussion of *All Roads Are Good*, an exhibition by First Nations artist Gerald McMaster at the National Museum of the American Indian in 1994.

It would appear that attention to First Nations institutional critique in art historical literature has only begun recently. Works such as *Interventions and Learning,* (2002) an article guest-edited by Janna Graham and Doris Van Den Brekel for the MERT journal (Museum Education Roundtable of Toronto) and Allan J. Ryan's book *The Trickster Shift* (1999) both discuss the museum or art gallery in First Nations art. Graham and Brekel examine how interventions function as an altered learning experience for museum visitors. It covers many examples of Canadian interventions, some of which are discussed in this thesis[4] but once again it examines many iconic works in this area such as Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum*, work by Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke and Andy Warhol etc. Allan Ryan's book, *The Trickster Shift* focuses on the use of various forms of humour in contemporary First Nations art and cultural expressions (primarily Canadian in focus). Ryan devotes an entire chapter, *Subverting the Systems of Representation*, to a discussion of the use of humour to critique systems of power in cultural and arts institutions such as museums and galleries. For her Master's thesis, *Trickster Amuck in the Museum: A Case*

[4] Examples such as *Museopathy* (2001) at the Agnes Etherington Art Gallery and *House Guests* at the Art Gallery of Ontario (2002) which are discussed in Chapter 2.

Study of the UBC Museum of Anthropology's Collaborative Contemporary Native Art Exhibition Raven's Reprise (2003), Kelly Legge wrote about *Raven's Reprise*, an exhibition held at University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology. The exhibition offered contemporary First Nations artists the opportunity to intervene by creating contemporary works for temporary installation within the museum's permanent collection. Legge's work focused on the politics of representation and theories of the trickster at play within *Raven's Reprise*.

While there is still much work to be done on contemporary First Nations art in Canada, a great debt is owed to writers such as Allan J. Ryan, Ruth Phillips, Lee-Ann Martin, Tom Hill, Gerald McMaster and others[5]. These writers have examined many issues concerning First Nations and museums, art galleries and art history, which has helped enormously to situate the works examined here. With grateful acknowledgement to the work of Graham and Brekel, Ryan and Legge, this thesis will build upon their studies to make a closer examination of contemporary Canadian First Nations institutional commentary as a contribution to the field.

Scope

Most of the selected works that are discussed here date from the late 1980s and early 1990s. While artists worldwide have been creating museum-related art almost continually throughout the 20th century (with considerably increased activity in the 1960s and 1970s), this is explained by developments occurring in First Nations art in Canada and political

[5] Numerous works by each of these artists have been referred to in this thesis; please see the bibliography.

events that profoundly affected artists. As will be shown, this particular period was a politically-charged time in which issues concerning the museum became part of larger political, social and cultural issues.

All of the artists included here have identified themselves as being of First Nations ancestry. It is still recognized that, much like other artists, there are varying degrees to which First Nations artists will choose to reference, be influenced by, or identify with their cultural heritage, in terms of stylistic choices or issues explored. Many prefer to be recognized first on the basis of the merit of their work as opposed to the relation of their ethnic backgrounds and heritage to that work. The amassing of examples here on the basis of First Nations heritage is necessary in order to "fill the gaps" that have already been created by other writers on this topic. It is intended that by doing so, further recognition can be given to the considerable merit of each work and the significant contributions each work makes to the field.

Examples of institutional commentary by American Indigenous artists will also be given in order to recognize that political and geographic borders are imposed and not reflective of the territories with which various First Nations groups on either side of that border would have once occupied and may currently still identify with. The focus, however, remains on Canadian artists to maintain a manageable scope for this thesis.

Terms

The term that most directly describes the works under consideration in this thesis is "institutional critique." According to Peltomäki, this term has been in use by critics, art historians and artists since the mid 1980s, usually referring to artistic activities that have taken place since the 1960s. The use and application of the term have rarely been consistent or made explicit in the literature. The term has been closely associated with art historical movements such as Minimalist art, Conceptual art, public art, and appropriation art, and has sometimes been used to "de-politicize" activist art and post avant-garde movements. I would argue that there have also been close associations and overlap with works that could equally be called site-specific or interventions.

The range of forms, media and styles used in institutional critique makes the term more of a description than a label of time and place. And yet, it has most often been employed to refer to the work of artists such as Michael Asher, Marcel Broodthaers, Buren, Hans Haacke, Andrea Fraser, Louise Lawler (to name a few) thus forming something of a "canon" of institutional critique as if it had been a movement.

For the purposes of this thesis, the term institutional critique walks a fine line between a descriptive theoretical category and a movement. While the use of it as a descriptor is preferable, it runs the risk of being considered as a movement given that the works under examination fall within a specific time period. Furthermore, the incorporation of the term "critique" poses a potential problem; it suggests an automatic boundary regarding the sort of work and messages that can be examined under its banner. "Critique" inherently

suggests that the work, while at best an analytical evaluation, must eventually contain, at its worst, an adverse judgment towards these institutions. While artists are welcome to find fault with the institutions of the arts, it precludes their ability to say anything positive about them. It eliminates the possibility of alternative perspectives and observations on these institutions.

As will be demonstrated throughout, many of the works included here offer a re-thinking of the institutions of art. A less limiting, yet equally relatable, term for institutional critique is therefore required. While institutional critique will still be applied in reference to the works of canonical artists whose work has been placed under that category, I propose a different term that respects the alternate viewpoints being expressed by the examples provided here. This is to ensure that we avoid the danger of excluding works from consideration that add another dimension to the discussion on arts institutions. I propose a more neutral descriptive term - "institutional commentary" – which does not imply a critical or negative standpoint and therefore does not limit what we can consider. It easily encapsulates those works that take the common element - the institutions of art – as a subject or a medium and allows the artists to reflect upon it in any way they wish.

If the terms institutional critique and institutional commentary are to be applied, it is necessary to define exactly what is being referred to as an "institution." As a starting point for discussion, the most obvious institutions of art include the museum and the fine art gallery. This can include not just the physical "bricks and mortar" sites of the museum or gallery but also the practices and ideologies which govern them. Throughout the thesis, a

distinction will be made between "the museum" which is understood to refer to anthropological museums and "art gallery" which refers to the fine art galleries. However, there will be times when issues being discussed in terms of one will refer to both. In such situations, the distinctions will be made overtly clear. Yet, art is not formed or defined by galleries and museums alone. Institutions of art can also refer to those entities that impact on art and its production. For example, it can also encompass art criticism, narratives of art history, curatorial and museum practices. It is always necessary to consider these entities in concert with museums and galleries since art compromises more than just one of these at any given time.

Methodology

The works selected are the result of intensive research conducted through the examination of books, exhibition catalogues and artist files. Experts in the field were also consulted for suggestions on appropriate examples (please see acknowledgements). Additional primary research included interviews with the artists and curators who worked on the projects discussed in the case studies. These interviews augment the limited body of writing available on these works.

A Brief History of Institutional Critique

The following is a brief historical overview of work referred to most commonly as institutional critique. The purpose of this overview is to provide a context within which artworks discussed in subsequent chapters can be understood as institutional commentary,

how they have engaged in similar practices and how their contributions are unique in this area.

Western European and North American artists from the 1960s onwards have used their art to explore just about every aspect of the museum, art gallery and issues related to them. They have used every conceivable means from installation, site specific and performance art to the more conventional forms of painting, sculpture and photography, even the physical site of the museum or gallery and its collections. They have intervened within museum collections and spaces (whether authorized by the institution or not), re-organized objects on display, captured aspects of the organization on film and even created museums of their own. They have erected their very own gift shops, tour and audio guides in an attempt to explore issues ranging from patronage and commercialism to collection policies and other museum practices. They have created work that criticizes, blames, and celebrates all aspects of these institutions. In essence, artists have revealed their ever-changing relationships and attitudes towards museums by dissecting almost every aspect of them.

In tracing the roots of art taking museums as subject, perhaps the earliest examples can be found in mid-19th century photography. Artists seized upon this new medium to capture the likeness of objects, including pieces in museum collections. The policy of the Victoria and Albert Museum in its early years was that if it could not possess a work outright, it would complete its collections by commissioning casts or photographs of the work instead (Stevens & Trippi). Charles Thurston Thompson, photographer for the Victoria and Albert

Museum, provides some of the first examples of the museum in art in photographs such as *Rock Crystal Cup, 16th Century Louvre, Paris* (c.1855) and *Venetian Mirror c. 1700 from the collection of John Webb* (1853).[6] Roger Fenton's photographs (circa 1857) of the interior of the British Museum Galleries are another early example of the museum as subject in art. As a trained painter, he was most likely attracted to the groupings of objects from which he was probably compelled to make copies as a student. These early beginnings are indicative of the institutional critique to follow as artists continue to use new emerging media or artistic techniques to "possess" or make aspects of the museum their own. As Fenton's work demonstrates, artists would turn the attention of their own work to considerations of the museum or gallery because of the various and changing roles and influences such institutions would have on their professional lives.

A more critical approach towards the museum can be identified in the 1920s and 1930s among the Surrealists and Dadaists (Gonzàlez 23). Both groups were known for their unconventional methods of display in arranging and juxtaposing seemingly incongruous objects. Similar to the German *Wunderkammer* or Cabinet of Curiosities (Putnam 12), which was described by Hooper-Greenhill as that seemingly "disordered jumble of unconnected objects" (79), each was created according to its own rationalities for selection and arrangement.

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[6] While such photographs can be regarded as being documentary in nature (and doubtlessly would have been considered to be so at the time they were created), they are important today for what they reveal about the museum's desire to possess objects – physically or metaphorically. Furthermore, the photographs themselves form a part of the current archival collections in museum settings which are part of the many aspects of the museum that have been of interest to contemporary artists investigating such institutions through their art.

The most commonly cited individual artist credited with the beginning of critical museum-related work is Marcel Duchamp, creator of the "ready-made" or "found object". One of the most famous examples of his "ready-mades" was the common men's room urinal placed upside down in the art gallery which he labeled *Fountain* (1917). Duchamp critiqued the museum's legitimizing function by transforming an everyday object into a work of art through its placement in that space. Artists to follow would take inspiration from these activities to re-arrange and incorporate unconventional objects on display, thus interrupting conventional meaning and at times shocking the viewer's expectations.

One of the many strategies artists have used to critique the museum, or to exert control over the institution and make art more accessible, is to create a museum of his or her own. Marcel Duchamp's *La Boîte-en-Valise* (1941) consisted of a leather suitcase containing miniaturized replicas of his own work, complete with mock frames.[7] When this work entered the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, it became "an object present in one institution in two forms" – the original full sized works and the miniaturized versions in the valise (Bonk in McShine 54). Similarly, Marcel Broodthaers created a fictional museum that existed in concept only – having no permanent collection and no permanent location. Broodthaers "opened" sections of his "museum" (devoted to such themes and subjects as ancient art, nineteenth century art and cinema) in various locations (including his own home) between 1968 and 1972. One of his most notable sections, *Musée d'Art Moderne, Department des Aigles* (1968), drew attention to nationalistic ideologies behind government supported cultural initiatives by displaying objects featuring the image of an

[7] The first version was created in 1941 (Corrin 5).

eagle; a commonly used political icon (Erickson in McShine 62). The creation of one's own museum, such as Broodthaer's work, challenges the site-ing of where art is viewed. Yet it can also be interpreted as an attempt to exercise control or influence over institutions that artists have felt powerless to affect but by whom they are greatly impacted.

Western art in the 1960s and 1970s in general was informed by interests in the spaces art occupied, expanded ideas of what constituted art, informed by Conceptualism and the acceptance of a wider range of media and forms in art – from land art (or earthworks) to performance art and beyond. In many ways, some of the "new media" and ideas can be seen as a rejection of the museum. Their ephemeral, site specific or physical incompatibility with the museum or gallery space made them difficult or impossible to collect, store or display.[8] Earthwork artist Robert Smithson created works such as *Spiral Jetty* (1970) which could only exist outside the boundaries of the museum. Prophetically, Smithson predicted "the investigation of the apparatus the artist is threaded through" would become the subject of art itself (Corrin 3). That said, however, our intent here is to look at those works that purposefully address the museum. A primary example is the performance art of artist Yayoi Kusama who, in 1969, had six men and six women take off their clothes and "frolic" in the Museum of Modern Art's sculpture garden pools – without the museum's permission – to protest the museum's lack of modernity (McShine 12). Other artists chose to move away from the museum space to similarly protest against

[8] Although museums have had to adapt to the challenges presented by new media and art forms and continue to do so today.

the "white cube" (Corrin 3) and the museum's function as the "frame" in which art is presented.

The 1960s also saw the beginnings of the museum as a medium through gradual and increased remodeling and manipulation of the gallery space. For example, in *The Nominal Three (To William of Ockham)* (1963) "...[Dan Flavin] made the first of his installations set at an angle across the corner of a room. The effect of this [was] to remodel the space by making the corner 'disappear'. The artist Mel Bochner [wrote] of Flavin exhibiting an 'acute awareness of the phenomenology of rooms...[His] demolished corners convert[ed] the simple facts of roomness into operative factors." (Archer 53). The site-specific nature of the work explored the very qualities of the gallery making it an integral part of the work of art.

As artists increasingly manipulated and controlled the exhibition space, it would be only a matter of time before they would also begin to engage other spaces. The first true museum intervention is generally acknowledged as Andy Warhol's *Raid the Icebox* (1970) at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum. Warhol was invited by the Museum to create the work and was given full access to its permanent collections. In selecting works for display, Warhol adopted an alternate curatorial rationale. In contrast to conventional art curators, who typically reject mundane or mediocre objects in favour of showing a few of

the "best" examples, Warhol displayed entire collections of objects "unedited" (Corrin 6).[9] In addition to being one of the first museum interventions, *Raid the Icebox* was one of the first art installations to use a permanent collection to create a display within the museum itself (Gonzàlez 23). As such, this work anticipated a period in the last decade of the 20th century in which museums and galleries began to invite artists to intervene in their institutions.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, artists began to explore more and more the political aspects of the museum.[10] They understood the difficulty of separating their art from the space in which it was being presented, and increasingly recognized that the "white cube" was no longer a neutral space but a political space. "[Artists]...have critiqued the power structures, value systems, and practices governing galleries and museum and illustrated how context is inseparable from the meaning of an art work and the meaning of the museum experience itself" (Corrin 4). Furthermore, if the museum was a political space and art could not be separated from its "frame," then art in these spaces could also be a means of making critical and political statements.

Institutional critique became equated with the questioning of authority. Some artists questioned the museum's authority on any given topic. On one occasion, artist Andrea

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[9] "Rather than make a selection of his favourite or the 'best' pieces in the museum storeroom, Warhol chose to exhibit the complete collections of various types of objects, regardless of provenance or condition. The items shown...[included] shoes and parasols" (Putnam 18)

[10] "While some artists decided that the need for art with a social purpose required them to turn their backs on the galleries, this was by no means a universal conclusion. The norm remained, as with Land and Environmental art, that artists worked in a variety of locations and ways. In addition, of course, the gallery itself was ripe for investigation." (Archer 136)

Fisher questioned officially-sanctioned knowledge and museum educational practices by posing as a museum docent named Jane Castleton. As Castleton, the artist provided her own unconventional guided tours of the museum – complete with stops at the hat check and bathrooms (Putnam 98). Others examined the museum's role in the ideologies of other authoritative institutions. One "department" of Marcel Broodthaer's afore mentioned *Musee d'Art Moderne* (a section titled *Musee d'Art Moderne Department des Aigles, Section des Figures [The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present]* (1972)] assembled over 250 objects bearing the iconic image of the eagle as an exploration of the nationalistic impulse of museum display (Gonzàlez 23).

The 1980s saw increased focus on the impact of commercialization and its resultant effects on museums and galleries. Rose Finn-Kelcey's *Bureau de Change* (1988) saw Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* re-created on the floor of the Matt Museum (London) in an arrangement of coins accompanied by a specially constructed viewing platform (an integral part of the installation) and a permanent security guard, whose very presence questioned the relationship of art, the gallery and monetary value (Putnam 91). Michael Asher responded to the tendency of museums to rely on wealthy patrons with his work, *The Michael Asher Lobby* (1983-1984) in which the artist laid claim to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles by naming a part of it after himself and installing a plaque in the lobby (Putnam 95).

Both Jac Leirner and the Canadian artist group General Idea examined the place of the museum gift shop. Leirner collected museum gift shop bags from around the world out of

which she created a collage or patch-work "quilt" of sorts, which she hung as a work of art (Putnam 96). General Idea created *The Boutique* as part of its *1984 Miss General Idea Pavilion*[11], a small gift shop whose counters they constructed in the shape of a large dollar sign which offered for sale General Idea prints, posters and publications. Reflecting on the dollar sign shape, the artists stated, "it remains true to the heart of the museum concept of progress itself. The unparalleled expansionist activities of the museum world in the last years are simulacra of possibilities in the global political arena that no longer exists; in a sense, the museum today plays the part of the war game for the corporate board member, its primary player" (McShine 174). Still others considered the relationship of commercialism to art in terms of the language of display. Jeff Koons, in a departure from Duchamp, revisited the idea of the readymade by displaying three vacuum cleaners in glass vitrines, lit from below with florescent light which he called *New Shelton Wet/Dry Tripledecker* (1981). Unlike Duchamp, Koon's work was less a statement about legitimacy and more about commodities and display; how objects are valued and displayed in museums versus the department store (Putnam 36).

While some artists attempted to distance themselves from art institutions by creating works that defied display in conventional art spaces, or by creating "museums" of their own, still others chose to use the museum or gallery itself as the medium of their art. An early example is Daniel Buren's *Photo-Souvenir: 'Up and Down, In and Out, Step by*

[11] The *1984 Miss General Idea Pavilion* was initially conceived as a "decentralized museum" which would take different forms in various museums where they were to be displayed. The project was announced in 1971 and it was intended to be completed by 1984. Yet, the members of General Idea were still working with it as late as 1987 (McShine, 174)

Step', Work in Situ (1977) in which the artist painted stripes on the steps of the Art Institute of Chicago's grand entrance staircase. Buren thus skirted the conventional gallery space altogether by turning the Institute's staircase into a large sculptural work (Putnam 27).

By the 1990s, artists were pushing the concept of the museum as medium even further. In 1993 for example, Michael Asher removed a dividing wall which separated the gallery office from the exhibition space at the Claire Copley Gallery in Los Angeles thus making the day to day running of the gallery part of the exhibit (Archer 136). That same year, Antony Gormley flooded three galleries of the Kunsthalle zu Kiel with over 43 cubic metres of mud and 15,000 litres of sea water. Anya Gallaccio re-painted the walls of the Karsten Schubert Gallery entirely with chocolate (visitors were welcome to lick the newly painted walls) [Asher, 192]. Thus, in one way or another, every aspect of the museum or gallery became implicated in the production of art.

A blurring of the roles of curator and artist began to occur as both professionals became more and more aware of the "frame" provided by the gallery, and delved further into explorations of the methods of the museum experience and museological display. Janet Cardiff made museum visitors aware of their experience of the museum environment in an unexpected way by creating a special gallery audio guide first created for the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art called *Chiaroscuro* (1997).[12] The sounds provided were

[12] The work is mentioned in the catalogue for the exhibition *Museum as Muse,* but it is unclear as to what was presented – the original audio guide or a new audio guide specifically for the Museum of Modern Art,

meant to interact in unexpected ways with what the viewers may have been experiencing at any given time during their "tour" to re-invigorate the typical gallery visit which had become noisy and crowded in the age of blockbuster exhibitions (Scott in McShine 166). Other artists have also disrupted viewer expectations in order to encourage the viewer to question established narratives and the world around them. For example, Canadian artist Louise Lawler used photographs to provide unexpected perspectives on familiar encounters in the museum by deliberately cropping or showing objects from different angles. In *How Many Pictures* (1989), we see a brightly colored painting by Frank Stella as it is reflected in the museum's polished hardwood floors. *Untitled* (1950-1951) shows the viewer a photograph of a museum bench, photographed in front of a museum bench! These unusual viewpoints invite viewers to question their relationship to what they are seeing. The creation of awareness, and an invitation to question experiences not only provided a means of further questioning authority, but also pointed the way towards changing the conventions under which museums and galleries operated.

Like artists, curators have often struggled with the way art institutions have organized themselves according to accepted narratives of art history. Exhibitions such as *Exhibition-ism: Museums and African Art* (1994) tried to address the way visitors experience and understand art and objects (in this specific case, African Art) as framed by the themes and methods of display used in the museum. However, it became more common for museums and galleries to invite artists to perform interventions to explore similar concepts; to open

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similar in spirit to the original. The analysis here is relevant as either option would have provided the museum visitor with a disrupted and unconventional experience, which was the intent of the work.

the gallery up to new audiences and new ways of experiencing the museum. Such interventions were a means of deconstructing the museum and its methods of display in order to reconstruct it along other lines. One of the best known examples of this approach is African-American artist Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum* (1992) at the Maryland Historical Society. For the work, he created "mock" museum installations in which objects from the museum's own permanent collections were re-arranged and displayed in an unconventional and provocative manner. For example, in the middle of an elaborate tea service housed in a vitrine labelled "metalworks" sat a small set of slave shackles; a reminder of the class divide and labour system that allowed the luxury of the tea set to be possible. Through *Mining* and similar installations, Wilson explores themes of social justice and how museums order knowledge, and consciously (or not) generate and confirm racial stereotypes.

While the body of literature concerning institutional critique in Canada is quite limited, there have been a number of Canadian artists, such as Louise Lawler and General Idea, who have engaged in such work. It would appear that the most conscious efforts towards museum intervention or institutional critique in Canadian art have occurred mostly within the last two decades or so in both museums and art galleries. In 2001, the Royal Ontario Museum hosted an intervention in the Roloff Beny Gallery by artist Spring Haliburton called *The Final Sleep/The Dernier Someil*. Haliburton created a "museum within a museum"; a work that examined the scientific gaze on natural specimens and cultural artefacts from the ROM's collection. Other Canadian examples have tended to be collaborative efforts. In 2001, the Agnes Etherington Art Gallery in Kingston, Ontario,

mounted a collaborative exhibition called *Museopathy* (2001) that included interventions by numerous artists in cultural institutions throughout the city. The next year, the Art Gallery of Ontario hosted an intervention by a number of Canadian and international artists in *House Guests* located within The Grange, the historic predecessor of the current gallery.

The various works discussed in this section above reflect a wide variety of approaches to the museum as both a subject and a medium. It has been a useful means for artists to express and voice the concerns that are most pertinent to them. Institutional critique bears witness to the thoughts and ideas artists have about the institutions that not only directly impact upon them, but are also meant to provide a universal base of knowledge, a validation of society's highest values and preserve society's cultural memories (Duncan 8).

Chapter 1: Artists Look at the Museum as Subject

There has been little attention paid to work by First Nations artists within the body of scholarly writing and literature relating to institutional critique or commentary. This chapter provides a closer examination of artworks by First Nations artists that engage the anthropological or ethnological museum as a subject. I argue that what is unique about First Nations institutional commentary is derived from the historical relationships of First Peoples to the museum, a relationship that has at times been problematic. Furthermore, the works represent an engagement of that past relationship in terms of present conditions. Most of the works discussed in this thesis are just one (or one of few) within any given artists' body of work that treats the museum as its subject. Artist Joane Cardinal-Schubert is the exception; she has directly critiqued the museum in multiple works over her career. Selected works by this artist form a case study to demonstrate how institutional commentary can address contentions about the museum and its functions.

The Relationship of Museums and First Peoples

It is difficult to define what constitutes the historical relationship of museums and First Peoples. Not only has each institution operated differently, but the experiences of First Nations people in relation to those institutions have been multiple, diverse and have changed over time. Attitudes and feelings towards museums and their practices have varied. First Nations curator, George Horse Capture, observed:

> Native Americans and perhaps other tribal peoples as well, have therefore a strange and special link with museums that has been described as a love/hate relationship. Many Indians appreciate the fact that for many reasons, the material that has survived is to be found in museums, where it is preserved and researched. The hate aspect comes from the fact that these

> museums are usually far away from Indian homes, and the materials are hence inaccessible to them. So the Indian people went to museums searching for ways to restore their culture. For the most part, they were viewed with suspicion or outright hostility" (Horse Capture in Clavir 84).

The relationship of First Nations artists to museums has often times been contentious. Dominant anthropological conceptions of Native art have sometimes redirected the exhibition of First Nations art away from fine art galleries and into ethnological museums instead where, as Alfred Youngman ("Towards a Political History of Native Art" 3) put it, contemporary artists and their work are exhibited "alongside relics from such long-dead cultures as the 15th century Mayan, Aztec, Peruvian and Egyptian civilizations."

While the experiences, opinions and attitudes of First Peoples towards museums have been diverse, what is shared is a common history of First Nations as indigenous cultures coming into contact with a Western institution based on western ideologies. The legacy of the western colonial museum is that it has often reflected the values of the dominant culture at the expense of indigenous cultures. Museums have at times functioned as cultural storehouses of objects demonstrating the achievements of colonial activity and confirming the racial inferiority of others. Some have argued that museums still continue a program of "cultural colonialism" which serves to control indigenous representation (Simpson "Making Representations" 1). That said, as slow as they may be to change, museums are not static institutions. In recognition of the increasingly culturally diverse publics they must serve, museums have undergone efforts to be more responsive.

In 1992 the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples presented results based on consultations between First Peoples and museums jointly organized by the Canadian Museum Association and the Assembly of First Nations in 1992. It came about as a result of the controversy which surrounded *The Spirit Sings* exhibition (to be discussed in chapter 2) and the conference *Preserving Our Heritage: A Working Conference Between Museums and First People* held in Ottawa in 1988. The goal was to address historical problems in the relationship of First Peoples and museums and to improve the working relationship between the two parties. The creation of the Task Force was an acknowledgement of the sometimes difficult interrelations of the past and the desire to change things for the better; to allow First Nations a greater voice in their own representation.

Likewise, Native artists have also addressed in their artwork many of the same issues outlined in the Task Force Report. The specific issues examined have been widespread and varied – from collection policies that have been detrimental to the continuity of cultures to methods of display – and have long formed a part of the historical relationship of First Peoples to the museum. Even discontinued museum practices have been the subject of contemporary art as their effects are still being felt[13]. This is evidenced by the choice of contemporary artists to engage in those aspects of the past in the first place. As such, some contemporary institutional commentaries by First Nations artists serve as valuable starting points to redress those relationships and activities. By identifying and

[13] One such example would be the collection of human remains which is discussed in the section that follows.

acknowledging areas of contention, past wounds can begin to heal. While some of the works discussed here are harsh and critical, others make connections between indigenous and western conceptions that lie at the heart of the nature of a museum. This offers a valuable re-thinking of the Western institution from another perspective and demonstrates that compatibility is possible.

Collections - Behind the Scenes

The foundation of the western museum is the collection and display of objects historically based on their exotic, curious or rare qualities and for their potential use as specimens of scientific interest. The interests of the indigenous cultures from whom objects were being collected were of little or no concern. Collection policies and practices - what gets collected, how it gets collected and who exercises control over it - have formed an important basis for exploration in contemporary First Nations art.

A once unquestioned western museological practice, the collection of human remains (specifically of indigenous peoples in colonized states) remains a major issue for museums today.[14] Museums have different views on repatriation – the return of human remains and other objects.[15] Many First Nations groups continue to engage in the process of removing ancestral remains from museum collections. Native American artist James Luna

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[14]Joane Cardinal-Schubert also addressed "...the practices of universities and museums plundering Native American burial grounds for the skeletal remains of ancient humans and the struggle by tribes across the continent to regain possession of those remains for a dignified reburial..." (Cardinal- Schubert in Soe) in *This is My History/Preservation of a Species – One little, two little, three little...* at the Meridian Gallery in San Francisco

[15] The Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples (1992) does recommend provisions for the return of human remains depending on a number of different circumstances. It does state that "retention of aboriginal remains for prolonged periods against the express wishes of First Peoples is not acceptable." (9)

(Diegueño/ Luiseño) addressed the collection (and display) of human beings in his performance/installation work *The Artifact Piece* (1987, figure 1) in which the artist installed himself, alive and breathing, in a museum specimen case at the San Diego Museum of Man; labels pointed out notable characteristics of this particular "specimen" of Native American (Berlo & Phillips 3). The work uses humour as the artist pokes fun at his own life and body to comment on the indignity of human display and how display can turn an individual into an object. The work suggests that it is no more appropriate to maintain human remains in such a context as it would be to keep a live human being on display.[16]

Another Native American artist, Peter Jones (Onondaga), also addressed the issue through a ceramic work entitled *Still Life* (1990, figure 2) which simulated a museum display and included a human skull made out of clay to "contest the callous display of Native human remains [in museums] as if they were so much ancient pottery" (Ryan "Trickster Shift" 139). The collection of remains represents a failing to understand and respect non-western beliefs; cultures have different views about what happens to the soul or spirit after the body ceases to function. These views clash with the idea of public display (Simpson "Bones of Contention" 173). The indignity suffered by having remains taken from their resting site in the first place is therefore further compounded with the indignity of them remaining in an inappropriate context.

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[16] It was common in Europe during the Victorian era to have indigenous peoples from around the world "perform their culture" through demonstrations in public as ethnographic specimens of their race. The display of the "Hottentot Venus" was a particularly famous example where a young South African woman named Sarah Bartmann was publicly displayed for a number of years in the early 19th century (Rydell 146).

The manner in which items make their way into collections has been just as much at issue as what has been collected. Historically, some have been collected through fair exchange or transferred legitimately as gifts. Others have been obtained through questionable or less equitable means (Simpson "Cultural Artifacts" 192). Ojibway artist Ron Noganosh's work *If You Find Any Culture, Send it Home* (1987, figure 3) creates a fictional scenario in which a mask is sold by a family to a museum. The work consists of a letter written on hide from a father to his son attending art school telling about a recent visit from a museum curator (for a transcript of the letter, please see appendix A). He tells about how the curator offered a large sum of money for "the old mask your grandfather used to use when he used to hang around with the other old men before he died." (Noganosh in Hill and Lippard 54). A wooden mask hanging above the letter is supposedly the mask in question. In the catalogue for the exhibition *Ron Noganosh: It Takes Time*, Lucy Lippard describes how the "whole ensemble is a fake" (54). The letter appears to gloat over the father's ability to pull a joke on the museum, thus subverting the authoritative knowledge of the curator by selling him a fake.

The work explores the concept of authenticity even further in terms of value – cultural value versus monetary value. The museum values it for its ability to represent some aspect of the culture it comes from whereas the family values it more in terms of the money they are able to obtain from it. That is not to say that the fictitious family in question values money over their own culture. For some, the object itself is of little importance compared to the ability to renew traditions through the creation of new objects (suggested in a tongue-in-cheek manner by the father's postscript). Was the mask really a fake? A product

for the museum market? Or was the family so far separated from their own cultural heritage that they no longer knew the mask's history and family importance? Are there important stories and histories attached to it? Or was the object truly something of little consequence? If museums are repositories for objects of value who gets to decide what those values are?

To See and To Know – Centre Stage

A wealth of literature has been written concerning the display of First Nations material culture and objects in museum settings. Topics have dealt with everything from the display of objects meant for viewing by certain people in certain circumstance (not for the general public to see at all times) to the manner in which entire cultural groups are portrayed and represented through exhibitions of these objects. Reconciling different cultural views regarding the display of objects has not always been easy but several artists have offered their perspectives on the matter through their art.

Kwakiutl artist John Powell commented on public museum display in a group exhibition *Raven's Reprise* at the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology (MOA) in 2000. Five contemporary artists - Mary Anne Barkhouse (Kwakwaka'wakw), Larry McNeil (Tlingit/Nisga'a), Marianne Nicolson (Kwakwaka'wakw), Connie (Sterritt) Watts (Nuu-chah-nulth/ Gitxsan/ Kwakwaka'wakw) and Powell were invited to create works to juxtapose with and install among the museum's permanent displays of Pacific Northwest Coast art. Powell created a large mixed media piece on canvas titled *Sanctuary* (2000, figure 4) (which was one of three pieces he created for the exhibition) that covered

part of the permanent visible storage section obscuring the view of the Hamat'sa masks throughout the duration of the exhibition. Hamat'sa masks are an important part of the Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch ceremony and must be danced (and therefore displayed and viewed) in a particular order. Visible storage violates that order because it means displaying many masks all at once. Powell used the color copper (referencing status objects also known as coppers) which are also intended to be displayed only in specific circumstances. The family photographs incorporated within the work reflect the personal and family histories embodied by the masks. The covering of the visible storage section, in some ways a stand in for screens which shield masks from view until the appropriate moment - is a reminder of the original context and display. In an ironic sort of way, Powell's covering was meant for viewers to see objects in visible storage in a new way. Artist Barbara Bloom did something very similar for her work *Historicism Art Nouveau* (1993). Bloom arranged the Museum fur Angewandte Kunst's Art Nouveau furniture behind a screen. With only the silhouettes visible, visitors could view and appreciate the museum's collection in a different way (Putnam 192). Similarly to Bloom's work, Powell's work covered the museum's display not to obstruct but to reveal; to "shed light on the world of confusion about our practices" as he explained in his choice to incorporate gold and silver in the work (Powell 8-9). Viewers are led to appreciate the connections to the family (shown through the incorporation of photographs in the work) before the aesthetics of the objects.

Museums, by virtue of their public nature, allow the general public to gaze upon objects. But to what extent does the gaze extend beyond the object to the culture itself with the

object mediating as a representation or symbol for a larger cultural whole? Mi'kmaq artist Theresa MacPhee's *Reservations* (1992, figure 5) is a work of multi-layered meanings, which expresses displeasure at the consumption of culture through the gaze - a gaze which museums would seemingly encourage. In this work, four café chairs made of heavy wire with clear glass seats surround a clear glass table. The seats and table top are filled with naked "Indian Kewpie Dolls" which form a large, homogenous mass of stereotyped representation. The backs of the chairs, shaped like anonymous human figures, appear to "feast their eyes" on the dolls below. The artist's statement is an admonishment for the destructive force of that gaze.[17] The work is similar in some ways to Zoe Leonard's photographic works of nude, female wax models used to instruct (male) medical students in the 18th century which she used to draw attention to submissive representations of women (Putnam 119). In a similar way, MacPhee's work demonstrates the potentially victimizing impact of the nameless, faceless gaze.

The purpose of placing acquired objects on display, asserts Elaine Hooper Greenhill (1992), is in order to learn and know; knowledge being the main commodity offered by the museum. Anishnabe artist Robert Houle's *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Indians from A to Z* (1985, figure 6) challenges the ability of the museum to provide a sufficient level of knowledge of any group or culture. *Indians from A to Z* was a mock museum installation at the Brignall Gallery, Toronto, of twenty six painted linen

[17] "Shamon you, Dipping into the bank of our culture With no collateral, No mortgage. Shamon you at a table for two Feeding on the exotic, Something rare, under glass With a vintage reserve; a Beothuk, a Natchez, a Mohican, A Yamasee, or a Tobacco perhaps. Shamon you, with the silver spoon Stained with greed Lifting centuries of denial into your belly Spitting out the indigestible morsels of Reality Banging on the table for your just Desserts." Excerpt from the Artist's Statement (MacPhee in Lunn 39.)

parfleches – similar to traditional Plains rawhide carrying bags - laid out on a long narrow wall mounted display. Stenciled along the top, in alphabetical order, were the names of 26 tribes with the corresponding letter of the alphabet below. The work was meant as a "critique [of] every museum exhibition that has ever promised the ultimate Indian experience and every new set of encyclopedias purporting to contain the last word on Native Americans" (Ryan "Trickster Shift" 139). The viewer is presented with neat, definitive, finite packages of knowledge to metaphorically "carry away" with them. The work is not only a critique but a parody of attempts by museums to divide, categorize and reduce knowledge to easily knowable and consumable pieces. Anishanabe artist Heather J. Henry's paintings, *Showcase #1* and *Showcase # 2* (1997, figure 7) also look at how museums can actually end up reducing rather than creating knowledge. Both paintings are of an aboriginal and Inuit man respectively, on a background lightly stenciled with the words "American Museum of Natural History." Each is painted with expressionless faces, eyes empty as if the personalities, experiences and individuality of each person has been erased and voided. The individuals are being likened to taxidermy specimens one might expect to find at a natural history museum. It is easy to forget that in a quest to know everything about a group, the individual can be subsumed. Furthermore, many museum collections policies of the past were enacted in the name of preserving the remnants of a culture that was thought to be on the verge of dying. With that mistaken idea in mind, exhibitions and collections unfortunately reinforced the idea of aboriginal culture living in the past at the expense of contemporary realities (Canadian Museum Association and Assembly of First Nations 7).

Numerous contemporary artists have created versions of their own museums – in alternative spaces, portable suitcases and portfolios, even in the trunk of a car! It is a means by which artists can exercise control over such institutions by deciding what gets collected and exhibited, parodying and critiquing the institutions that the smaller versions are meant to stand in for and creating their own messages through mock artifacts. For example, Jimmie Durham (Cherokee) created an example of his own museum in a work titled, *On Loan From the Museum of the American Indian* (1987, figure 8), a parody of the sorts of artifacts that end up on display in ethnographic specimen cases. Clearly pinned and labeled are an "Indian leg bone", pictures of relatives and a pair of "Pocahontas' panties". In doing so, Durham chooses to show the cold, impersonal representations of nameless and faceless peoples that tell nothing of the lived experience of individuals. (Whyte 8B).

The ability of any museum to provide "the ultimate Indian experience" is certainly worthy of challenge because museum storage and display can sometimes significantly alter the essence of what an object is, how it functions, or who an individual might be. The objects collected and the methods in which they were collected, catalogued, conserved and displayed often reflect more of the historical attitudes of Westerners to the "exotic others" than it does of the object's original creators, owners and users (Vogel in Nooter Roberts 37). One questions the sort of experience and understanding a museum visitor can expect to have of a culture if the objects on display are so far removed from it.[18]

[18] I would like to acknowledge that there are a number of museums in Canada that were created and are governed by First Nations groups such as the U'mista Cultural Society run by the Kwakwaka'wakw in Alert

Living (Objects) Outside the Museum

Mary Nooter Roberts, in her work *Does an Object Have a Life?* (1994) examines how objects have a "social life" of their own.[19] Some objects are thought to literally contain a life force or spirit, but in the sense that Nooter Roberts means, an object can have a life by playing a role or function in the society from which it comes. How the natural "life" of an object is interrupted by its presence in a museum has been of great concern and interest to contemporary First Nations artists.

Haisla artist Arthur Renwick's photograph *Cage* (1989, figure 9) illustrates what is meant by the "life" and social history of an object. The photographic work shows a number of Haida totem poles on display in the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropoloy (MOA) taken from outside the building. Juxtaposed together in the simultaneously transparent and reflective surface of the museum's glass walls are the trees from the outside and the exhibition space from the inside. The glass building, like a huge museum specimen case, clearly separates the poles from their original context. The carvings of animals and beings on the poles seem to thrash like wild animals trapped in a cage, through the dramatic angles and repeated use of the photographs. The work addresses the collection of objects which are meant to expend their natural existence in a different context from that of a museum setting, while also addressing the practice of display. Past curatorial practices which failed to acknowledge or understand indigenous

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Bay, British Columbia and the Woodland Cultural Centre which is located on Six Nations' land in Brantford, Ontario.

[19] Nooter Roberts' work *Does an Object Have a Life?* specifically applies this to African objects collected as "trophies of colonial imperialism." (37)

views concerning what objects get put on pubic view and how they are displayed have not always been compatible with First Nations ideologies. In as much as glass walls allow the poles to be seen close to their original context, they do not allow the poles to fulfill their natural functions and lives by deteriorating into the ground. This is in direct conflict with First Nations views on the natural deterioration of certain objects (Clavir 78).

Patricia Deadman (Tuscarora/Mohawk) explores the discrepancy between life as it is lived in its natural setting and the museum as a repository for once living things. Her black and white photograph, *Dusty Museum Specimen* (1996, figure 10), shows the back of an elk's skull bathed in light from above. The play of light and choice of subject matter could also be read as similar in spirit to the installation, *View* (1991), by artists Ann Hamilton and Kathryn Clark installed at the Hirshborn Museum in Washington D.C. For *View*, Hamilton and Clark created multiple small wax panels, each inscribed with the name of an extinct plant or animal. Covering the gallery's windows, each panel became slightly translucent from the outside light. The interplay between the museum's interior and exterior environments was a comment on the museum's ironic desire to preserve species within its walls but not in their natural environment outside of the museum (Putnam160). Likewise, the skull of a dead animal in a museum appearing in Deadman's photograph would seem to be an environmental statement concerning the preservation of wildlife. One is much more likely to see an animal stuffed or preserved in a museum than in the natural environment humans have encroached upon.

Video artist Mike MacDonald (Scottish/Irish/Portugese/ Micmac/Beothuk) stated that this was part of his intended message in his installation, *Seven Sisters* (1996, figure 11): "One of the things I'm trying to do with the piece is to suggest that if we don't change our methods of resource extraction then the only place our grandchildren are going to see the wildlife is stuffed in museums or on laser disks. That's why, that's the message" (MacDonald in Sherman 1).

While this perspective of the "life" of an object works from an environmental angle, I would argue that Deadman's photograph takes it one step further. According to most Judeo-Christian belief systems, bones are the remnants of the dead. For many societies with shamanistic structures, bones embody life.[20] From this perspective, the title is ironic as the elk's head is not some dusty, museum relic at all. It is in fact the embodiment of a life force. We can read the light shining on the skull as a suggestion of that life force. The work represents how the value systems and beliefs of other cultures may not always be understood or properly acknowledged in the museum setting.

While some objects are thought to embody life, others need to be activated in order to "come alive" and participate in the rituals and lives of their owners and users. Some museums allow objects from their collections to be used in ceremonies, but this is often on a case by case basis and not a widespread policy occurring in every museum. Heiltsuk artist Shawn Hunt created *Museum Man* (2000, figure 12) while a student at the

[20] "...in the spiritual realm of hunters and herdsman, bone represents the very source of life, both human and animal." (Elidae, 63).

University of British Columbia. The work was selected as a contemporary element for an exhibition of Heiltsuk art and culture called *Kaxlaya Gvilas: The Ones Who Uphold the Laws of our Ancestors* (2000) at the Royal Ontario Museum. Passing by the visible storage section almost every day on his way to class, Hunt was disturbed by the large numbers of cannibal bird masks stacked one on top of the other in the visible storage case. Hunt carved *Museum Man* as a response to that experience (personal conversation with Shawn Hunt 2000). The figure of the *Museum Man* is seen in transition, moving from the space behind the glass to the realm beyond it. The colourlessness of its presence behind the glass suggests lifelessness where it is not being put to any function. Yet the colour spreading through the arms and legs as they begin to emerge into the space of the viewer conveys a sense of life beginning to be re-activated within the figure as it makes its transition. This is in keeping with the fundamental belief amongst many First Nations groups that for certain objects, use is an integral part of the object's being and without use it ceases to be what it was intended to be. For ritual objects in particular, use has to be continuous and is considered part of the necessary care of an object (Clavir 92). The *Museum Man* communicates the idea that, behind glass, an object does not have the same "life" it was intended to have by its makers, and that its lack of use as it rests in a display case means it is not receiving the proper care that it needs. The life of that object therefore drains away like the colours on the *Museum Man's* body.

Hunt does not depict a ritual object like the masks he saw at the UBC Museum of Anthropology. Instead, we are shown a figure similar to the welcoming or guardian figures that can be found in Pacific Northwest coast carvings. Such figures were used to

welcome strangers but also to protect and sometimes mark the boundaries of the village. These figures can be thought of as existing in two worlds: of the village and the outside world. *Museum Man* also occupies two worlds: the museum behind the glass and the world beyond. Yet we see it at a moment when its passage between those two worlds has come to a standstill in the middle of that transition. It is as though it is being forced to occupy two different realms at the same time. It would seem that for a museum object for which repatriation is not a possibility, this must be the condition under which it will have to exist.

Appadurai argues that objects, much like people, have social lives in the manner in which they are exchanged, circulated and reveal social relations(3). Such social lives have numerous stages through which an object can pass. Kwakwaka'wakw artist Marianne Nicolson also created a work in concert with the visible storage area for *Raven's Reprise*. Nicolson's work looks at the lives of people who would have owned those objects and the generations to which they would have been passed had they not been taken out of circulation and placed in a museum. The mixed media work, *Waxemedlagin xusbandayu (Even Though I Am The Last One, I Still Count)* (2000, figure 13) consists of a photo based structure. At the centre is a photograph of the artist's uncles and aunts as children surrounded by a gold border with double headed sea serpents, wolves and two parent bees. The title and imagery are in reference to the bee dance, one of the first dances a child participates in at the winter ceremonial. The nearby bee masks on display had formerly been the property of Nicolson's grandfather who had sold them in the 1960s to the MOA for their permanent collection. The artist stated: "I created this piece to recognize that the

rights and privileges that they embodied are still active and integral to the Musgamagw Dzawada' enuxw people" (Nicolson in Hill "Raven's Reprise" 11).

Nicolson's work does not express displeasure at the museum's acquisition or her grandfather's decision to sell the masks; she neither mourns their loss nor demands them back because, as she states, the family traditions embodied by the masks have been assured. As Ken Harris states in Miriam Clavir's book *Preserving What is Valued*: "We do not really conserve – in the same sense as storage at the Museum of Anthropology – we renew. It's continuity, like a lineage" (Harris in Clavir 114). Nicolson's work affirms that with or without the masks, the important traditions will endure long after the physical objects have entered a different phase of their own social lives – that of museum artifacts.

Case Study - Joane Cardinal-Schubert

In 1997 the Muttart Public Art Gallery in Calgary mounted a retrospective exhibition for visual artist, writer, and freelance curator Joane Cardinal-Schubert. As the exhibition developed, Cardinal-Schubert talked to the curator, Kathryn Burns, about her desire to "take back her words" through the retrospective, to gather together the expressions she had given voice to over the years through her paintings, installation and other works (Burns 4). Over her career Cardinal-Schubert has been vocal about the storage, preservation and conservation activities of museums, either as a direct focus or indirectly as a recurring theme in many of her works. Cardinal-Schubert has created her own versions of objects and artifacts in museum collections as a means of continuing the knowledge and tradition they embody and deliberately subverting curatorial practice. In so

doing, she has used institutional commentary as a means to reclaim control from the museum. It has been the vehicle through which she can not only address but correct contentious museum practices.

Blood artist Joane Cardinal-Schubert was born in Red Deer, Alberta and began her formal art training at the Alberta College of Art. She graduated in 1977 from the University of Calgary where she obtained her BFA in printmaking and painting.[21] She received an honourary degree from the University of Calgary in 2003. She was Assistant Curator at the University of Calgary Art Gallery in 1978 and at the Nickel Arts Museum from 1979 to 1985. Her work has been shown around the world and she has participated in such notable group exhibitions as *Stardusters* (1986, Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay, Ontario); *A Celebration of Canadian Art* (1987, Southwest Museum, California); *Revisions* (1988, Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff, Alberta); *Beyond History* (1989, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, British Columbia); *Indigena* (1992, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Gatineau, Quebec); and her solo exhibition, *Joane Cardinal-Schubert – Two Decades*, which has toured across Canada (1998-2000). Cardinal-Schubert was admitted to the Royal Academy of Arts in 1986, becoming only the fourth woman in Alberta to be admitted and received the Commemorative Medal of Canada in 1993 for her contributions to the arts.

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[21] Curriculum Vitae for Joane Cardinal-Schubert. Dated 22 April 2002. Artist Files for Joane Cardinal-Schubert, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Indian Art Centre and National Gallery of Canada Archives.

Cardinal-Schubert began addressing the museum in some of her earliest paintings such as *Eagle Ribstone* (1983, figure 14) in which she included imagery depicting actual museum artifacts, sometimes complete with museum accession numbers. Capturing the images of the artifacts in her canvases allowed them to exist in different contexts from those of the museum. Many of her large scale installations from the late 1980s onward include elements of museology and "anti-museum" features. For example, she often uses chalkboards in her installations, such as in *The Lesson* (1993, figure 15), to subordinate the voice of the curator. "...the word person, the curator, comes along and the words become indelible, outlasting the exhibition..." (Cardinal-Schubert quoted in Baele "Writing on the Wall" E1). Allan Ryan noted in *The Trickster Shift* the pleasure the artist takes in flouting the conventional practices of the curator or conservationist – deliberately refusing to glue down pieces in an installation or inviting people to walk around and touch objects in an installation (143). It is certainly evidence of trickster behaviour and part of the artist's use of humour to defy the institutions. One wonders if it is an attempt to balance out the power relations between the artist and the museum. One needs the other, yet it is often the curator who exercises final control over the exhibition.

Cardinal-Schubert directly addresses this conviction in a work titled *Contemporary Artifact – Medicine Bundles: The Spirits Are Forever Within* (1986, figure 16) which was her response to a visit to a museum's collection storage area early in her career:

> I was in the Glenbow [Museum] in '73 and [Curator] Julia Harrison took me in the back and showed me the collection they had. She opened this cupboard and I went, 'Eahhh!' because it was a power bundle and they had taken everything out of it and lined it up on the shelf, and they had little

> museum numbers on it.[22] Well, [as a curator] that was my job to do that – but with contemporary artworks, not with cultural items. I just went, 'how can you have this?' She said, 'Oh, well this was done before me.' I said, 'Can't you do anything about it, like give it back?' So that bugged me. Anyway, when I did this one [*Contemporary Artifact – Medicine Bundles: The Spirits Are Forever Within*] I put a hand on it to say, 'This is protected.' Like a firmness...with the plaster I would make a bundle that nobody could open and take anything out of (Cardinal-Schubert in Ryan "Trickster Shift" 134).

The medicine bundle Cardinal-Schubert viewed was treated according to acceptable institutional conventions at the time it was acquired. From the museum's point of view, all the parts were present and undamaged therefore the integrity of the object was maintained. Yet, from a First Nations perspective, the treatment of the medicine bundle constitutes an act of violation.[23] In the act of tagging and ordering each of the medicine bundle's contents, the museum has destroyed the integrity of the object as the contents of such a bundle are usually spiritual and personal to the owner.

There is a certain irony to the situation: the entire medicine bundle is exposed and laid bare in collection storage space - a counterpoint to the more public display space where access is barred and objects not available for viewing are stored. Cardinal-Schubert's work asks the viewer to reconsider the concept of preservation from decomposition as museums define it, and instead consider preservation from prying eyes. In many ways this work is

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[22] Medicine or power bundles are found in numerous First Nations societies. Broadly speaking, a medicine bundle is considered to be "a receptacle of any size, or a blanket of any size, either of which contain natural objects or substances of spiritual value. A medicine bundle is considered to be sacred. To preserve its spiritual value, it should be handled only by its owner or by the person entrusted with its care." (Commissioner's Directive on Aboriginal Programming)

[23] "An object's acquisition by a museum, and the museum's subsequent efforts to preserve it are, indeed, in some instances looked upon by the originating peoples as a perversion of the natural order" (Moses in Clavir, xviii).

very similar to Richard Artschwager's *File* (1964) which looks like a four drawer filing cabinet but is in fact a solid box; it is impossible to get the drawers open and gain access to the contents and knowledge contained within (Schaffner & Winzen, 42).

Cardinal-Schubert, in creating her own medicine bundle, is in effect taking back or reclaiming the bundle she saw in collection storage. As a guest in the museum, she was powerless to do anything about the artifact's condition. Yet as an artist, she is able to treat her own medicine bundle in the manner she deems appropriate, with all the imagined materials safely contained within and encapsulated in a way that no one will be able to disturb. In this way, the artist is able to correct a mistake from the past that the curator was unable to or unwilling to redress. The *Medicine Bundle* created by Cardinal-Schubert is an example of "taking back" the museum artifacts by creating objects like those in museum collections. Such work is almost an act of repatriation through contemporary art. Her comments concerning another of her works (*The Warshirt Series)* equally apply to the *Medicine Bundle*: "I had a good time making a reasonable facsimile of the real thing [laughs]. Okay you won't let me have them, then I'm still going to tell the story. I want to expose this!" (Ryan "Trickster Shift" 138). What she is trying to expose is the insensitivity with which these objects were treated in order to affect change in the way preservation is carried out in the museum environment. In an effort to right a past wrong, Cardinal-Schubert is trying to instigate awareness to affect future change in museum conservation and storage practices.

In the *War Shirts Series* (1988, figure 17),[24] in her exhibition *Joane Cardinal-Schubert: Preservation of a Species 1987-1988* (Gulf Canada Gallery, Calgary 1988), the artist reclaimed objects she viewed in other museum collections. Here, she presented a series of war shirts based on those she viewed in the collections of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Of that experience she recounted: "And they're all in these map-case drawers and they're all in these plastic bags. But when this museum person is showing them to me the plastic's really clouded so she's going like this [pressing] on the beadwork. And I'm going, 'Eahhh!" (Ryan "Trickster Shift" 138). At issue for Cardinal-Schubert is the manner in which the objects were being handled and stored. In her book *Preserving What is Valued* (2002), conservator Miriam Clavir examines the contested area of conservation and preservation of First Nations objects in the museum environment. She explores the different views concerning preservation in western museums (that are usually more concerned with the physical integrity of the object itself) and First Nations cultures (who generally view the traditions and oral histories associated with the object to be as integral as its physical components) and how they might be balanced.

Much of Cardinal-Schubert's work has been informed by her own experiences as a curator. As a curator, she learnt first hand the conventions under which museums operate. She takes exception to the manner in which people and artifacts are labeled and categorized, and the manner in which they are expected to conform to those systems. One of her first actions as curator at the Nickel Arts Museum was to integrate the Inuit and

[24] According to Tom Hill in the catalogue to *Indian Art '88*, this was her personal protest against *The Spirit Sings* exhibition.

Native artist files with all others to demonstrate her disapproval of the manner in which museums separate people (Dudley 1989). She further commented on this in the *War Shirt Series*[25]: "They asked me: 'What do you want to see?' and I said: 'I want to see Blackfoot, specifically, war shirts from this period, pre-1880s.' So they go to their computer and they whip out [data] and they Xerox all these cards – acquisition cards with numbers and stuff and we finally go down and we find the pieces (Ryan "Trickster Shift" 138). At issue is what information about an object is considered important.[26] For example, the manner in which the identification of such personal objects is removed from the human beings that made and owned them only to be replaced by impersonal randomly generated numbers. The artist placed the "Purchased from Christie's Auction" on the top of one shirt titled *Remnant II* (Ryan "Trickster Shift" 139). This was not only a means of making purchasing information public but an ironic inclusion of what a museum considers an important piece of information on an object whose stories and histories are probably lost.

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[25] The *Warshirt Series* was a wall installation consisting of several crosses (a direct reference to Christian iconography) on which were mounted replicas of war shirts created by the artist (and inspired by those she viewed in museum collections) and sealed in clear plastic bags. Cardinal-Schubert's war shirts were part of her contribution to the 1989 exhibition *Beyond History* at the Vancouver Art Gallery where artists "use[d] their works to confront stereotypes of Native art, to insist that mainstream art institutions not display Native artwork simply as curiosity pieces." (Busheiken)

[26] In *Routes*, James Clifford describes a meeting at the Portland Museum of Art in Oregon in 1989. Museum staff, anthropologists, experts on Northwest Coast art and a group of Tlingit elders gathered to discuss the Ramussen Collection of objects collected in the 1920s in southern Alaska and on the Canadian Pacific Northwest Coast. The encounter demonstrated how information concerning the objects differed in priority and relevance by each of the parties assembled: "The curatorial staff seems to have expected the discussions to focus on the objects of the collection. I, at any rate, anticipated that the elders would comment on them in a detailed way, telling us for example, this is how the mask is used; it was made by so-and-so; this is its power in terms of the clan, our traditions, and so forth. In fact, the objects were not the subject of much direct commentary by the elders, who had their own agenda for the meeting. They referred to the regalia with appreciation and respect, but they seemed only to use them as *aides-mémoires*, occasions for the telling of stories and the singing of songs" (188-189).

While criticizing preservation practices in the *War Shirt Series* she is also critical of the separation of objects in museum collections from their stories and histories. Works from the *Series* such as *Remnant*, comment on these separations:

> ...So I don't understand the meaning of the whole collecting mentality...These things were taken away from people and were not allowed to simply die their natural death... When I tell people about that. [I explain] it like [this]: if you had a gold watch in your family and you had heard about this and you knew it belonged to your family and you went into a museum and there it was, you would be outraged. You would go, 'But that's mine! That's my family's! A part of my life is missing 'cause I didn't have access to that.' And not only that, if you take an item like a gold watch and you show it to an old person they go 'Oh, I remember when,' and this whole text comes out.... And what you've done is take that away, put it in a museum. There's no access to the stories that go with that. [They're] lost. They don't get passed on because people don't have the item to trigger them -like a signpost (Ryan "Trickster Shift" 139).

As in her *Medicine Bundle*, Cardinal-Schubert uses her *War Shirts* to "repatriate". Shirts like *Remember Dunbow* (figure 18) contain small fragments of personal family items, such as a lock of her hair, a button from a coat she had when she was first married and her son's baby spoon. These shirts then become highly personal artifacts; the creation of which is a continued tradition from the historic war shirts in the museum collection. Why the need to take it back? "In 1969 at 27, I, like many Native People had begun to realize that there was little or nothing celebrated about our People, by our people, in this Nation Country. Clearly defined 'places' for Native people existed in the feathers and beads category. Our objects had been and continue to be collected, stored and tagged. As images about exotic or other... never representing a contemporized insiders view" (Cardinal-Schubert "Two Decades" 19). Institutional commentary allows the artist in the present day to make corrections to the past and point out the problematics of representation in the

current day from a Native perspective. By taking back from the museum in her art, Cardinal-Schubert is engaging in a form of visual repatriation that allows her to re-assert her identity, voice objections from the past that were silenced and gain agency for cultural continuity (Payne 10 & 14). In doing so, Cardinal-Schubert's art forms a counter-narrative which tips the balance of cultural authority in an effort to change the attitudes and behaviors of the museum for the future.

Living With the Museum

The range of artists' reactions to museums in their work have been wide – from vehement expressions of anger, frustration and scathing critique to quieter reflective contemplation. Not all responses have been negative or critical nor have artists always positioned First Nations culture in direct opposition to the museum.

Numerous artists have credited museums for the role they have played in developing their own contemporary work. Mohawk artist Shelley Niro, in her artist statement for the exhibition *What Are We Leaving for the 7th Generation? 7 Haudenosaunee Voices...* (2002), described how her experiences in museums inspired her mixed media work, *Weapons for the 7th Generation* (c.2002, figure 19): "This series has been influenced by looking at actual weapons of war in museums and books. I immediately noticed the elegance and craftsmanship that have gone into the creation of these particular instruments used by my ancestors. I became nostalgic because of their design and I wanted to hold on to them. While visiting the Museum of Natural History in Albany, New York, I did get to hold one. They are empowering" (Niro in Gibson Art Gallery 18).

Bob Boyer (Métis) also expressed his appreciation for museum collections as a place that "[feeds] my self-image, my knowledge" as a member of First Nations culture (Severson). As such, he was one of several contributing artists[27] to the Glenbow Institute's exhibition series *Connections to Collections* (1999-2000). Contemporary artists were invited to investigate the museum's collection and create new works in response to it. Boyer created six paintings on burlap using a fresco technique common to the Maya, Aztec and Pueblo along with a slide presentation of over 50 artifacts and documents from the collection. The presentation looked at contemporary problems and their political undertones.

Included in the exhibition and publication was a letter from Boyer to the exhibition's curator, Kirstin Evenden, in which he imparts his observations on the similarities in role and purpose between museum stakeholders and individuals in many traditional First Nations societies:

> In First Nations' communities, there are real, old, and living museum entities, which contain parallel roles to a formal museum. For many old and sacred collections, known as bundles, there is a curator. In the case of the ancient and sacred Calf Pipe of the Lakota, Orval Looking Horse was made the keeper. He was asked in a traditional way to protect it and keep its tradition alive – by definition, the curatorial role of this sacred bundle/ collection. These bundles are stored with traditional curators who care for them in a traditional way until they are called for by the community. When there is need for them in ceremony, dance or feast, these traditional curators are contacted in a good way to bring out the bundles to be used and displayed for the people. Museums have educators and animators for exhibitions. First Nations ceremonies have legend tellers who may perhaps use the sacred objects and relate their history and purpose. If there is damage, certain people may repair, copy or renew what is necessary. In the museum world they call them conservators. At the end of the ceremony or

[27] Other artists included Arlene Stamp and Carl Rungius.

> celebration, all is put away in a proper way and returned to the curators who care for them until the next ceremony" (Boyer 1999).

Chuck Heit (Ya'ya Ts'itxstap) explored similar parallels in a work entitled *Chief's Chair* (1996, figure 20). Made of carved mahogany, the seat appears to be covered in traditional Pacific Northwest Coast motifs, yet every design element is analogous to the function or role of all stakeholders in an average museum. The image of the chief transforming into an eagle on the outside back of the chair is analogous to the museum itself. The artist states: "I talked about this [work] with my grandmother and she said it sounds like some of the duties of the Gitxsan Chief. Of course a Chief must do many things for his people. It is for a Chief to learn to pass onto the next generations many of the same things as a museum" According to the artist, this figure of the chief is also meant to symbolize the Museum Director (Heit in Arnold 128).

On either side, the Chief/Director figure is flanked by two coppers, traditional symbols that connote power and wealth, which Heit refers to as "Warrior/Guardians of the treasures of the societies that create them" (Heit in Arnold 102). At the very top of the seat is the figure of Raven/Museum Educator, the inside of the chair contains the Wing Chiefs or Museum Trustees who both hold great powers, surrounded by faces which represent the Families or Voters who are "… the voices and eyes, the grass roots controllers of the institutions." The upper edge of the seat contains a band which symbolizes a rainbow, the heavens and astral entities such as stars, which represents that "these two societies' ideals know no bounds" And "the boundless influences that work upon our societies" (Heit in Arnold 103).

Heit's tribute demonstrates that although museums are Western institutions steeped in their own ideologies, they are not necessarily incompatible with indigenous cultures even if there is disagreement on the manner in which common goals are carried out. He further writes:

> At the start [of working on this Chief's Chair] the theme [was] the role a museum plays in society. That is, a museum acquires knowledge and passes it on, museums are great recorders of history and so they are great sources of history, museums also gather billions of artefacts and display them...So my Chief's Chair has gone from a chief's chair, to a tribute to museums, and then, back to a Chief's seat. This chair is an interesting statement of commonality of [two] very different institutions from [two] very different societies. It is of course, a work of art and therefore, technically, it does not belong in a museum. But museums are full of art. From the Gitxsan viewpoint, this chair talks about some of the duties of the Chiefs, our most important institution. Chiefs are in charge of the past and present, shapers of the future. Guardians of everyone and everything....From the Canadian's point of view, you see how a museum works within the society. Museums are run by and sustained by people. They record and show the past and present and give glimpses of the future (Heit in Arnold 128).

Heit's work embodies many of the same points made by Clavir in *Preserving What is Valued.* While both museums and First Nations believe in preserving that which is of cultural significance, both have very different but not necessarily incompatible ideas about what preservation means. We can extend this idea to other museum practices. By its nature, a museum is a place to display objects; a place where knowledge is disseminated. While the beginnings of what we recognize as a museum are based on western European models, it does not mean that other cultures do not have similar models for the display of objects and the dissemination of information also.

Conclusion

The numerous examples discussed reflect the wide range of feelings, attitudes and opinions towards museums and a large number of issues related to them. As Rushing stated, the museum for some has functioned as an "Indian morgue," while, for others, it has been a source of aesthetic inspiration and cultural revitalization (Rushing 78). The manner in which any artists choose to comment upon or respond to a museum is contingent upon their own personal experiences. The individual experiences of First Peoples have been diverse and yet there is a shared history in which First Nations narratives told in their own voices have been subjugated to those presented in western institutions. While the concept of a museum may be a primarily Western construction, as Bob Boyer's statements and Chuck Heit's work demonstrate, they are not necessarily incompatible with First Nations models and ideas about objects, their display and presentation. They can, in fact be a means through which First Nations peoples can reclaim and assert their cultural identity (Krinsky 204). The museum as a subject in contemporary First Nations art has been a vehicle for expressing the narratives that need rewriting. As Chapter 2 will elaborate, the museum is not the only western institution that needed to be re-examined.

Chapter 2 – Artists and the Fine Art Gallery as Medium

Contemporary artistic expressions have not only addressed the museum but other institutions of art. These include everything from the fine art gallery to the discipline of art history itself. In fact, many of the same comments directed towards the museum in the last chapter apply to the fine art gallery, as both take the collection and display of objects as a main occupation. Much like the relationship of First Peoples to the museum, the relationship of First Nations to these other institutions of art has also been problematic at times. The examples in this chapter address the difficulties of the past to simultaneously address the realities being faced by the artists in their own time. "Their own time" refers to a very specific period in which most of these examples were created, ranging from the mid to late 1980s to the early 1990s. As discussed in the introduction, artists in Europe and the United States had begun engaging the institutions of art in their work much sooner. This chapter also explores why we do not see similar work from First Nations artists in Canada until this later time period. Furthermore, the most common themes in institutional critique of the 1980s was commerce, commodification and the role of the art gallery in the art markets. Yet these themes seem to be of little concern to First Nations artists. How do we account for this difference? I argue in this chapter that the answers lie in the cultural and political events taking place in Canada in the second half of the 1980s and early 1990s and which had particular significance for First Peoples. These developments and their impact on First Nations art in Canada, meant that museums and galleries were just two of the many institutions that were being re-examined in terms of their impact on First Nations identity and self-representation. Institutional commentary offered an opportunity to identify and address these issues. While museums and galleries were still being addressed

as subjects, they also became mediums through site-specific works and interventions, making these institutions potential sites for change.

Challenging the Institutions of Art

Institutions of art refer not only to the "bricks and mortar" sites but the philosophies and methodologies that galleries often come to embody, legitimate or even sometimes defy. This would include the institution of art history itself. Art history has primarily been a western construction; the earliest and most highly influential writings over the centuries being European in origin (Vasari, Kant, Wölfllin etc.). As such it has, at times, been accused of Euro-centric favoritism that has excluded and marginalized consideration of indigenous cultural expressions. Yet the last half of the 20th century has been marked by a demand for more inclusive art historical narratives. Artists themselves have become more self reflexive about their places within those narratives.

Jim Logan (Métis) reworks the icons of Western art in paintings such as *A Rethinking of the Western Front* (1992, figure 21) and *The Diner's Club (No Reservation Required)* (1992, figure 22) by casting aboriginals in the key roles of Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* and Manet's *Le Déjeuner Sur l'Herbe.* In so doing, Logan plays with the positioning of First Nations to the established canons of art history by removing the familiar and iconic figures and replacing them with aboriginals in a manner that is still familiar and iconic. In doing so, Logan reflects on the manner in which First Nations art has often been inserted into already pre-determined structures and theories of art history which, having been developed by and for western aesthetics, have not always been

adaptable to cultural productions of other cultures. Logan re-positions the figure of the Native to instead occupy a place of prominence over marginalization as the focal point of his paintings.

Canadian art history, having been derived from European models, has also struggled to understand how it should relate to First Nations cultural expressions and aesthetics. Ojibwa artist Allan Angeconeb's serigraph *Two Mosquitoes on a Bush* (1985, figure 23) is a "satirical jab at the Canadian Art establishment" in which two pesky mosquitoes, rendered in a style reminiscent of the Anishnabe Painting or Woodland School style, alight on the surface of a color field painting similar to the work of Jack Bush, a Canadian artist and member of Painters Eleven (Hill "Indian Art '85" vii). The humourous work suggests that, much like the mosquitoes, First Nations aesthetics have been viewed as an undesirable imposition, not on the "Bush" but on the established canon of Canadian art history. But the work also demonstrates the greater complexities of the relationship. The Jack Bush-style painting forms the optical illusion of a box. Is the Anishnabe aesthetic, symbolized by the motifs on top of the box, perched on a pedestal? Or is it trapped within rigid structures and canons of art history symbolized by the box? The optical trick and unanswerable nature of those questions show how the nature of the relationship is an indefinable illusion. In trying to determine the best way to approach First Nations art in relation to the traditional European art history that has been adopted and employed in Canadian art history, there are no easy answers.

Angeconeb's work also suggests a double standard in the fine art gallery's definition and acceptance of innovation in art. Other artists have observed the irony of the manner in which some fine art galleries have, in the past, been reluctant to accept Native art and yet simultaneously have been quick to show works by artists who have appropriated First Nations imagery and aesthetics.[28] In *Tea With Emily Carr...Sitting Around Talking about Appropriation* (1994, figure 24) Coast Salish artist Rose Saphan converses with a famous icon of Canadian art, Emily Carr (Brant & Lalonde 80). The two literally "come to the table" over the issue of appropriation – Carr's use of imagery from the Pacific Northwest Coast and Saphan's use of western collage techniques.[29] Similarly, Joane Cardinal-Schubert talks to the same artist in *Birch Bark Letters to Emily Carr* (1991). Perhaps both women were able to identify with a fellow female artist who also struggled for her place in the Canadian art world for a portion of her artistic career; marginalization from the fine art galleries has not occurred on the basis of race alone.

Placement and classification has not only been an issue for Native art in art history. The positioning of objects conventionally designated as native "tourist art" or "craft" (as well as those created for the museum market), caught up in "the ideological matrix of western colonialism, Eurocentric narratives and museums" (Phillips "A Proper Place for Art" 45-

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[28] The National Gallery of Canada's 1927 *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern* featured paintings by Emily Carr, A.Y. Jackson and Edwin Holgate along with Native artefact which, for the first time in a major Canadian exhibition, were featured alongside modernist paintings as "art." Yet, the First Nations works were stripped of all ethnographic context and meaning. Numerous exhibitions of Carr's work have been held since which include images of First Nations villages and monumental sculpture (Jessup 82-83). Yet 2006 was the first time in the National Gallery's 126 year history that it mounted a solo exhibition for a First Nations artist – Norval Morrisseau.

[29] "Appropriation occurs when someone else speaks for, tells, defines, describes, represents, uses or recruits the images , experiences, dreams of others for their own" (Todd in Grande 8).

46) has affected not only what gets collected but in which institution it is placed. Which objects should be placed in the anthropological museum as ethnological material culture versus "high art" in the fine art gallery? In the exhibition, *Indian Art '85* at the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford, Ontario, Carl Beam (Ojibway) displayed simultaneously *Pope in Landscape* and *Dialogue* (1985, figures 25 and 26), described by Tom Hill as resembling "1950s ash trays in garish pink and metallic glazes," alongside one of his most iconic mixed media works, *The North American Iceberg 85* (1985, figure 27). Commenting further on the two vastly different contributions, Tom Hill mused: "As a counter point to the massiveness and seriousness of *North American Ice Berg 85*, Beam includes two small high glaze ceramic plates… [which] appear more like tourist artifacts and just may be Carl Beam's satirical jolt to force the viewer, to re-examine the artifact as a manifestation of contemporary Indian Culture" (Hill "Indian Art '85" viii). The small form of the plates, reminiscent of the tiles and trivets one might find in a souvenir shop, belies the weighty western and indigenous religious/spiritual iconography (including figures of the Pope and the raven) that appears upon them.

Yet it is Beam's choice to exhibit the two plates that, at first glance seem so easy to miss alongside the monumental *North American Iceberg* painting. One assumes Beam considered the two vastly different works to be equally valid expressions of contemporary art. This juxtaposition reflects the importance of re-examining not only the structures and methods of art history but also what is considered to be "art" from different cultural perspectives. The acceptance of Beam's contributions by the Woodland Cultural Centre, a First Nations organization located on Six Nation's land in Brantford, Ontario, for an

exhibition as significant as the annual *Indian Art* show[30] further legitimates the varying forms and expressions of contemporary art by First Nations artists.

Works that address the institutions of art, also address the philosophies that govern their practice. Galleries perform a legitimizing function in which these philosophies become confirmed and sanctioned. It is natural to expect that artists would turn their attentions to galleries also.

Challenging the Art Gallery - Confronting the Exhibition Space

Along with the concern about the placement of Native art in art history, is the concern about the placement of Native art in the priorities of fine art galleries. Having a good relationship with a gallery is of major importance to an artist because of the impact a gallery can have on an artist's career. Artists are naturally concerned about the spaces in which their art is received. First Nations artists in Canada have responded to the activities (particularly exhibitions) of the gallery in the past out of concern for the lack of contemporary First Nations art being exhibited.

One of the first examples of a work by a First Nations artist in Canada that directly critiqued a specific exhibition was Carl Beam's afore mentioned *North American Ice Berg 85* (1985, figure 27) which was, in part, a satirical reference to the *European Ice Berg*, a major exhibition held at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1985 (Hill "Indian Art '85" VIII).

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[30] The annual exhibitions at the Woodland Cultural Centre have been and continue to be of great importance in reflecting the trends, concerns and changes occurring in First Nations contemporary art (Hill, "First Nations Art '90" 5).

The European Ice Berg was meant to recognize the significance of contemporary developments in European (German and Italian) architecture, art, cinema, design, fashion, photography and theatre. The exhibition was also intended to address the problem of the largely "fragmentary and second hand" knowledge in Canada of what was happening in the European art scene (Nasgaard 9). Beam, in citing the exhibition, may have been pointing to the very fragmentary knowledge about what was happening in the First Nations art scene in the 1980s. The title plays with the idea that while Canada was looking towards Europe for the "top" in art, there remained, hidden beneath it all, a much larger portion of First Nations art and culture to be seen. First Nations art was not being exhibited widely in contemporary galleries at this time so the title may have been a reference to the "freezing out" that was taking place.[31]

Some of the criticisms directed at museums apply to fine art galleries as both have collected historic material culture at the expense of contemporary expressions. One of the most pivotal exhibitions in Canadian museum history; the Glenbow Institute's *The Spirit Sings* drew an enormous amount of criticism for its lack of contemporary expressions, collaborations with First Nations and a perceived insensitivity towards contemporary First Nations issues. The exhibition was a special event created in connection with the 1988

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[31] Interestingly enough, this work is also significant for having been the first major work by a First Nations artist to be purchased by the National Gallery of Canada in 1986. Gerald McMaster in his work *Towards an Aboriginal Art History*, discusses *The North American Iceberg* in terms of this distinction and narratives of art history: "...we can surmise from the piece, he is making a case for the mainstream's avoidance of a 500 year historical relation with aboriginal peoples in North America. Even the Gallery's good will can be seen as short-sighted unless it addresses this history as a legacy....The work is also an objection to the extraordinarily arrogant title of its namesake, 'The European Iceberg.' A characteristic of icebergs is that they float in similar waters, occasionally colliding, but always focused on their own centrality, until of course they melt and their waters become one. 'The European iceberg' imposes its force on the contemporary art world; the 'North American iceberg' critiques as it speaks about its history." (93)

Calgary Olympics. It opened a watershed of discussion initially because of controversy surrounding the exhibition's major sponsor, Shell Canada, and the Lubicon Cree who were in dispute over a land claim. The exhibition became the target of a large boycott lead by the Lubicon Cree to protest Shell Canada's activities, but the activity surrounding the exhibition gradually came to highlight issues about conventional museum activities and working relationships with First Peoples. Many of these issues were as much a concern for fine art galleries as they were for museums.

In a performance work titled *Exhibit 671B* (1988, figure 28), performance artist, Rebecca Belmore (Ojibway) not only protested a museum exhibition but the absence of contemporary artistic expression in it. In sight of the Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Belmore installed herself wearing a Shell Canada logo, within a mock museum display case where she became a "living artifact" (Ryan "Trickster Shift" 145). Situated along the Olympic torch relay route, the Olympic torch bearer, and scores of accompanying media, encountered the "living artifact" sitting in the freezing cold winter temperatures of her home town of Thunder Bay. The work drew attention to the protest but also addressed many of the issues concerning museum practices of the time including exhibition sponsorship. In its intention to convey a larger political message, Belmore's work is similar to Hans Haacke's *Metromobilitan* (1985) which protested against Mobil's sponsorship of *Treasures of Ancient Nigeria* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The work included a photograph of a funeral procession for black victims killed by South African police with a banner for *Treasures of Ancient Nigeria* (which included acknowledgement of support and the corporate logo) as a statement about economic

exploitation by a multi-national company that had links with the apartheid regime in South Africa (Putnam 108).

But with the Glenbow exhibit, there were also concerns about the lack of input from First Nations people concerning the objects that were being displayed, the historization of First Peoples as individuals, a culture belonging to the past and the lack of acknowledgement of contemporary lives and realities through the exclusion of contemporary work by First Nations artists.[32] First Nations culture was being displayed as if "frozen in time" in the past. Yet here was a living, breathing artist about to "freeze to death" in her exclusion from the museum.

Belmore's work begs comparison with the self-installation of performance artist James Luna in the *Artifact Piece,* (as previously discussed in Chapter 1, figure 1). Both protest the public representation of First Nations culture using self-installation yet using opposite strategies, Luna situates himself within the institution and Belmore situates herself outside. The performances by both artists are very similar to a work by Cornelia Parker who partnered with, and installed, actress Tilda Swinton in the Tate Gallery. Swinton slept in a large glass vitrine during visiting hours surrounded by personal objects from famous people, such as Queen Victoria's stocking and Charles Dicken's quill. The work was meant to demonstrate how objects in museums have connections to living, breathing people and how these stories "sleep" when put on display. One of the earliest examples of an artist installing himself as a work of art within the gallery was Timm Uerichs (*The First*

Living Work of Art, 1961) who did so to show there is no separation of art and life (Putnam 15). Belmore is using the same means to show that in the case of *The Spirit Sings* there certainly was a separation of the realities of life as it is lived and that being represented in the museum space. In the same way that Fred Wilson's empty plinths pointed out the gaps in the museum's collection and the state's historical narrative in *Mining the Museum*, Belmore's work is just as much about what is *not* in the exhibition as it is about what is; pointing out the space where the absence lies.[33] Her work reflects the experiences of many other First Nations artists working in Canada at the time – equally frozen out of the gallery as the museum.

Joane Cardinal-Schubert has directly criticized not only museums in her work but fine art galleries as well. The installation *Preservation of a Species: Deep Freeze* (1989, Vancouver Art Gallery, figure 29) included a section referred to as *Cultural Baggage*[34]. The large black suitcase with the words "cultural baggage" written in white refers to the psychological concept of "emotional baggage" - negative feelings and thoughts based on past experiences that one can not forget. A similar piece appeared again as *Art Reservation* (1991, figure 30) at the Muttart Gallery; a large black box with the words "Native Art/National Gallery" is crossed out with arrows pointing down to the words on the side "Try the Museum of Civilization". In her retrospective exhibition, *Joane Cardinal*

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[33] For example, the entrance to the exhibition included three white plinths holding busts of famous white historical figures such as Napoleon Bonapoarte. While Bonaparte had no particular connection or relevance to the history of Maryland, his portrait bust formed part of the Historical Society's collection. This was contrasted with three additional black plinths which stood empty and bore the names of important African Americans such as Harriet Tubman, who had a significant impact on the history of Maryland, but of whom the Society did not have a portrait or bust.

[34] This is similar in appearance to part of an installation in *Preservation of a Species: Cultural Currency, the Lesson* (Articule, Montreal, 1990).

Schubert: Two Decades (1997), the artist expanded on the idea even further. *For Preservation – Art Reservation* she created a large plinth, an isolated island for art in the middle of the gallery with none of it visible. Instead, we are presented with large crates, tubes and boxes, all of which are neatly gift-wrapped with a bright pink or yellow bow. The white lettering on the various boxes tells us what is supposed to be inside and where it is destined: "Restricted Access", "New Artifact", "Unidentified Objects", National Gallery Contemporary Curator of Art Sussex Drive Ottawa ONT for Exhibition only", "Native icons" a package for the Ufundi Art Gallery. Surrounding the boxes are books with white slipcovers bearing the artist's own titles written on the front and spine such as "New Exhibitions and How to Get 'Em", This is My History", "Native Stories Retold." The work implicates the gallery, the museum and the First Nations reservation system together as places where everything is isolated from all other contexts and only labels tell us where things belong.

Situating Institutional Commentary - The Late 1980s and early 1990s

So far I have examined numerous examples of institutional commentary that have been created by First Nations artists. Artistic expressions by Canada's First Nations artists concerning the art gallery, museum and related institutions appear to have occurred later and been of a different focus from their counterparts. While there are earlier examples of institutional commentary, most of the examples that have been discussed here date back to the late 1980s. This is not meant to imply that there was a conscious and cohesive movement towards institutional commentary occurring at this time. However, the wealth of examples coming out of such a narrow time period bears further examination. Also,

with few exceptions, there was a lack of concern with commerce and art markets which occupied so many other artists at this time. How do we account for these differences? I argue that this not only has to do with the historical relationship of First Nations artists to galleries and museums at this time but with the convergence of cultural and political events in the struggle for increased self-representation for First Peoples in the 1980s and 1990s. The following sections examine events and ideas occurring at this time that influenced and impacted on institutional commentaries created by First Nations artists in Canada.

Developments in the Arts

Changes taking place in the arts in the 1960s and 1970s for First Nations artists in Canada and the art world in general would have an impact on those whose careers unfolded in the 1980s. In the 1960s and 1970s, more and more First Nations artists began accessing formal training in professional art schools. There were few programs specifically aimed at First Nations students which meant that most aspiring First Nations artists were studying at Non-Native art schools. [35] Any artist attending a formal art school at this time would have been exposed to new media such as site-specific, installation work and other concepts which, as already discussed, are so closely related to institutional commentary. In formal art school settings, First Nations artists would have had a greater opportunity for exposure to "modernist visual languages" to combine with other aesthetic traditions and conventions (Berlo and Phillips 227-234). This would have also been an opportune

[35] There were some initiatives though. The Indian Art Program at the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College in Regina was founded in 1972.

environment for young artists in training to become exposed to and become engaged in international visual experiments, including those that engaged the museum and gallery subjects.

The 1960s and 1970s are periods typically associated with the beginnings of postmodernist discourse within which institutional commentary participates. Being still very close in time to the period makes debate about what postmodernism is or is not difficult. Whether we understand postmodernism as a movement, a set of characteristics or something else, what is of concern for the purposes of this discussion is its de-constructivist and revisionist elements which allow institutional critique and commentary an opportunity to flourish.

Berlo and Phillips argue that Modernism was a different experience for First Nations artists (209).[36] Given its nominal association, one then has to ask how aspects of post-modernism relate to First Nations art. It could be argued that it is simply another Western construction into which First Nations are being slotted; that the use of "post-studio" media and similar art practices is just a further example of assimilation.[37]

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[36] This is mostly because many First Nations artists became interested in some of the central concerns of modernism in the mid-20th century, several decades after "the birth of modernism" in Europe and North America. Berlo and Phillips state that "because of this time-lag [First Nations] work was considered provincial and historicist" (209)

[37] Loretta Todd argues along similar lines for the broader concepts of modernism and postmodernism in *What More Do They Want?* (1992) where she explores the manner in which these terms are applied to First Nations art.

Gerhard Hoffmann in *Postmodern Culture and Indian Art* argues that there has been a postmodern movement in "Indian Art." Hoffmann argues "the attractiveness of this kind of assemblage art for the Native artist lies in its tendency to break down traditional ideas about art and eliminate hierarchies, which of necessity was one of the central issues for Indian artists" (268). As has been demonstrated in this thesis, institutional commentary is an ideal vehicle for First Nations artists to "eliminate hierarchies" governing museums and galleries and to break down conventions concerning art and its narratives. Such an engagement is further proof that institutional commentary is not simply another Western construction.

As much as First Nations artists were exploring new media and aesthetics in the 1980s, ethnographic museums were still applying ethnographic criteria to what they were collecting and displaying (Berlo and Phillips 234). This meant that contemporary art that did not fit a pre-determined idea about what Native art should look like stood less of a chance of getting collected or displayed. In his introductory essay to the exhibition *New Work by a New Generation* (1982), artist and curator Robert Houle addressed this same problem in what he identified as a new generation of First Nations artists who, while taking inspiration from the past, were executing their visions with modern concepts and techniques: "Regrettably, their artistic outpouring is still regulated as a cultural continuum of an anthropological past. Such an intellectual approach only confines them as mere curiosities of a vanishing race whose art is a product of a fourth world, often deemed highly insignificant by pontificating art historians" (2). Houle had some professional experience with this matter. Some years earlier he resigned as Curator at the Canadian

Museum of Civilization because of the large number of contemporary First Nations works being collected but not displayed in the museum. He continued his essay by saying:

> This new generation of artists eloquently questions such short-sighted arguments through the seriousness and high quality of their work. The relegation of this new aesthetic to ethnological data by museums is to literally establish those cultural institutions as reservations of contemporary art. Inevitably, the emergence of the artist together with the understanding and use of the polemics of modern art will lead to an appropriate environment, the art gallery (Houle 2)

At the same time, First Nations artists were having more trouble getting their work noticed by art galleries (at least, those not dedicated to First Nations art, of which there were very few). As Berlo and Phillips stated, "During the 1980s modernist and postmodernist Native artists in the U.S. and Canada lobbied hard to have their work shown in and collected by major fine art institutions" (235). Lee-Ann Martin's report to the Canada Council in March, 1991, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Contemporary Native Art and Public Art Museums in Canada,* offers a snapshot of the status and nature of contemporary Canadian First Nations art in public fine art institutions in Canada at this time. Not surprisingly, she concluded that First Nations art was indeed being under-represented in Canadian collections, the explanations for which were numerous. While gallery mandates did not exclude First Nations art, its inclusion often depended on the expertise (of which there was often a lack) and interest of an institution's curator. It was mostly a matter of professional "will" as opposed to institutional policy. In most cases there were few, if any, First Nations individuals working in positions of any sustainable authority and influence. Most were guest curators or contract workers in temporary and subordinate positions. No

doubt, misconceptions about First Nations art, compounded by ethnographic and popular stereotypes, exacerbated the problem.

These developments gave artists both the tools and the reason to address both the museum and gallery. In essence, the spaces for artistic production at this time were becoming narrower and narrower; museums were accepting some types of works that fit criteria that some contemporary artists were not willing or interested in fulfilling in favour of engaging in other, sometimes more political, themes. Fine art galleries were not accepting of this type of work either, for many of the reasons identified by Martin, including the charge that contemporary First Nations art was becoming "too political" and therefore undesirable ("The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion" 30). This led artists to address these spaces in their work. Use of critical strategies derived from new media and activist art movements drew attention to the gaps in the activities of arts institutions.

Building Political Activism

Numerous North American and European artists engaging in institutional critique in the 1980s were focusing on themes centered on commerce and commodification, particularly the gallery's role in the marketing of art. Numerous authors have discussed the role that markets and commerce have played in the development of First Nations art.[38] Yet with

[38] Discussions of markets and First Nations art has usually been less about the commodification of First Nations contemporary art and more concerned with markets for previously designated "tourist" or "souvenir" arts or "crafts." For example, Tom Hill in *Indian Art in Canada: A Historical Perspective* devotes an entire section to "The Crafted Arts: Towards Commercialization." Ruth Phillips discusses the role of commodification in First Nations tourist works in a number of her writings such as *A Proper Place for Art or the Proper Arts of Place?* (45-72) which appeared in *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery*

few exceptions, the subject of commodification and commerce is not a large theme running through First Nations institutional commentary. This might be partially explained by the economic situation specific to Canada in the 1980s which was experiencing a recessionary period at that time. As Hill elaborates, First Nations artists at this time were not participating in the same art market that other artists in the canon are criticizing so strongly in their own institutional commentary. The recessionary period of the late 1980s in Canada made it difficult to remain an artist at all and equally difficult to appear critical of any art market (McMaster "Politics in Canadian Native Art" 15-16).

I would argue that political concerns which had begun in the 1960s and 1970s and which were gathering steam by the 1980s were the reason for the difference in focus. In as much as issues revolving around the market for Native art were a concern, political issues took priority. Beginning in the 1980s, First Nations in Canada were in a constitutional battle with the federal government (McMaster "Politics in Canadian Native Art" 15). There were large native protests over concerns that federal repatriation of the British North America Act would terminate the special status and rights made to the First Nations under the Royal Proclamation of 1763. It was also the beginning of greater organization and political impetus through the creation of what would become known as the Assembly of First Nations. Much of the Native art community was galvanized by significant events taking place, Elijah Harper's vote against the Meech Lake Accord and the stand-off at Oka

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along with Aaron Glass' work *(Cultural) Objects of (Cultural) Value* looks at the dynamics of commoditization and Pacific Northwest Coast art (93-114).

in Quebec stand out as two particularly poignant examples both occurring in 1990 (McMaster "Politics in Canadian Native Art" 16).

One of the lasting impacts of such politically charged events was that they created greater general awareness of aboriginal issues (to non-Natives as well as First Nations). Furthermore, such political events impact on not only the awareness but also the commitment to First Nations art in the Canadian art world: "As a demonstration of a new consciousness and affirmation of identity artists also seized the moment by participating in several exhibitions that demonstrated their solidarity with Native political leaders" (McMaster "Politics of Canadian Native Art" 16).

By the 1980s, First Nations art in the country had started to become more political and critical in general. Catalogues for the annual Indian Art exhibitions held at the Woodland Cultural Centre every year since the late 1970s reflected this shift. They served as "a kind of barometer…for what [was] happening in First Nations art" (Hill, "First Nations Art '90" 5). In particular, the catalogues from the late 1980s to the early 1990s showed a distinct change in tone, as the art took on a much more political stance than that which had been seen previously. Political art was certainly not new but younger artists were "[finding] new ways of expressing the political moment (McMaster "The Politics of Canadian Native Art" 16). Unlike their contemporaries, many First Nations artists were perhaps not as engaged in concerns about commerce because of larger threats to native identity and status.

With increased desire to assert a sense of identity came a greater need to address those institutions which had historically asserted control over the representation of that identity. The creation of art by First Nations artists that addressed the museum and gallery at this time was a postmodern response to building political tensions and activism. Government, as an institution, played as much of a part as institutions of art in the assertion of First Nations identity. Boldly political works such as Coast Salish artist Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's *Transformation of Bill Wilson* (1991, figure 31) were a call for self-determination in all its facets – not just political self-government.[39] In this work, the large transformation mask based on Pacific Northwest Coast aesthetics opens up to reveal not a transformed face but a message boldly lettered across the entire piece "self-government now." Self government can easily refer to control over representation in cultural institutions as much as in political organization. In exerting their control over the representation and identity of First People, through exhibitions or political constitutions, such institutions were continuing with the program of colonial domination and control. Clearly culture and politics were being implicated together. Yuxweluptun's bold statement reflected the gathering momentum and demand for transformation. Exacerbated by past historical conventions, First Nations artists were turning to these institutions as a means of addressing the present through that past in an attempt to create change in more areas than just culture and the arts.

The need for change was brought clearly into focus with officially sanctioned cultural events taking place in the latter part of the 20th century. At this time, several large-scale

[39] I would like to acknowledge Lee-Ann Martin for her suggestion of this work in this context.

special events and anniversary years occurred in close proximity to one another. In 1989, Calgary hosted the Olympic Winter Games. The year 1992 was the quincentennial of Columbus' arrival in North America and the 350th anniversary of the founding of Montreal. Official government plans included large scale exhibitions to celebrate these occasions. For example, Calgary's Glenbow Institute hosted *The Spirit Sings* for the Olympics and the National Gallery of Canada hosted *Land/Spirit/Power* in 1992 for the Columbus celebrations.

For many First Peoples, these anniversaries were not occasions to celebrate. The anniversaries recalled the beginnings of decades of colonial oppression, the impact of which was still being felt. *The Spirit Sings* raised unresolved aboriginal issues concerning politics (land claims) as well as control and representation in the museum. The combined impact of these exhibitions was that they highlighted what had been historically wrong with museums and what continued to be wrong. As political activism built up speed, the exhibits became a cultural lightning rod in which museums were directly implicated, along with other institutions such as government, the education system and religion, for control over identity and representation.

A Space of One's Own

First Nations curators and artists responded to these events through their art[40] and also through the mounting of their own exhibitions. *Revisions* was quickly mounted at the Walter Phillips Gallery in Banff as a response to *The Spirit Sings*; the catalogue was later

[40] Such as Rebecca Belmore's previously discussed performance work, *Exhibit 671B.*

published during the Columbus anniversary year (which it also directly addressed). *Indigena*, curated by Gerald McMaster and Lee-Ann Martin at the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the *Submuloc Show/ Columbus Wohs'*, curated by Jaune Quick-To-See Smith for Atlatl in the U.S. were intended to "counter official government plans to treat the anniversary as a celebration" (Berlo and Phillips 237). Exhibitions and art joined the larger gambit of cultural production aimed at "(de)celebrating" these events (Revisions 1).

In the moments following the cultural events and their respective exhibitions to celebrate them, we recognize the manner in which "art practice is understood as inextricably bound to broader cultural and political spheres." (Revisions, 2) Comments on the museum, its values and priorities, whether they took the form of contemporary art or exhibitions, equally provide commentary on the values and priorities of society as a whole.

First Nations artists have undertaken numerous other initiatives to address the issues concerning lack of exhibition space. For example, the artist-run centre, The Urban Shaman, opened in Winnipeg in 1996. It was a response to the lack of galleries dedicated to contemporary aboriginal art in the province of Manitoba and was created to promote contemporary work in all disciplines by artists primarily of aboriginal descent.[41] Other initiatives have defied the conventional concept of the art gallery. Cyberpowwow[42] is a virtual gallery and chat room started by Skawennati Tricia Fragnito and the Nation to Nation group also in 1996 (MacDonald "Indians in Cybermuse" unpaginated). The

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[41] According to mandate information available on the Urban Shaman website available at: <http://www.urbanshaman.org/>

[42] Available at <www.cyberpowwow.net>

concept behind virtual galleries is that they are more accessible to wider audiences as visitors can view the works on-line at any time. Tribe, a "centre for evolving aboriginal media and performing arts" in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, is an unusual gallery having neither collection nor gallery! Co-founded by performance artist Lori Blondeau, April Brass and Denny Norman, Tribe forms partnerships with other gallery spaces in order to give the host gallery an opportunity to increase their programming and the artists an opportunity to show their work.

Other artists have suggested alternate ways of conceptualizing the art gallery spaces already in existence. For the National Gallery's exhibition, *Land, Spirit, Power* (1992), Rebecca Belmore created an installation *Mawa-che-hitoowin: A Gathering of People for Any Purpose* (1992, figure 32), in which she attempted to make the gallery a space for dialogue. *A Gathering* consisted of a circle of chairs, all favourites of Belmore's friends, lent for the exhibition. The chairs possessed headsets on which could be heard recorded stories of the chair's owners told in their own voice. Belmore created a space for Anishnabe women to be heard within a "setting itself in opposition to an art institution's apparent detachment from the predicament of individual Native people" (Townsend-Gault "Hot Dogs" 121). Art galleries are intended to be gathering places in which multiple expressions and messages are voiced through the art on display. Belmore re-forms the space into something more familiar and accessible to the viewer through the incorporation of personal items. It is a space in which multiple voices can be heard equally and individually through the use of individual headsets with no one voice being more important than the other.

Marianne Nicolson also provides an alternative space inspired by traditional Pacific northwest coast spaces such as the Big House. Of Nicolson's work *Nam'sgams/Malt'sams* (1994, figure 33), Andrea Walsh wrote for the Eiteljorg Fellowship:

> Nicolson's strategy of suspending her installation work from the ceiling of the gallery is symbolic of the incongruities that exist between the context of an authentic big house and the art gallery. The suspended presentation of her work acknowledges that the ideas or cultural concepts inherent in her art are not "grounded" within the confines and history of European art history, or for that matter, public exhibition. Her representations of the big house that "float" in the context of the gallery space cannot be tied down to specific meanings created by outsides. 'In a large part, our lives have been highly documented because others have imposed their perspectives,' Nicolson says. 'I want to present this work so that there are multiple viewpoints. I wish people to have a viewpoint of my home and experience. I also want to represent it in my own way and not necessarily have everything understood in a singular fashion (Walsh 27).

By placing one space within the context of the other, Nicolson creates a re-articulation of them both. I would argue that as much as there may be incongruities between the gallery and the Big House, there are also similarities. Both are gathering places where objects are displayed within a particular context. The suspended panels of Nicolson's work allow the eye to traverse both spaces simultaneously, thus confirming the co-presence of spaces that are less incongruous than they may initially seem.

Interventions

Institutions responded in numerous different ways to the watershed events of the late 1980s, such as the *The Spirit Sings* exhibition. It was clear that changes needed to be made in the manner in which First Nations, museums and galleries were relating to one another. While the Task Force Report which came out of that experience provided recommendations, it was not always obvious what form the changes should take. In 1989,

the Canadian Museum of Civilization opened its Indian and Inuit Art Gallery which provided a major permanent venue for the large quantity of contemporary art Robert Houle had collected for the museum while a curator there (Martin "First Nations Art '90" 7). Other galleries attempted to mount more exhibitions of contemporary First Nations art. While a step in the right direction, these exhibitions were often small, temporary or group shows that attempted to absorb "different sorts of art" (Finkelpearl in Martin "Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion" 25).

Yet the discipline of art history itself had been undergoing change in the last decades of the 20th century. The "new" or "critical" art history as proposed by art historian Jonathan Harris, fueled by social and political demands in the 1960s, challenged the discipline to become more open, self-reflective and interrogative (1-9). Doubtlessly as a result of the discipline's revisionist nature in the face of political actions taking place, and as an initiative to create working partnerships, museums and galleries began to invite First Nations artists to participate in a form of institutional commentary known as "interventions". These are occasions in which artists are invited by institutions to create works that respond to the host museum or gallery's collection and displays. There, the artist is given substantial control over the space, determining what gets displayed and how. This provided an opportunity for First Nations artists to have more involvement in the spaces where art is displayed and greater control over representation. Some of the larger institutions in Canada – museums, galleries and institutions that often function as a hybrid of both, such as the Art Gallery of Ontario (with its historic predecessor known as The Grange) and the UBC Museum of Anthropology (an anthropological museum with

contemporary gallery space) - have undertaken such works. Many of the invited artists used the institution as a medium to not only address the museum or gallery but, in many cases, to express wider societal concerns.

Two examples of interventions at the UBC Museum of Anthropology are *Raven's Reprise* which has already been briefly discussed in terms of Powell and Nicolson's work and *Savage Graces*, which will be discussed in Chapter Three. In the case of *Raven's Reprise*, the artists were asked to create works that responded to and would be installed among the museum's permanent collection in order to create "a visual dialogue between the contemporary and historic pieces" in order to "offer some insight into current art practices that venture beyond an analysis of traditional forms and genres" (Hill "Raven's Reprise" 1). *Savage Graces* was originally mounted in an anthropological museum and later traveled to contemporary art galleries across Canada. Still other artists such as Jeff Thomas and Robert Houle have created interventions within the collections and spaces of contemporary fine art galleries.

Onandaga artist Jeff Thomas created a re-installation of the Art Gallery of Ontario's permanent collection of historical Canadian Art called *No Escapin' This: Confronting Images of Aboriginal Leadership* (2001, figure 34). Thomas erected a graffiti wall with one of Edmund Morris' (1871-1913) "Indian portraits" next to a contemporary photo portrait taken by Thomas of a prominent Aboriginal woman, Madeline Dion Stout. The graffiti wall was meant to disrupt the viewer's experience and be a reminder of a cultural legacy estranged from the museum environment by bringing Morris' work into

perspective with modern, urban Aboriginal communities in Canadian cities. The work was intended to suggest that "... art museums can be places for people to deepen their knowledge of the past, and to make that knowledge import to how we live today." ("No Escapin' This"). The re-installation reaffirms the value that a gallery can have in terms of contemporary life and society by combining a part of the Gallery's historic collection with more contemporary art forms.

In 1993, artist and curator Robert Houle was also invited to create an installation at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO). Organized by the Gallery's Curator of Contemporary Art, Philip Monk, *Anishnabe Walker Court: Part 2* (figure 35) opened in April of that year, shortly after a stage in the Gallery's reconstruction had been completed. Houle created his installation in response to another work already installed in the AGO's Walker Court, a work by German artist Lothar Baumgarten titled *Monument to the Native People of Ontario,* which had been created for the 1985 exhibition, *The European Iceberg: Creativity in Germany and Italy Today.* Baumgarten's work was intended to be a "homage to local tribes of southern Ontario" (McMaster "Towards an Aboriginal Art History" 88). Houle's work was an intervention in two different respects. First, the artist intervened in an unconventional gallery exhibition space. Secondly, he also made use of the AGO's collection by situating his work in close proximity to the Baumgarten installation, which had been acquired by the AGO after the *European Iceberg* exhibition and became such an integral part of Houle's installation.

Houle's work mimics and alters the basic premise of Baumgarten's which consisted of a decorative "frieze" of First Nations names in capital letters placed high above the interior of the courtyard's archways.[43] The eight aboriginal references painted on the walls in a classic Roman typeface included "Algonkian", "Nipissing", "Ottawa", "Ojibwa", "Iroquois", "Neutral", "Petun" and "Huron." This catalogue of tribal names was meant to include those people now supposedly "extinct." Houle's response to Baumgarten's work was comprised of a three part installation surrounding the Walker Court (which contained the main body of the work), the George Weston Hall and the Joey and Tobey Tanenbaum Sculpture Atrium. Houle's project literally "worked around it." Eight large photographs of the gallery from various stages of the past and the same eight names used by Baumgarten (in similar red and brown classical lettering) alternated on both sides of the outermost periphery of the Walker Court from the northeast corner onwards.

Houle's work also intervened in the concept and hierarchy of authority within museum space by using lower-case lettering in contrast to Baumgarten's upper case and by placing the names at a lower, chest-level height as opposed to high up above the courtyard archways. In essence, Houle puts his work on an equal level with the viewer as opposed to "lording over" the viewer as Baumgarten's naming does. This act of naming, so central to the work, allows the artist to literally become a part of the museum space. Being himself a

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[43] Baumgarten's site-specific tribute was not the first time that he had examined First Nations within a museum context and he continued afterwards to create other text-based works similar to *Monument.* In 1993 (the same year that Houle was doing his work at the Walker Court) Baumgarten also installed First Nations terms and names on the spiraling walls of New York's Guggenheim Museum in a work called *America Intervention.* Of the original Walker Court Baumgarten work, Houle said "It's poorly researched and romantic but it's also very eloquent. What I noticed when I first saw it is that its silence is deafening .... Baumgarten's work is about naming so I decided to rename the Walker Court *Anishnabe Walker Court* for the six months my piece will be there" Robert Houle (Hume "Anishnabe Artist" WO.4).

member of one of the supposedly "extinct tribes" Baumgarten was trying to honour, Houle uses the tribal names to re-claim the space for himself in a manner reminiscent of the *Michael Asher Lobby.* In that respect, the positioning of authority in terms of history and historical representations is also a key part of the work.

The concept of authority seems most relevant to issues concerning representation not only in museum practice but in artistic production as well.[44] Reflecting on his work, the artist said "I've taken names from Baumgarten's work and have used Walker Court as a metaphor, to comment on the issue of integrity as it relates to a work of art" ("Robert Houle Exhibition an Intriguing Commentary"). This experience in the court can be interpreted as a critique of the placement of First Nations art and artists in relation to the dominant mainstream art world in Canada. This is supported by the choice to have Houle create a work in an unconventional space outside the surrounding galleries within the AGO. Houle's *Anishnabec Walker Court* found itself surrounded on all sides by European art – the Baumgarten work at the centre and the various works in the galleries surrounding the court leave First Nations art with a very narrow margin indeed.

Two other noteworthy examples of interventions come from group work that has taken place in the early years of the current century: *House Guests* at the Grange in Toronto,

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[44] Michael Bell considered Houle's work to be more about the creation of a new narrative that took the Baumgarten work as its starting point: "[Houle] engages the notion of museum representation of native history and comments upon it by juxtaposing and overlaying his language and personal artifacts in another museum space, formulating another history." (Bell in McMaster "Towards an Aboriginal Art History" 89). As McMaster further points out, it is significant that while Baumgarten's work can be seen and experienced all at once from the inside of the courtyard, Houle's work must be seen from the courtyard's periphery. To visit the courtyard is to risk missing or ignoring the work on the outside. To experience it means to place oneself on the outside peripheries, to be on the margins looking inwards on something one is not a part of.

organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario (2002) and *Museopathy* (2001) organized by the Agnes Etherington Art Gallery (AEAG) in Kingston, Ontario, in which Rebecca Belmore and Brian Jungen, respectively, were invited to be part of large group interventions in "hybrid spaces." Both exhibitions were organized by fine art galleries, but the actual installations were in museums or museum-like settings. While Jungen's and Belmore's work both responded to the collections and spaces of the host institutions, each artist chose to forego the opportunity to critique the arts institution. Instead, they created work that made a statement about the place of First Peoples in society.

Brian Jungen was one of multiple artists who participated in *Museopathy*, a multi-site exhibition held in various museum and heritage sites throughout Kingston, Ontario during the summer of 2001. Visual artists were commissioned to create site specific and site responsive installations in museums across the city while an exhibition of objects from the collections of the city's museums were displayed at the AEAG. The results were a switching of art in non-gallery spaces and "non-art" in gallery spaces.[45]

Jungen created a sculptural installation within the Correctional Service of Canada Museum, a building originally built by prisoners between 1871-1873 as the home for the Kingston Penitentiary Warden. It displays amongst its collection, an array of confiscated objects from former prisoners. Perhaps the most infamous of which is an "escape pod" created in 1980 by a prisoner from the Millhaven Maximum Security Institution. The

[45] Among the many participating artists were Barb Hunt who worked at the Royal Military College of Canada Museum and Jamelie Hassan at the Museum of Health Care at Kingston.

prisoner noticed that cafeteria ware was taken outside the institution for cleaning. He proceeded to glue together stacks of trays taken from the prison cafeteria and hollowed out a space to hide in. This particular piece of the Museum's permanent collection served as the inspiration for Jungen's work *Isolated Depiction of the Passage of Time* (2001, figure 36). Jungen similarly stacked and glued over 1,500 cafeteria trays on cedar palettes (the cedar referencing Northwest coast mask and totem pole carving). Each of the 1,500 trays stood for one aboriginal male incarcerated in a Canadian penal institution; a disproportionately high number relative to the demographics of the Canadian population. Each tray's color represented not only the individual but the length of his sentence – yellow for a sentence less than three years, mustard for three to six years, pink for a sentence of six to ten years, light pink for over ten years and orange for a life sentence. Within the centre of the stacks was a television set, the light from which could be seen flickering between the stacks and palettes. The television broadcasted footage of the execution of Timothy McVeigh, convicted for the 1995 bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building which killed 168 people.

While the work functions on its own, the collection and the specific site which inspired its creation are important parts of the work's interpretation. The context suggests a subtle play on the idea of the institution and of being trapped; the desiring of escape. One wonders exactly which institution is being discussed in this work; is the artist trying to escape from the museum or the correctional institution? Both the gallery and the jail are institutions for the select few. Both have been theorized as places for correcting the

behaviour of society[46]. The work in this context seems to reconcile the museum and the penal institution as both being, as Tony Bennett describes in his work *The Birth of the Museum* (1995), new technologies of modern forms of government which aim at regulating the conduct of individuals and populations (i.e./ prisons & asylums etc.), each of which is characterized by its own specific rationalities. Both the museum and the prison have a certain rhetoric which is supposed to govern them. For example, prisons are meant to reform yet the political rationalities embodied in their actual functioning (separation from the main population) create a gap and supply conditions for a discourse of reform "which proves unending because it mistakes the nature of its object" (Bennett 89-90). Jungen's work is a statement on the under-representation of people of native ancestry in one institution, the gallery, to express the over-representation in another, the prison system.

Rebecca Belmore's contribution to *House Guests* also examines the place of aboriginals in society. From September 15, 2001 to January 27, 2002, the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) in Toronto played host to *House Guests: Contemporary Artists in the Grange*. A number of local Toronto artists, including Luis Jacob, Robert Fones, Christy Thompson and international contemporary artists, such as Elaine Reichek and Josiah McElheny from New York and Elizabeth Le Moine from London, U.K., were invited to install current work as guest artists within the Grange. The Grange is a national historic site and the

[46] Tony Bennett argues this in Chapter 2 "The Exhibitionary Complex" in *The Birth of the Museum* where he describes how London's Crystal Palace allowed society its own surveillance of itself (65) and how the museum in Great Britain in the 1800s came to be seen as a "new [instrument] for the moral and cultural regulation of the working class" (73).

home of Toronto's first art museum which eventually became an historic house museum and part of the Art Gallery of Ontario. The exhibition was meant to mark the centennial of the AGO by having the artists explore "the transformations of the Grange as a physical landmark as well as its social and cultural role within the city and the art community ("House Guests" Art Gallery of Ontario website).

As one of the invited artists, Belmore combined performance and installation in a work called *Wild* (2001, figure 37) in the Grange's master bedroom (also known as the "best bedroom"). Belmore focused her attention on "the master's bed" – a large dark brown wood canopy bed covered in plush dark green curtains and covers. Belmore described her attraction to it: "Dressed in its plush cloth of dark evergreen over deep brown wood, it lures me to dream of sleeping deep within the folds of soft moss and the sweet smell of earth. The bed is a fortress. The four posts clearly marking its territory. Its canopy protecting one from the powers that live in the sky. I will re-dress this bed and occupy its space. It will become my shelter." (Exhibition proposal for Rebecca Belmore). Belmore replaced these bedclothes with various fabrics and materials such as fur, Hudson Bay blankets and beadwork and placed herself within the bed. Her intent was to stay in the house and occupy this "best bedroom" where her ancestors would never have been invited or welcomed to even enter. Of her self-installation in such an intimate environment Belmore stated: "The opportunity to exhibit myself in such a personal context is fortuitous in that it will provide me with the odd experience of perhaps being the only native woman to ever sleep in such a place" (Exhibition proposal for Rebecca Belmore).

The significance of Belmore being *invited* to do this work cannot be over-stated as she would never have been officially "invited in" during the Grange's early days.[47] Belmore's work, from a strictly historical perspective is more of an "invasion" than an intervention. Yet her presence makes conspicuous the absence of First Peoples within recorded history; she creates a place for herself in the modern day.

Conclusion

Interventions would seem like an excellent way for First Nations to address their main concerns about the museum, galleries and other institutions of art by using the very institutions they are addressing in the first place. They would certainly seem like an ideal means of addressing issues of identity and control over one's representation. Offering artists the opportunity to represent themselves in the same space, interventions have been part of changes and initiatives to increase aboriginal programming and exhibition opportunities for First Nations artists; to offer museum and gallery visitors a plurality of viewpoints and voices. But how successful have they been? "To the present, what has happened for the most part is that the mainstream museum and galleries have made an attempt to absorb different sorts of art without changing their character, and the mainstream audience has yet to make a real effort to find new contexts within which to see

[47] Author Charlotte Gray wrote a three-part history for the exhibition catalogue for *House Guests*. The red brick mansion known as The Grange was built in 1817 for D'Arcy Boulton, a lawyer and merchant living in what was then known as York, and his wife Sarah Anne. Sarah enjoyed a reputation as an excellent hostess amongst York's small elite, who strove to replicate the standards and values of upper class British life in the new and growing nation. A contemporary of the time wrote "Our society [remembered to] pay and receive civilities [and] proper respect" to avoid becoming "little better than savages" (20). The history also includes an account of a potentially alarming encounter: "Soon after the Boulton's sixth child was born, according to the nineteenth century writer Henry Scadding, a native Indian wandered into Sarah Anne's bedroom where she was lying with the baby. Scadding claimed that the visitor simply patted mother and child , said 'Pretty squaw, pretty papoose,' and walked away." (26)

art. Artists of colour are given an 'opportunity' to show, but it is on the terms of the establishment. No significant shift of power has taken place…" (Finkelpearl in Martin "Politics of Inclusion" 25). Martin observed that smaller solo or group shows designed purposefully to increase the presence of First Nations art in the early part of 1990 amounted to "soft" inclusion which served to absolve "…the institution from a long term commitment to the serious treatment of works by Native artists…this intermittent inclusion or "tokenism" almost always guarantees consistent exclusion of these artists and gives the impression that there is no problem of exclusion" (Martin "The Politics of Inclusion" 25). Upon first examination of interventions by First Nations, it would appear that such initiatives amount to another form of "soft inclusion". Chapter Three takes a closer look at Gerald McMaster's *Savage Graces* to provide a more considered view of how such work can function within the museum space.

Chapter 3 – Artists in the Contact Zones

The last chapter explored interventions, works using the physical locale and/or collection of the art gallery or museum as its medium. As discussed, many contemporary First Nations artists had experienced difficulty in getting their work shown in fine art galleries in the 1980s. To be invited by a gallery or museum to create an intervention marks a considerable change in the relationship between artist and institution that generates a number of pertinent questions. What does it mean when the artist is suddenly given an opportunity to work from "the inside"? How do the roles of artist and curator change and what are the implications of that? Why would a museum or gallery allow, even invite an artist to create a work that has the potential to criticize or portray it in a negative light? Does such work mark any substantial change in the relationship of the First Nations artist to the museum or gallery?

We can begin to examine some of these questions by applying the concept of the museum as a contact zone, as discussed by James Clifford in *Routes* (1987), to Gerald McMaster's *Savage Graces: After Images* at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology in 1992. In this case study, we can see how an intervention with First Nations concerns created in the context of events occurring in the early part of the 1990s functioned as a strategic tool to redress the conventional relationship of First Nations with the museum/art gallery; offering a transformative shift between old and new. This application gives us a different perspective on how we can understand interventions and how they functioned at this time.

Case Study - Gerald McMaster's *Savage Graces: After Images*

Plains Cree artist, writer and curator, Gerald McMaster was born and raised in Red Pheasant, Saskatchewan.[48] McMaster's education includes fine art, art history and anthropology studies. He attended the Institute of American Indian Arts and completed a BFA at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design in 1977. He earned an MA in Anthropology at Carleton University in 1994, and a Ph.D at the Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis in 1999. McMaster's achievements as an artist and curator are considerable. His art has been exhibited around the world and can be found in many collections, including the Canada Council Art Bank and the Canadian Museum of Civilization amongst many others. In 1995, he was named Canadian Commissioner to the prestigious *Biennale di Venezia* XLVI and was Curator of Contemporary Indian Art and Curator-in-Charge of the First Peoples Hall at the Canadian Museum of Civilization from 1981 to 2000. Following that, McMaster served as the Deputy Assistant Director for Cultural Resources at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian. He is currently Curator of Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, the first aboriginal in Canada to occupy such a role.

McMaster's solo exhibition, *Savage Graces: After Images,* opened in 1992 at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology (MOA), co-curated by the artist and MOA curator Rosa Ho. The exhibition was a combination of McMaster's own recent

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[48] Biographical information comes from a variety of sources, including National Aboriginal Achievement Awards (http://www.naaf.ca/html/g_mcmaster_e.html); First Nations Art: An Introduction to Contemporary Native Artists in Canada (http://collections.ic.gc.ca/artists/mcmaster.html) and The Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art Canadian Art Database (http://www.ccca.ca/cv/english/mcmaster-cv.html)

paintings, found objects and images juxtaposed with text and objects from MOA's permanent collection. The exhibition effectively used the museum space, collection and the language of museum display to critique the manner in which native peoples have been portrayed and stereotyped, not only in the museum or gallery but in a wider social context of popular culture.

The first half of the exhibition displayed six new, large-scale acrylic paintings created by McMaster exploring colonial power relations and Native stereotypes using a montage of images from cartoons and photographs, corporate logos, kitsch imagery and text. One canvas entitled *Pretty Maidens All in a Row* (figure 38) looked at the stereotypical representations of First Nations women, combining images of young women in residential school dresses, semi-nude native women selling Oklahoma Brand goods, a logo for "Pocahontas Braids" and an animation still of Princess Tiger Lily under threat from Captain Hook in the Disney film *Peter Pan*. Other works, such as *Making a Buck* and *Commercialism and Lies the Movies Told Me,* (figures 39 and 40) looked at the exploitation of such Native representations in trademarks, sports logos and comic book scenes of the Lone Ranger and Tonto, for the purposes of commercial gain or entertainment.

McMaster next combined text and imagery in two separate wall installations which consisted of images of First Peoples. These images, modern and historic - some stereotyped - on postcards, in magazine articles, old photographs, advertisements and more were pinned directly to the wall. One of the installations titled *Kill the 'Indian' and*

Save the Man (taken from an anonymous colonial-era quote) [figure 41] is re-appropriated by McMaster in order to "kill" the culturally constructed concept of "the Indian" in order to reveal the human being beneath it. McMaster also reverses the meaning of the title of his second installation - *And Here is the Vanishing Race Which Symbolizes My Whole Work* (figure 42) – a quotation from the American Photographer Edward Curtis referring to his project of "preserving" the so-called "vanishing" cultures of Native Americans through his photography at the turn of the 20th century. But the Native peoples did not "vanish" as predicted; McMaster leaves us with a small reminder by including a photograph of himself - covered with red and gold paint in the centre of the grouping (Robertson). The collection of images in these wall installations is reminiscent of the Victoria and Albert Museum's policy to "possess" objects unavailable for physical acquisition through photography. It is also very similar to Curtis' efforts to "capture" a culture through his photographs. McMaster, instead "re-captures" those images and representations of First Nations for himself.

McMaster is essentially creating a museum of his own, similar to Duchamp's creation of a museum for his own work in *Bôite-en-Valise* in that he has assembled his own choices of two dimensional objects. [49] McMaster also creates a museum of his own in the sense that John Berger describes the "pinboard" museum (30). Berger writes that: "The means of [photographic] reproduction are used politically and commercially to disguise or deny what their existence makes possible..." This is certainly the case in the selected magazine

[49] It is also similar to Annette Messanger's *Album Collections* (1973) where Messanger assembled and displayed two dimensional images in photo albums in museum vitrines (Putnam 17).

clippings, postcards and other photomechanical reproductions, which deny or disguise the lived realities of many First Nations peoples. Berger continues: "But sometimes individuals use them differently....On each board all the images belong to the same language... because they have been chosen in a highly personal way to match and express the experience of the room's inhabitant. Logically, these boards should replace museums" (Berger 30). McMaster's selection and display is not only a creation of his own highly personal museum but simultaneously a re-possession of the museum for himself.

The third wall installation by McMaster relied more heavily on text than visual imagery with a mural sized head of a "young brave" drawn in white and colored chalks on a black wall (figure 43).[50] Each of the feathers projecting from the brave's headdress or feather bonnet bore a sentence, question or statement. It is McMaster's way of not only asking out loud the questions posed by the show but a manner of understanding stereotypes from all angles, not just the visual. A portion of the text reads: "The Native Canadian is the least understood and the most misunderstood of all Canadians. Do Native Canadians have to be dead to get into museums? Do Native Artists have to lose their identity to get into art galleries/museums? Why do you call us Indians? Is there a mass conspiracy to legitimize only one version of the way we see the world?" (see appendix B for full text)

The final section moved away from two dimensional images and texts to focus on objects – both those from the museum's permanent collection and those from everyday life. At

[50] The chalk drawing was not drawn directly on the wall by McMaster at each venue, but rather projected and traced by installation crews.

MOA, the selections from the permanent collection included objects such as a feather bonnet or headdress and a pair of moccasins. The location of McMaster's work in the temporary galleries also allowed the artist to take advantage of the proximity of a monumental work in the museum's permanent collection – Bill Reid's sculpture, *Raven and the First Men.* This prominently displayed work in the museum's rotunda was visible from the exhibition space for *Savage Graces.* The huge figure of the raven, who, in Haida legend is the trickster, appears to be observing McMaster's work very carefully from his perch atop the clamshell (figure 44).

The permanent collection objects were selected by McMaster from each venue as the show traveled and thus, changed in each location in accordance with local contexts (figure 45).[51] For example, at the Edmonton Art Gallery, portraits of natives by Nicholas Grandmaison, and paintings by Cornelius Krieghoff were included. A slightly different approach was taken at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, with the inclusion of 19th century documentary paintings and contemporary works by Ken Lum and Bill Lobchuck (Gillmore B5).

Savage Graces can be seen as not only an intervention occurring in the museum space and collection but also in the manner of display. McMaster maintained complete control not only of how the objects were arranged but the museum labelling on each of the vitrines as

[51] Other dates and venues included: Ottawa Art Gallery, Ottawa, ON, (Jan. 6 – Feb. 13, 1994), Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge AB (May 1 – May 30, 1994), Art Gallery of Windsor, Windsor, ON (Sept. 12 – Nov. 17, 1994), Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg, MB (Dec. – Jan., 1995), Memorial University Art Gallery, St. John's, NL (Feb. -March, 1995), Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, AB (June – Aug., 1995).

well. Each historical object at MOA was labeled in both English and Cree. "I think some of the stuff that I did use, like a headdress, [would usually have the] normal label like a "headdress" or a "feather bonnet" or something like that … I used a Cree word, which goes over the head of people, to think about what these objects were doing there and what it meant and what the true words or names for these things were (Interview with Gerald McMaster). By doing so, McMaster subverted the conventions of museum labelling. By taking control of the labelling, the artist offered a rethinking of the manner in which a museum classifies and names objects.

Juxtaposed against the "authentic" objects of the museum collection were installations of everyday objects collected by the artist that depicted stereotypes of "Indians." These included everyday objects and the more bizarre examples of kitsch such as children's toys and games, product packaging and tourist souvenirs. Objects were grouped thematically in specimen cases normally reserved for valuable museum artifacts. Each case bore an ironic or double title which commented on the contents. For example, a vitrine labeled *Food for Thought/Absolutely No Preservatives* (figure 46) contained food-related items such as cobs of dried "Indian" corn, a Land O'Lakes brand butter package bearing the image of a smiling "Indian maiden princess", two "Indian" salt and pepper shakers and empty bags of corn chips with a stereotypical cartoon Native on the front. Another vitrine labelled *Not Recommended for Children* (figure 47) contained a small scene of an Indian village created with colorful children's Playmobile toys - complete with teepee, canoes, stretched pelts and a buffalo skull. Upon closer examination, one would find a Playmobile artist with easel and a photographer with camera busily capturing the scene. "So you'd see a

little Playmobile set for example and they were so much fun. I figured kids would enjoy it, you know, I put it at a low level so young kids could see all this Playmobile stuff which they play with but of course everything would go right over their head, they would just see this interesting set up of Indians " (Interview with Gerald McMaster). The set up is a reminder that such representations can enter one's consciousness and become naturalized at a very young and impressionable age. Other objects in cases on display included everything from a package of Red Man chewing tobacco, Lone Ranger comics, sports paraphernalia, beer cans, National Geographic magazines, Big Chief writing tablets and tourist souvenirs to an image of the naturalist Grey Owl (an "Indian fake") and a clipping from the Vancouver Sun on the controversy surrounding the Atlanta Braves' "Tomahawk Chop." These objects all demonstrate the pervasiveness and cumulative impact of stereotypes.

McMaster gave the museum visitor the last say with a participatory work called *The Cultural Amnesty Box* (figure 48). The *Amnesty Box* was a large box or vitrine for museum visitors to deposit objects from their everyday environment that portrayed stereotypes similar to those explored in the exhibition. The *Amnesty Box* essentially provided visitors not only with an opportunity to participate in the exhibition but also with a safe haven to examine their own misconceptions about indigenous peoples:

> I did create a piece called...*Cultural Amnesty*... It was really wonderful and it was a piece that developed out of nothing, right there, right then, as I was actually installing the show...And what ended up happening was people just began leaving stuff, and you could tell they were from around the world by what was left behind, and that was just a hodge podge of things....I don't know if they got the idea or if they just felt they needed to deposit something, just as a remembrance of their visit, or a gift to me or

> they clearly understood the idea of what that meant....I think the *Cultural Amnesty* was a good example of perhaps people participating. The *Cultural Amnesty* piece got people thinking...and also the comments that people put in the book [see Appendix C for examples] I think were also a way for folks to ask themselves questions. I think that was a good moment for people...(Interview with Gerald McMaster)

At MOA several tourist-style totem poles, a boomerang and reading materials were deposited. In Saskatoon, someone added a Pocahontas Dress-Up set and a plastic tipi (Robertson).[52] *Cultural Amnesty* was a means of allowing viewers to seriously contemplate their role in the perpetuation of negative and harmful stereotypes – particularly when they failed to address or question the subtle forms of stereotyping that infuse everyday life. The work also functioned as a cathartic means for people to discard any previous misconceptions with which they may have entered the exhibition and to effectively leave them behind.

Savage Graces was conceived not only as a means to address stereotypes but to address museum representation as well: "I was also interested in using the museum because of its own history, you know, I was interested in doing this exhibition at the Museum of Anthropology because if I was interested in representations, what better place to do an exhibition about representations than a museum of anthropology which needed to be questioned, which I did in some ways just by the questions that I did ask" (Interview with Gerald McMaster). McMaster also felt that what needed to be questioned or challenged

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[52] When asked if it was true that some visitors had purchased things from the gallery gift shops and re-entered the exhibition to put them in the *Cultural Amnesty* box, the artist laughed and said he had never examined the offerings closely enough but wouldn't doubt if that had been the case in some instances (Interview with McMaster).

was that historically, museum representation used objects to express anthropological views of otherness (Interview with Gerald McMaster).

McMaster took the scientific manner in which anthropology museums looked at culture as a main theme. It was no coincidence that McMaster pinned the two dimensional images directly to the museum walls like frogs on a dissecting table in order to subject the stereotypes to a similar kind of careful scrutiny. By extension, McMaster was also interested in the ways in which anthropological museums re-create this very scientific gaze of culture through exhibitions of objects on public display, representations of culture that became the focus of a public gaze: "I was interested in looking at the very scientific interrogation of culture and what that meant, that kind of microscopic view of things, looking at objects microscopically as they sat in cases..." (Interview with Gerald McMaster). Through his wall and object installations, McMaster turns the table by forcing the stereotypical representations into plexiglass cases and under his own metaphoric microscope.

Artist/ Curator/Ethnographer

Interventions introduce a change in the relationship between artists and curators. McShine observed that in general, from the earliest part of the twentieth century onwards, the relationship of the artist to art galleries and museums was a distant one with curators occupying an authoritative role at length from the artist (McShine 11). Joane Cardinal-Schubert commented on this relationship in Canada: "We have a network of curators who control the art in this country and that network includes the Canada Council, the big public

galleries and on down to the smallest community gallery…Artists are created for a short period of time by curators who get funded by public galleries and then they are dropped." (Cardinal-Schubert in Hammond).

As discussed in Chapter Two, First Nations artists in Canada in the 1980s and 1990s were certainly feeling a sense of distance from the arts institutions. Greater collaborative efforts undertaken by museums after *The Spirit Sings* encouraged participation of First Nations artists in curatorial projects to close that distance. Such collaborations also gave First Nations artists opportunities to become more familiar with museum and curatorial practices which they have had the option of applying in their own artistic practices.

Interventions in artistic practice are, by their very nature, similar to curatorial practice. They involve the selection of objects from collections and arrangement of those objects in exhibition spaces. As a curator and artist, McMaster saw similarities of both artistic and curatorial practices in his own work:

> …I guess you could say I was curating [*Savage Graces*] because I was pulling and tying everything together to make sure everything was working and I think that's how artists now are working, and not necessarily controlling exhibits, but having big parts in exhibitions. They see not individual works but how works can speak and jump off of one another and how they can work that way. So the curatorial practice that way has had an impact…that's the way I was working, from the research to what was going in, what I could edit in or out and controlling the labels. I made my own labels [chuckle] which was actually quite interesting for the curators…so it became an installation but yet it was seemingly curated by me. And so you could say that, curatorially, I was in charge of what colours went on the wall, you know, what needed to be painted, where things would be positioned. So you could say that from that perspective I curated the show. Because of the allowance that the museum gave me, a latitude of control over the setting up of the entire space … (Interview with Gerald McMaster)

In her co-curator's statement, Rosa Ho also articulated their working relationship: "McMaster was seeking a personal response for his work. He wanted me, and others, to respond to the work from our own cultural perspectives and individual experiences. Hence, rather than being the site of analysis, he was really leading this exhibition project as principal curator. I, in turn, acted as facilitator, and his first audience – asking questions, clarifying his intent, always pushing; and also pushed by McMaster's ideas" (Ho "Co-Curator's Statement").

For interventions, what we see happening is a blurring of conventional roles and functions – art that looks more like an exhibition and artists functioning as curators. Curator Diana Nemiroff also recognized this phenomenon occurring in other aspects of the art world: "Where once the indispensable expert was the ethnologist or collector, the exhibitions of the eighties have most often been collaborations, with native individuals playing hybrid roles: administrator/historian (Tom Hill, Rick Hill), artist/critic (Jimmie Durham), artist/curator (Juane Quick-To-See Smith, Gerald McMaster, Robert Houle) and artist/teacher/polemicist (Alfred Young Man)." (Nemiroff "Exhibitions of First Nations Art" 428)

The value of this "blurring of roles," is that the artist, functioning as a curator, is able to offer a different perspective from a curator. Artists can push the boundaries and create more provocative and potentially controversial statements than a curator might. This is because the results of artistic practice can be considered a personal expression whereas

curatorial practices are often constrained by professional obligations. Contemporary art is not obligated to respond to the general public in the same way that museums and galleries (which are most often publicly funded) must. Furthermore, according to McMaster, the viewing public have a different set of expectations that they apply to contemporary art as opposed to a museum exhibition - "They are used to artists being a bit oddball in doing strange, different, unusual practices, but a museum shouldn't be that way, you know?" (Interview with McMaster)

Increased participation in the museum environment has allowed First Nations artists an opportunity to observe and incorporate the role of ethnographer as well; this is yet another blurring of roles between artist and the museum professional engaged in ethnography and ethnographic research methods. Hal Foster recognized this in his work *The Artist as Ethnographer* (1996) identifying what he calls an "ethnographic turn" in contemporary art (182-183) and an "ethnographic envy" among artists who borrowed from anthropology by, for example, doing their own fieldwork (Foster, 181). Indeed, McMaster felt it was highly necessary to do research amongst elders in his home province of Saskatchewan when the focus of *Savage Graces* was initially quite different[53]. However he then undertook (if only at an informal level) to do "fieldwork" as he surveyed shops, advertisements and media for examples of stereotyped representations.

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[53] McMaster initially proposed an exhibition titled *Mystic Warrior* in which the artist intended to look at his own cultural background and contemporary Native art and culture by posing questions concerning the role of the "Warrior" which he explained as "the most respected personification of male attributes and position in historic Plains society." The exhibition was to examine questions concerning the role of the Warrior in contemporary society and the social relationships between men and women in respect to the Warrior. Similar to *Savage Graces*, McMaster intended to create "visual interactions" with the architecture and Pacific Northwest Coast objects in MOA's collection. (McMaster "Exhibition proposal for Mystic Warriors" 1)

We can further identify an "ethnographic turn" in the collection practices McMaster undertook in preparation for the exhibition. By gathering and collecting material and objects from everyday life, he took on the role of ethnographer of mainstream pop and consumer culture. He had been collecting material that dealt with stereotypes for some time; with the show he had an opportunity to do a more serious survey of the sort of kitsch items available:

> I began to find things everywhere - in stores, in antique shops and in different places - that I began to purchase, began to accumulate. And I became interested in the question of various kinds of stereotypes through time and so that was where the idea for *Savage Graces* began to take place and began the shift - from the more spiritual in art to much more about ideas that surround these questions about trying to get audiences to look rather differently about the stereotype, about prejudice. And how does that come out in the visual arts for example, and how does that come out visually and how does it play out in every day life, particularly with regards to Aboriginal peoples in Canada and the United States. So that was sort of a direction I went in and I began to work on pulling together disparate materials as I said, that I was purchasing and I began to formulate this idea. At the same time I began painting, doing large paintings on the subject and so that's how it all started really (Interview with Gerald McMaster).

In the shift from McMaster's original exhibition concept for *Mystic Warriors*, we simultaneously see a shift of the artist to the ethnographer, engaging in the survey and collection of materials from mainstream pop and consumer culture.

His collecting practices were not limited to material culture; his selection of museum objects put him in the position of "collector of collectors":

> ... I was in my own work as a curator and doing research on subject matters relating to representation. I felt that museums across Canada and the United States were privy or perhaps they were ... what's the word I'm looking for ... I think there was a duplicity perhaps. On the one hand, there was an

> interest in collecting material culture from indigenous peoples, and at the same time there was collecting material about representations of Native Peoples and those could be from very well known artists through time to sometimes popular culture that was very stereotypical. So I began to take an interest in differing representations - both from how collectors and anthropologists saw Native Peoples [and] how artists and the public viewed Native Peoples. So I was interested, as I was saying, when I was going through various museums and discovering the different array of material that I could find... and so at the same time I was also finding material like this in stores[54] that were sometimes inexpensive. And surprisingly, not only did I find historic material at reasonable cost but I was more surprised to find the perpetuation of those kinds of representations in contemporary products. That was very surprising; the longevity and the efficacy of stereotypes, and negative stereotypes. I was surprised to see the strength they've had and continue to have on contemporary society and what that meant for people's view of "otherness." So I guess that's what prompted me to think about this exhibition and thus the exhibit title began to play on that notion and this duplicity that goes on in the world today. So I was quite interested in those differing kinds of representations (Interview with McMaster).

How does this "blurring of roles" created by interventions affect the legitimacy of such work? In *The Artist as Ethnographer*, Foster argues that with some exceptions, many such works are co-opted by the very institutions they are meant to criticize; the gallery (or museum) grants the work a sense of merit in the first place. Foster therefore argues for the need for critical distance in such work. Yet, Peltomäki (2001) argues that one of the flaws in such reasoning is that it ignores how art becomes art in the first place; the art gallery is not the only institution which grants legitimacy to a work. For example, art is also given legitimacy by its historical precedents. This would lead one to conclude that a critical distance is not possible.

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[54] In addition, friends and colleagues who knew of McMaster's interest in this area also sent him examples, some of which ended up in the exhibition.

Likewise, I would argue that a critical distance is not possible when artists perform interventions and thus occupy the role of artist and curator simultaneously. However, I would also argue that in this situation, lack of "critical distance" is advantageous. The individual doing the intervention is afforded a full view of both roles at the same time which serves to inform the work in a way that no other art form can. Interventions are valuable because of this fuller perspective. In the case of *Savage Graces*, Gerald McMaster occupies a number of roles all at once as an artist/curator/ethnologist but also as an individual representing a culture in a type of institution that has not always readily provided for non-western expressions.

Inoculation Versus Homeopathy

If the museum and gallery have traditionally occupied a position of authority, it begs the question as to why these institutions would allow, even invite and commission an artist to create work that might potentially criticize that institution or portray it in a negative light, or create controversy? Why displace the traditional authority of the curator, even if only temporarily? Foster suggests several possible reasons: Interventions can become media spectacles generating publicity for the institution. By inviting critique, it can present a show of tolerance, openness and interest in building relationships with different communities. To use Foster's terminology, an intervention can be an act of "inoculation" against critique, undertaken by and within the institution. The benefits of such work to the museum are clear: "In these cases the institution may shadow the work that it otherwise highlights: it becomes the spectacle, it collects the cultural capital, and the director-curator becomes the star. This is not a conspiracy, nor is its cooption pure and simple;

nevertheless, it can detour the artist more than reconfigure the site" (Foster 198). But our original questions then shift. Why then, would an artist want to engage in interventions and accept those commissions? What benefit is there for the artist? More importantly for this discussion is what incentive is there for a First Nations artist to participate, in light of the historic relationship that has been discussed in previous chapters?

Foster offers a clue: "The shift to a horizontal way of working is consistent with the ethnographic turn in art and criticism; one selects a site, enters its culture and learns its language, conceives and presents a project, only to move to the next site where the cycle is repeated" (Foster 202). This is very similar to James Clifford's description of the museum as a contact zone, where we see artists coming into contact with the gallery or museum, learning to use the language of museum display to create an intervention and then moving out of the site again.

The effect of this movement in the museum contact zone for the artist and in particular for First Nations artists is that in as much as it may be an inoculation for the museum or gallery, it also has the potential to be a form of "homeopathy" for the artist. An inoculation is meant to prevent harm or damage from being done in the first place. For First Nations artists, the damage of mis-representation and under-representation has already taken place. Metaphoric homeopathy is about trying to cure and heal by taking in small doses, aspects of the very agent that caused the harm, in this case, the museum. "Like" is used to cure "like" by diluting the agent and rendering it inactive. Many of the works discussed in this thesis not only address the museum but also "de-activate" its

harmful effects by altering its own language through the use of humour.[55] Furthermore, some First Nations artists have used the museum or gallery to "treat" wider issues that museums may (or may not) be complicit in. Robert Houle's *Anishnabec Walker Court* and Rebecca Belmore's self-installation in the Grange for example can equally be read as a commentary on the marginalized placement of First Peoples within society as well as the institutions of art. Commentary leveled at the museum or gallery therefore becomes the mechanism through which First Nations artists can challenge several forms of power which, as Foucault would contend, govern the terms of their existence (Foucault in Butler 12). Through strategic interventions in power structures artist have opportunities to destabilize them.

Savage Graces is a means to heal the damage done by negative, stereotypical representations of First Nations both inside and outside the museum. As much as it is an interrogation of the museum, *Savage Graces* is also an interrogation of wider society in terms of the public gaze and representation. When a museum places objects on public display, an inherent assumption is that there will be a public to come and view them. "The display case installation was kind of a metaphor of museum practices, the concept of looking in, so that the gaze of the viewer participated in and was in complicity with that gaze of science." (McMaster in Abbott 13). *Savage Graces* is not only about the gaze created by the anthropology museum but about that of the museum visitor as well. McMaster is asking viewers to consider what sort of critical scrutiny they place on these

[55] The criticism directed at museums is also "diluted" somewhat when the work also addresses multiple layers of issues and themes.

representations. McMaster's intervention within the museum is a strategy to further interrogate this wider society and, specifically, the place of First Nations people within it. Placing the harmful representations under museum plexiglas renders them inactive and thus allows a certain amount of healing from those damaging stereotypes to take place both within the museum and without.

Furthermore, the reproductions are widely disseminated; they can be found not just in the museum but in stores and various facets of everyday life, the vast array of which greatly surprised McMaster: "...the perpetuation of those kinds of representations in contemporary products, that was very surprising; the longevity and the efficacy of stereotypes, and negative stereotypes...I was surprised to see the strength they've had and continue to have on contemporary society and what that meant for people's view of "otherness" and so I guess that's what prompted me to think about this exhibition..." (Interview with Gerald McMaster). McMaster was concerned about the duplicitous relationship that he believed existed between the museum and the wider world: "The idea was to look at how science, aesthetics, and the commercial sector were using the 'Indian as a symbol' as a sign to look at" (McMaster in Abbott 13).

McMaster's choices in *Savage Graces* deliberately created a disruption of the viewer's expectations by de-familiarizing what appeared to be a museum exhibit through the unusual assemblages of objects. His comments concerning the Oka crisis, in an exhibition reflecting on the event, can perhaps also apply to his strategic use of disruption in *Savage Graces*: "A demonstration has to be disruptive to be successful. People have to be

inconvenienced in some way or another to make them aware of the issues. The point is to make people aware, to wake them up." (McMaster in Martin "Solidarity: Art After Oka") Yet, at the same time, this disruption isn't one that is meant to upset. In the planning stages for the exhibition McMaster commented on his use of humour as another deliberate strategy to reach people and make them think in different ways:

> The one I'm working on now, '*Savage Graces*', sounds ominous and serious and it is serious, but as I am starting to work there's again a sense of irony and humour in it that will transcend the way we look at art and how we define art. That's my strategy for evoking laughter and provoking ideas and discussions because I enjoy people looking at my work and having a chuckle about it. Once they've chuckled they can take the next step to understanding (Abbott 8).

As the artist stated in another of his exhibitions, humour is far more effective at reaching people than outrage: "Who listens to angry people? Anyway, I have a quiet anger. It comes out in different ways. It's there if you look." (McMaster in Currie J4)

Contact Zones – How Interventions Function

A more direct application of Clifford's concept of the museum as a contact zone will help us understand the dynamics of interventions more thoroughly. In *Routes: Travels and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (1997) James Clifford examined the idea of the museum as a contact zone. He borrowed the term from the work of Mary Louise Pratt in her work, *Imperial Eyes: Travel and Transculturation* (1992), in which she defines "contact zone" as "the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come in to contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality and

intractable conflict" (Clifford 192). Clifford supplied numerous examples from his experiences with various communities and their interactions with museums.

Pratt, herself, borrows the concept of "contact": "I borrow the term 'contact' here from its use in linguistics, where the term contact language refers to improvised languages that develop among speakers of different native languages who need to communicate with each other consistently, usually in the context of trade. Such languages begin as pidgins, and are called creoles when they come to have native speakers of their own" (Pratt 6).

Much institutional commentary, particularly interventions, functions as a form of contact language, to use Pratt's terminology. It is an improvisation of the language of two spheres, that of the artist and the curator, that come into contact with one another in order for the two parties to be able to communicate. Institutional commentary, and in particular interventions such as *Savage Graces*, borrows from the language of display and other museum practices, and incorporates it into artistic practice. In Pratt's work, contact usually refers to a situation occurring in the context of trade or economic exchange. In this context it becomes a matter of cultural exchange. The dialogue resulting from this cultural exchange is a particularly important one for First Nations art of this time because it created a much needed dialogue between First Nations artists and the institutions of art.

In terms of this discussion, institutions of art can function as contact zones for those who, as McShine says, have had an ongoing yet marginalized position in relation to the gallery or museum (1999). In some cases, as has been the experience of some of the artists

discussed here, there have been situations of radical inequality in which the gallery has asserted its authority over all other considerations. For First Nations artists who have developed their work in areas located far from the major centres where arts organizations generally operate, separation from the gallery can also be geographic. Furthermore, institutions of art can be places of "intractable conflict" for those cultures that have experienced the inequality as a result of having their knowledge and representations subjected to the authority of the curator. Furthermore, the term contact zone is:

> ...An attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal co-presence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjuncture, and whose trajectories now intersect. By using the term 'contact' I aim to foreground the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination. A 'contact' perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. [It stresses] co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power (Clifford 192).

Using the contact zone perspective, an intervention can therefore be an opportunity for the museum and the artist to dialogue with one another using a very similar language. It allows us a different understanding of institutional commentary, and interventions as being much more than just a means of pointing out past wrongs or observing cultural similarities. This contact zone perspective allows us an opportunity to see how both the museum/gallery and First Nations cultures have been shaped by one another.

Elements of the Contact Zone

The following section breaks down the elements of the contact zone as Clifford describes it, using *Savage Graces* and other examples to examine how institutional commentary functions from this perspective.

Two of the most immediately recognizable elements of the contact zone are those of temporality and movement: "Contact zones are constituted through reciprocal movements of people, not just objects, messages, commodities and money" (Clifford 195). In other words, things move through these zones, they do not rest there permanently. Interventions quite literally move through these zones in that they are usually temporary; artists are invited or commissioned for a limited period of time to create temporary works after which the artist moves on. McMaster's *Savage Graces* was a traveling exhibition so the show was dismantled for shipment elsewhere. In Robert Houle's case the Walker Court was restored to the way it was before with the Baumgarten work. Even the artist (functioning also as a curator or ethnographer) is only a temporary guest of the host institution. Likewise, the messages created through their art go with them. Institutions may import critique but only temporarily. Such works are also difficult for the gallery to collect.

Movement and temporality are also analogous to the First Nations conception of the cyclical and self-renewing force of nature which Hoffman locates in the notion of impermanent art (266). One quality of impermanent art in the context of Western postmodern art was to encourage the viewer, through disorientation and "de-

familiarization," to see and hear what was in front of him or her "...with fresh senses and without attempting to place the details within a predetermined hierarchy" (Hoffman 267). Interventions also function as temporary disruptions of the expectations of the museum or gallery visitor. We see this in *Savage Graces* where, for example, the placement of common everyday objects in glass display cases caused the viewer to reconsider their unexpected presence and their reasons for being there.

Clifford 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" (192). I argue this equally applies to exhibitions. Certainly, the controversy and debates surrounding *The Spirit Sings* contained their own set of "push and pulls." In interventions, both curators and artists, control what is happening in the exhibition space. In Clifford's examples, the museums did not just *get* something, they were also called on to give something in return[56].

Clifford also identifies what he refers to as "mutual exploitation" happening on either side of the contact zone. I choose to use the term not in the derogatory sense but rather in recognition that both sides of any particular situation will seek to obtain benefit from an event that has taken place. Clifford also uses the term reciprocity, which is more to the point. There is a crucial point in this matter of reciprocity not articulated by Clifford; in

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[56] Refer to footnote 25; Clifford further elaborates that while the elders were providing information with respect to objects in the Portland Museum's collection, they were also concerned about how the museum was going to reciprocate: "On more than one occasion during the proceedings, the museum was directly admonished: 'We're taking the risk of confiding important things to you. It's important that these things be recorded for posterity. What will you do with what we give you? We'll be paying attention" (191).

any sort of exchange that is said to be mutually beneficial, both parties must perceive that what has been received is of value. Hence the museum benefits from its "inoculation" and claim to greater inclusiveness while the artist "heals" through "homeopathy" and gets a chance to air a larger message. This was particularly important in the late 1980s and early 1990s as First Nations artists were really fighting to have those messages heard.

In McMaster's work, the museum received an exhibition exploring First Nations stereotypes, but it was also asked to give something in return, to re-think the way it represents First Nations people:

> I was much more interested in the ideas that I could develop … and that would have a kind of a residual effect on institutional practices so that it may change the way people inside the museum do their work and bring to light different approaches. So it might not necessarily [affect museum visitor's] immediate attitudes or perhaps the way people do things within the museum. As I say, it's the residual effects that could occur. And I am certain it had some kind of impact on the people that work there (Interview with McMaster).

The public was also treated the same way – they got something but they were also asked to give back. They were asked to think about the way stereotypes happen in daily life, to provide feedback in the books, to act on stereotypes by depositing them in the *Cultural Amnesty Box*. This was not about completely erasing the discrepancies, or unbalancing power relations (Clifford 193) but about challenging and reworking a relationship. In doing so, a "message [is] delivered, performed, within an ongoing contact history" (193). McMaster reflected:

> Yeah, that's so critical today and that's the big shift that has taken place. It means now an interrogation of voice and how that operates in museums today because of the control museums had over representation. And now of

> course, Native peoples are very much engaged, whether it's the artist or a community of experts in their own right. [They] are now involved in museums and so its now much more dialogical rather than monological. So I think that museums are much more aware of the power of the Native voice and so that's the contact zone, that's where people are at today. I think that's been happening since the late 80s and it's a complete shift. I think that people are learning from it. I think in part my show [*Savage Graces*] is as much a part of that, or *Indigena*, and it became very critical of museum practice. It was a world that needed to change. At the same time, I think artists were very much interested in art galleries but the institutional authority and practice of museums of anthropology, of ethnology needed to undergo change. It has and sometimes it hasn't, you know, that's up for debate, but if it is right, that's what he [Clifford] sees and that's what I've seen in the last 15 years (Interview with Gerald McMaster).

Conclusion

As demonstrated, museums have traditionally had their own ways of ordering and classifying objects that have often differed from traditional First Nations ways of doing the same. The first encounter described by Clifford further demonstrates this. The elders sitting in the Portland Museum did not refer to the objects as art or artifacts but as history and law:

> In cases where coercion is not direct, when non-western artists, culture makers and curators enter western museums on their own (negotiated) terms, the collection sites of art and anthropology can no longer be understood primarily in terms of Promethean discovery and discerning selection. They become places of crossing, explicit and unacknowledged, occasions for different discoveries and selections (Clifford 201).

Likewise, different ways of ordering and displaying objects using the hybrid language of museum and artistic practice such as we see in interventions allows us to see and know in a different way.

Encounters within the museum contact zone can stimulate reflection and cultural critique (Clifford 198) which is both a necessary and desirable component of living in a democratic society. Yet, more to the point is the recognition gained of the full range of experiences possible within the contact zone which makes critique less about challenge and dissent than about different ways of thinking and less confrontational methods of instituting change.

Furthermore, interaction in the contact zone "opens up a different range of relations from those normally practiced in contexts of collecting and display" (Clifford 196). We see this very clearly in McMaster's *Cultural Amnesty Box,* which invites greater interactivity with the museum visitor. The blurring of roles that happens when interventions take place between the curator/artist/ ethnographer also sets up a different range of interactions. These allow for a different means of collaboration than what Clifford observed in the Portland Museum.

The interactions of western institutional traditions and contemporary First Nations art are also very important. Through the negotiations and collaborations taking place in interventions what we see happening is "each us[ing] the other's traditions to remake its own" (Clifford 201). In other words, it is the artist advancing his or her work by making use of the very institutions that traditionally decided whose work to advance. In that way, it amounts to both artist and museum pushing their own culture forward through the use of the other; First Nations artists participating in post modern discourses and combining aesthetics, and museums mounting more collaborative projects.

"What exceeds the apparatus of coercion and stereotype in contact relations may perhaps be reclaimed for current practice in movements to expand and democratize what can happen in museums and related sites of ethno-mimesis" (Clifford 200). We can understand ethno-mimesis to include participation in a wider public sphere as well. Interventions such as *Savage Graces,* allow museums and galleries to occupy an expanded role in which the artist not only uses the museum to address itself but to voice larger social concerns. By involving the museum in such concerns, it suggests such institutions can play an expanded role through unconventional relationships and interactions with artists in the space of the contact zone.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined a large number of examples of what I have called institutional commentary. These works reflect a wide range of issues and concerns, observations concerning the relationship of First Peoples to the museum, gallery and other institutions of art and society. They represent a unique contribution to reflexive and sometimes de-constructivist models of postmodernism. Such work has given artists an opportunity to voice concerns about past practices which were still having an impact at the time the work was created. Some work has identified and acknowledged problem areas in the relationship between First Peoples and arts institutions while others have attempted to actively heal past wounds.

The question that remains is how effective has institutional commentary been in creating awareness and instituting change. This is difficult to measure. As slow as change has been, improvements in the relationship between institutions of art and First Peoples have taken place. The exhibition *Norval Morrisseau: Shaman Artist* for example, was the first time in the National Gallery of Canada's 126 year history that it presented a solo exhibition of a First Nations artist.

Each of the examples discussed in this thesis is just a small fraction of each artist's much larger body of work. While no one specific work created a widespread revolution, each one was like a small trickle of water running through cracks in a rock. While each trickle is powerless to affect the rock on its own, when enough water freezes together, it cracks

the rock wide open. Likewise, with each work of art, when every small statement is taken together it can create a message that is loud and clear in a single voice that must be heard.

Appendix A

Transcript of Ron Noganosh's *If You Find Any Culture Send it Home*

Dear Son

Just a short note to let you know that we are all fine here at home and to tell you about our good fortune. You remember that old mask your grandfather used to use when he used to hang around with the other old men before he died. Well yesterday a man came here from the museum and said he wanted to buy it. Well he looked at it and said it was a fine example of the culture and said if I sold it we could see it when we went to the city. I didn't tell him I almost burned it the time it was real cold and since you are studying art down there at the university I figured you could make another one. So guess what. He gave me 800 bucks for it and we went to town and bought a brand new VCR. I am sending you a hundred bucks and if you have any left at break bring some movies home.

Love Dad

P.S. – If you find any culture send it home.

Appendix B
Wall Installation from Gerald McMaster's *Savage Graces: After Images*

The Native Canadian is the least understood and the more misunderstood of all Canadians.
The greatest sin of all is to pretend there is no problem.
Do Native Canadians have to be dead to get into museums?
Do Native Artists have to loose their identity to get into art galleries/museums?
Are you threatened by "others"?
Why do you cal us Indians?
Why do you call this land British Columbia?
Is there a universalizing intelligence?
Are non-western cultures irrational and invalid?
Is there a mass conspiracy to legitimize only one version of the way we see the world?
Does western knowledge control the framework of relevant evidence?
Do we need permission to destroy the natural world?
If native voices are given legitimacy, is that a threat to your agenda?
I am bilingual, English being my second language, however I cannot speak my first.
Do I have to change my (Cree) surname to be respected?
Share the vision.
The term "medicine" means sacred power.
Does an Indian have to play an Indian in order to be an Indian?
I never knew I was an Indian until someone told me.
I never knew I was poor, until someone told me.
We define first and then we see.
Do we (I) represent only the past to you?
If we are to be guided by our elders, we need a clear direction.

Appendix C
Selected Comments* from the Visitor's Book
For *Savage Graces: After Images*

"Hi! I found this exhibit very interesting. I like the picture of the Indian boy with the words for his feathers. Sometime I feel the same way. I am native. I am very glad you did this painting. Thank you very much for doing this."

"Heap good, Kemo Sabe!"

'Serious stuff, serious things going down."

"This is a very moving piece of artwork"

"A very very inspiring exhibit for me as a native youth of today. Finally somebody has taken a step to say that we are something different than the stereotypical Indian. Thank you very much."

"Incredibly moved and sad as I looked at McMaster's works. Museum is to be commended"

"My opinion of this exhibit is it disturbs me and it is very racist but I enjoyed the rest."

"This year is the 500th anniversary of discovery of the Americas by Christopher Columbus so say the Western mind and the white man in general. How is it possible for Columbus so-called discovered Americas while more than 5000 BC years ago the Indigenous Native Americans were a flourishing, thriving, civilized, cosmopolitan and highly superior; from the Inuit, the Arawaks, Mayans, Aztec, Incas etc, have been living in the Americas long before any foreigner arrived. These exhibits are a small contribution to the unique and true culture of the Americas, for which is very important for the greater awareness of how beautiful Indigenous Americans are and they deserve credit!!!"

"Very bitter display – don't see how anything positive can come of it."

"Too much guilt. Too little art."

*Please note the comments selected were intended to show a range of reactions to the exhibition and should not be considered a representative sample.

Appendix D
Images

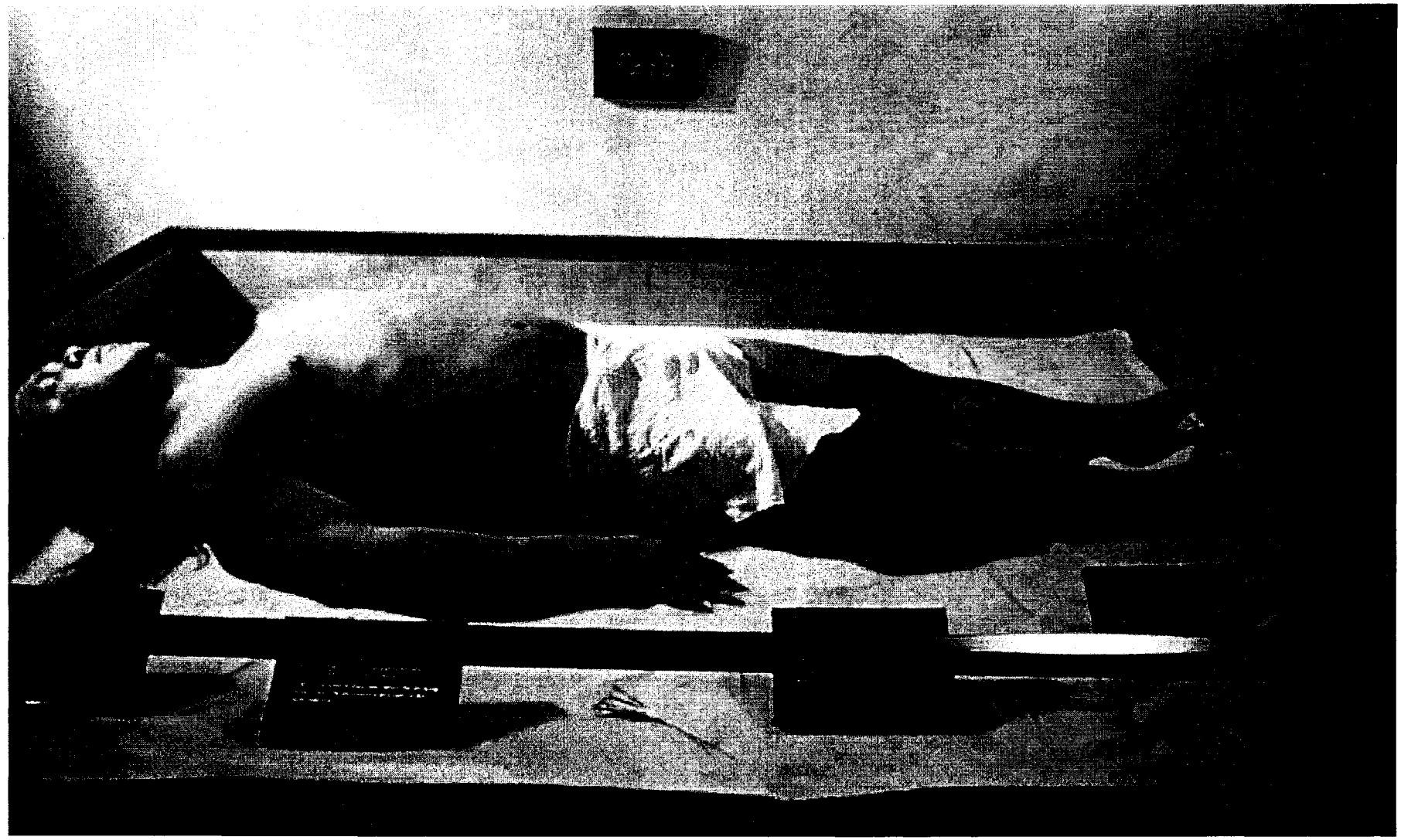

Fig. 1
The Artifact Piece (1987)
James Luna
Mixed media installation and performance, Museum of Man, San Diego, California
From: Native American Art in the Twentieth Century. Jackson W. Rushing III, ed. New York, NY & London, UK: Routledge, 1999. Plate J. [Photo by Robin Holland]

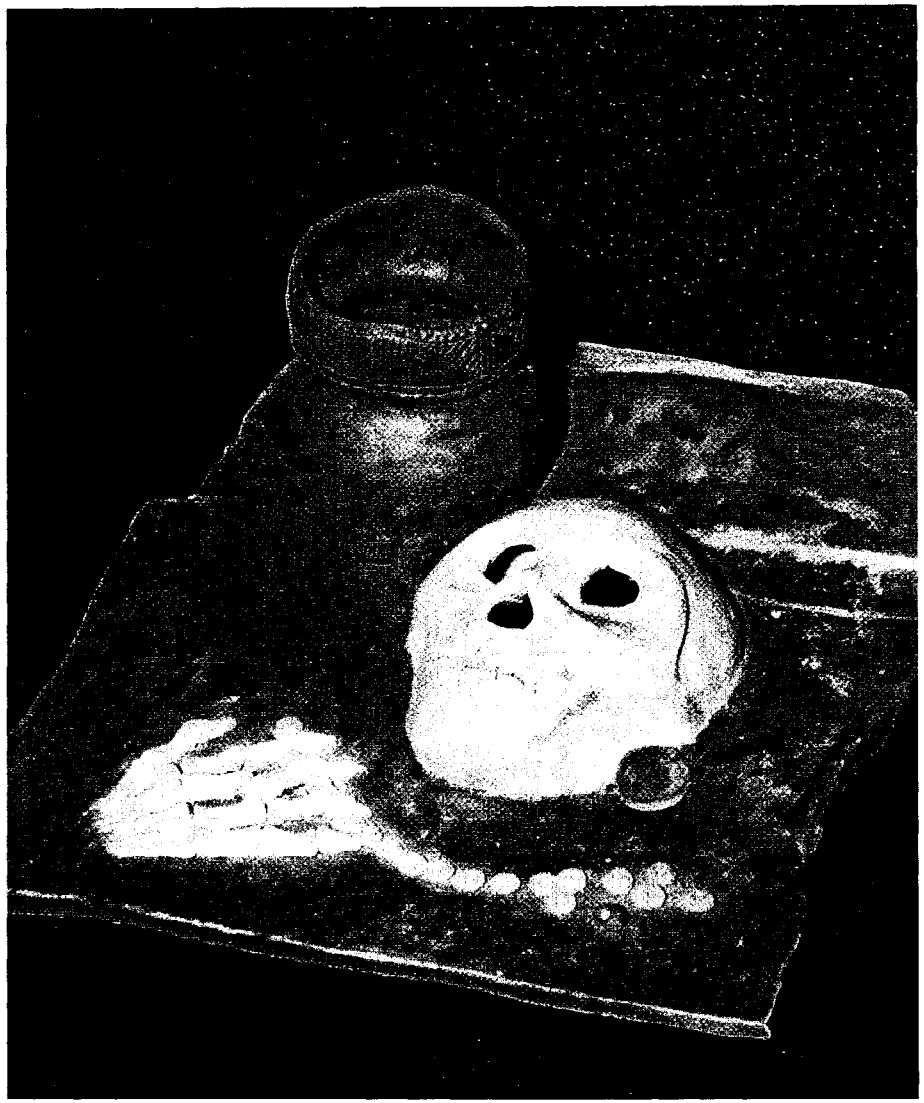

Fig. 2
Still Life (1990)
Peter Jones
Stoneware, clay
51 x 47 x 19 cm
From: Ryan, Allan. The Trickster Shift. Vancouver, BC & Toronto, ON: UBC Press, 1992. p.141, figure 73.

Fig. 3
If You Find Any Culture, Send it Home (1987)
Ron Noganosh
Wood, pigment stain, copper, feathers, hide
180 x 80 cm
From: Duffek, Karen. Beyond History. Vancouver, BC: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1989 or Hill, Tom & Lippard, Lucy. Ron Noganosh: It Takes Time. Ottawa, ON: Ottawa Art Gallery, 2001.

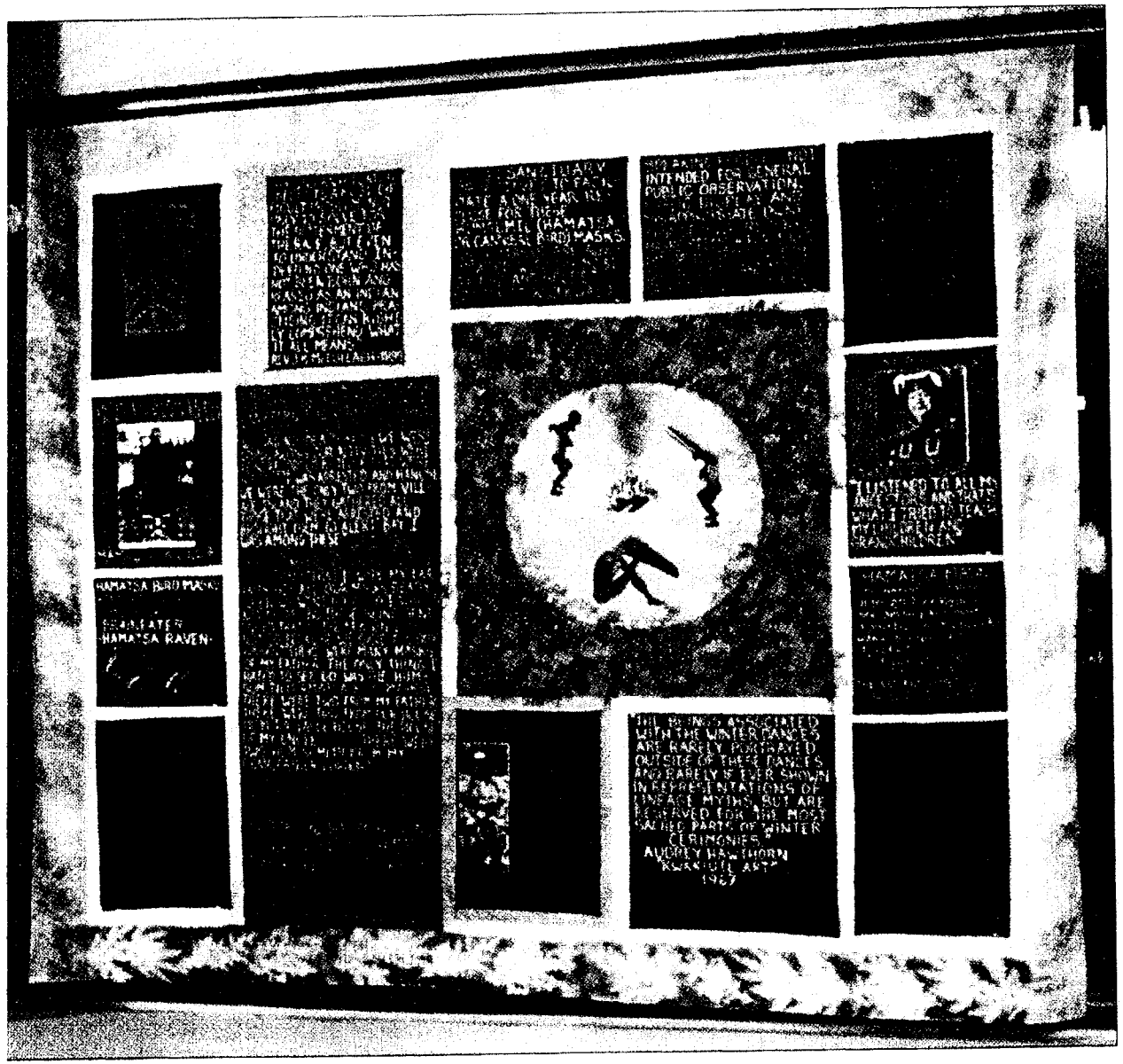

Fig. 4
Sanctuary (2000)
John Powell
Mixed media on canvas
Dimensions unknown
From: Hill, Lynn. Raven's Reprise. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia, Museum of Anthropology, 2000 [Exhibition catalogue]

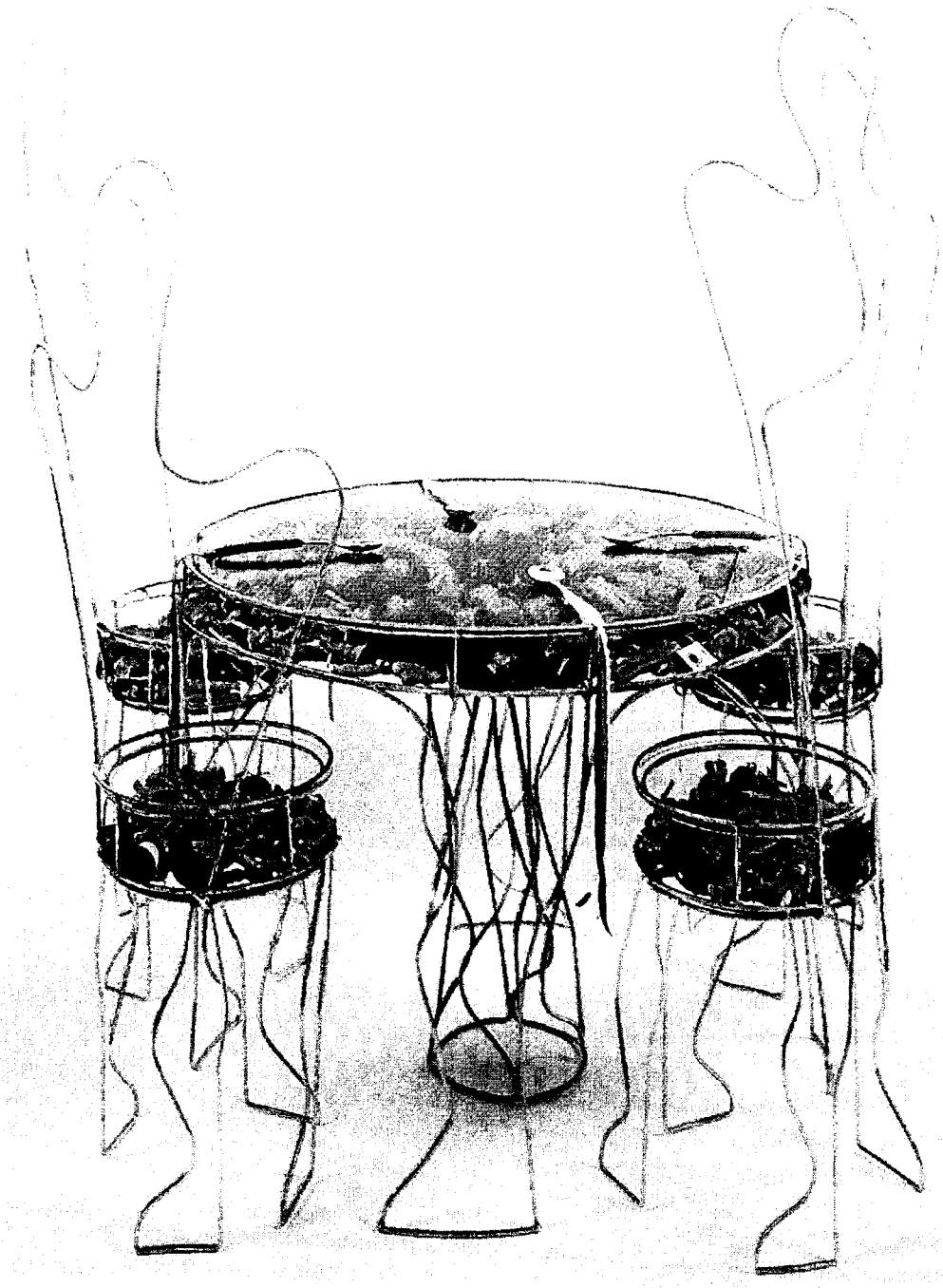

Fig. 5
Reservations (1992)
Theresa MacPhee
Metal, glass, found objects
Dimensions unknown
From: Lunn, Dr. John et al. Canada's First Peoples: A Celebration of Contemporary Native Visual Arts. Fort McMurray, AB: Syncrude Canada Ltd., Alberta Part Art Publications Society,1992. [Exhibition catalogue]

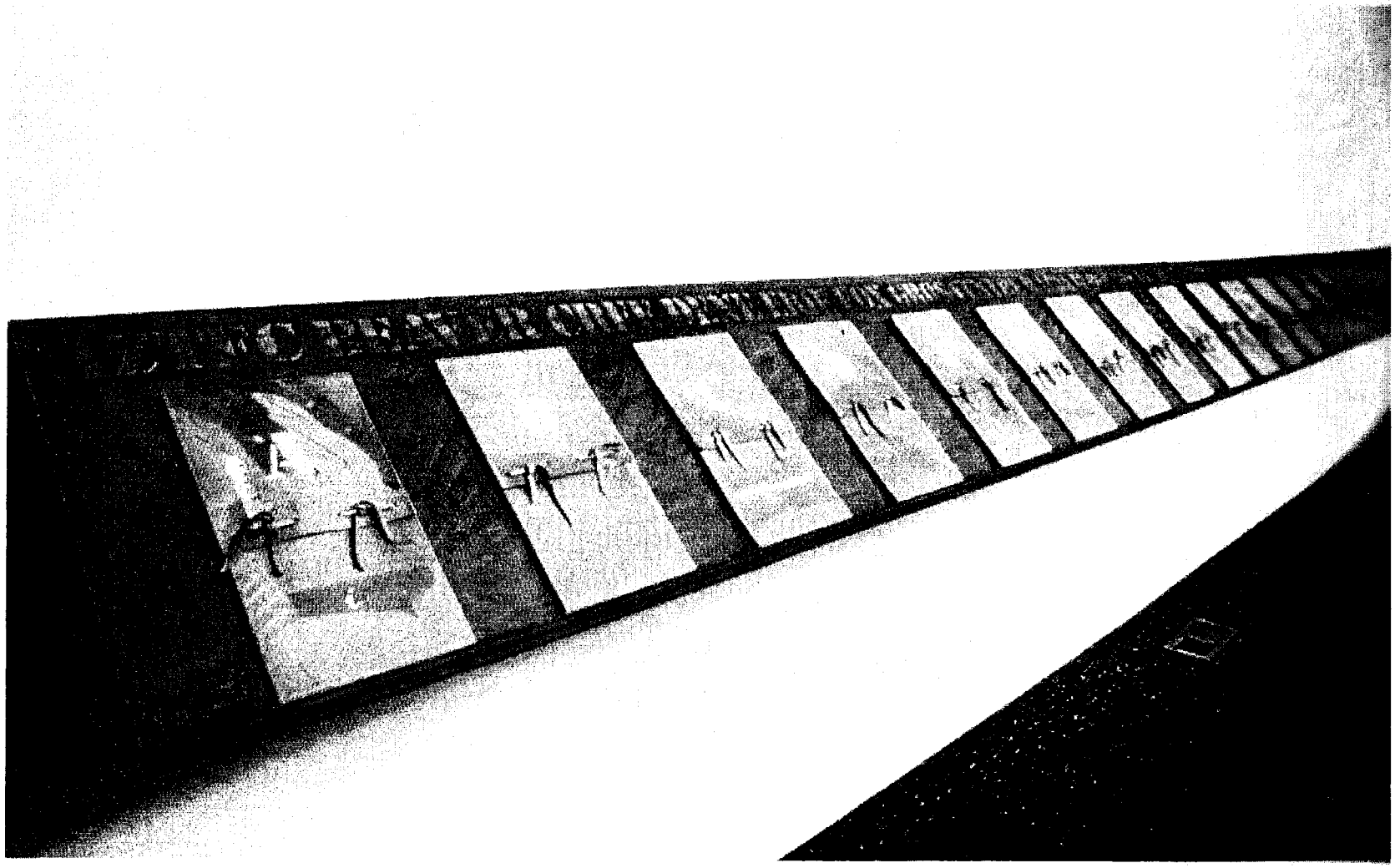

Fig. 6
Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Indians from A to Z (1985)
Robert Houle
Acrylic, rawhide, wood, linen
46 x 993 cm (approx.); 41 x 25 cm (each parfleche)
From: Ryan, Allan. The Trickster Shift. Vancouver, BC & Toronto, ON: UBC Press, 1992. p.142, figure 74.

Fig. 7
Showcase #1 (1997)
Heather J. Henry
Oil on canvas
134 x 106.7 cm
Collection of the Artist
From: Between You and Me. London, ON: Museum London, 2002. [Exhibition catalogue] p. 19.

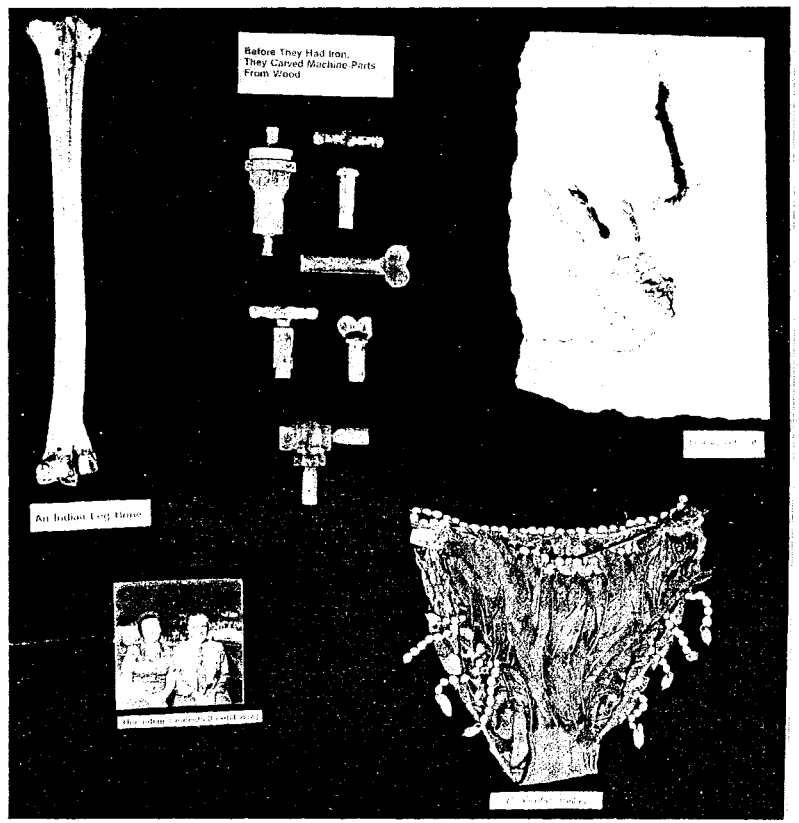

Fig. 8
Detail from *On Loan From the Museum of the American Indian*, detail (1987)
Jimmie Durham
Mixed media installation
Dimensions variable
From: Revisions Banff, AB: Walter Phillips Gallery, 1992 [Exhibition Catalogue] p. 29.

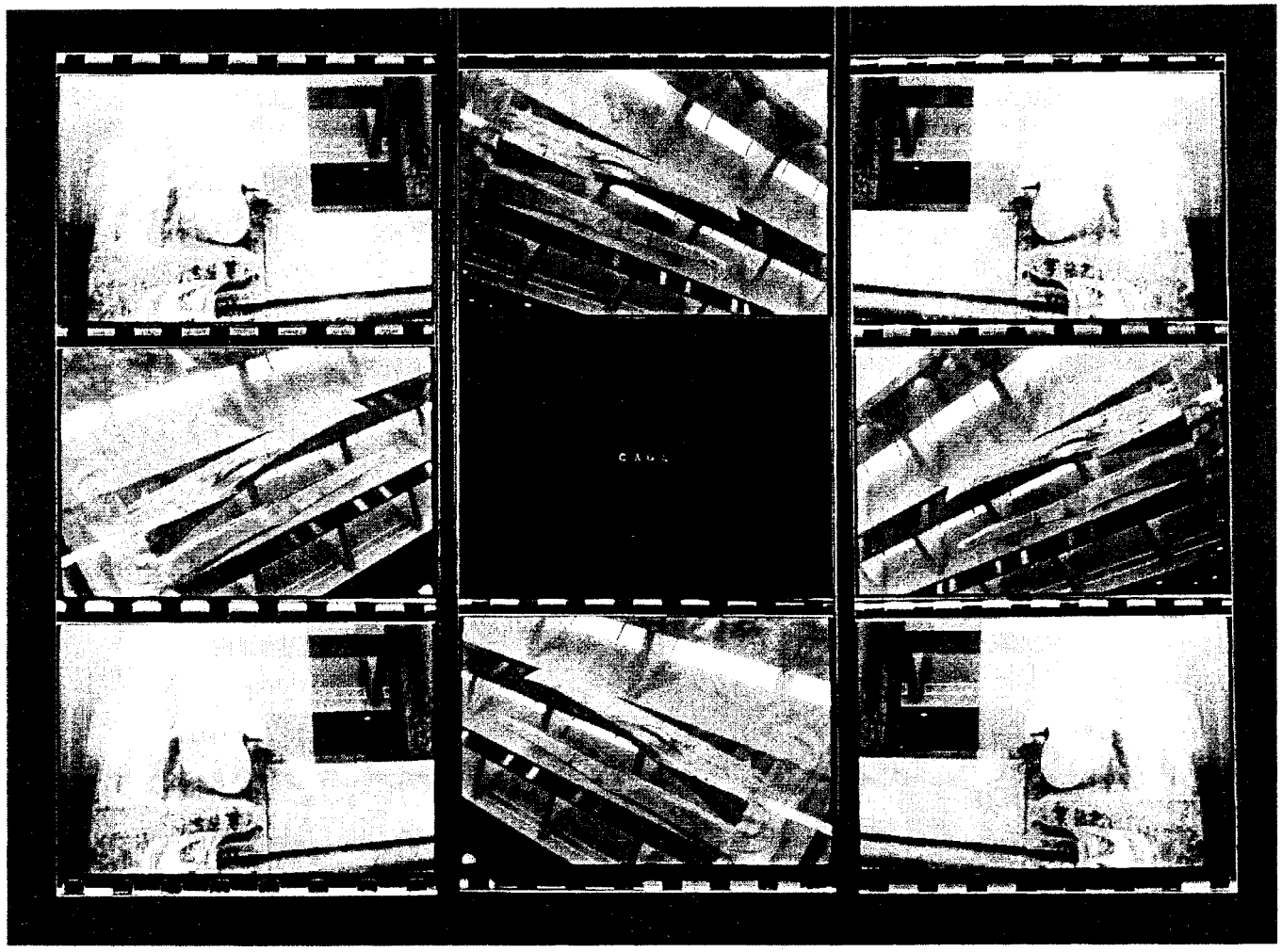

Fig. 9
Cage (1989)
Arthur Renwick
c-prints, letraset
152.4 x 182.88 cm
Collection of the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Gatineau, Quebec
From: Cousineau-Levine, Penny. Faking Death. Canadian Art Photography and the Canadian Imagination. Montreal, QC; Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003. p. 66, figure 3.11.

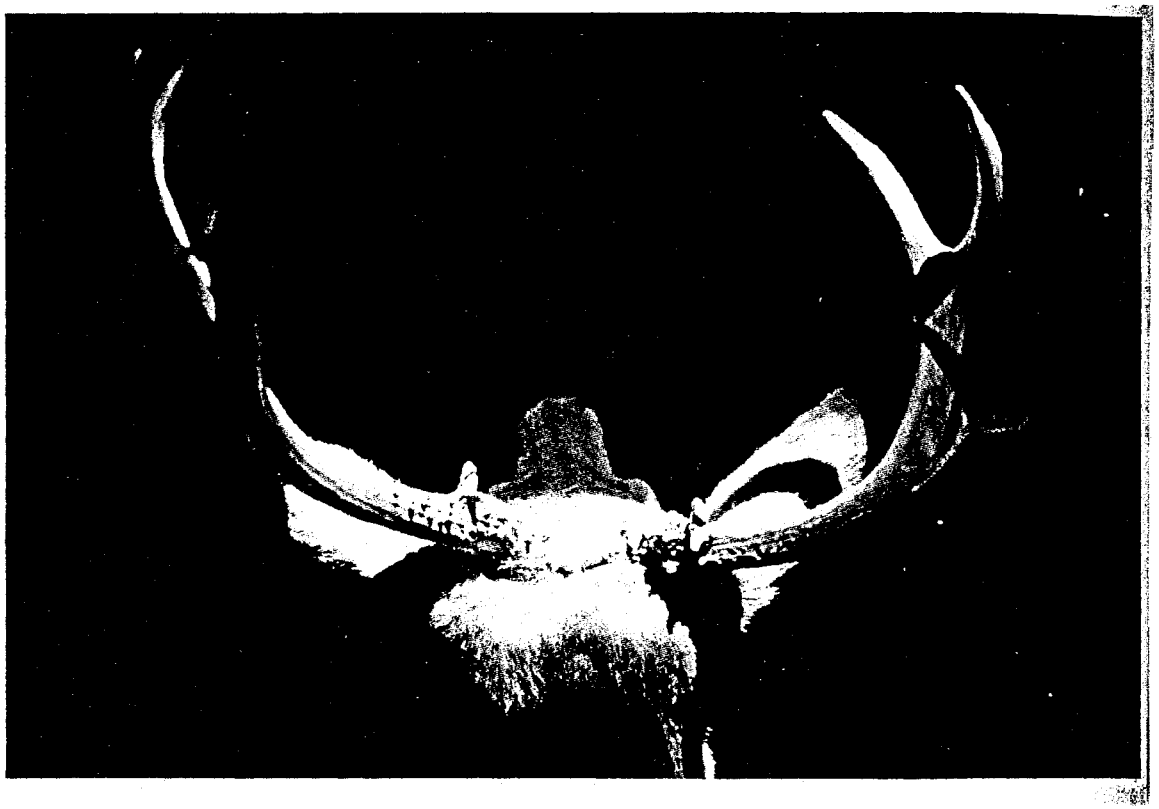

Fig. 10
Dusty Museum Specimen (1996)
Patricia Deadman
Black and white photography
Dimensions unknown
From: Hill, Lynn. "Patricia Deadman." Godi'nigoha: The Women's Mind. Brantford, ON: Woodland Cultural Centre, 1997. 13-18. [Exhibition Catalogue]

Fig. 11
Seven Sisters (1989)
Mike MacDonald
Video installation
From: Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives. McMaster, Gerald & Martin, Lee-Anne eds.Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1992. 152-155.

Fig. 12
Museum Man (2000)
Shawn Hunt
Wood, plexiglass, paint
Dimensions unknown
Courtesy of the artist and the University of British Columbia
Museum of Anthropology

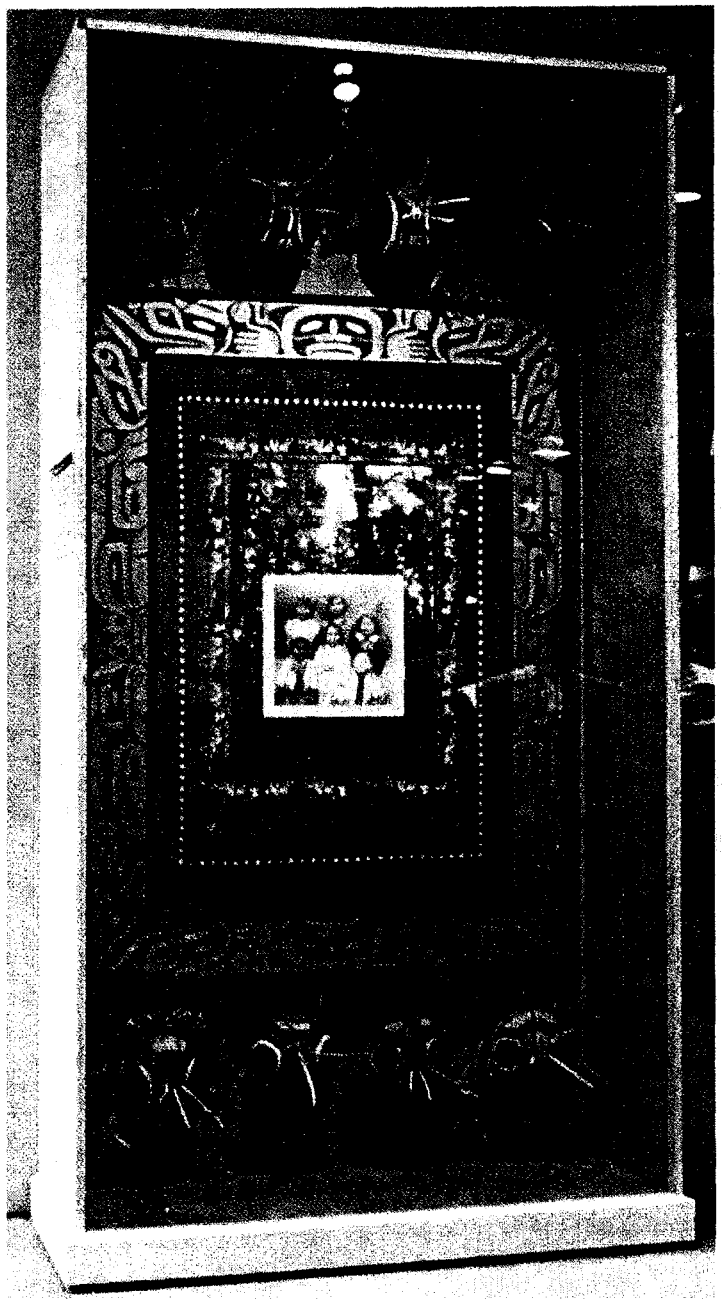

Fig. 13
Waxemedlagin xusbandayu' (Even Though I Am The Last One, I Still Count), detail (2000)
Marianne Nicolson
Mixed media photo-based installation
Dimensions unknown
Collection of the artist
From: Hill, Lynn. Raven's Reprise. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia, Museum of Anthropology, 2000 [Exhibition catalogue]

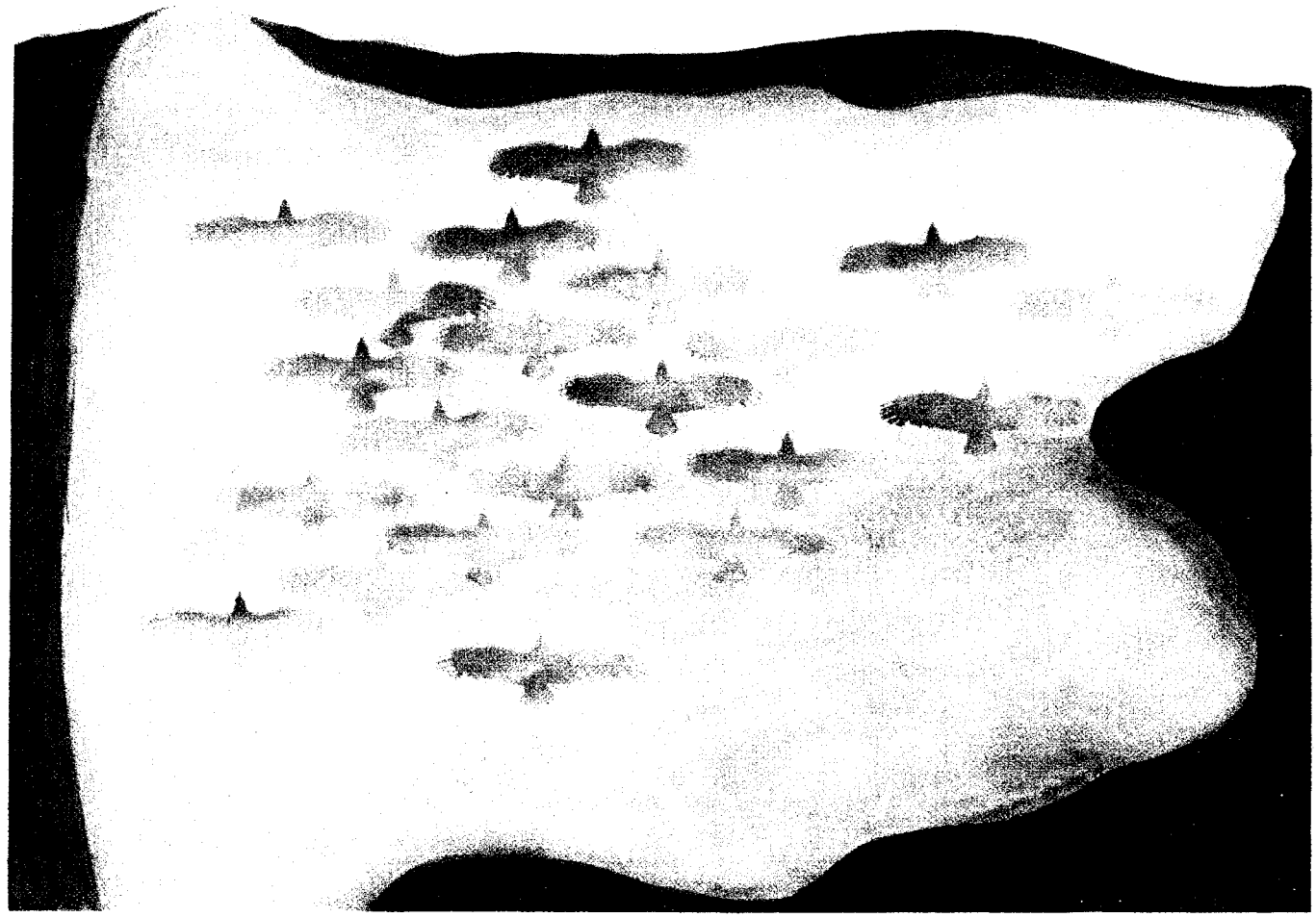

Fig. 14
Eagle Ribstone (1983)
Joane Cardinal-Schubert
Oil on rag paper
32 x 23.5"
Collection of Mr. & Mrs. K Shaw, Calgary
From: Joane Cardinal-Schubert: This is My History. Thunder Bay, ON: Thunder Bay Art Gallery, 1985. [Exhibition catalogue] p. 20, Figure 9.

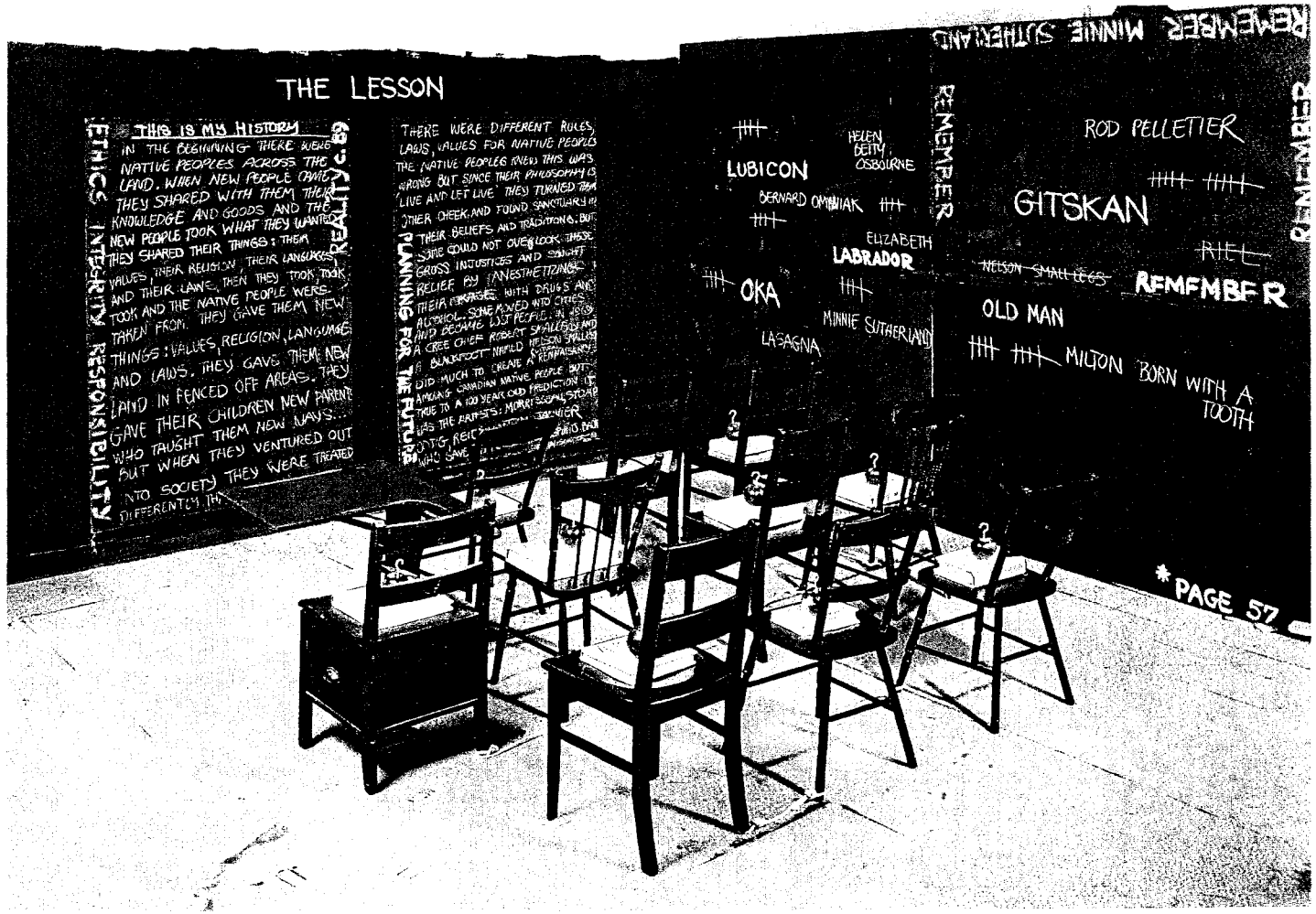

Fig. 15
The Lesson (1990)
Joane Cardinal-Schubert
Mixed media installation
365.76 x 365.76
Collection of the artist
From: Burns, Kathryn. Joane Cardinal-Schubert: Two Decades. Calgary, AB: The Muttart Public Art Gallery, 1997. p. 39 [Exhibition catalogue]

Fig. 16
Contemporary Artifact – Medicine Bundles: The Spirits Are Forever Within (1986)
Joane Cardinal-Schubert
Plaster on wire mesh, oil, graphite, urethane
69 x 38 x 24 cm and 104 x 46 x 18 cm
From: Ryan, Allan. The Trickster Shift. Vancouver, BC & Toronto, ON: UBC Press, 1992. p.127, figure 65.

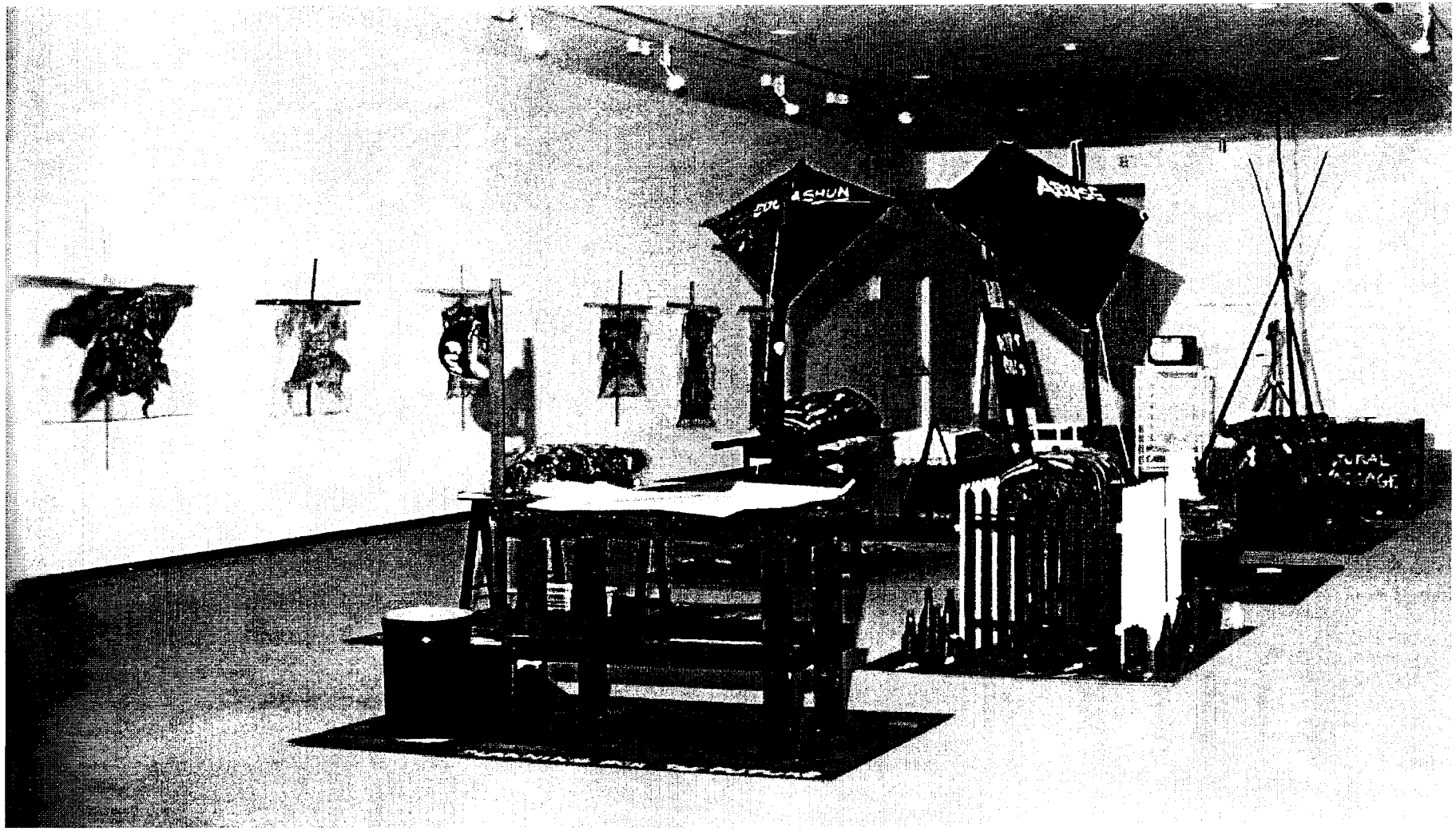

Fig. 17
Preservation of a Species: The War Shirts Series installation view from *Preservation of a Species: Deep Freeze* (1988-1989)
Joane Cardinal-Schubert
Wall installation, wire mesh, plaster, oil, varathane, found objects.
From: Ryan, Allan. The Trickster Shift. Vancouver, BC & Toronto, ON: UBC Press, 1992. p.137, figure 71.

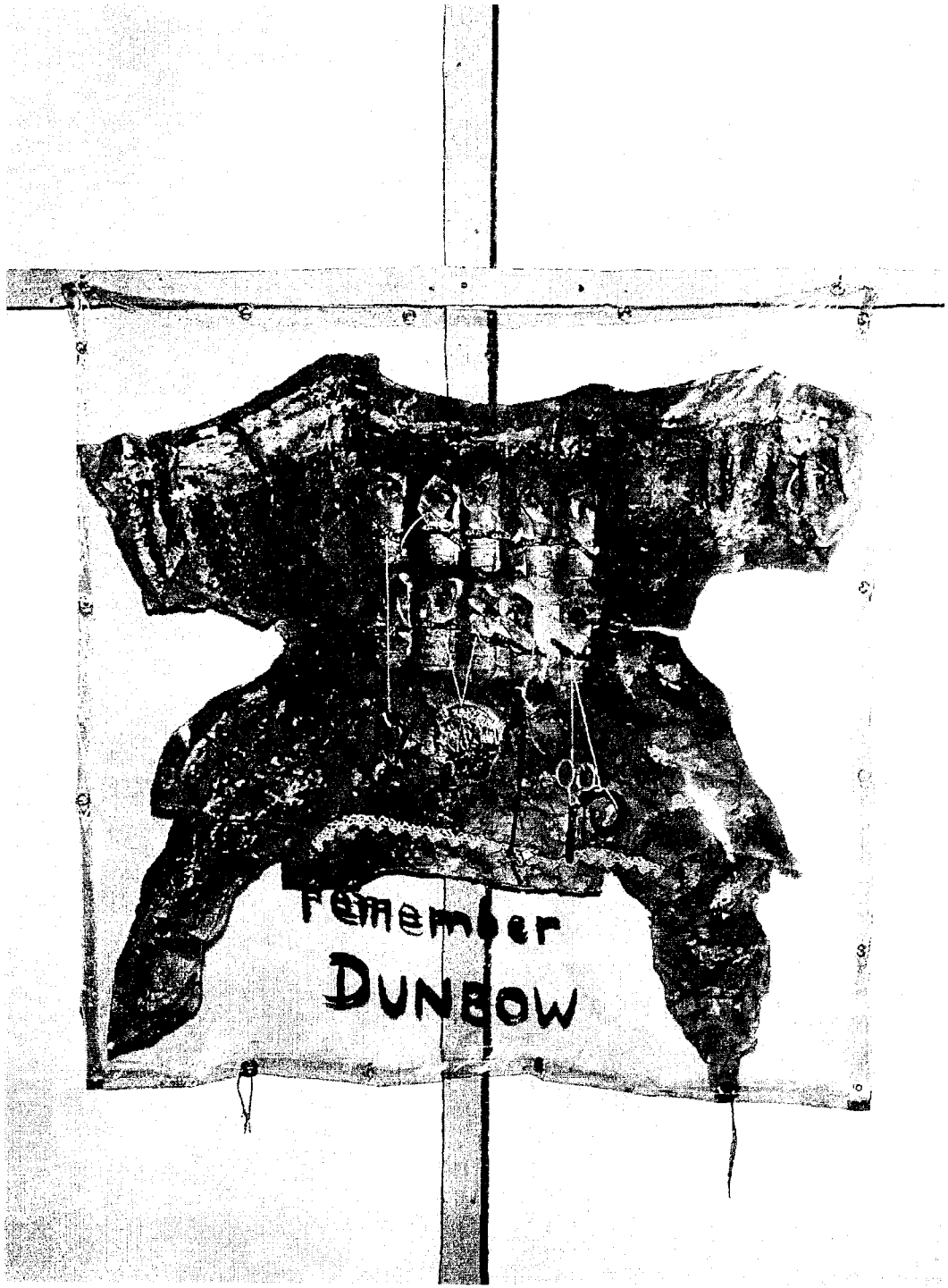

Fig. 18
Remember Dunbow, Preservation of a Species: Warshirt Series, detail (1988)
Joane Cardinal-Schubert
Wall installation, oil, conte, charcoal on rag paper, found objects, clear vinyl, wood
102 x 91 cm each
From: Ryan, Allan. The Trickster Shift. Vancouver, BC & Toronto, ON: UBC Press, 1992. p.136, figure 70.

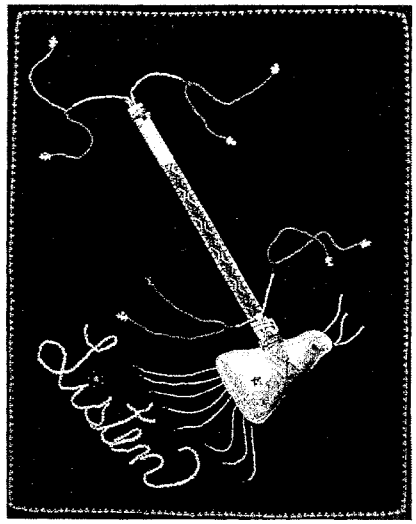

Fig. 19
Weapons for the 7th Generation (c. 2002)
Shelley Niro
Mixed media
Dimensions unknown
From: Gibson Art Gallery. What Are We Leaving for the 7th Generation? 7 Haudenosaunee Voices..."
Potsdam, NY: The Gibson Gallery, College at Potsdam, State University of New York, 2002. p.19.

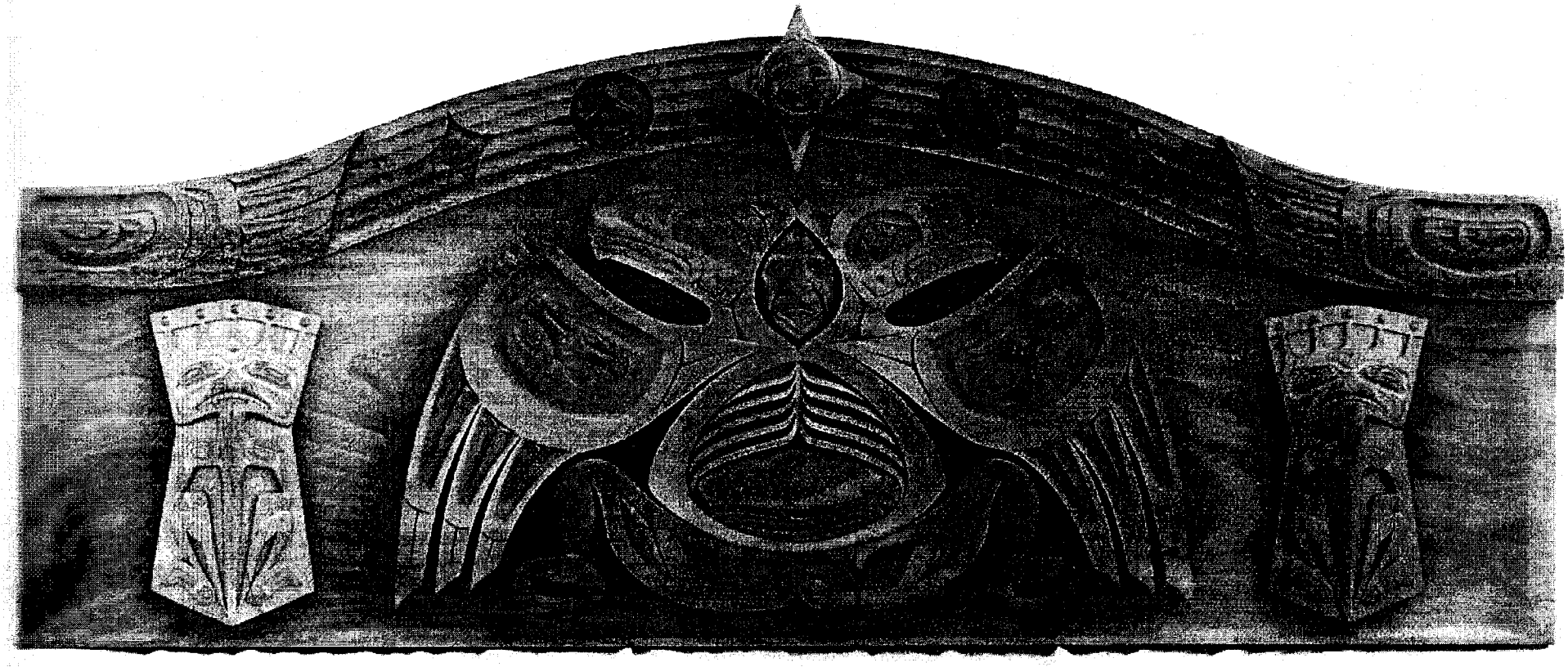

Fig. 20
Detail from *Chief's Chair* (1996)
Chuck Heit
Carved mahogany
85 x 180 x 65
Collection of the artist
From: Arnold, Grant, Monika Kin Gagnon and Doreen Jensen. Topographies: Aspects of Recent B.C. Art. Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd for Vancouver Art Gallery, 1996. p. 101 [Exhibition catalogue, photo by Harold J. T. Demetzer].

Fig. 21
A Rethinking on the Western Front (1992)
Jim Logan
Acrylic on canvas
167 x 244 cm
From: Ryan, Allan. The Trickster Shift. Vancouver, BC & Toronto, ON: UBC Press, 1992. p.127, figure 65.

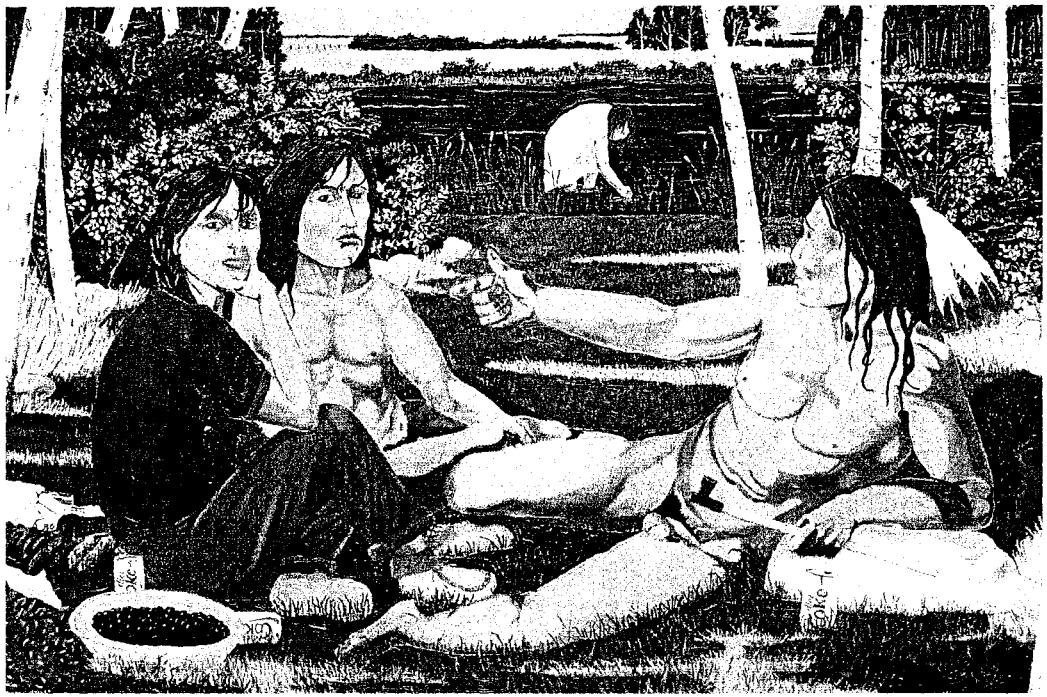

Fig. 22
The Diners Club (No Reservation Required) [1992]
Jim Logan
Acrylic on canvas
89 x 135 cm
From: Ryan, Allan. The Trickster Shift. Vancouver, BC & Toronto, ON: UBC Press, 1992. p.128, figure 66.

Fig. 23
Two Mosquitoes on a Bush (1985)
Allan Angeconeb
Serigraph
41.5 x 30 cm
From: Hill, Tom. "Indian Art '85." Indian Art '85. Brantford, ON: The Woodland Indian Cultural
Educational Centre, 1985. V-IX. [Exhibition catalogue]

Fig. 24
Tea With Emily Carr…Sitting Around Talking about Appropriation (1994)
Rose Saphan
Collage
Dimensions unknown
From: Sweetgrass Grows All Around Her. Beth Brant and Sandra Laronde, eds. Native Women in the Arts, 1996

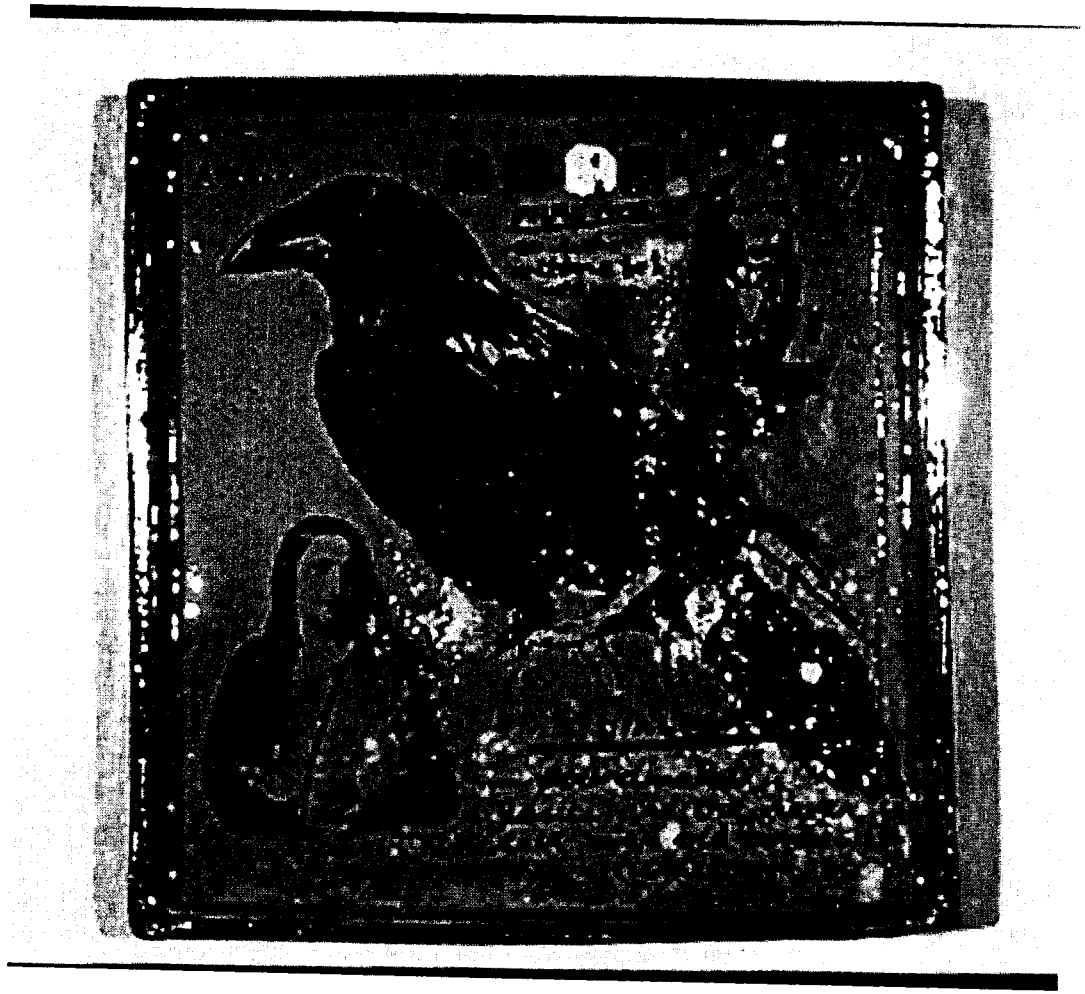

Fig. 25
Dialogue (1985)
Carl Beam
Pottery
29.5 x 29.5 cm

Image courtesy of the Woodland Cultural Centre

Fig. 26
Pope in Landscape (1985)
Carl Beam
Pottery
29.5 x 29.5 cm
Image courtesy of the Woodland Cultural Centre

Fig. 27
The North American Iceberg 85 (1985)
Carl Beam
Acrylic, photoserigraph, pencil, on plexiglass
7 x 12.3 feet
Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, ON

From: Native American Art in the Twentieth Century. Jackson W. Rushing III, ed. New York, NY & London, UK: Routledge, 1999. Plate G.

Fig. 28
Exhibit 671B (12 Jan.,1988)
Rebecca Belmore
Performance, Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay, ON
From: Ryan, Allan. The Trickster Shift. Vancouver, BC & Toronto, ON: UBC Press, 1992. p.147, figure 75

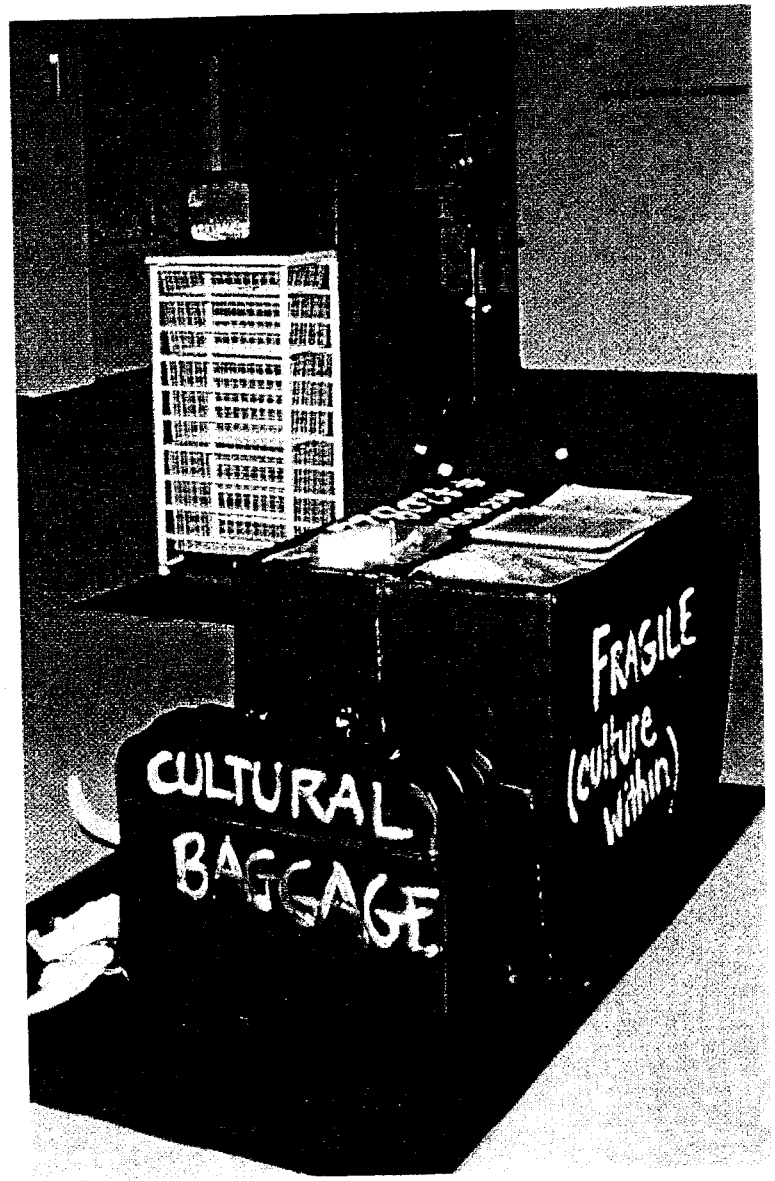

Fig 29
Cultural Baggage from *Preservation of a Species: Deep Freeze* (1988-1989)
Joane Cardinal-Schubert
From: Ryan, Allan. The Trickster Shift. Vancouver, BC & Toronto, ON: UBC Press, 1992. p.140, figure 72.

Fig. 30
Art Reservation (1991)
Joane Cardinal-Schubert
Mixed media installation
121.92 x 243.84
From: Burns, Kathryn. Joane Cardinal-Schubert: Two Decades. Calgary, AB: The Muttart Public Art Gallery, 1997.

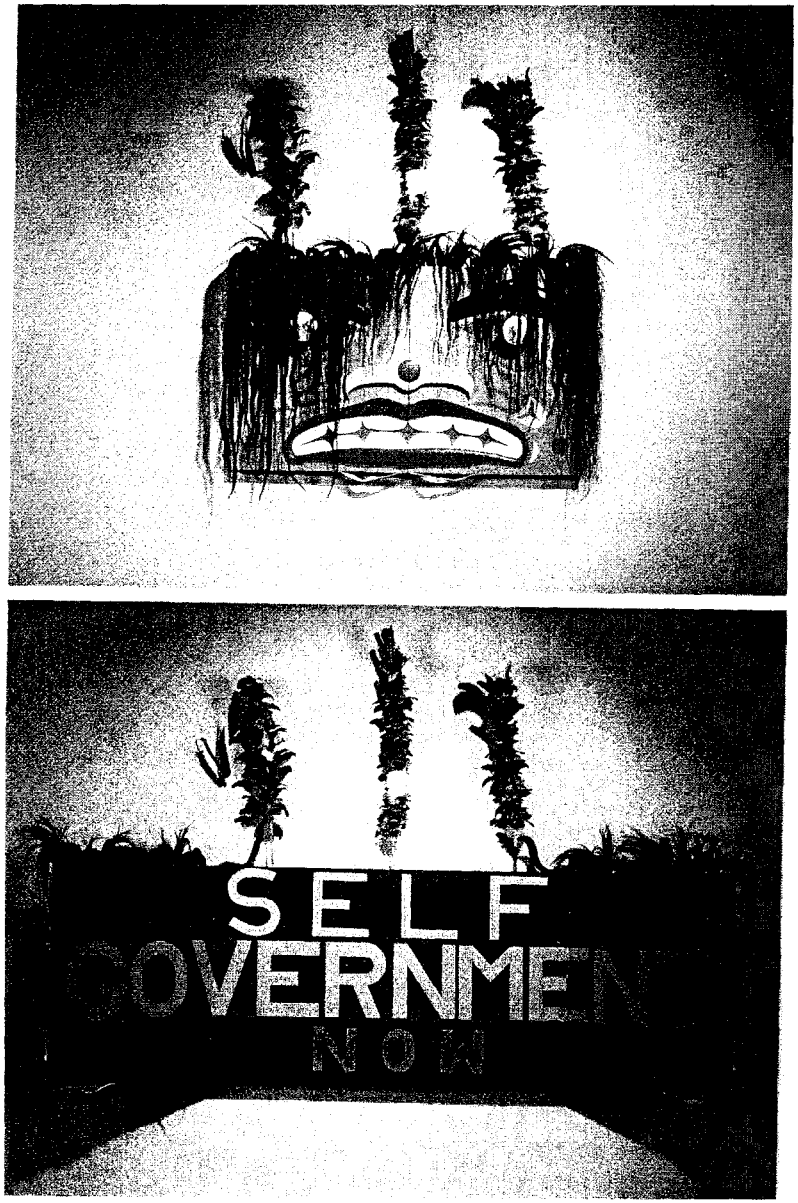

Fig. 31
*Transformation of Bill Wilson (*1991)
Lawrence Paul
Mixed media
134 x 148 x 13 cm
Above: closed position; below: open position
From: Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives.
McMaster, Gerald & Martin,
Lee-Anne eds.Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1992. p.156.

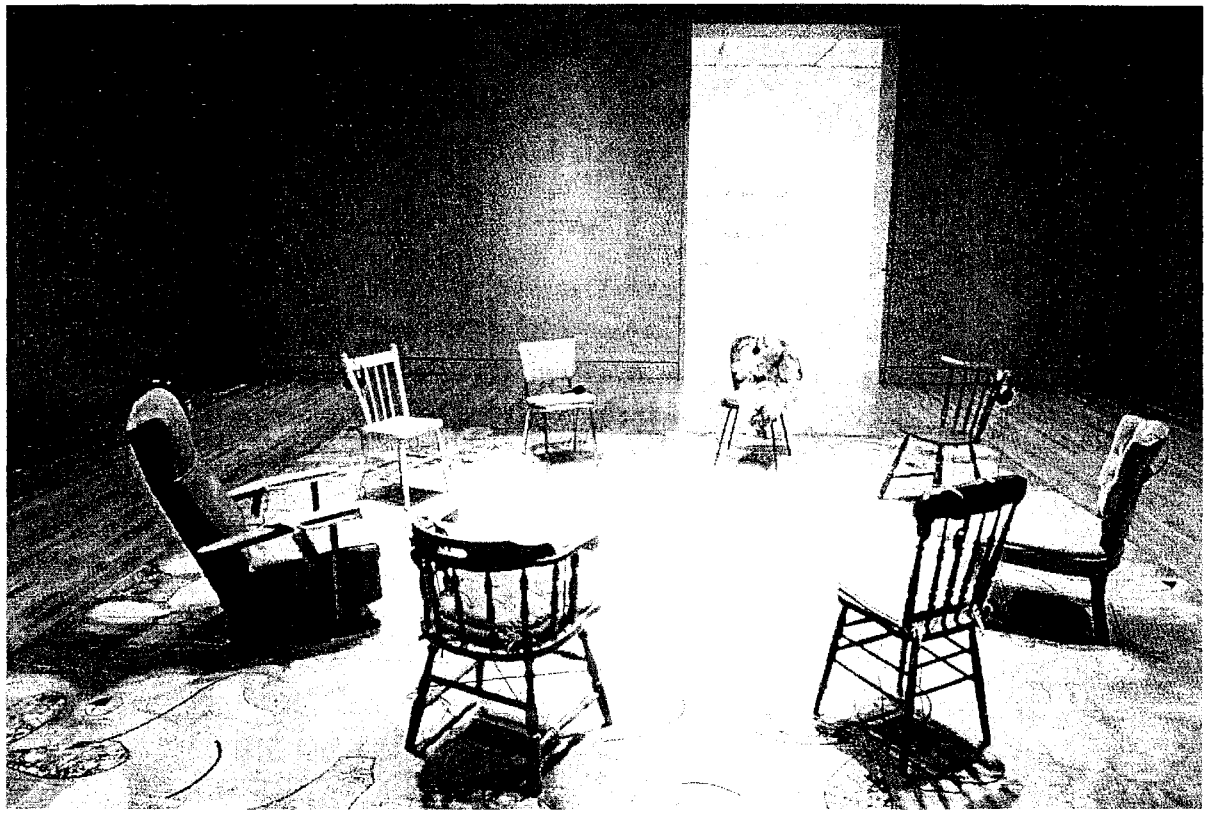

Fig. 32
Mawa-che-hitoowin: A Gathering of People for Any Purpose (1992)
Rebecca Belmore
Mixed media installation
From: Berlo, Catherine Janet and Phillips, Ruth. Native North American Art. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998. p. 237, figure 161.

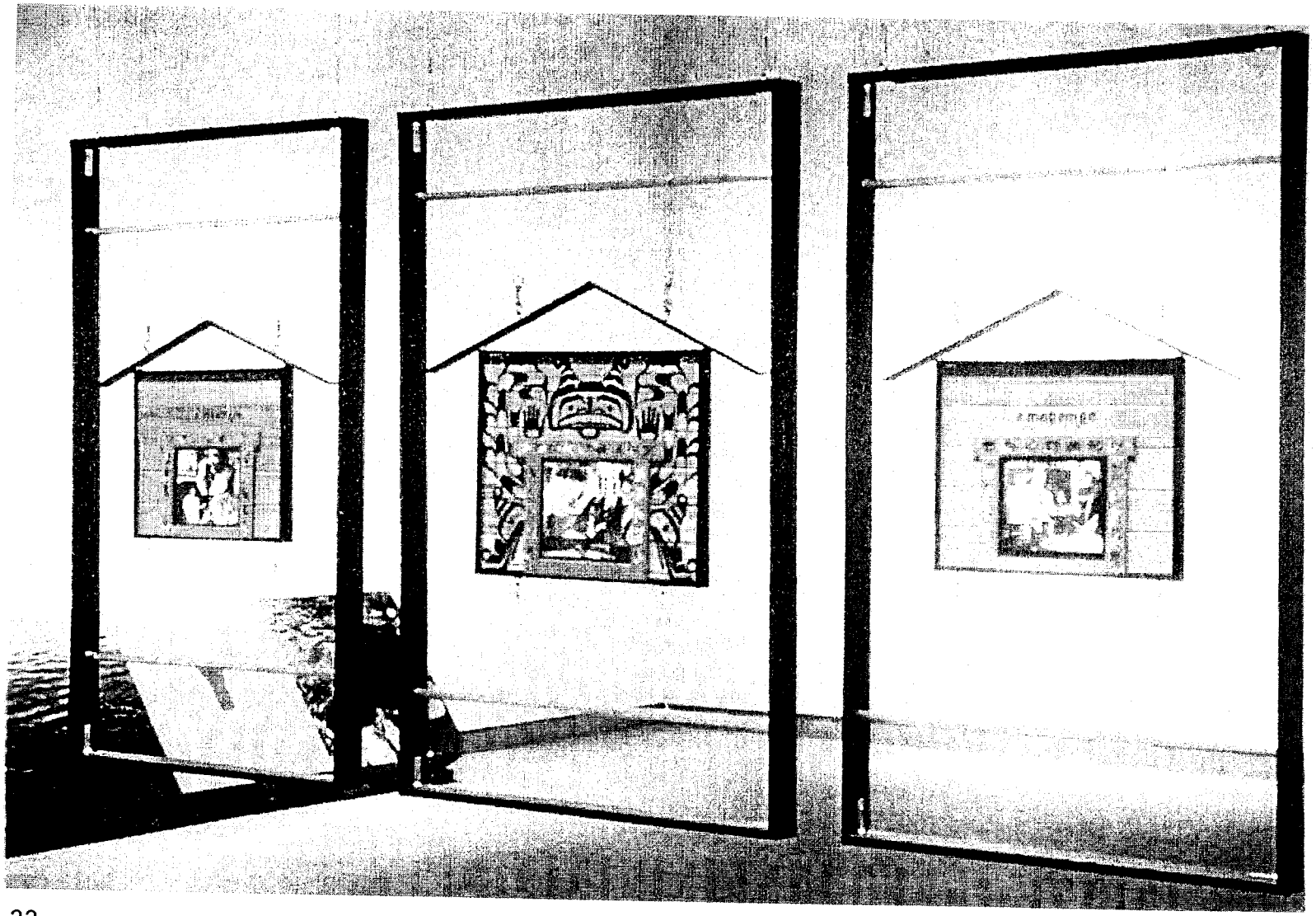

Fig. 33
Nam'sgams/Malt'sams (1994)
Marianne Nicolson
Photo installation
4' x 12'x 3"
From: Walsh, Andrea. "Marianne Nicolson." The Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art. Vol. 1. Indianapolis, Indianna: Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, 1999.

Fig. 34
No Escapin' This: Confronting Images of Aboriginal Leadership (2001).
Jeff Thomas; graffiti wall by the Seventh Generation Image Makers headed by Josh Peltier
Multi media installation, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario
Image available from:
<http://www.ago.net/www/information/exhibitions/no_escapin_this/image.cfm?f=A_07205.jpg>

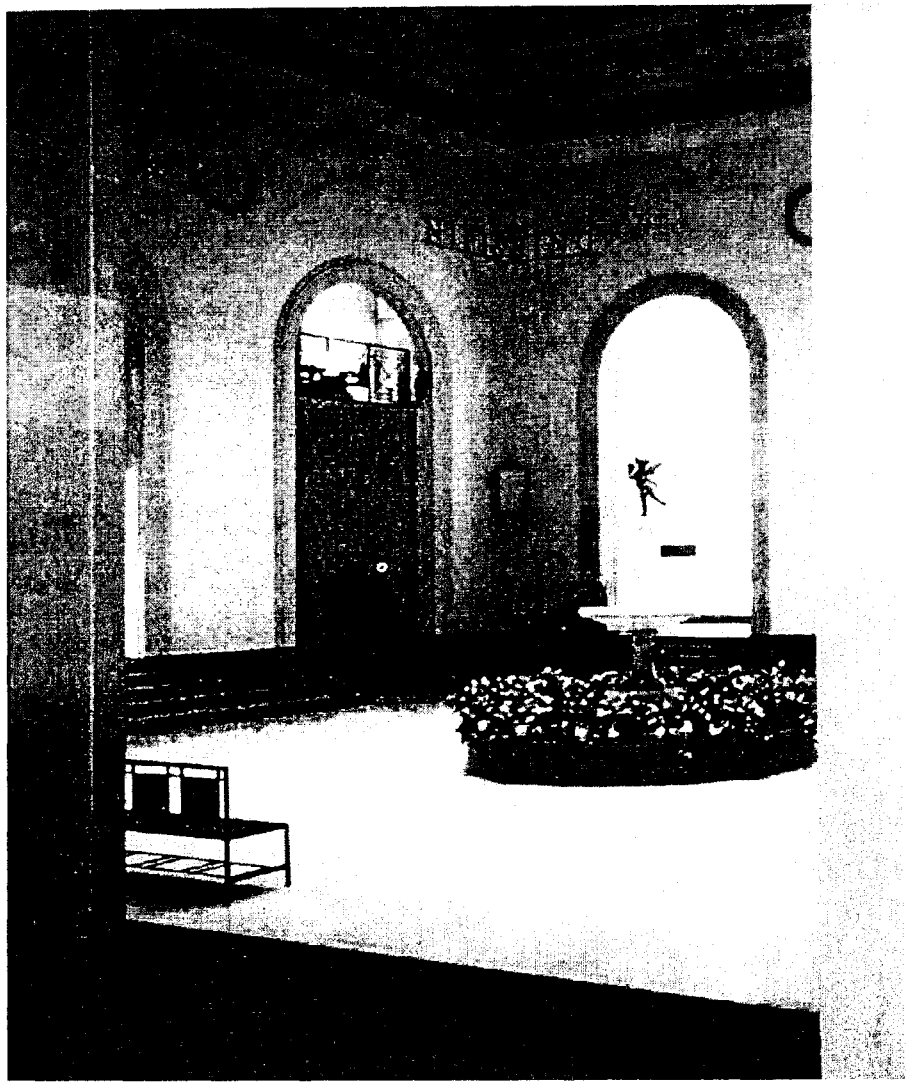

Fig. 35
Anishnabe Walker Court: Part 2 (1993)
Robert Houle
Installation at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario

From: Native American Art in the Twentieth Century. Jackson W. Rushing III, ed. New York, NY & London, UK: Routledge, 1999. Plate J. [Photo by Robin Holland]

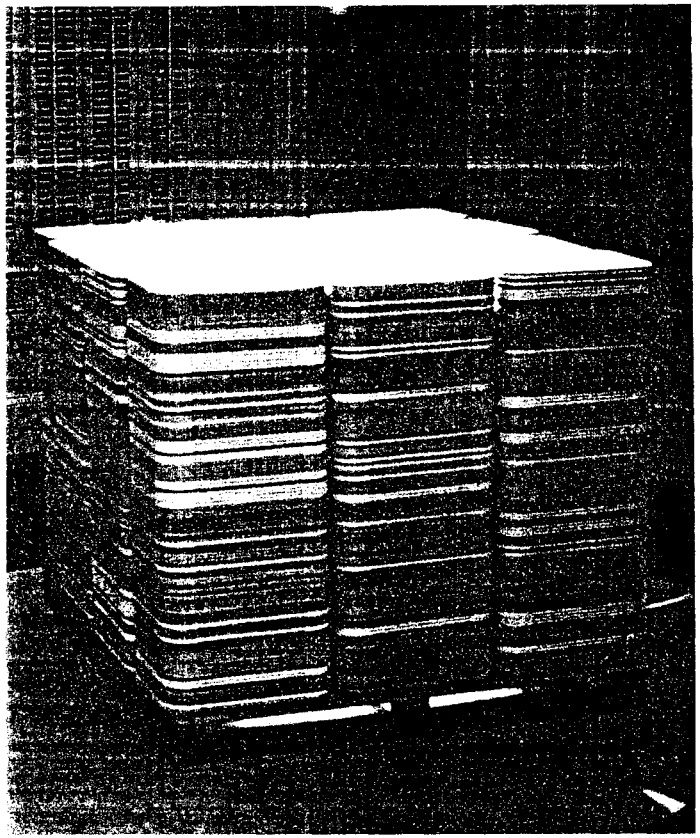

Fig. 36
Isolated Depiction of the Passage of Time (2001)
Brian Jungen
Found objects
Dimensions unknown
From: Drobnick, Jim & Fisher, Jennifer. Museopathy. Jan Allen, Ed. Kingston, ON: Agnes Etherington Art Gallery, 2002

Fig. 37
Wild (2001)
Rebecca Belmore
Mixed media and performance, The Grange, Toronto, ON
Dimensions variable
From: House Guests: The Grange from 1817 to Today. Toronto, ON: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2001. p. 84-85. Courtesy of the artist and Pari Nadimi Gallery, Toronto, Ontario.

Fig. 38
Pretty Maidens all in a Row (1992)
Acrylic on canvas
85.5 x 102 cm
Image courtesy of Gerald McMaster

Fig. 39
Making a Buck (1992)
Acrylic on canvas
85.5 x 102 cm
Image courtesy of Gerald McMaster

Fig. 40
Lies the Movies Told Me (1992)
Acrylic on canvas
85.5 x 102 cm
Image courtesy of Gerald McMaster

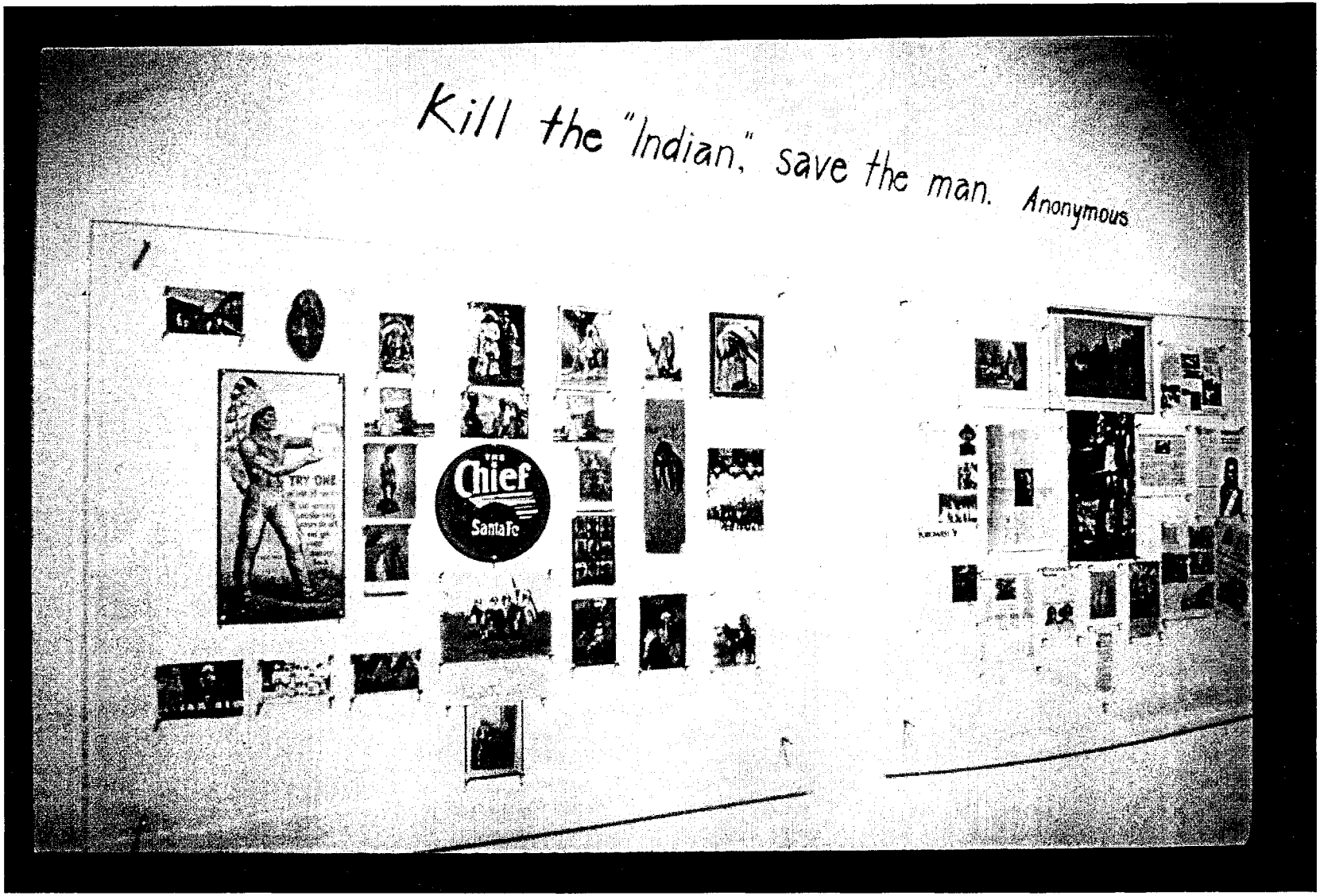

Fig. 41
Kill the 'Indian' and Save the Man (1992)
Wall installation of found materials
Image courtesy of Gerald McMaster

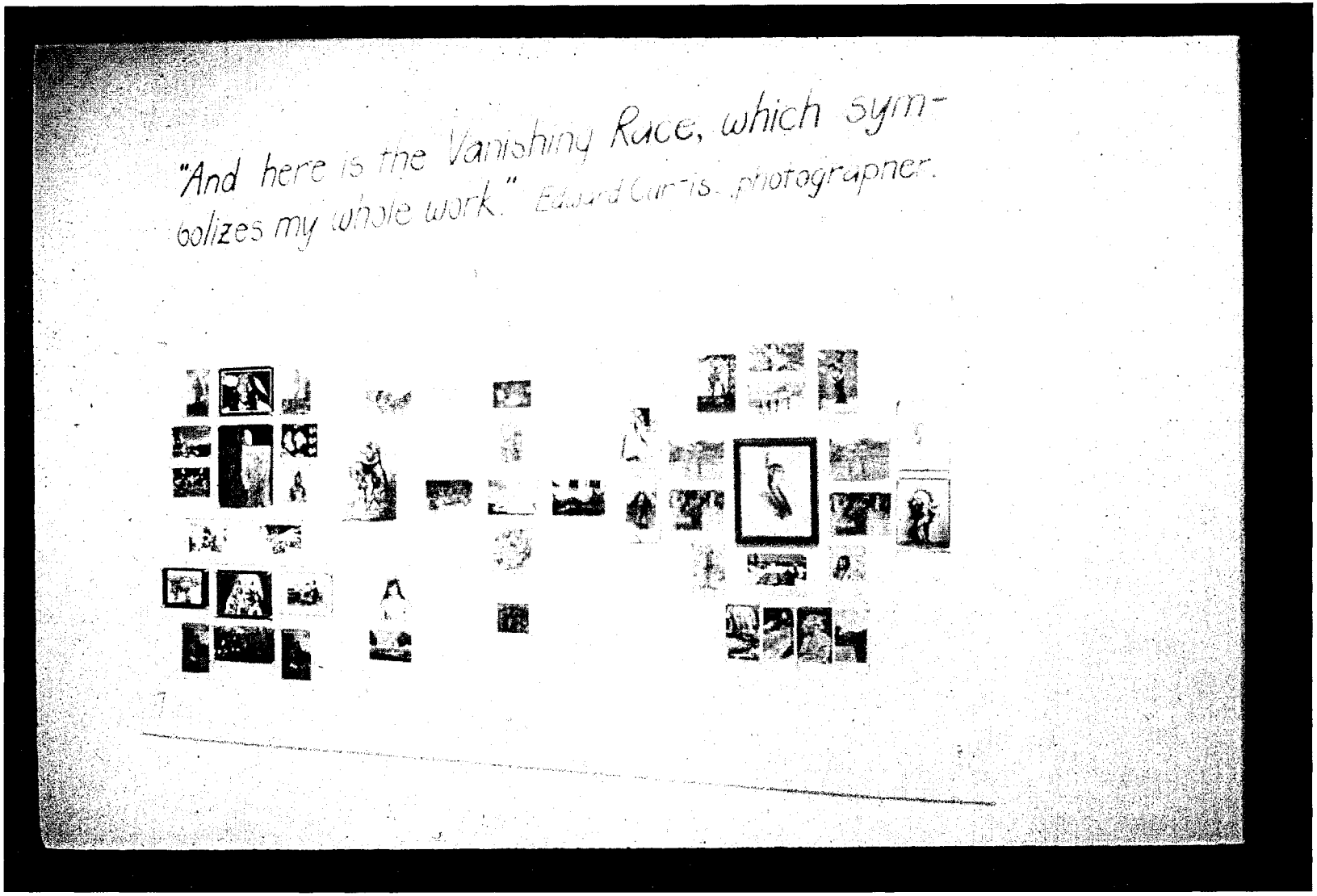

Fig. 42
And Here is the Vanishing Race Which Symbolizes My Whole Work (1992)
Wall installation of found materials
Image courtesy of Gerald McMaster

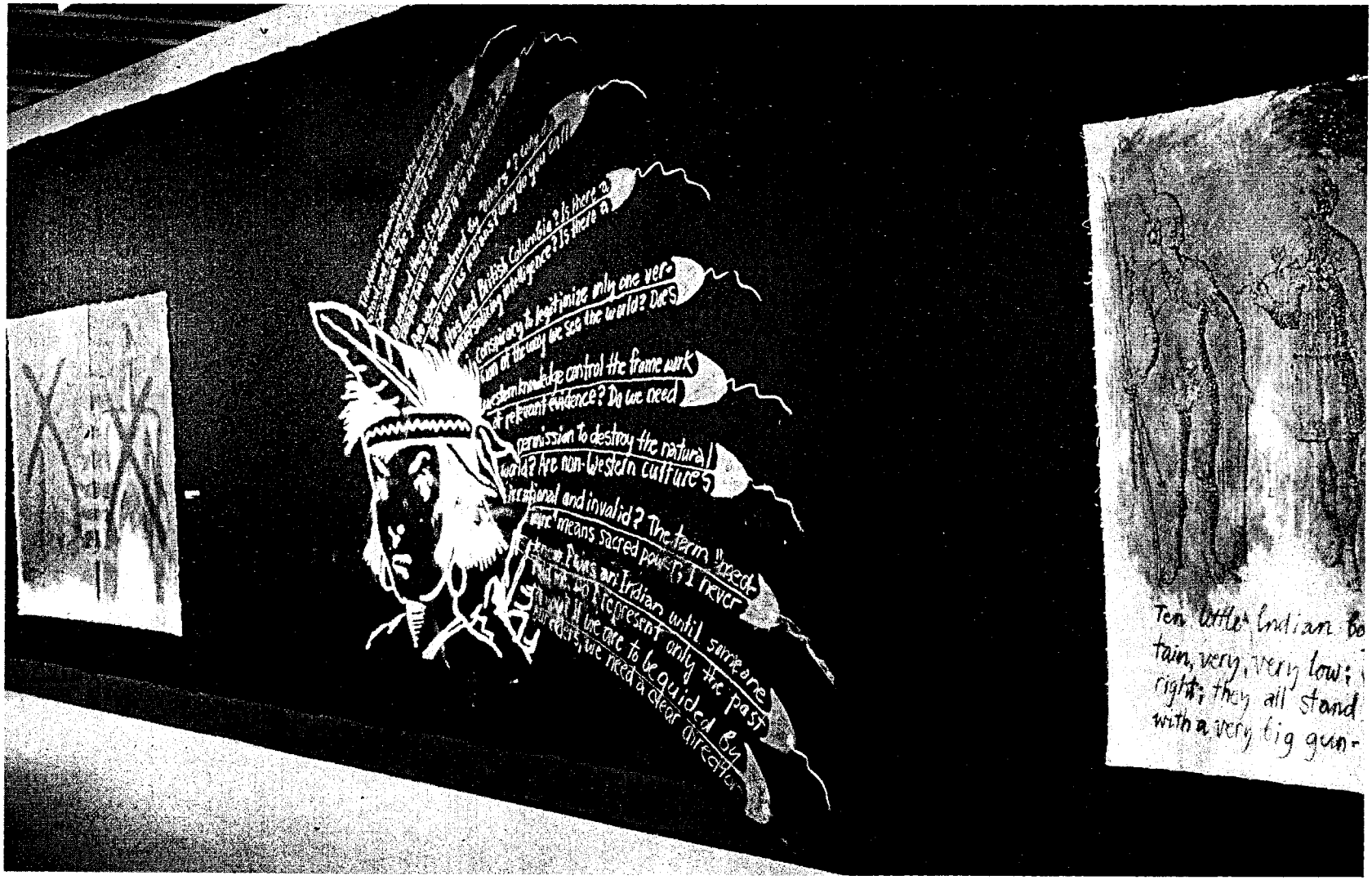

Fig. 43
Installation of *Savage Graces: After Images* (1992)
(Image of brave with headdress)
Image courtesy of Gerald McMaster

Fig. 44
Installation of *Savage Graces: After Images* at UBC MOA (1992)
(Installation with Bill Reid's *Raven and the First Men* in background)
Image courtesy of Gerald McMaster

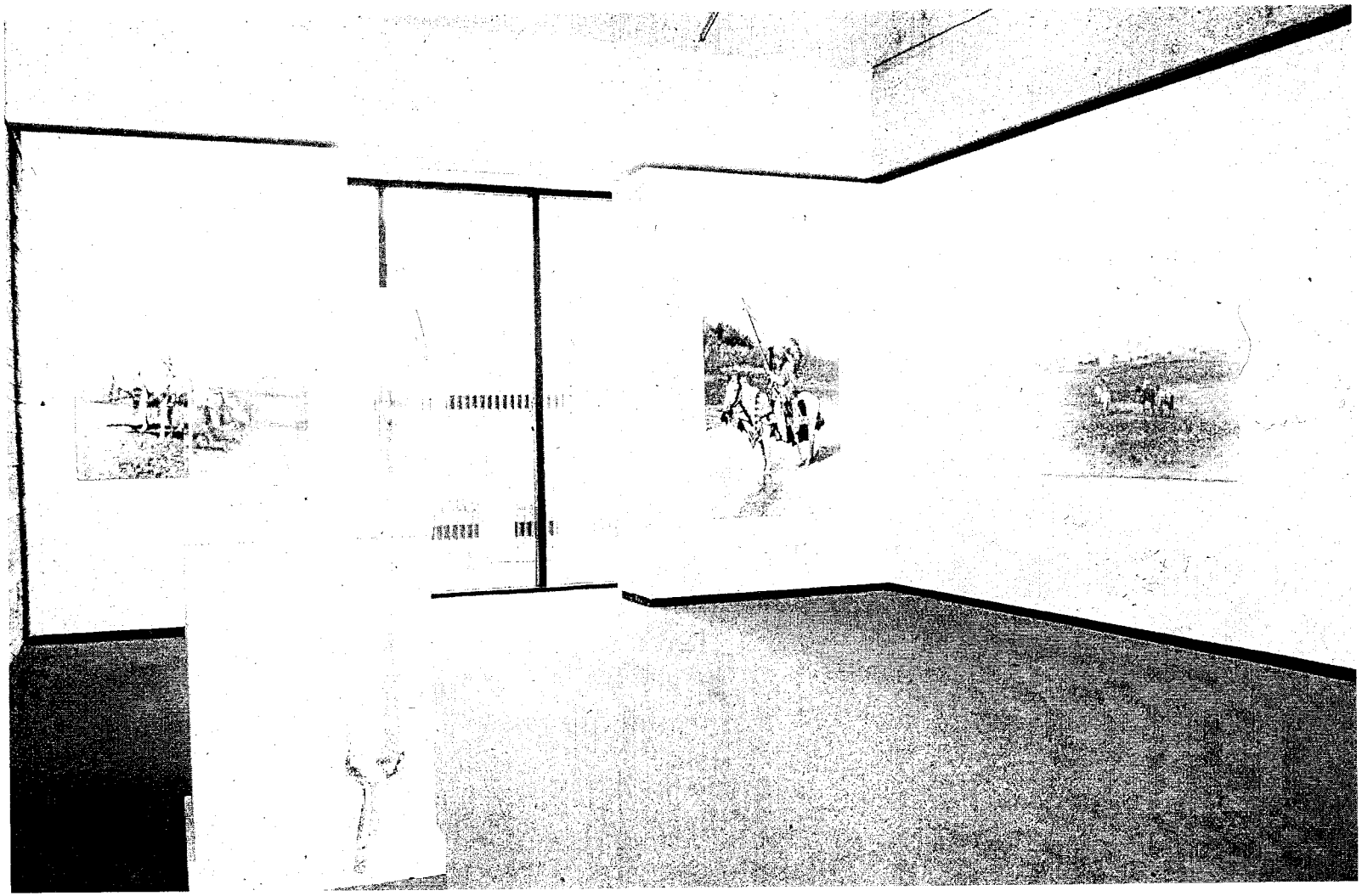

Fig. 45
Installation of *Savage Graces: After Images* (1992)
(Location unknown)
Image courtesy of Gerald McMaster

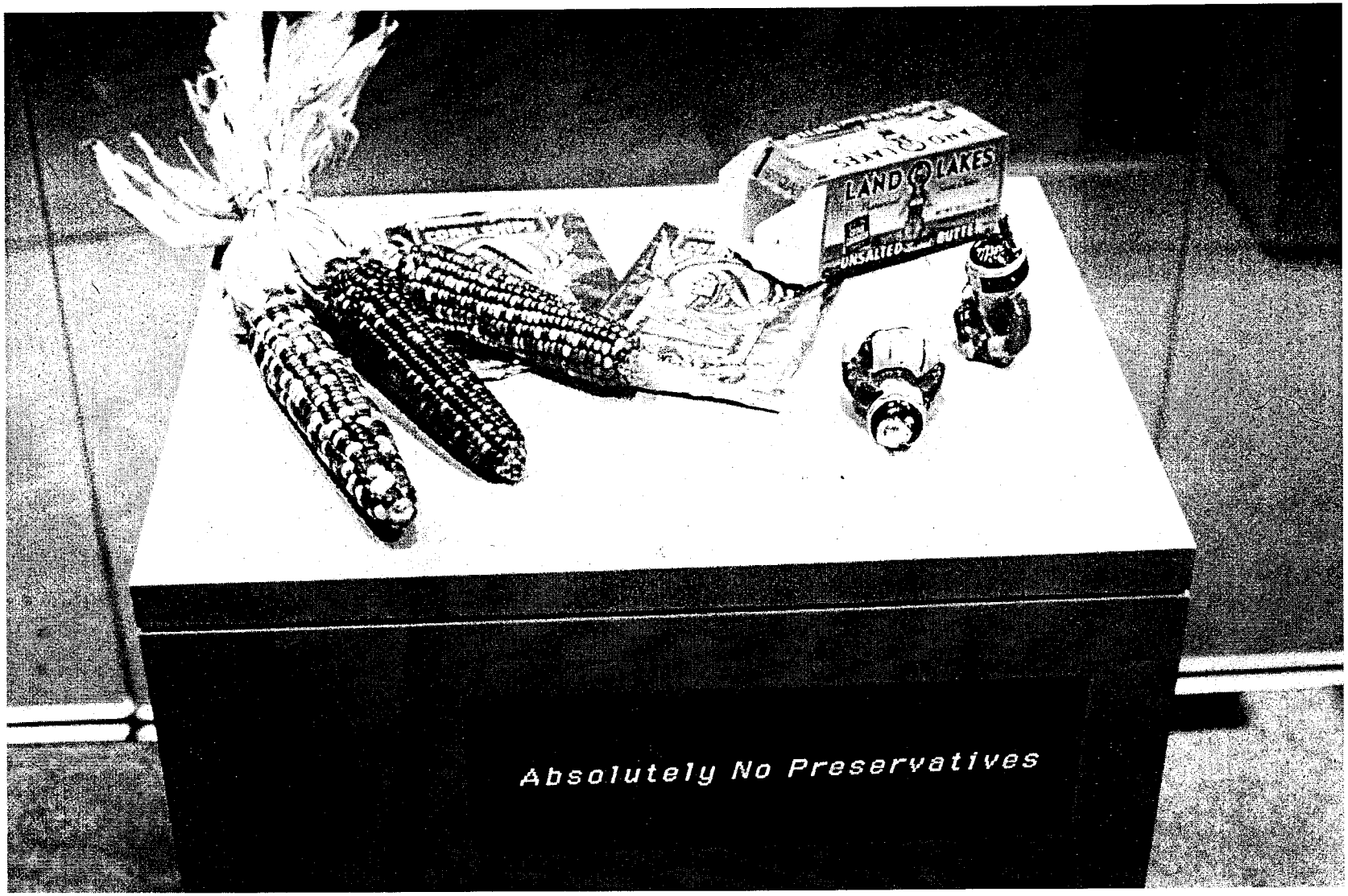

Fig. 46
Food for Thought/ Absolutely No Preservatives (1992)
Installation of found objects
Image courtesy of Gerald McMaster

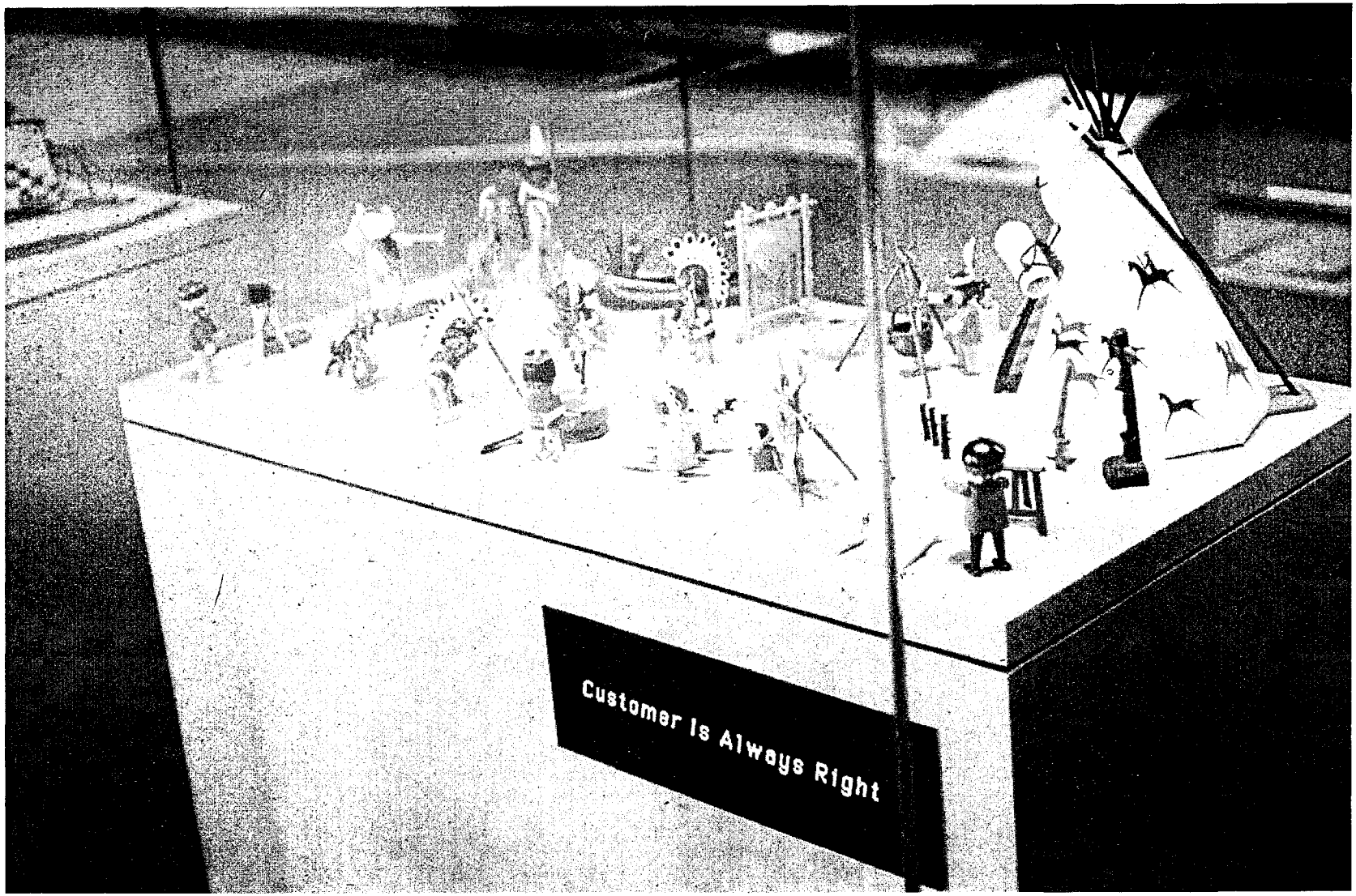

Fig. 47
Not Recommended for Children/ Customer is Always Right (1992)
Installation of found objects
Image courtesy of Gerald McMaster

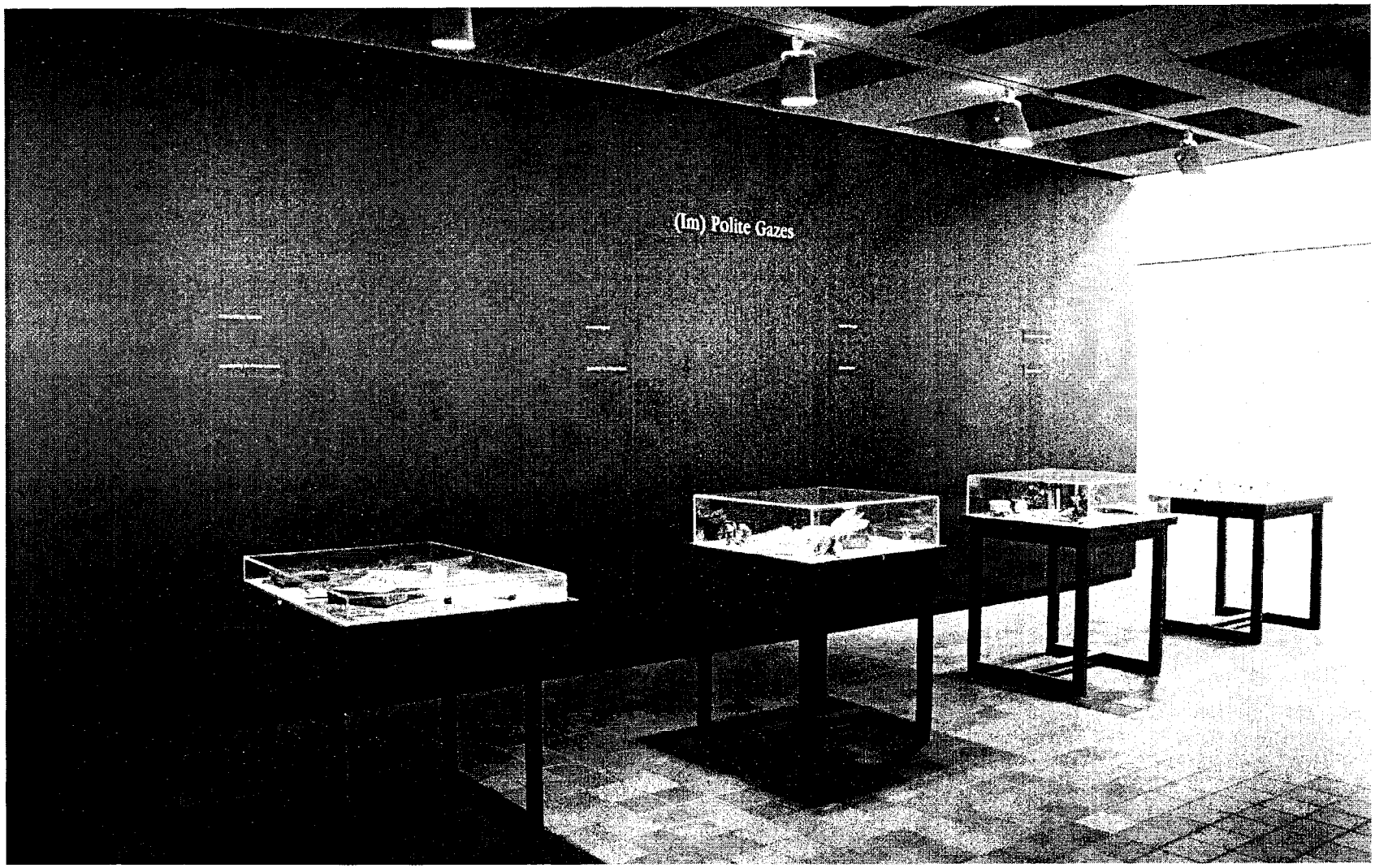

Fig. 48
Installation of found objects for *Savage Graces: After Images* (1992)
Image courtesy of Gerald McMaster

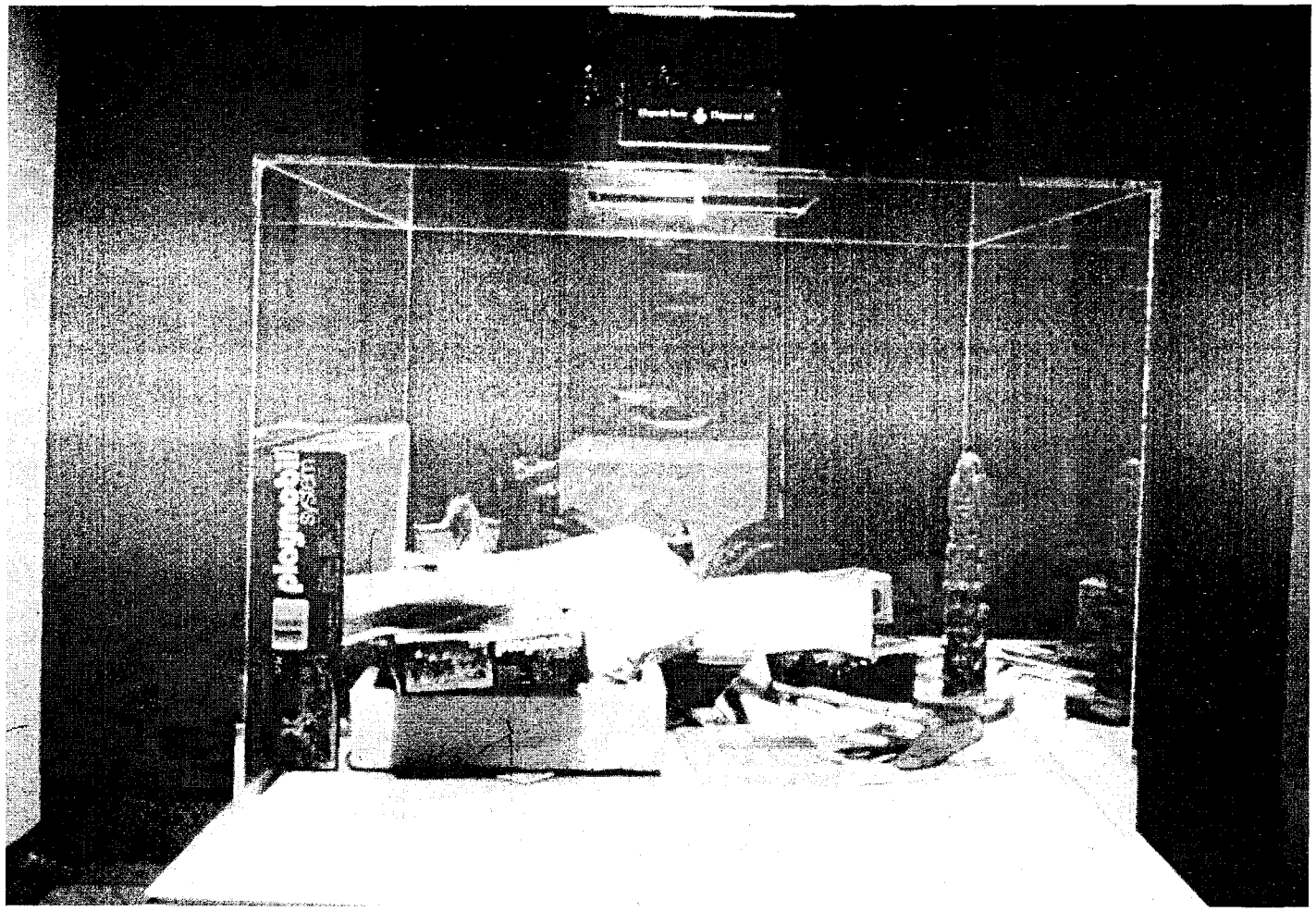

Fig. 49
Cultural Amnesty Box (1992)
Found objects
Image courtesy of Gerald McMaster

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