

Decolonial Curating: Methods and Practices

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Decolonial Curating: Methods and Practices

The annotated bibliographies in this booklet are the outcome of a seminar held at the Graduate Center in spring 2020 that focused on post- and decolonial curating. Our starting point was the growth of decolonization movements in art and activism that began in earnest in the 2000s with the Maison des Civilisations et de l'Unité Réunionnaise MCUR) in La Réunion, and the Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency (DAAR) in Beit Sahour, Palestine. In New York, such efforts have taken the form of calls to decolonize the museum both in terms of its exhibitions and organizational structure—from the exhibition “This Place” (Brooklyn Museum, 2016) to the campaign to remove Warren Kanders from the board of the Whitney Museum of American Art (2019).

The seminar set out to trace the various historical and theoretical inflections of the term “decolonization” in North and South America, Europe, Africa, Australia, and South Asia, and their impact upon exhibition practice. Due to generous funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the seminar was largely based around visiting speakers with expertise in these regions.

We began with the activist movement Decolonize This Place, whose understanding of decolonization is a confluence of Indigenous rights activism, Black libera-

tion, Palestinian nationalism, and anti-gentrification. Since the Whitney protests, they have gravitated beyond the art world and towards the radical formation FTP (“Fuck the Police,” “Free the People,” or “Feed the People”). Françoise Vergès, a feminist activist and intellectual based in Paris, told us about her decolonial tours of the Louvre, her attempts to establish a “museum without objects” in La Réunion, and her innovative pedagogic methods for people of color. Nigerian art historian Chika Okeke-Agulu (Princeton University) presented his cocurated exhibition “Who Knows Tomorrow” (Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 2010) and spoke powerfully against the “decolonial,” arguing that West Africa is still in a postcolonial moment.

Paul Chaat Smith, curator at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC, expressed skepticism about the accessibility of the term “decolonization,” and presented his cocurated exhibition “Americans” (2018–ongoing) as an attempt to appeal to a broad public without condescension or moralization. Julieta González’s exhibition “Memories of Underdevelopment: Art and the Decolonial Turn in Latin America, 1960–1985” (Museo Jumex, Mexico City, 2018), by contrast, understood Latin American decolonization through the lens of 1960s anti-imperialism and dependency theory

(rather than more recent writings on Indigenous epistemology).

Berlin-based independent curator Claire Tancons energized the class with her research into Caribbean carnival practices and candid approach to the difficulty of translating these into exhibition formats. Wanda Nanibush, curator of Indigenous art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, discussed the notion of “performing sovereignty” through her rehang of the J.S. McLean Centre for Indigenous & Canadian Art, which included a rejection of chronology and informational labelling. Our last speakers were Monica Narula and Jeebesh Bagchi of Raqs Media Collective (New Delhi), who confirmed that in South Asia, decolonization still tends to refer to the Partition of India in 1947; the term “decolonial” is emerging as a paradigm to replace the postcolonial/global, but its temporal and geographic reach are still waiting to be more closely defined.

In preparing the class, we were struck by the dearth of material that linked decolonization to art history and museums. As part of their final assignment, students contributed five entries for an annotated bibliography, each student focusing on a particular continent or region. The following booklet presents the outcome of this literature review, with groupings of texts on decolonial artistic and curatorial strategies in Africa, Australia, Canada, Europe, Latin America, South Asia, and the United States.

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The following texts on de- and post-coloniality in an African context cover an entire continent and span sixteen years of scholarly writing. Despite their wide geographic and temporal range, several common themes emerge. First, all authors are preoccupied with the legacy of colonialism in a contemporary globalized and neoliberal world—be it socio-economically, politically, theoretically, or in relation to questions around cultural heritage and curatorial practices. The term employed to signify the condition of “globalization after imperialism” (Enwezor) continues to be “postcoloniality.” The term is used to designate states of multiplicity, hybridity, or plurality, and to counter myths of authentic origins, totalizing narratives, and teleological trajectories. Several authors even complicate and expand geographical descriptors such as “Africa” and the “Global South” to indicate not a specific place, but a condition of postcoloniality.

Yet it also becomes clear from these texts that the postcolonial as a critical method has been in steady decline since the 1990s. Indeed, multiple authors can be observed struggling against the capaciousness and overuse of postcolonial terminologies such as “modernity” or the “Global South.” Having become a well-worn discourse, it does not yet appear to be succeeded by the recent turn to decolonization. The failure of

the latter to take hold in African scholarship may be explained by its implied notion of process (and perhaps also progress), which runs counter to the still-popular idea of a globally shared “condition” or “constellation” marked by the legacy and ongoing reality of colonialism. Instead, methodologies from diaspora and migration studies as well as critical humanist approaches are gaining ground in discourses around the past and present of African art and culture.

Keywords: multiplicity; plurality; hybridity; mobility and migration; diaspora; globalization; neoliberalism; progress and teleology; authentic origins; restitution; Sarr-Savoy Report; material and immaterial cultural heritage; African modernities; artwork versus artifact; the ethnographic; modernity versus modernization; derivative modernity

Okwui Enwezor, “The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition,” *Research in African Literatures* 34, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 57–82.

Amongst the most important shows curated by the late Nigerian-born Okwui Enwezor are the 56th Venice Biennale (“All the World’s Futures,” 2015), Documenta 11 (2002) and “The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945–1994”

(Munich, Berlin, Chicago, New York, 2001). Enwezor was director of Haus der Kunst in Munich until 2018. This article from 2003 appeared in *Research in African Literatures*, which was established in 1970 and is published by Indiana University Press. The article considers the role of art exhibitions and the figure of the curator in what Enwezor calls a “postcolonial constellation,” defined as the contemporary geopolitical configuration of “globalization after imperialism” (58). The article is structured in two parts.

The first half engages in a critique of dominant curatorial and academic discourses that deny art its social function. Such formalism is part and parcel of a modernist conception of a universal history of art which depends on the paradoxical simultaneous exclusion and appropriation of a constructed cultural Other. The 2003 rehang of Tate Modern in London is a case in point. Despite its attempts to break with modernist linear narratives, Enwezor argues, the rehang repeats colonial operations of exclusion and obfuscation. These can be observed most clearly in the thematic section called “Nude/Action/Body,” which evinces a glaring absence of representations of the Black body by Black artists (such as the British-Nigerian Rotimi Fani-Kayode, whose photographs are in the Tate’s collection). When naked African bodies are represented in the galleries, it is through documentary films from the early 1900s. This constructs a dichotomy between (African) *nakedness* as the domain of the ethnographic, and (European) *nudity* as the domain of the aesthetic. Finally, the only sculpture from Africa—nameless and authorless—is not presented amongst other sculptures, but inside a vitrine of ethnographic paraphernalia that reduces the sculpture from artwork to artifact, while simultaneously erasing the wealth and diversity of African sculptural traditions. Such a “subjugation of historical memory,” Enwezor argues, repeats modern colonial operations of obfuscation and exclusion through a “savage act of epistemological and hermeneutic violence” (68).

The second half of the essay turns away from rethinking historical narratives of modernity

and towards the challenges of curating contemporary art. It argues that contemporary art’s postcolonial condition is characterized by impermanence, multiplicity, hybridization, discontinuity, and the aleatory. The section then discusses five historical effects of postcolonial critique on curatorial practices since the 1980s: (1) the proliferation of new exhibition forms such as large-scale shows, blockbusters, and biennials, (2) the strategic importance of cultural identity discourses for securing institutional and financial support, (3) the explosion of heterogeneous artistic practices, (4) the blurring of the line between a museum’s architectural design and its collection, (5) the unevenness of access provided by the digital revolution to networks of knowledge and creative production.

The article closes with some reflections on the role of the curator in the postcolonial constellation, informed by Foucault’s notions of a “history of thought” and discourse as an instrument of power. Rather than giving a panoramic view of artistic practice or a single judgement of taste, the role of the curator, Enwezor argues, is to operate self-reflexively and self-critically, as someone who transforms the visual into various histories of thought, producing one strand of knowledge about art in a vast network of multiple narratives.

While the essay’s first half clearly maps out the pitfalls of recent curatorial attempts to challenge dominant narratives through the example of the Tate Modern rehang, a similarly clear discussion of a concrete example would have benefitted the second section of the paper. Other than a plurality of global narratives that should supplant the totalizing singular conception of modernity, it remains unclear precisely how the role of the curator has transformed in the postcolonial constellation.

It is worth mentioning one unresolved knot in the argument of the paper. After criticizing Tate Modern for reducing the authorless African sculpture to a utilitarian artifact, Enwezor mentions that its elevation to an autonomous modern art object would be equally misguided. The latter would only destroy its symbolic power and deny its social significance.

An alternative method of exhibiting such a sculpture, neither in the frame of ethnography nor that of Western formalism, however, is never mentioned. Equally, Enwezor shifts between advocating for the inclusion of African artists in the curatorial spaces of modern art museums and biennials on the one hand, and condemning the reductionist and essentializing nature of identity-based curatorial strategies on the other.

Aside from its incisive critique of Tate Modern and the insightful distinction between nakedness and nudity in a colonial context, the essay makes a valuable contribution by providing a distinction between postcolonialism and decolonization. Enwezor notes, almost in passing, that the term decolonization “has, attached to it, something recognizable in the ideals of modernity: the notion of progress” (71). It is indeed a perplexing thought that unlike the postcolonial, which signifies a condition, the notion of decolonization might contain an implicit teleology, one of the most harshly criticized elements of modernist historiography. The ways in which this distinction might translate into different sets of curatorial strategies, however, is left to the reader’s own imagination.

John Pepper, “Africa’s Diaspora of Images,” *Third Text* 19, no. 4 (July 2005): 339–355.

Associate professor of contemporary and non-Western art history at Ramapo College, New Jersey, John Pepper’s research focuses on African photography, visual culture in South Africa during apartheid, and the historiography of African art history. He is author of *Art at the End of Apartheid* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009). The present essay appeared in *Third Text*, a journal for contemporary art in a global context, published by Routledge.

The proposition of Pepper’s article is compellingly simple: to expand the notion of “diaspora” to encompass not only persons, but also objects and images that have been dispersed beyond the African continent. Works of art from Africa, too, should be understood as “sown through”—Peffer’s

preferred translation of the Greek word *diáspora*—foreign lands (340).

The first part of this article discusses the historical and conceptual parallels between the processes of the enslavement of African people and the global dissemination of African objects, both of which entailed violent acts of uprooting, renaming, and status alteration. Indeed, the very conflation of human and thing that underpins the Atlantic slave trade troubles the strict limitation of diaspora to the category of the human. Furthermore, ever since this original dislocation, African diasporic objects—like their human makers—have become the product of a cultural encounter with the unfamiliar. Three examples from different decades are discussed to illustrate this point.

A first case in point are the *Nyau* masquerade practices in rural Malawi, which since the 1940s have included masks inspired by Christian imagery of the Virgin Mary and, since the 1970s, even masks depicting the American pop star Elvis Presley. African objects here appear as hybrid entities, as the sites of a productive encounter with cultural others.

A second example is the photographer Malick Sidibé, who documented Malian youth culture in the 1960s and 1970s. Depicted listening to European yé-yé pop music and the Beatles, these young Malians aligned themselves with international youth liberation movements. Far from part of some “pure” or “primitive” African culture, the photographs show young Malians as cosmopolitan and “genuine markers of a self-assured modernity” (353).

The third example is a photograph from a 2002 issue of the American fashion magazine *Lucky*. In the background of this photo of a New York City sidewalk scene appears an art catalogue of the Malian photographer Seydou Keita being sold on the street. Peffer uses this to show that African images continue to be “sown through” the visual world of the West.

To conceive of African objects as *in diaspora* has a significant methodological impact on the study of these objects: it is a conceptual

tool that helps to move away from seeking authentic origins and invites to consider instead the context of distribution as part of an object's layered history. Once African objects are released from the geographical and semantic fixity of a constructed origin, Peffer argues, they can be imagined as a series of encounters across space and time. This idea is the article's most compelling contribution to a debate about the status and place of African art in a global context.

That said, the precise function of the three examples in the larger arch of the argument remains somewhat unclear. One of the article's weaker points is thus the merely implied continuity between the uprooting of African objects as a form of colonial exploitation, and the culturally hybridizing effects of globalization since the second half of the twentieth century. Colonialism and globalization are certainly far from distinct phenomena, but the abrupt jump from looted object to globally circulating image would have benefited from a more differentiated articulation (as, for instance, by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten in "Fantasy in the Hold," in *The Undercommons*, 2013). Peffer's ambiguity instead causes an unnecessary and confusing conflation between a diaspora of *images* and a diaspora of *objects*. It is unsurprising that as a historian of photography, Peffer takes an interest in the circulation of images, but the notion of diaspora—and the violence it inscribes into acts of dislocation—applies more aptly to the material entities of bodies and things. It would have thus sufficed to restrict discussions to the latter.¹

It is only with considerable interpretative effort from the part of the reader that Peffer's argument can be teased out from the constellation of his three examples. They seem to show that in an era in which images and objects travel across the globe, it is primitivizing to expect African objects to be exempt from such mobility and hybridity by attempting to restore to them a singular and pure cultural origin. Indeed, Africa's diasporic objects might even be understood as participating in a form of globalization *avant la lettre*. The qualifier "African," then, denotes something much more complex than a simple geo-

graphical location: as "objects in motion" (339), African art's locale *is* the global.

It remains a matter of debate which position this essay would support in conversations around the return of African objects to their "original" communities. It is indeed possible to understand this paper as containing a covert argument *against* the necessity of restitution: one might argue that like an African diasporic people, African diasporic objects have become vital parts of their colonizer's communities, having accrued new meanings and found new audiences. Of course, it is equally possible to argue that the notion of a diaspora of objects need not rule out in principle their potential return. Whatever the conclusions one might draw, the most significant contribution of Peffer's idea is to do away with the misguided assumption that African objects can ever be restituted to a simple, pure, and authentically African "home"—as Felwine Sarr concurs, by quoting this article in a conversation with Alexandre Kazerouni at Sharjah Art Foundation in 2019 to make the same point.²

Chika Okeke-Agulu, ed., "NKA Roundtable II: Contemporary African Art History and the Scholarship," *NKA: Journal of Contemporary African Art* 26 (Spring 2010): 80–151.

Panelists: Okwui Enwezor, Elizabeth Harney, dele jegede, Sidney Kasfir, Dominique Malaquais, Steven Nelson, Ikem Stanley Okoye, John Peffer, John Picton, Peter Probst, Colin Richards, Frank Ugiomoh, Susan Vogel, Jessica Winegar

This virtual roundtable discussion between fourteen scholars, educators, and curators of contemporary African art comprises a series of blog posts written over the span of one month. The majority of participants are affiliated with academic institutions in the United States, Canada, or Europe; only two teach at institutions in Africa. Moderated by Chika Okeke-Agulu, professor of art history at Princeton University, the discussion was published in *NKA: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, which Okeke-Agulu founded

together with Okwui Enwezor and Salah M. Hassan in 1994, published by Duke University Press.

The roundtable covers a variety of themes, including the contested boundaries between traditional, modern, and contemporary African art; debates over whether the temporal qualifier eclipses the geographical one in "contemporary" "African" art; the paradoxical desire to elaborate a category of "African-ness" while wishing the category's dissolution; the disparate reception of renowned artists such as El Anatsui by local versus global audiences; tensions between the importance of geographical specificity and the danger of parochialism which inheres in the return to national narratives; practical questions about canonization, the writing of syllabi, and reservations about standardized textbooks for teaching... The list could be extended much longer, but this entry will focus on one recurring theme, namely a broad consensus on the decreasing utility of the postcolonial as a critical method for scholars of contemporary African art.

Peter Probst, professor of African art at Tufts University, opens this conversation by voicing his fatigue with what he calls "the postcolonial tool kit" (84). Having risen to such prominence that it leaves no room for alternatives, he argues, this tool kit runs a high risk of turning into a "lazy discourse" that continues to push against the same old frontlines and blame the same old bad objects (i.e., the ethnographic) (139). Colin Richards from University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg echoes Probst's concerns. Having triumphed as part of the rise of theory in the 1980s and 1990s, he argues, the token or routine application of postcolonial theory to contemporary art now frequently stifles attempts to engage closely the works of art themselves (96). Finally, Sidney Kasfir, director of the Institute of African Studies at Emory University, observes that the postcolonial has lost explanatory power since the 1990s due to its ubiquity and capaciousness as a conceptual framework (with the exception of its brief revival through Achille Mbembe's notion of the "postcolony").³ She adds that this might be due to an increasing generational remove

from the experience of colonialism or, simply, that the postcolonial has been superseded by discourses on diaspora and migration in recent scholarship on forms of globalism (142–43).

Diaspora and migration studies might be the discourses, then, that constitute some of the alternatives to the postcolonial tool kit, in answer to Peter Probst's initial remonstration. Another alternative offered in this conversation is Colin Richards's notion, via Edward Said, of "critical humanism" as an approach to contemporary African art (82). Such a methodology encourages new lines of inquiry—about human-animal relations, secular-divine divides, or human-machine relations—and moves away from rote challenges to universal notions of modernity.

This roundtable discussion is immensely helpful for any novice to the field of contemporary African art, providing her with an opportunity to eavesdrop on leading academics mapping the fault lines of the current scholarly debate. One of the most generous contributions along those lines is Dominique Malaquais's long list of texts she would place on the syllabus of an ideal Contemporary African Art course (143–144).

Despite being a useful format to unite participants dispersed across the globe, the virtual roundtable comes with its own challenges. At times it reads more like a mosaic of soliloquies that only vaguely echo each other's ideas, instead of staging a direct back-and-forth between interlocutors. This applies equally to the "debate" around the obsolescence of the postcolonial tool kit, in which the main idea is largely repeated in different iterations; none of the authors take a truly contrarian position. The conversation among experts nevertheless provides valuable insights into the academic "career" of the postcolonial as a critical method and its demise by the year 2010. The reader in 2020 is left wondering what the panelists might think of the more recent turn to the decolonial: whether it promises a renewal and sharpening of the worn-out edges of its predecessor, or whether the term merely gives a new veneer to an inevitably crumbling foun-

dition. If anything, this might be an indication that enough time has passed to restage such a roundtable, discussing new developments in the field of contemporary African art.

Jean and John Comaroff, "Theory From the South: Or, How Europe is Evolving Toward Africa," *Anthropological Forum* 22, no. 2 (2012): 113–131.

Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff are both professors of African and African American studies and of anthropology at Harvard University. This article is one of their many co-authored works on colonialism and the postcolony in southern Africa (even if, curiously, the paper frequently speaks as a singular "I"). The present essay is almost identical to the first chapter of its eponymous book project, *Theory from the South* (Paradigm Publishers, 2012). It opens with the claim that the Global South continues to be the dark underside of Western capitalist modernity: Euro-American modernity was a project developed in philosophical opposition to, yet economic dependence on, the Global South. If North and South are shared makers of this co-constitutive, albeit starkly asymmetrical project, then the history of modernity can equally be told from its reverse perspective.

The paper's aim is thus to narrate modernity with Africa as its point of departure. It attempts to do so in two steps. A first section establishes that one can speak of African modernities (necessarily plural) without positing them as derivative copies of the Euro-American model. To do so, one must distinguish "modernity" (an epistemology, ideology, or *Weltanschauung*) from "modernization" (a teleological trajectory of development towards an improved future). Here, Comaroff and Comaroff contend with Frederick Cooper's critique that "modernity" has become too large an analytic category. They argue instead that the modern must be defined precisely as that which has no outside to it, only peripheries. Modernity is thus always a "concrete abstraction," characterizable only as being both one and many: both construct and fact, both singular and plural, both particular and general (13).

The second section goes one step further than advocating for African modernities *sui generis*. It reverses the common developmentalist trope that the South is playing catch-up with a Northern modernity which it will never fully attain. Indeed, the South is not *behind*, but *ahead* of the North, for it has become the testing ground for the most unchecked forms of the neoliberal economy. The ensuing social, economic, and political realities have anticipated recent developments in the North and give it a foretaste of what is yet to come (i.e., increasing ethnic conflict and xenophobia, precarization of the middle classes, forced mobility, and an ever more fenced-off economic and political elite). "Africa, it seems, is becoming a global condition," Comaroff and Comaroff conclude (23), anticipating Achille Mbembe's comparable notion of a "becoming Black of the world" (*Critique of Black Reason*, 2013). Countries of the North should thus look towards the South to get a glimpse of what the future holds in store for them.

This argument provides a compelling challenge to the widespread fallacy of underdevelopment. Yet, there are three ways in which the essay walks into its own traps. First, by announcing a free-market South to be the inevitable future of the North, it falls prey to teleological thinking characteristic of modernization theory. After critiquing the latter's normative belief in progress-as-industrialization, Comaroff and Comaroff now make the same argument in reverse, positing an extreme neoliberal deregulation as the only possible end in a trajectory of economic "development." All roads still lead to an ever-more ferocious capitalism.

Second is the indiscriminateness of the category "South" and "North" (similar in expansiveness and ambiguity to that of "modernity"). A coda anticipates this critique by dissociating the label "South" from its previous geographical meaning (Africa, Asia, and Latin America) and making it signify instead the corrosion of a social welfare system by an unchecked economy. The paper closes with the assertion that lines are blurry and positions can only be defined in relation.⁴ This renders the coda not a convincing

clarification, but an acknowledgement of the unwieldiness of its own terminology, hollowing out the categories that lie at the heart of its argument to the point of their obliteration.

Third, and most importantly, the paper only partially delivers on the promises it makes in its opening passages: to narrate modernity from the vantage of its underside. Africa might be Comaroff and Comaroff's point of departure, but Euro-America (and its "Southernization") remains the final protagonist. As the essay progresses, it loses sight of its most salient point, the initial recognition that the epistemologies, theories, and—one might add, *art*—of the Global South might today afford "privileged insight into the workings of the world at large" (1). It is not for a dystopian vision of an economic hyper-capitalist future that it is worthwhile turning to Africa (even if it is true that this is what one might currently find), but to learn about potential alternatives to this path of modernization. Different modernities, Comaroff and Comaroff argue after all, require different ways of knowing, different creative practices, different modes of being-in-the-world. One is left to hope that this is what their larger book project turns towards, for that would truly be theory *from*, *about*, and *for* the South.

Zoë S. Strother, "Eurocentrism Still Sets the Terms of Restitution of African Art," *The Art Newspaper*, January 8, 2019.

Professor of African art at Columbia University, Zoë Strother specializes in Central and West African art history and has conducted research in Nigeria, Ethiopia, Mali, Senegal, and the DRC. Her research interests include masquerading, the history of iconoclasm in Africa, and debates on the restitution of African objects. On October 18, 2019, she participated in a symposium on the restitution debate at Columbia University together with Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy, amongst other specialists on this topic.

In this article, Strother debunks a statistic that circulated widely in media responses to the Sarr-Savoy Report: the claim by Beninese curator Alain Godonou that

"90–95% of African heritage is to be found outside the continent in the major world museums" (para. 2). Not only is this statistic factually incorrect, she argues (flagship cultural institutions in Lagos, for instance, have an estimated collection of 50,000 works; that of the Musée du Quai Branly comprises 70,000), but it also upholds a reductive understanding of what constitutes African heritage—focusing on objects to the exclusion of oral or embodied cultural practices such as song, dance, the learning of proverbs, and masquerade. Indeed, African cultural heritage is frequently limited to "classical" objects collected between 1885–1930 (sculptures, masks, religious icons) and admired by European modernists. Such a narrow understanding of what counts as African heritage thus inadvertently reproduces a colonial paradigm that defines African cultural achievement according to European standards.

Godonou's Eurocentric statistic, moreover, is strategically important to French President Emmanuel Macron in allowing him to limit restitution debates to the disproportionately "culturally impoverished" African continent (and to exclude Egypt, Greece, or China). Furthermore, the statistic explains why many African museums, modelling their collections after European institutions, have struggled to address the interests of local audiences.

Instead of moral outrage at a bogus statistic, Strother argues, public discourse should analyze the political calculations behind Macron's gesture: these might be anything from attempts to distract from France's ever more strict immigration policies, to efforts of securing geopolitical influence in a competition with China over oil contracts in Senegal. She reminds us that the Sarr-Savoy Report is also a tool of soft power, implemented to augment France's crumbling geopolitical reputation in order to pursue an economic agenda.

Strother's cautions against political naïveté on the one hand and cultural Eurocentrism on the other, are points well taken. She refrains, unfortunately, from sharing her opinion on the effectiveness of the report itself as an instruction manual for the return

of diasporic African objects to the continent. Nor does she provide any comments on how, or whether, Africa's immaterial cultural heritage should be protected or preserved. These are, to be fair, questions for debates that far exceed the format and scope of the present (short) article. Its brief comments are nevertheless a valuable contribution to the post-Sarr-Savoy restitution debate, as they insist that the return of African objects is not simply a matter of European benevolence. Instead, it demands that European initiators fundamentally rethink categories such as "heritage," "culture," or "artwork," while remaining attentive to the politics involved in cultural diplomacy.

1. The article came out of a conference at the Arts Council of the African Studies Association called "Roots and Routes" in 2004 on the relationship between the African continent and its global diaspora. The aim seems to have been to make a contribution to diaspora discourses and the history of looted objects from the viewpoint of a photo historian, by formulating conceptual parallels between circulating images, objects, and people. It would have been beneficial for Peffer to address his own academic position and methodological approach, as well as discuss the potential limitations of his analogies.

2. "The Museum as a Device of Recolonization? A conversation between Felwine Sarr and Alexandre Kazerouni," in *Look for Me All around You: Sharjah Biennial 14 - Leaving the Echo Chamber*, ed. Claire Tancons (Munich: Prestel, forthcoming).

3. See Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

4. For a similar, relational rather than strictly geographic use of the terms Global South and Global North—and one that causes similar ambiguities—see the entry on Corbet (2019).

North America María Beatriz H. Carrión

This annotated bibliography focuses on the application of decolonial and postcolonial thought both to museums run by Native American communities and US collections in possession of large holdings of Indigenous artifacts. One of the aspects this bibliography brings forth is how the creation of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in 2004 impacted discussions about museums' relation to Indigenous peoples.

The three texts that analyze the NMAI's inaugural exhibitions praise the institution's commitment to empowering Native Americans by presenting them as creative, resourceful, and adaptable individuals who not only survived but overcame settler colonialism. To this end, the Smithsonian has embraced two concepts: Native voice and survivance. The museum conveyed its Native voice by citing elders when interpreting material culture and also by inviting communities to participate in exhibition-making. This strategy has been widely accepted and replicated by other museums, even as its detractors point out that a Native voice implies a cultural homogeneity that contradicts the inherent diversity of Indigenous communities.

The NMAI's mobilization of survivance has proved more polemical. Defining Indigenous agency as presence and resistance

rather than as power or control, this term has inadvertently allowed the NMAI and smaller cultural spaces to disregard settler colonialism. This curatorial approach, which Indigenous communities embrace, has been criticized by academics, who condemn museums' use of survivance as a strategy to deflect from conversations about colonial and racist matters.

The authors considered below claim that the decolonization of museums requires a recasting of Native North Americans as agential subjects, living examples of survivance; a critical and honest retelling of the colonial history of the United States; and continuous cooperation with the country's diverse Indigenous populations.

Keywords: Indigenous agency; Native voice; survivance versus survival; victimhood versus resistance; community curating; homogeneity versus multiplicity; decolonization as democratization; visual and non-visual cultural heritage; Indigenous epistemologies; Indigenous curatorship; self-representation; truth-telling and healing; authenticity

Sonya Atalay, “No Sense of the Struggle: Creating a Context for Survivance at the NMAI,” *American Indian Quarterly* 30, no. 3/4 (2006): 597–618.

Anthropologist Sonya Atalay's article, written for a special issue of *American Indian Quarterly* on “Decolonizing Archaeology,” offers a thought-provoking postcolonial critique of the inaugural exhibits of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), which opened to the public in 2004. Narrated in first person, from the perspective of an Ojibwe visitor and scholar, the review is informed by Native American and Indigenous studies, both of which call for decolonization and political autonomy. Atalay takes up the idea of “survivance” put forward by Anishinaabe cultural theorist Gerald Vizenor—a critical concept that emphasizes the ongoing presence and continuation of Native North American culture, rather than an end (mere survival). She contends that the NMAI failed to create a context for survivance in its galleries and suggests ways in which the institution might remediate this shortcoming. The essay offers a lesson on how to incorporate ideas from Native American and Indigenous studies into curatorial projects that feature Amerindian subjects, objects, or subject matter.

Although the NMAI frequently references the concept of survivance in its wall texts, Atalay criticizes the museum's emphasis on Native agency because it comes at the expense of examining the genocidal history of settler colonialism. The curators whitewash this violence, showing how Indigenous populations adapted to the Euro-American presence. Her central example concerns two displays, one of guns, the other of bibles, both of which are shown in terms of benign adaptation rather than genocidal conflict (603). For the author, demonstrating and highlighting the struggles endured by Indigenous people is fundamental to conveying the extraordinary achievement of survival amidst a colonial process. Her point is that survivance is more than just agency—it is “all the painful, triumphant, inspiring, resistant, horrific truths encompassed in it” (614).

Atalay does not discuss the practical implications of more explicitly discussing

settler colonialism at a public institution that is the official voice of the United States and receives visitors from throughout the country and the world, preferring to focus on general orientations. (She does, however, glance approvingly at how the Australian Museum in Sydney negotiates the difficult history of Christianity and Indigenous spirituality [607].) Considering the backlash triggered by the more experimental and political exhibitions that have taken place at the Smithsonian in the past, such as “The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820–1920,” it would have been helpful for the author to suggest how curators might navigate the ideological minefield of negotiating the conflicting expectations of the museum's stakeholders: Indigenous peoples, local and international visitors, and the US government.

Patricia Pierce Erikson, “Decolonizing the ‘Nation's Attic’: The National Museum of the American Indian and the Politics of Knowledge-Making in a National Space,” in *The National Museum of the American Indian*, ed. Amy Lonetree and Amanda J. Cobb-Greetham (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 43–83.

Patricia Pierce Erikson, a cultural anthropologist, addresses the complicated position occupied by the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) as a branch of the Smithsonian Institution. Though the Smithsonian is a national cultural powerhouse, it is also vulnerable to politically-driven attacks from both conservative and liberal groups that threaten its very existence. As a federally-funded museum, the Smithsonian has always trodden a careful path, as its displays can be subject to meddling from Congress, resulting in highly visible controversies (e.g., the Enola Gay exhibit at the National Air and Space Museum in 1995). Yet for the author, it is this political complexity that makes the Smithsonian—and the NMAI in particular—an ideal platform to challenge “dominant ideologies” that have “contributed to the colonization of Native peoples” (46). The NMAI can thus be a test case for thinking through the influence

of Native American epistemologies on a national museum.

The first section of Erikson's article focuses on past displays of anthropological artifacts in the Smithsonian and offers a critical account of the museum's Anthropology Department, which until 1989 was responsible for the Native American collection and housed within the Natural History Museum. She shows how the Smithsonian and US museums in general have perpetuated the idea of “Indianness,” a racial construct whose stereotypical depictions of Native North Americans has long permeated national and international imaginaries. She also includes a comprehensive analysis of the institutional, scientific, and legal debates during the 1980s that made the repatriation of human remains possible.

Erikson suggests that it is through community collaboration that the museum can decolonize its historical relationship with Indigenous peoples. Incorporating Native perspectives into exhibitions can position Indigenous peoples as producers of culture rather than as mere subjects of representation. Erikson foregrounds the role that community museums and cultural centers have played in recent years, and which have actively influenced the curatorial approach of mainstream institutions like the Smithsonian. She praises the strategic inclusion of oral history and multigenerational knowledge in the NMAI, while remaining suspicious of the museum's potential to generate an official narrative about Native peoples without inadvertently silencing community voices.

Erikson positions the Native American museum movement within a broader “global trend of ‘democratizing’ or decolonizing museums,” implying that the two terms are synonymous (47). This view of decolonization implies that cultural institutions must decentralize knowledge production and strive for greater transparency. Such an approach can guarantee Indigenous peoples' right to self-presentation and representation on a national and hyper-visible platform like the Smithsonian. However, in collapsing democratization and decolonization, Erikson

neglects to problematize how the very structure of universal museums perpetuates colonial practices and Euro-American epistemologies. The ambiguous understanding of the decolonial comes through in her allusion to the works of James Clifford and Ruth Phillips, to which she makes reference without articulating a more specific theory of decolonization.

The essay is ultimately not conceived for art historians, but it can be useful in its analysis of anthropology's role in constructing representation. Erikson positions this discipline as central to discussions about the politics of representation, yet many archaeological and anthropological artifacts held at the Smithsonian are often treated, exhibited, and/or studied as art objects. It could have thus been productive for Erikson to articulate her argument within an art historical framework in order to problematize at least three aspects: first, how museums continue to foreground representation as a universal concept even in contexts where embodiment is more relevant to understanding Indigenous artistic practices; second, how Native American material culture has been reduced to visual culture, as objects that are meant to be activated through contact are often treated like images; and third, how the label of art is often applied to Native American artifacts exclusively following Western aesthetic concerns.

Jennifer Shannon, “The Construction of Native Voice at the National Museum of the American Indian,” in *Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives*, ed. Susan Sleeper-Smith (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 218–248.

Part of an edited volume on museums' relationship with Indigenous peoples across the world, Jennifer Shannon's essay examines how the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington, DC created, incorporated, and negotiated the institutional inclusion of a Native voice when it opened in 2004. Shannon, a curator and professor of anthropology at the University

of Colorado, analyzes the NMAI's multifaceted understanding of an "authentic Native voice," which she treats as an academic and institutional construct that facilitated the museum's institutional position and relationship with Indigenous communities (218). She argues that the NMAI derives its institutional identity and legitimacy as a Native museum from its "collaborative process and authored representations" of Indigenous communities (218). While not explicitly decolonial or postcolonial in her approach, Shannon offers an impartial and measured insight into how the NMAI, as a major cultural institution, incorporated Native perspectives in its inaugural exhibitions.

As an advocate of "collaborative anthropology," Shannon unsurprisingly identifies community curating as the NMAI's most important strategy for implementing a Native perspective. Community curating involves a two-step dialogue: bringing representatives of Indigenous communities to the museum and sending curators to these communities' hometowns. The author suggests that community curating demotes the centrality of objects in museum displays. In seeking to foreground a Native voice, curators have often used their conversations with community members as the point of departure for the exhibition concept, rather than the objects—which in turn come to assume a more illustrational function. Curatorial projects based on collaboration with Native communities can end up favoring them to the extent that a museum's collection becomes less significant than those voices. While Shannon does not qualify this development as positive or negative, she does suggest that this approach might trigger backlash from institutions and curators. In a highly visible and publicly funded institution like the NMAI, marginalizing objects demonstrates that permanent collections are not the core of universal museums. Although Shannon does not directly address it, the implications can be to destabilize museums' central mission to preserve the cultural heritage of humankind. And, though this realization would support decolonial efforts in restitution and repatriation, it would also threaten the very existence of public museums.

The author thus makes the powerful argument that community curating, by virtue of privileging Indigenous perspectives, generates subject-to-subject relations instead of the traditional object-to-subject dynamic of Western museums. This is perhaps the strongest idea articulated in the article, as it suggests that the relationship between museums, viewers, and communities can be transformed without abolishing the institution's structure. But community curating also comes with its own challenges: Shannon addresses the difficulty of deciding which Native voice should be brought to a museum's exhibitions, and criticizes the way in which the NMAI's Native voice became homogenizing and authoritative, lacking a sense of multiplicity and diversity. The questions that the article leaves unanswered are whether these subject-to-subject exhibitions suffice to incorporate a plurality of Native voices into the museum, and whether objects can become a more active component (rather than a third actor) in this reframed exhibition model.

Gerald Vizenor, *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 85–103.

Anishinaabe thinker and academic Gerald Vizenor is widely cited by scholars across all the subfields of Native American and Indigenous studies. A significant number of decolonial essays on Indigenous museum practice reference or gravitate toward his concept of "survivance," which he first put forward in *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (1999). In this chapter, Vizenor describes survivance as a practice that "creates a sense of native presence and actuality over absence, nihilism, and victimry" (85). Survivance, as opposed to mere survival, highlights the agency of Indigenous peoples in enduring settler colonialism and generating spaces to express and reassert their subjectivity, creativity, and presence. Vizenor urges scholars to develop strategies to identify the *aesthetics* of survivance in Native American narratives, rather than simply invoking the term abstractly: "Survivance is a practice, not an ideology, dissimulation, or a theory" (89).

Vizenor searches for evidence of survivance in works of literature, where its critical aesthetic can be conveyed through "space, time, consciousness, and irony" (98). His text illustrates its own methodological proposal as Vizenor writes in a vivid style that combines academic argumentation with storytelling and poetics. His central argument concerns the device of a "fourth person," the figurative presence of "a sui generis native discourse" in the form of a visual reminiscence, oral narrative, or "storied presence" (86–87). After finding numerous examples of survivance in Native literature, Vizenor critiques the use of the term in contemporary scholarship, arguing that it pays insufficient attention to aesthetics.

Vizenor's text is useful for art historians and curators seeking to locate survivance in works of art and archives produced by both non-Indigenous and Indigenous subjects. He encourages readers to more actively engage with non-conventional, non-Euro-American modes of knowledge production. (He gives a powerful example of how an elderly Native American man used oral tradition in court to argue against federal determination of a wild rice harvest.) Considering the centrality of survivance in specialized discussions about museums and Native peoples, Vizenor's book is mandatory reading for scholars and curators working in institutional contexts. This chapter in particular offers a methodological approach to identifying and paying attention to Indigenous aesthetics as an expression of agency, and an effective introduction to the central values of Native American and Indigenous studies as a whole.

Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), (19–42).

Amy Lonetree's *Decolonizing Museums* centers on three cases studies: the Mille Lacs Indian Museum in Minnesota, the Zhiibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways in Michigan, and predictably, the NMAI. The introduction states that Native American

peoples and museums now have a relationship of "shared authority" as a result of Indigenous activism during the 1980s and 1990s (19). During this period, Native communities strove to transform museums into "community-relevant sites" and to rewrite representations of Indigenous memory and history (19). Lonetree's analysis then focuses on the ideological shifts undertaken by museums holding large collections of Native American artifacts during the last two and a half decades. The author interrogates the general impact, pedagogical success, and decolonial qualities of the three institutions she studies.

Lonetree's most compelling claim is to position the decolonization of museums as a process of truth-telling and healing. Because cultural institutions have long ignored Indigenous trauma, concealed the atrocities of settler colonialism, and silenced the voices of tribal nations, truth-telling is fundamental to decolonize the museum and facilitate healing processes. This emphasis on historical transparency is a concern that she shares with Patricia Erikson, as democratizing the museum should involve both the incorporation of Native perspectives and the denunciation of settler colonialism. Without discussing the colonial context, Lonetree argues, both community centers and mainstream museums will only convey an inaccurate message—namely, that the contemporary struggles of Native North Americans are a result of supposedly "poor decision making" rather than of external and systematic political forces. She approaches the legacy of colonialism and racism against Indigenous peoples as a holocaust and thus a form of historical trauma that has remained unaddressed by museums. Rebutting alternative stances that support a focus on Indigenous agency, she claims that "it is time for us as communities to acknowledge the painful aspects of our history along with our stories of survivance, so that we can move toward healing, well-being, and true self-determination" (23). Lonetree underscores the therapeutic and liberating effects of truth-telling among communities with unresolved grief. Unlike Sonya Atalay, who advocates for a discussion of colonialism in

order to encourage non-Indigenous visitors to confront settler colonialism, Lonetree focuses on how Native American museums can have a cathartic impact on the lived experience of the people they represent.

The rest of the introduction features a panoramic examination of the history of North American collections of Indigenous artifacts and human remains, and a discussion of how community collaboration has become a “best practice” among curators of mainstream museums (32). Thanks to tribal museums and collaborative efforts, communities now have greater access to self-representation. Lonetree concludes by asserting that the representation of Native peoples in museum contexts is a fluid, contested, and ever-changing reality. But throughout her book (and studies of Native American art in general) there seems to be a disconnect between the scholarship, which proposes a balanced display of colonial history and Indigenous survivance, and community institutions, which appear exclusively concerned with agency. This disconnect demonstrates that Native American scholars and communities have conflicting goals when it comes to the decolonization of museums. For the former, it consists of driving institutions to acknowledge the violence of settler colonialism in order to value survivance; for the latter, decolonization is a matter of overcoming victimhood by de-emphasizing the colonial context and affirming Indigenous agency.

1. For Shannon’s definition of collaborative anthropology, see “Jen Shannon,” University of Colorado, accessed July 21, 2020, <https://jenshannonanthro.weebly.com/>.

Europe Isabel Elson

The following texts center on European museums and how they are working to challenge their own colonial legacies and enact decolonial practices from positions inside the institution. Across these five texts, the writers interpret the “decolonial” in various ways. Almost all of the writers insist on institutional self-reflection as the first step in decolonizing the museum. The British Museum curators address this by interrogating how objects came to be in the collection. They follow the example of Sara Wajid and Rachael Minott who use the objects in British institutional collections not only to expose their colonial provenance, but to subvert their accompanying narratives that have glorified the British Empire. Along with Robin Boast’s essay, these three texts insist that the museum space is inherently colonial, and as such, that a decolonial exhibition must be non-neutral and explicitly anti-colonial. Of the essays featured, only Boast as well as Wajid and Minott advocate a structural reshaping of the museum as part of the decolonizing process. Wajid and Minott, for example, challenge not only the narratives promoted by the museum, but seek also to redress the scarcity of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) employees within these institutions that continue to serve as cultural gatekeepers.

The essays published by L’Internationale, a confederation of seven European

museums, have a less defined notion of the decolonial, variously understood as “democratic” (in their anthology *Decolonising Archives*) or as “global” (in Nav Haq’s essay). While the authors persuasively argue for wider representation of culturally and racially diverse artists, and greater access to the formation, preservation, and use of institutional archives, the anthologies read more as a forum in which the writers attempt to explore the decolonial, without having formulated a firm enough understanding of its institutional implications to propose a decolonial strategy.

Keywords: non-neutrality; institutional self-reflection; institutional transparency; the anti-colonial; decolonization as democratization; empire and imperialism; identity politics; visibility; inclusionism; contact zone museology; self-othering; neocolonialism; tokenism; archival resistance; collective curating; insider and outsider activism

Robin Boast, “Neocolonial Collaboration: Museum as Contact Zone Revisited,” *Museum Anthropology* 34, no. 1 (2011): 56–70.

Currently a professor at the University of Amsterdam, Robin Boast was—at the time of this article’s publication—cura-

tor for World Archeology at the Museum of Archeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge. Boast has written several articles rethinking James Clifford's concept of the "museum as contact zone," and is particularly interested in how new media technologies and digital resources can be used within the fields of archeology and anthropology and in reimagining the role of museums.¹

In the present essay, Boast responds to various museums' embraces of James Clifford's 1997 theory of the museum as contact zone as a way to promote their postcolonial credentials. He begins with a review of the concept of the contact zone, first coined by Mary Louise Pratt in her 1991 essay that defined the term in reference to "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (57).² Through inclusionist programs that privilege collaboration with the groups whose patrimony they hold in their collections, museums have attempted to distance themselves from their colonial roots through a dialogic new museology. While encouraging contact zone practices that prioritize discussion and education, Boast also warns that they do little to adjust the power imbalance inherent to the structure of the museum. His article thus questions the effectiveness of the museum as contact zone by exposing it as non-neutral, nonreciprocal, and controlling over the cultures it seeks to present. Through their embrace of contact zone museology, Broad claims that institutions have not taken on a postcolonial role, but rather a neocolonial one.

Broad illustrates his argument compellingly with the examples of a museological effort to orchestrate a contact zone at the Papuan Sculpture Garden at Stanford University. While acknowledging the sincerity of this (and other) attempts, Broad shows how these programs and exhibitions ultimately force the colonial Other to represent him or herself through modes familiar and acceptable to the hegemonic group. The unavoidable

problem with the museum, Broad concludes, is that it has yet to transcend the "three leftover colonial competences" that define its societal role: "collecting, exhibiting, and educating" (65). Instead of abandoning these colonial practices, Broad argues, museums have simply "adapted themselves to a neocolonial world," perpetuating their position of dominance in relation to the colonial Other (65). Broad notes the response of many Indigenous communities was to create their own museums and cultural centers, decentralizing the contact zone that traditional museums have monopolized for so long. As a curator, however, Broad is not entirely dismissive of the museum, and still believes that it can serve a societally beneficial role if it addresses its neocolonial infrastructure head-on. By releasing its stranglehold on resources and objects, the museum could be reimagined as "an institution that supported the enrichment, rather than the authorization, of collections" (67).

Nav Haq, "The Invisible and the Visible: Identity Politics and the Economy of Reproduction in Art," in *Decolonising Museums*, ed. L'Internationale Online (L'Internationale Books, 2015), 9–22.

Nav Haq is a British curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp (M HKA) whose exhibitions often think critically about the formation of both personal and national identities. Haq uses this essay to revisit questions of identity, which he sees as central to redressing the power imbalance on which the art world sustains itself. Haq begins by tracing the roots of identity politics back to the late 1970s, when it was born primarily out of a "desire for visibility" (10). While permitting the entry of marginalized artists into the White hegemonic art world, Haq contends that since its emergence, the discourse around identity politics may have caused more problems than it sought to solve. He cogently argues that "the act of making visible, though considered necessary for a certain period, could now be thought of as a second tier of marginalisation. It could be seen as a ghettoisation harboured within the fold of art world legitimisation." (13) It quickly became apparent that marginalized

artists would only be offered entry into the coveted art world on the condition that they perform their prescribed role of the racial or cultural Other.

Haq suggests that the same mechanisms by which racialized artists were ushered into the art world in the 1970s and 1980s have since been mobilized by the Western art world to legitimize artists coming from globally marginalized contexts. This is particularly apparent in the popularity of the international art biennial, where visibility and identification are contingent upon alterity. Haq succinctly characterizes this Western consumption of the Other as "a kind of colonial export" (14). Artists themselves are described as complicit in the way that the art world processes identity. Haq examples of those who self-reflexively make themselves visible through "post-colonialist self-othering" are the artist Danh Võ and the collective Slavs and Tatars (18). But increasingly, Haq argues, artists are resisting this structure, refusing to center their work around an easily digested singular identity demanded by the art world. Instead, artists are opting for a more pluralistic, intersectional approach to identity that foregrounds the self-determination of their own practice.

This type of work, Haq suggests, operates within a new cognitive space that he hopes can replace—or at least serve as a viable alternative to—the hegemonic art world. However, his emphasis throughout the essay is on the artist, rather than the cultural institution or curator with whom the artist must work. While lamenting the power imbalances of the art world, Haq credits artists for taking the first steps in resisting the conditions of these imbalances, but in doing so seems to place the burden of change on their shoulders. The "atmosphere" of the art world, he concludes, "will dissipate once those from backgrounds previously considered marginalised gain broader comprehension of the art world and its meme, understand it as a form of symbolic violence, and avoid being coaxed into the trap of visibility" (21). By targeting the nebulous and all-encompassing "art world," Haq fails to hold accountable the curators, critics, museum employees, and gallerists

who perpetuate this essentializing system, and never addresses how he personally is seeking to overturn this structure in his role as a curator of museum exhibitions and multiple international biennials.

While the risk of tokenizing artists under the guise of identity politics continues to be an issue, Haq does little to advance this conversation, offering no structural solutions beyond a list of artists whose work he believes resists this visibility narrative. Haq's focus is woefully limited to Euro-America, centering European-educated artists and citing only Western scholars. While the packaging of identity politics must certainly be considered within conversations around decolonization, Haq fails to establish any connection between his concerns and decolonial theory or museum practices, leaving the reader in the dark about how this essay fits into an anthology on decolonizing the museum.

Rado Ištok and L'Internationale Online, ed., *Decolonising Archives* (L'Internationale Online, 2016), 1–101.

This is the second online anthology by L'Internationale, a confederation of seven European museums, that addresses the colonial legacies of cultural institutions, following on the heels of *Decolonising Museums* (2015). It positions the practice of archiving as a colonial legacy, and presents various proposals for how museums and other holders of cultural heritage might rethink the creation, organization, and distribution of their archives.

In the introduction, the (unnamed) editor, presumably Rado Ištok, attempts to organize the contributions into four loosely thematic groups. The first group of writers focuses on the need and potential for archival digitization to destabilize the informational hierarchies that support dominant narratives. Media theorist Wolfgang Ernst, for instance, exposes the intricate relationship between national archives and master narratives of nation states, and proposes the digital archive as a non-narrative alternative to a historiography that privileges the colonial

perspective. By presenting information as a series of data strings, rather than a linear development, Ernst argues that archival memory can be liberated from its “reductive subjection to the discourse of history,” thus opening the archival narrative to alternate histories (12). Jeffrey Schnapp, founder of metaLAB at Harvard, similarly advocates a non-narrative archival structure by approaching cataloging not as the creation of distinct entries, but rather as the formation of an expansive network between objects. Schnapp insists that this is not merely a digitization project, but concerns the application of new models of data collection and sharing. By focusing more on the connections between objects, rather than the history of individual objects themselves, Schnapp envisages an archive that activates interconnected optical, tactile, and auditory cultural memories. The third contributor to meditate on data collection is Jordan-born artist Lawrence Abu Hamdan, who presents a criminal case study—the police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014—to highlight the role of sound in forensic analysis and critique the growth of ShotSpotter™ microphones, positioned by the police in public spaces as a security device.

The second and third group of writers consider the social and political particularities of archive formation, preservation, and accessibility across several geographic locations. Of particular note is art historian Ana Longoni’s essay which foregrounds the work of Red Conceptualismos del Sur (RedC-Sur) and is co-authored with the group. This research platform has recognized the politically catalyzing potential of the archive, especially those archives of artists and groups who opposed the Latin American military dictatorships and have determined clear strategies to increase public access and activate this material.

The contribution by Zoe Todd and Crystal Fraser in the second section, and Rona Sela in the third, form an interesting dialogue in that the writers share concerns about the inherent coloniality of the national archive, but offer two very different solutions. Todd and Fraser, writing about the inaccessibility

of Indigenous cultural archives held by Canadian settler institutions, are dismissive of the very idea of a decolonial archive. Instead, they propose “applying a *historically-informed critical decolonial sensibility*” to any engagement with such archives (33–34). However, they do little to demonstrate what this would practically involve, beyond simply recognizing the repressive intentions of settler archives on Indigenous communities. Sela, by contrast, reckons with the historical use of archives in Israel to subjugate and silence Palestinians, and in turn considers the creative and political potential of using these biased archives against themselves. With several examples of artists who mine Israeli national archives in their work, she demonstrates the efficacy of subverting material condoned by the state to enact an “archival resistance” (57).

The last section of the publication features two essays written following the “Archives of the Commons” seminar organized by Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Fundación de los Comunes, and Red Conceptualismos del Sur. The first, a collective text by representatives of those three institutions—Mela Dávila, Carlos Prieto del Campo, Marisa Pérez Colina, and Mabel Tapia—summarizes the objectives of the seminar. The second contribution by Prieto del Campo elaborates on Museo Reina Sofía’s commitment to a “new ecology of memory” and a “common construction of history” (95). In these two essays, the writers reflect on how institutions can create more democratic archives that are compiled and managed by the general public. They propose that the institution’s role is to protect the collective memory that such archives hold and maintain their public accessibility.

The authors here, as in the rest of the publication, seem to equate “democratize” with “decolonize,” assuming that an archive of the commons is by its open, accessible nature inherently decolonial. There are next to no mentions of race or colonialism. The publication’s conclusive takeaway relies on technology to achieve the “openness, as well as hybrid, mutable taxonomies, collective production, and universal accessibil-

ity” that characterizes this concept of an archive of the commons (85). The future of the decolonial archive, according to this publication, depends almost exclusively on technology to achieve the nonhierarchical, nonlinear, interconnected, openly accessible, digitized, activated, and multitemporal concept that the various writers envision. What the anthology succeeds in highlighting is the potential of such an archive to have political use and wider application outside the cultural field, whether by providing evidence of police violence perpetrated against people of color (Abu Hamdan) or creating networks and resources to support public resistance against authoritarianism (Longoni). The implication is that in its wider societal impact, the archive can function as a tool that exposes colonial infrastructures and provide a platform for resistance against such structures.

John Giblin, Imma Ramos, and Nikki Grout, “Dismantling the Master’s House,” *Third Text* 33, no. 4–5 (2019): 471–486.

This essay is the introduction to a special issue of *Third Text*, “Exhibiting the Experience of Empire: Decolonising Objects, Images, Materials and Words,” guest-edited by three current or former curators and researchers from the British Museum in London. At the time of writing, John Giblin was head of the Africa section in the Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas; he writes frequently on postcolonial approaches to heritage, including reappropriation, collecting, and exhibition strategies. Imma Ramos is the curator of the South Asian collection at the British Museum, and Nikki Grout is a doctoral fellow researching early examples of decolonial practices at the British Museum in the 1950s and 1960s. Emerging out of two symposia organized by the museum in 2018, the issue’s editors pose a two-part question: How are museums and other public spaces using objects, images, materials, and words to represent empire today? And how might they work to privilege nondominant experiences of empire, decentralize the narrative away from Europe, and recover cultural erasure?

Giblin, Ramos, and Grout consider this question through the lens of two recent installations at the British Museum, curated by Giblin and Ramos respectively. The first, “South Africa: The Art of a Nation” (2016–2017), contextualized the British Museum’s South African holdings in terms of the British colonial period, when these objects entered the collection. Pairing historical and archaeological artifacts with works by contemporary South African artists, the exhibition used artist quotes to reflect on the missing voices of the anonymous makers of the historical objects, and to expose the way in which the British Museum came to own these works as a beneficiary and sponsor of colonial exploitation. Giblin is upfront about the exhibition’s problematic identity politics. As three non-South African curators addressing a largely White British public with visual evidence of Britain’s complicity in Apartheid politics, Giblin comes to the conclusion that curatorial and audience discomfort was not only inevitable but obligatory. He also makes a compelling defense for delimiting the exhibition to a modern nation state, even though this is anachronistic in terms of the work presented, which preceded the formation of South Africa. Traditionally, blockbuster exhibitions have a regional focus, which he argues denies the lived experience of modern borders and separates the past from the geopolitical present. The exhibition also followed established museum practice in South Africa in terms of labelling, referring to all makers as artists, even when their names are unknown.

Ramos’s reinstallation of the South Asian Gallery takes on a similar strategy, addressing the colonial origins of the collection, and attempting to reintroduce South Asian voices and narratives through the work of contemporary artists. Like Giblin’s exhibition, Ramos’s show is directly critical of the British Empire, and highly self-reflexive. Exhibiting 300 years of South Asian art, the final gallery included voices from workshops with relevant communities, with the goal of “re-scripting” the museum and improving teaching on colonial history (481).

While both Giblin’s and Ramos’s installations successfully foreground a sought-after insti-

tutional transparency, this strategy ultimately centers the exhibition around the British Empire, anachronistically presenting historical works from South Africa or South Asia in terms of imperial presence. Presenting the objects in this way risks maintaining European paradigms rather than toppling them in favor of alternative narratives and temporalities. Arguments against such exhibitions of empire are also included in this issue, most notably by Julia T S Binter and Divia Patel. The editors summarize their positions in the introduction, but unfortunately not in a way that enables reflection upon their own methodologies.

Sara Wajid and Rachael Minott, "Detoxing and Decolonising Museums," in *Museum Activism*, ed. Robert Janes and Richard Sandell (New York: Routledge, 2019), 25–35.

Sara Wajid and Rachael Minott write as members of Museum Detox, a collective of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) museum workers in the United Kingdom. Described as both a professional network and a space of solidarity and mutual support, Museum Detox is the foundation upon which Wajid and Minott co-curated "The Past is Now: Birmingham and the British Empire" at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG) in 2017–2018. Wajid spent a year as head of interpretation at BMAG as a result of participating in a leadership program called Change Makers (initiated by Arts Council England), an initiative that sought to tackle the underrepresentation of people of color and disabled people in cultural leadership positions. While in this position, Wajid brought in Minott, a fellow member of Museum Detox and currently the inclusion and change manager at the National Archives of the UK, as the exhibition's curatorial lead. The chapter describes their experience organizing "The Past is Now," their methodology, process, and the challenges posed by this experiment in decolonial curating.

Wajid and Minott stress their concerted efforts to democratize the curation of the exhibition, developing BMAG's history of co-curating. Minott gathered a group of six

BAME women art workers to collaborate with museum staff, in order to challenge the museological convention of the insider (White curator) calling upon the expertise of the outsider (Black consultant). This decision was repeated at each stage of the exhibition process: democratizing the decision-making process, forcing the institution to relinquish control over the curatorial voice and narratives included, and acknowledging the non-neutrality of museums and their role in cultural misrepresentation.

The writers outline the process of building the exhibition, starting with the museum's curatorial staff who were instructed to explore their collection for objects that spoke to British imperialism, that were collected during a colonial expedition, or that glorified imperial exploits. They presented their research to the external co-curators who then collectively developed focused narratives that rewrote the history of Birmingham in terms of the city's complicity within Britain's imperial strategy. The objects selected for the exhibition were chosen to fit one of the curatorial narratives, all of which supported a critical portrayal of the British Empire, inverting the convention whereby objects themselves seem to tell the story. This method sought to recognize the museum as a non-neutral space, and thus one that demands a non-neutral counternarrative.

Essential to the project of decolonizing the museum, Wajid and Minott contend, is the participation of both "insider" and "outsider" activists. They define themselves and the co-curators as insider activists, employed and deemed appropriate by the museum in service of their strategic agenda. Insider activists have a greater understanding and awareness of institutional limitations and objectives and are therefore in the best position to implement change, albeit slowly and carefully. Outsider activists, consisting in this example of other Museum Detox members and other independent activist groups, unaffiliated with the museum yet equally invested in redressing the underrepresentation of BAME stories and peoples, hold a moral authority. Outsider activism can be uncensored and more radical compared to insider activism, and thus integral in making urgent

the decolonial project. Insider activists then translate and mediate the demands from the outsiders to be able to effectively apply them within the limitations of the museum. Wajid and Minott map out an insider-outsider collaboration model in which both groups work together to curate the exhibition, allowing for a far bolder approach than a museum would typically venture, one that embraces a much wider range of perspectives. With this model, Wajid and Minott effectively imagine into existence a decolonized exhibition, if not the potential for a decolonized museum.

1. See James Clifford, "Museums as Contact Zones," in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, ed. James Clifford (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 188–219.

2. Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession* (1991): 34.

Latin America

Monica Espinel

Latin America is a key locus of enunciation for decolonial thinking, though not the only one. From the 1990s onwards, numerous scholars have contested modernity and its Eurocentric forms of knowledge in an attempt to dismantle colonial epistemology. The following entries offer an introduction to decolonial thinking emanating from Latin America. They review a set of texts that address decolonial theory or activism from a range of vantage points: sociological, art historical, anthropological, theoretical, and psychoanalytical. These authors provide critical reflections on modernity, its institutions, and their ideological, economic, social, cultural, and political effects. They focus not only on theoretical deconstructions of the colonial structures imposed by Europe's conquest of the Americas that continue to obscure the specificities of race and place, but also on the proposition of decolonial alternatives and knowledge-making. The selection begins with the ideas of the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano on the coloniality of power, a cornerstone for future critiques of modernity and proposals for decolonization. Anthropologist Michael Taussig tackles the aftermath of racialized colonial practices and the perils of extractive economies on the local populations of Colombia's Pacific Coast; psychoanalyst Suely Rolnik calls for a decolonization of the unconscious to tap into our will to power; artist-researcher María Inés Clavo advocates an "epistemodiversity"

inclusive of Indigenous forms of knowing and being. Particularly insightful for art historians is curator Gerardo Mosquera's description of the epistemological shift that occurred when anthropophagy and transculturation, concepts used to address issues of identity and originality in art, were replaced by the paradigm of "from here," a new perspective grounded in the geopolitics of knowledge production.

Keywords: universality; the anti-colonial; non-neutrality; poststructuralism; modernity/rationality; anthropophagy; epistemological decolonization; intercultural communication; identity politics; authenticity; globalization; mestizaje and hybridity; derivative modernity; modernism versus modernization; Indigenous cosmologies; epistemodiversity

Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2–3 (March/May 2007): 168–178.

Aníbal Quijano's essay, first published in 1999, is foundational to any thinking of decolonization in the Latin American context. One of Peru's most renowned sociologists, Quijano puts forward the concept of the "coloniality of power" as a way to connect the practices and legacies of European colonialism to today's social orders and forms of knowledge in Latin America. He describes

colonial domination as the consolidation of European "modernity/rationality," which was exported as a "universal paradigm of knowledge and of the relation between humanity and the rest of the world" (171–72). Coloniality must now be urgently dismantled in a project of "epistemological decolonization" (177).

Positing Latin America as the most extreme case of cultural colonization by Europeans, Quijano explains that the demographic extermination brought about by exploitation of labor force, violence, and disease also involved the destruction of societies and cultures. This massive genocide turned the high cultures of America into illiterate, peasant subcultures "condemned to orality; that is, deprived of their own patterns of formalized, objectivised, intellectual, and plastic or visual expression" (170). He briefly discusses the example of Africa, where cultural destruction was more pervasive than in Asia, but less so than in the Americas. For Quijano, African colonization took place by depriving the continent of legitimacy, labeling its culture as "exotic" (but unequal to European art), and thus making it acceptable to conceive of African art and motifs as a source of inspiration for the art of Western or Europeanized African artists, but not as its own mode of artistic expression.

Quijano uses the term "coloniality" to refer to the systematic repression and imposition of European rationality, which he describes as an example of "provincialism as universalism" (177). This served to impede the cultural production of the dominated and led to the colonization of their imagination and paradigms of knowledge. Quijano sees this internalized coloniality still in place, leading him to pronounce coloniality as the most pervasive form of domination today.

Race, Quijano argues, is a cornerstone of the coloniality of power. It was a key element of the social classification of the colonized and colonizers, incorporating ideas of supposed biological and structural superiority. Quijano shows that the legacy of racial discrimination remains in place through the distribution of labor under capitalism. And yet labor alone cannot account for past and ongoing racial

inequities; rather, Quijano turns to the production of knowledge as a key element in the coloniality of power. Accordingly, European colonizers conceived of their racial Other not as a producer and hence a subject of knowledge, but solely as an object of study and, by extension, domination. An epistemologically objectivized Other can thus never become an agent in the circuits of knowledge production, which are by necessity constituted by subject-to-subject relations (a relation between individuals about an external object). This understanding of what constitutes knowledge and who can be its legitimate producer is one of the foundational mechanisms undergirding a relation of coloniality between Western cultures and the rest of the world.

Quijano claims that his vision of "social totality" differs from the European model because it depends on the historical diversity and heterogeneity of society (173). Thus, his formulation does not deny but instead requires the idea of an Other, because in his social totality difference doesn't automatically entail domination. Hence the task is to liberate the production of knowledge from those modes of thought imposed by European colonizers: an epistemological decolonization to clear the way for new intercultural communication as the basis of another rationality that can legitimately lay claim to universality. This epistemological liberation would be "part of the process of social liberation from all power organized as inequality, discrimination, exploitation, and as domination" (178).

Aside from Quijano's homogenization of the "outside the West" being rather problematic, the essay presents few practical suggestions as to how to dismantle the "mirage" imposed by Europe upon the cultures it colonized (176, 177). Nevertheless, Quijano's critique remains worthy of attention—not least because it was the springboard for future scholars of decoloniality, including Walter D. Mignolo, Arturo Escobar, and Nelson Maldonado-Torres, among others.

Gerardo Mosquera, "Against Latin American Art," in *Contemporary Art in Latin America*, ed. Phoebe Adler, Tom Howells, and Nikolaos Kotsopoulos (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2010), 12–23.

"It only interests me what is not mine." One of the most provocative lines in Oswald de Andrade's *Manifesto Antropófago* (1928), is the first example invoked by Gerardo Mosquera to speak about the "paradoxical anti-colonial resistance of Latin American culture," pointing out how the phrase reverses "the fundamentalist politics of authenticity" that insists upon cultural purity (12). In this essay, a follow-up to a text he wrote in 1994, Mosquera, legendary Cuban critic and international curator, provides a theoretical overview of how globalization has impacted the creation and reception of art from Latin America and how issues of identity and intercultural dynamics have evolved since the 1920s.¹

Mosquera focuses on two concepts. First, de Andrade's concept of anthropophagy (or cannibalism): he traces its use from its poetic beginnings in modernism to becoming a key concept for the continent when it was adopted by Hélio Oiticica and the Tropicália movement in the late 1960s, to its embrace by the poststructuralists in the 1980s and 1990s to address notions of appropriation and the validation of the copy. Second, Mosquera discusses Fernando Ortiz's concept of "transculturation" (coined in 1940), which he uses to emphasize the "bilateral exchange implicit in any acculturation" (14).² Describing appropriation as a "culture of resignification" in which readings mutate to fit a new context, Mosquera sees this strategy not as a sign of dependency on a hegemonic cultural canon but as a road to originality (14).³ Further, such cultural appropriation is not just a postmodern fad/strategy but carries an "anti-Eurocentric deconstruction of the self-reference of dominant models" (14). After each positive affirmation of anthropophagy and transculturation, however, Mosquera also considers their problematic aspects, since "critical swallowing [...] does not take place in neutral territory"

and appropriation "satisfies the desire of the dominant culture for a reformed, recognizable Other" (14).

Addressing other key concepts linked to Latin American identity like *mestizaje* (miscegenation), syncretism, and hybridization, Mosquera suggests that despite being very productive terms to analyze the region's massive cultural and racial blend, they tend to erase imbalances and conflicts and ignore the unwillingness of certain cultures to integrate. Mosquera's ambivalence is made clear when he underlines the power imbalance between hegemonic and subordinate cultures, where the more powerful component exerts a gravitational pull that ends up reinscribing its authority.

Mosquera describes a paradigmatic change whereby anthropophagy and transculturation have been replaced by a new perspective called the paradigm of "from here" (16). The author claims that this epistemological shift took place when, instead of appropriating, artists began "actively making that meta-culture firsthand, unfettered, from their own imagery and perspectives [...] by introducing new issues and meanings derived from their diverse experiences, and by infiltrating their differences in broader, somewhat more truly globalised art circuits" (16). Again, Mosquera warns us that this "pluralism can work as a prison without walls," weaving a "labyrinth of indetermination confining the possibilities toward real, active diversification," and forcing artists to "express themselves in a lingua franca that has been hegemonically constructed" (17). Most importantly, he underlines how the use of this imposed language implies the discrimination of other languages, which could potentially exclude important poetics that do not respond to the codes legitimated internationally.

Mosquera is self-reflexive enough to consider his essay as an example of the continued "identity neurosis suffered by Latin American culture" (18). He brings up the difficulty of defining what constitutes being Latin American and looks approvingly to Africa, where intellectuals are less interested in focusing on identity and have deemed the

idea of Africa to be a colonial invention. For the author, Latin America is "an invention that we can reinvent," with grounds for both provincialism and solidarity if one embraces its diversity and contradictions (19). His ultimate proposition is that because artists have shifted away from representing contexts to working within them, it is necessary to refuse the totalizing term "Latin American art," which puts emphasis on who is making the work, not where it is made. In his eyes, "Latin American art has ceased to be so, and has instead become art from Latin America. From, and not so much of, in or here, is the key word today in the re-articulation of the increasingly permeable polarities local/international, contextual/global, centres/peripheries, and West/non-West." (12)

María Iñigo Clavo, "Modernity vs. Epistemodiversity," *e-flux journal* 73 (May 2016): 1–9.

A co-founder of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía's research group "Península: Colonial Processes and Artistic and Curatorial Practices," artist-researcher María Iñigo Clavo questions the need to "define ourselves in terms of all those prefixes that locate modernity (anti-, pre-, post-, anti-, counter-) in order to remain in the orbit of Western history" (1). Her essay charts the use of such prefixes attached to modernity in the Latin American context, and views the persistence of these prefixes as symptomatic of the imperialist view that the South is a faulty version of the North. Against this, she argues in favor of what she calls "epistemodiversity," the inclusion of forms of knowledge that were ignored by modernity. Art, she argues, is in a privileged position to facilitate this integration.

Equating modernity with emancipation, Iñigo Clavo critiques Hegel's view of modernity—via a discussion of Susan Buck-Morss's book *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (2009)—and posits that Marx contributed to Europe's denial of Latin American agency through his inability to distinguish between counterrevolution and national liberation in Simón Bolívar's actions. In Hegel and Marx she locates the reasons why Latin America

has been perceived as "outside history," that is, having insufficiently developed political institutions and philosophical thought that would allow it to participate in the progressive movement toward freedom that characterizes "Universal History" (2).

Iñigo Clavo then examines how modernity in Latin America has been framed from within as either a "copycat modernity" or a "different modernity" (2). Her points of reference are multiple and nonchronological: Néstor García Canclini's question as to whether there can be modernism without modernization (1990s); Oswald de Andrade's *Manifesto Antropófago* as a proposition for intellectual cannibalism that came to define Brazilian culture (1928); Marta Traba's interrogation about the validity of Pop art in a region without the existence of a truly accessible mass culture (1973);⁴ and Roberto Schwarz's understanding of the neurosis surrounding the notion of the "imported copy" as a problem that began with the coexistence of contradictory economic systems and values during the era of independence (1987). The author equates these myriad internal questionings to the contradictions that also gave rise to postmodernism in Euro-America.

Homi Bhabha's theory of "countermodernity" in India serves Iñigo Clavo as an example of how enlightened subjects in postcolonial contexts, including Latin America, threatened Western postmodernism because they were always already multicultural, *mestizo*, and chronologically fragmented—conditions that intellectuals in these regions had tried to rationalize and overcome. Jumping frequently between theorists, Iñigo Clavo cites a slew of decolonial thinkers: Walter Dignolo, Enrique Dussel, Anibal Quijano, and Boaventura de Sousa Santos.

Summarizing the many scholars she cites, Iñigo Clavo borders on repetition and redundancy. The notable shift comes when she brings up the separation between the natural and social sciences as a major feature of colonial modernity. While again dependent on citation (Philippe Descola's compelling theories of animism and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's idea that animism and perspectiv-

ism can be decolonizing forces that serve to destabilize Western frameworks of thought), Iñigo Clavo describes how many Amerindian cosmologies endow nature and inanimate objects with a soul “because what constitutes them is the relationships that exist among them” (5). Embracing their belief system would thus shatter the division between the natural and social sciences—as would Amazonian perspectivism by which knowing is not to objectivize but to embody, because knowing implies taking on the point of view of the thing one wishes to know. However, she quickly tempers this optimistic integration of Indigenous thought with the caveat that Viveiros de Castro’s theories come from anthropology, a field that sees Indigenous and African heritage as objects of study rather than as producers of knowledge. And art, too, has tended to look to Indigenous cosmologies merely for creative inspiration, rather than for reorganizing modern boundaries of knowledge.

Iñigo Clavo concludes by echoing de Sousa Santos’ call for an abdication of the human/nature divide that perpetuates colonialism and the exploitation of nature. Her aim is to break the duality of the human and natural sciences and to dismantle the separation between art and popular culture, in order to construct a “new language that uses popular knowledge not as a theme for contemporary art, but as a spark for creating new regimes of representation and new structures of thought” (7). Although she briefly mentions the way in which Indigenous cosmologies have been inserted into the curriculum at the Federal University of Southern Bahia, which she sees as promoting the epistemodiversity she seeks (and which modernity refuses), she ultimately leaves the reader hanging without answers to her final question: “How can contemporary art contribute to the learning of epistemodiversity?” (7)

Michael Taussig, *My Cocaine Museum* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

My Cocaine Museum was written as a counterpoint to the Gold Museum in

Bogotá, where the glittering residues of a pre-Columbian past shine in the plundered objects on display, in an exhibition that neglects to tell important stories about the country’s heritage. Drawing from his extensive anthropological fieldwork in Colombia over three decades, Michael Taussig offers a trippy yet poignant critique of the museum’s failure to acknowledge the lives of African slaves, who mined Colombia’s wealth for centuries, as well as those of their descendants, who continue to pan for gold or who are now drawn into the treacherous world of cocaine production.

Taussig draws a parallel between the museum’s silence about gold mining in relation to slavery and its silence about the cocaine industry today. He focuses on these two commodities, gold and cocaine, which he labels as fetishes, “transgressive substances” that swarm “with all manner of peril” and play “subtle tricks upon human understanding” (xiii, xviii). Taussig calls attention to the fact that resource extraction follows the same colonial path as that at the height of imperialism, a path that has had a profound and damaging effect on the nation and which has never benefitted the locals who source these substances. He finds in the erotic gold *poporos* of the Gold Museum—the lime containers used by the Arahuaos of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta during the ritualistic use of coca leaves—the symbolic manifestation of the ancestral union between the world of gold and the world of coca. Taussig fills the gaps left by the museum’s decontextualization of its *poporos* by sharing his understanding of the ritual, which is based on research by a local anthropologist, María del Rosario Ferro.

Weaving together a history of things with a history of people, Taussig embraces a language in which matter and myth connect, blending fact and fiction, ethnographic observation, archival history, and memoir. He moves swiftly from stories about the women and children who pan for specks of gold, to Christian and Jewish theology, to modernist thinkers (Georges Bataille, Antonin Artaud, Walter Benjamin), to the US Drug Enforcement Administration’s search for “consti-

pated mules” and the terror brought on by the guerillas and the paramilitaries linked to drug trafficking (15). A plethora of characters, referred to by first name only, pepper the text with conversations about life in Santa Maria, a gold mining village located on the remote Pacific coast of Colombia. Their observations bring to light the conditions that lead to inequality, sorcery, and murder, as well as the boredom and soggy pleasures embraced by the locals during the frequent torrential rains.

Taussig has a delightful way of conveying how the world seems to relish opposites—how the most common substances found on bank notes in the United States are shit and cocaine, or how Russian miners can be seen as both invaders and prisoners. In feverish visions that combine the horrors of the drug trade with the precarious economics that drive people into trafficking, he brilliantly questions whether the pleasures associated with gold and cocaine are proportionate to their monetary value and the risks accepted by locals to obtain them, at times as their only means of survival. Taussig does not bat an eye: his sensorial journey is told candidly with the fluidity of the rivers that carry gold nuggets as well as the bodies of *desechables* (throwaways), showing how the bloody violence has tainted the work of contemporary artists like Juan Manuel Echavarría who distills and documents the violent effects of the drug trade. Ultimately, Taussig’s book reveals how gold and cocaine carry with them a fraught history of enslavement and continued oppression and seeks to correct “the way history has numbed us” (43).

Suely Rolnik, “The Spheres of Insurrection: Suggestions for Combating the Pimping of Life,” *e-flux journal* 86 (November 2017): 1–11.

Writing in 2017, when the prospect of Jair Bolsonaro’s government was already in the air, Brazilian psychoanalyst Suely Rolnik describes a world whose “level of violence and barbarity reminds us of the worst moments in history” (1). The “colonial-capitalistic system,” she argues, is characterized by

the “pimping of life as a force for creation and transmutation” and total expropriation of the biosphere (3). Against this, Rolnik explores outlets for the left to abandon its macropolitical stance, which she understands as the inclusion of minority identity positions, in favor of embracing micropolitical insurrections (following Deleuze and Guattari, understood as revolt on the level of the politics of desire). She believes such insurrections can sustain the left during these times of fear and malaise brought about by “the rise of reactive forces of conservatism and neoliberalism” (2). By seeing the oppressed as entities reduced to class relations, the left neutralizes the potency of their subjectivities, argues Rolnik, and thus promotes the “inclusion” of groups at the expense of their capacities for micropolitical resistance, as with Indigenous groups in Brazil.

Rolnik turns to a psychoanalytic framework to expand her analysis. She brings to light Freud’s distinction between the drive (as the human vital force) and instinct (a learned reflex) in order to argue that the pimping of life destroys the vital energy that constitutes the subjective resource for human preservation. Rolnik differentiates this from the Marxist tradition that sees labor as a vital force, and as the new version of capitalism (neoliberalism) that feeds off the energy of the drive, derailing people’s values and corrupting desire, leading them to channel their energy towards the dominant regime rather than the preservation of their own life. Rolnik compares this to the violence that a pimp enacts on a prostitute by “means of seduction” (5). Her critique of neoliberalism’s “perverse politics of desire” rings very true in the current political/COVID-19 climate, where a disturbing number of citizens support leaders who “threaten [their] own continuity” (5).

A year ago, one may have been dubious of Rolnik’s statement that “we are constituted by the effects of forces, with their diverse and mutable relationships that stir the vital flows of a world. These forces traverse all the bodies that compose the world, making them one sole body in continuous variation, whether or not we are conscious of it.” (5) Today, however, her diagnosis seems

spot-on—although she doesn't refer to these forces as a virus, but as affect, an experience that is extra-personal, extra-sensory, and extra-sentimental, a kind of "body-knowing," "life-knowing," or "eco-ethological knowing" whose mode of relating to others is empathy (5). But this knowing can be difficult to attain: Rolnik identifies a tension between the familiar (the personal) and the strange (the extra-personal) that we first experience as malaise. This tension drives people to cling to established forms, especially in situations of crisis, even if this may lead to ecological disasters or the perpetuation of unequal power relations. But this moment of tension is precisely where it is possible to redirect the politics of desire—to be active rather than simply reactive.

Rolnik urges readers to explore this politics of desire. She posits the unconscious as the matrix of micropolitical resistance, calls for the decolonizing of the unconscious, and advocates for a dual insurrection in both the macropolitical and micropolitical arenas in order to dissolve the regime of the "colonial-capitalistic unconscious" (9). Rolnik concludes her article with ten suggestions for decolonizing the unconscious. The most noteworthy are (1) awakening our vulnerabilities to the forces of the world, (3) enabling access to the tense and paradoxical experience of the strange-familiar, (4) embracing the resulting fragility, (6) not giving in to the will of conserving forms and to the pressure they exert against life's will to power, and (10) practicing thinking in its full ethical, aesthetic, political, critical, and clinical function.

Rolnik's desire to constantly "bricolage [...] the self" as a means of attaining micropolitical gains that combat the pimping of life is contagious (10). Yet her commitment to a particularly florid psychoanalytic vocabulary, inflected with the concepts of philosopher Félix Guattari, leads her to a vivid but often gratuitous and unnecessarily charged vocabulary (such as "the pimping-capitalistic unconscious" [7] or "premature ejaculations of the ego" [9]). These can distract from the clarity of her arguments. Her commitment to the micropolitical, while well-articulated, also dismisses any progres-

sive role for organized politics. Emancipation, for Rolnik, is a matter of moving beyond empowerment and "embrac[ing] potentialization"—largely as individuals in relation to other individuals (8). It is hard to imagine how these politics might function to dismantle structural oppression in the form of institutionalized racism and misogyny.

1. The earlier essay is a contribution to the catalogue *Cocido y Crudo*. See Gerardo Mosquera, "Cooking Identity," in *Cocido y Crudo*, exh. cat. (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 1994), 32–37.

2. Mosquera lists 1948 as the date of coinage for "transculturation" (13), however, Ortiz is first cited with the term in 1940. See Fernando Ortiz, *Contrapunteo Cubano del Tabaco y el Azúcar* (Havana: Jesus Montero, 1940).

3. Today, cultural appropriation is primarily understood as the adoption by a dominant culture of cultural elements from minority groups. For most of the 20th century, however, cultural appropriation, especially in postcolonial contexts, denotes the precise opposite: the appropriation by colonized people of the dominant culture for its subversion and repurposing.

4. Iñigo Clavo does not include a reference to this work. It is most likely, however, that she is referring to Marta Traba, *Dos Décadas Vulnerables en las Artes Plásticas Latinoamericanas: 1950–1970* (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1973).

West Africa Caroline House

The following selection of texts explores the relationship between France and its once-occupied territories in West Africa, centering on the physical life and accessibility of African artistic and cultural output as viewed through the lens of contemporary postcolonial theory. The concept of the de- and postcolonial in these texts entails various conceptions of poststructuralist networks of lateral cultural exchange. There is, moreover, an emphasis on the question of whether or not Western-style museums can be anything but one-directional institutions of hierarchical knowledge. When read alongside one another, these readings present fraught and often contradictory arguments that interrogate the binaries of universalism/fragmentation, postcolonial agency/identity, morality/legality, and hierarchical/lateral thinking.

All the texts presented here were written within the past fifteen years and are by turns optimistic, skeptical, pragmatic, resigned, and idealistic. They begin with James Clifford's critical interrogation of the then recently opened Musée du Quai Branly—an ethnographic museum populated with artifacts obtained by the French during the colonial era—and end with calls for the restitution of many of those objects. Oscillating between historical and contemporary contexts, these analyses debate

how art objects currently operate (or might operate in the future) within a postcolonial framework; they are thus applicable to institutional contexts far beyond the singular Franco-African colonial relationship. With the exception of the Sarr-Savoy Report, the term "decolonial" has not supplanted the "postcolonial." Instead, the postcolonial is seen to follow on from mid-century decolonization and independence.

Keywords: postcolonial universalism; postcolonial agency; morality versus legality; hierarchical versus lateral thinking; Sarr-Savoy Report; poststructuralism; restitution versus reparation; artwork versus artifact; anti-essentialism; non-linearity; postcolonial modernism; African modernity; national patrimony; contact zone; ethnographic museum

James Clifford, "Quai Branly in Process," *October* 120 (Spring 2007): 3–23.

James Clifford, an interdisciplinary historian, anthropologist and ethnographer based in the History of Consciousness Department at University of California Santa Cruz, reviews and rebukes the recently opened Musée du Quai Branly in Paris. He offers the reader a careful analysis of the (few) perceived successes and (many) failures of the new museum, which opened to the public in 2006.

While the article is not written from an explicitly de- or postcolonial standpoint, it does take certain precepts of postcolonial anthropology as a given. Clifford routinely draws attention to the absence of “local, national, metropolitan, and transnational contexts” for understanding the objects on display, and “how their meanings and powers can be repatriated by old and emerging ‘indigenous’ groups” (15). Accordingly, he tends to praise and value attempts by the curators to contextualize and acknowledge these colonial histories. Yet their efforts are all too often subsumed by Jean Nouvel’s primitivizing architecture and the desire to cater to mass audiences by aestheticizing the objects on display with dramatic lighting. Wall labels are kept to a minimum—touch screens are preferred—and the overall message is one of simplified aesthetic universalism rather than diverse and competing worldviews.

Clifford’s understanding of the function of the art object is, in tandem with his postcolonial method, decidedly poststructuralist and anti-universalist. He roundly critiques the eagerness of director Stéphane Martin to decontextualize objects in the name of theater and wonder. As with Clifford’s previous forays into museum critique (such as his searing review of MoMA’s “Primitivism” show in 1984),¹ he seeks not just context but contradiction and complexity: Quai Branly, to his eyes, might “uncharitably, be called a magical theme park” since it is “largely undisturbed by history, politics, or the arts and cultures of a contradictory (post)modernity” (12, 14).

Clifford’s article supplies a helpful background for how the objects in the museum came to be regarded as part of French national patrimony in the first place—the work, he says, of President Jacques Chirac and his heavy hand in transferring many of these works to the collection of the Louvre. This transfer, and ultimately the project of Quai Branly, was based on a new designation of these works as *art* objects, rather than cultural or anthropological artifacts. Yet much has changed since 1992, when a proposal for the museum was first set in motion. Back then, the project “fit comfortably within a late-colonial liberal politics of

recognition,” but these politics are markedly unsatisfying in a contemporary climate; they create tension in the museum “between an updated, antiethnocentric (and still recognizably ‘French’) universalism and a potential alliance with contemporary indigenous social movements” (18–19). Clifford even questions the continued cultural relevance of such a museum given that “Paris itself is a changing contact zone—no longer the center of Civilization [...], but a node in global networks of culture and power” (9).

Ultimately, this review is most useful as an outline of the way that France has nationalized its holdings of colonial-era art and artifacts and continues to do so by mobilizing concepts of the universal. It is thus particularly relevant to revisit this essay on President Chirac’s vision of French culture in light of the restitution debate incited by the incumbent President Macron in 2018, specifically his speech at the University of Ouagadougou. Clifford’s text presciently calls into question the continued relevance of the ethnographic museum that provides various global communities “no direct access to important works from their own traditions” (19). He nevertheless holds out for a more optimistic vision of a self-critical and relevant museum that provides access and knowledge.

Fourteen years after the publication of Clifford’s review, the reader might be a bit more skeptical that a Western museum can successfully overcome its colonial baggage. Clifford’s optimism for the continued relevance of the Western ethnographic museum might even be seen as misguided, as he works under the assumption that the nationalistic legal grip of French museum holdings is fundamentally irrevocable—as many museum professionals continue to insist. Under this framework, restitution is a specious option, and Clifford accordingly treats museum reform as the only path forward. Among the tidal wave of global protests for social change sparked by the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States, there are many forcefully calling for a complete social, financial, and legal overhaul of cultural institutions like museums. While

Clifford’s pragmatic review highlights useful points of possible reform, the reader may not only wonder if reform is a possibility, but whether reform should be a goal at all.

Souleymane Bachir Diagne, “On the Postcolonial and the Universal?,” in *Africa and the Challenges of the Twenty-first Century: Keynote Addresses Delivered at the 13th General Assembly of CODESRIA*, ed. Ebrima Sall (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2015), 67–79.

Souleymane Bachir Diagne, currently the chair of French and Romance philology at Columbia University, is a Senegalese scholar who received his Ph.D. from Sorbonne University. This essay was published in a collection of keynote speeches given at the 13th general assembly of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), providing a helpful conceptual overview of current debates on African issues within postcolonial research. Most of the contributions in the volume address large systemic issues like climate change, poverty, and urbanization (such as Jayati Ghosh’s essay on “Development in a Turbulent World”), and as such are applicable beyond an African context.

“On the Postcolonial and the Universal?” can (and should) be read as a response to French academia’s hostility towards postcolonial theory, which it caricatures as politically correct multiculturalism. It also anticipates a dialogue between Diagne and anthropologist Jean-Loup Amselle, published in French in 2018, on their competing understandings of the universal.² In the present essay, Diagne asks the question: “Is the postcolonial anti-universal? Shouldn’t we say, rather, that only in a postcolonial world can the question of the universal truly be posed?” (67).

To answer this, Diagne first presents Husserl’s “Vienna Lecture” as a straw man for European essentialist universalism. He shows how the philosophical roots of the universal are Eurocentric, and specifically attacks Husserl’s notion of a directional universal—one that flows from Europe to its colonies.

Having deconstructed the groundwork for traditional universalism, Diagne then turns (via Levinas) to contemporary critiques of postcolonial thought. He singles out Jean-Loup Amselle’s *L’Occident décroché* (2008), which sees the postcolonial as an anti-essentialist, yet paradoxically also fundamentalist, dismantling of Western universalism, thus leaving the latter “*dis-oriented*” (70). His own position is that “the language of the universal is translation” (74): “because my point of departure is the language that I speak which is one among many, [translation] demands that we avoid both fragmentation and reduction to the One” (75). This universal is not overarching but (following Merleau-Ponty) *lateral*, a process of incessant testing rather than submission to a universal grammar.

When applied to art history, Diagne’s essay seems most pertinent to a museum context, especially when thinking about provenance, language, and display practices for a global and “universal” audience. He underlines the mistakes of thinking (along the lines of Husserl) that the line of communication must be from the “universal to [...] the subaltern,” and not the other way around (70). For Diagne, context is specific, communicable, and necessary.

Diagne likens postcolonial universalism to Copernicus decentering the earth as the center of the universe, instead presenting the earth as one planet within a complex but still-unified system. Ultimately, his optimistic belief in the continued possibility of a concept of a universal in postcolonial philosophy encourages a rethinking of the encyclopaedic universal museum and the concurrent restitution debates, as is evidenced by his prominent citation in the Sarr-Savoy Report. The antimonies of universalism are prominent in this essay—and, one imagines, even more prominent in the dialogue with Amselle that it foreshadows.

Chika Okeke-Agulu, professor of art history at Princeton University, offers a methodologically rich text on African art after the colonial period. It combines a thorough rethinking of the general narrative surrounding modernism in Africa with detailed visual analysis of artists' practices, specifically focusing on artistic output in Nigeria between the years 1957 and 1967 (the country gained independence from Great Britain in 1960). The artists discussed are almost all associated with the Art Society, a group of artists who met while studying at the Nigerian College of Arts, Science, and Technology in Zaria. The book is divided into seven chapters, arranged chronologically.

The introduction is, for the most part, dedicated to explaining the methodological parameters for his project and is a rich read for anyone interested in postcolonial thought across disciplines and geographies. Okeke-Agulu coins the term “postcolonial modernism” to describe the works created during 1957 and 1967 in Nigeria. He uses the concept to vigorously push back against “the usual argument [...] that since formal art teaching began under the watch of colonial regimes and since easel painting and academic art was imported into colonial Africa through these encounters, it follows that the art made by Africans [...] is a product of colonialism and colonialist visions” (7). This “usual argument” might be thought of as a reductive approach in which colonial influences are ferreted out, identified as such, and ultimately condemned. For Okeke-Agulu, however, this argument is not only Eurocentric and oversimplified, but, most importantly, it denies the subjectivity of colonized African subjects and artists.

By focusing his own analysis on the *mutual* permeability of African and Western artistic sensibilities, divorced from a linear narrative of colonial impact, Okeke-Agulu proposes a more complex story in which African artists are “simultaneously products and agents

of history” (11). This text thus is a useful resource as an example of the ways in which postcolonial thought can give agency to people living under colonial influence. The “postcolonial self” outlined in this book is a “compound consciousness that constantly reconstitute[s] itself by selective incorporation of diverse, oppositional, or complementary elements” (11).

The early chapters of the book focus on the colonial context: the intellectual origins of modernism in Nigeria, art pedagogy, the Art Society, and the emergence of postcolonial modernism and pan-Africanism in the Mbari Club at Ibadan. The later chapters look at the work of specific artists associated with the Mbari Club and Art Society: Demas Nwoko, Uche Okeke, Jimo Akolo, Colette Omogbai, among others. The book ends with the military intervention in 1966 that led to civil war a year later, positing that postcolonial modernism was born of the tension between mid-century decolonization and nationalism.

Okeke-Agulu's combination of postcolonial theory, political context, literary sources, and analysis of specific artistic production presents both a new methodological understanding of African modernity and a model for analyzing other postcolonial modernisms in the region. Critical reviews have lauded it as an important point of reference in African postcolonial studies and intellectual history.³ Despite the author's emphasis on theory, it is written in clear and engaging prose that is accessible and interesting to both academic and lay audiences.

Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage: Toward a New Relational Ethics*, trans. Drew S. Burk (November 2018): 1-89.

The Sarr-Savoy Report, commissioned in 2018 by incumbent French President Emmanuel Macron following his remarks at the University of Ouagadougou, begins with an introduction titled “Impossible No More.” Positioning itself as the culmination of nearly fifty years of debate on restitution, the report forges onward with (ostensibly) state-

sanctioned authority against naysayers who declare that restitution can and should not be enacted under French patrimony laws. This report is a crucial source for scholars engaging with contemporary issues of art restitution and cultural heritage, and is particularly relevant for postcolonial academics and curators working on French museums and/or their counterparts in postcolonial African countries that were once occupied by France.

Written by Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy, a Senegalese economist and novelist and a French art historian of cultural patrimony, the report was commissioned to offer practical, step-by-step suggestions to the government of France and its museums as to how best to approach restitution. In layman's terms, it is an attempt to set the standard for “best practice.” The first chapter of the report, “To Restitute,” makes an ethical case for restitution as opposed to reparations and memory work. The second section looks at the relationship between colonial administrations and art collections to establish which objects in French museums could be returned. It concludes with a critique of the current French patrimony laws that forbid the deaccessioning of any objects from national museums, a timeline for restitution, and an inventory of objects.

The underlying assumption of the Sarr-Savoy Report is that restitution is primarily a moral question, rather than a legal one, and thus the law should be altered to reflect the correct moral framework. Noteworthy is the semantic distinction between “restitution” (defined in this report as “the return [of] an item to its legitimate owner” [29]), which implies an umbrella acknowledgement of guilt and physical reparation, and “repatriation,” which implies a more straightforward notion of return. Restitution, for Sarr and Savoy, must be triggered by a claim by the country from which an important item originates.

The moral framework of this document is reliant on a specific interpretation of the “universal,” a concept that can be (and has been) mobilized on both sides of the restitution debate. Hard-liner advocates for restitu-

tion draw on the concept of the universal, understood as the creative expression of a globally shared human experience, to argue that objects must be fully returned to their countries of origin—mere circulation or long-term loans are insufficient. Cultural artifacts are thus assumed to carry a mnemonic function for their community, in which access is not equivalent to ownership. A different account of the universal is proposed by those who oppose restitution, who often cite the universal importance of cultural heritage in order to argue for the value of keeping objects in Western encyclopaedic museums, which are accessible to many more visitors. Sarr and Savoy use the malleability of this term to make their case to the French government. Steering a middle course between these opposing camps, they ultimately argue for the global circulation of restituted objects under a transferred ownership. This idea is central to their proposal for a “new relational ethics,” based on a “new economy of exchange,” between Europe and Africa (38–39).

The fact that this document was commissioned by the French president makes it the most official—and thus the most hotly contested—version of a plethora of calls to change cultural patrimony laws. Yet two and a half years later, these laws are still far from actually being changed. The steps outlined, though more detailed and systematic than any other document to date, often idealistically demand an unprecedented level of international cooperation and cultural as well as legal coordination between France, the EU, and participating African countries, all of whom would be required to pass new legislation to enact the suggested gateways to restitution. Furthermore, given the vigorous nationalistic pushback against the report in France in particular and in Europe in general—even among museum professionals—Macron's support alone cannot guarantee the intra-institutional underpinning necessary for implementation of even the report's more obviously manageable suggested initiatives (e.g. comprehensive cataloguing). On the other side of the debate, some critics have noted that the report ultimately continues to operate under an Enlightenment

framework of knowledge in which museums are the gravitational center of cultural preservation and object conservation, with no attempt to bring in alternative conceptualizations of cultural restitution that might suggest that an object has a better home outside of the traditional museum framework. Thus, a museum scholar interested in rethinking restitution practices would certainly find the report to be a substantial framework on which to build or against which to push back. Simultaneously too radical and not radical enough, the Sarr-Savoy Report is a rich resource for decolonial thinking and calls for restitution of African art objects from the past fifty years.

El Hadji Malick Ndiaye, “Musée, Colonisation, et Restitution,” *African Arts* 52, no. 3 (Autumn 2019): 1–6.

In his contribution to this issue of *African Arts*, El Hadji Malick Ndiaye, art historian and secretary general of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Senegal, responds to the recent revival of the restitution debate in the West since 2017. Ndiaye describes the precursors to the current movement prompted by the Sarr-Savoy Report, and lists the persistent and still-relevant questions that precipitated the failure of previous movements for restitution. His remarks are not addressed to the practicalities of restitution, but instead interrogate the stakes of the debate itself.

His article is structured in two parts. The first section, “Paths to Restitution,” is a helpful primer on the beginnings of the restitution debate, which Ndiaye locates in the mid-1970s activities of UNESCO. The increase in restitution claims that followed, he argues, mark “the advent of a new consciousness of the past, a decolonization of history” (4). (Unsurprisingly, he takes care to highlight the contributions of ICOM to that debate, even though the organization expressed reservations.) Ndiaye argues that the contemporary debate differs from its 1970s predecessor in three key ways: First, it is a popular movement, based on a “liberation of speech stripped of all institutional or political calculation” (4). Second, it

involves people who are not museum professionals. And third, it pays new attention to the archive and has increased methodological rigor. (To this last point, he keenly praises the Sarr-Savoy Report.)

In the second section, “The Stakes of Restitution,” Ndiaye is critical of European museums, “burdened with their colonial pasts,” and runs through a brief list of ethnographic museums and their various (failed, in his eyes) attempts at decolonial or postcolonial exhibition displays (4). He also criticizes the Western tendency to describe cultural goods as “works of art,” because this co-opts the object into a culturally-specific history of taste, and the Western preference for revering heritage (i.e., aestheticized objects from the past) over sacred objects (i.e., living culture) (5). While Ndiaye is decidedly in favor of restitution, he is reluctant to approach the question from an overtly moral or political angle; he agrees with Sarr and Savoy that objects help form collective memory, but goes further in suggesting that objects themselves also have a right to “self-determination” (5).⁴

Ndiaye’s essay counters the unabashed and optimistic idealism of the Sarr-Savoy Report with a healthy dose of pragmatic skepticism, and is thus useful to read alongside it. While Ndiaye fullheartedly supports the goals of the restitution project, he provides a more grounded perspective that acknowledges historic pitfalls and problems within the debate. The plea of UNESCO president Amadou-Mahtar M’Bow, writing in 1979, “for the return of an irreplaceable cultural heritage to those who created it” is cited by Sarr and Savoy to argue that restitution is long overdue (Sarr and Savoy 2018, 19); Ndiaye, by contrast, mobilizes the very same speech to point out that this nearly fifty-year-long debate has yielded few results. His last sentence, a question, notes that restitution is currently a possibility, but asks, “Will this possibility survive President Emmanuel Macron’s term in office?” (5) Only time will tell.

1. James Clifford, “Histories of the Tribal and the Modern,” *Art in America* 73, no. 4 (April 1985): 164–215.

2. Limited online resources and international copyright laws prevented me from obtaining a copy of this book, even in French. From what I gather of it, it is a formalized transcript of an emailed conversation between Diagne and Amselle, who take up opposing poles of the discourse on universalism. It was published in French by Albin Michel in 2018. The English version was published in late May 2020. Jean-Loup Amselle is an anthropologist specializing in African studies and the director of studies at ehes. Some video clips of the conversation are available on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJZf6DnO3fc>.

3. Hermann von Hesse, “Postcolonial Modernism: Art and Decolonization in Twentieth-Century Nigeria by Chika Okeke-Agulu (Review),” *African Studies Review* 60, no. 2 (September 2017): 264–66.

4. Compare here the entry on Peffer (2005), who similarly uses personification as a strategy to think about the ethics involved in engaging with objects in diaspora.

South Asia

Khushmi Mehta

Narratives of decolonization in South Asia continue to be traced back to 1947, the year that marked the carnage of the Partition of the subcontinent and a mass migration that left millions displaced. As a result, decolonial methodologies are imbricated less in a retrieval of precolonial epistemologies (as it is the case in Latin America, for example), and more in the processing of the psychological and cultural trauma that marked generations following the Partition. Today the legacies of colonization are visible less in the traces of the British rule, and more in the violence of the ongoing conflict between the divided nation-states. The art infrastructure that developed through post-independence modernizing efforts is inevitably bound up in the constraints of the nation-state, as well as questions of citizenship and belonging. As Karin Zitzewitz explains, “conditions in the South Asian region, with its legacy of state opposition to the movement of both people and things across national borders, provide ample evidence for how equally important material networks can be for art and its circulation.”¹ A complete process of decolonization in South Asia then, as Dilpreet Bhullar suggests, would consist not only in exorcizing the Western colonial legacy, but also in dismantling from within the unequal power structures upheld by local hegemonies.

Keywords: cultural trauma; postcolonial histories; European master narratives; mobility and migration; multiculturalism and transculturalism; diaspora; hybridity; postcolonial temporality; the migrant’s time; subalternity; the non-modern; dislocation and non-belonging; cross-border collaboration; nationalism and the nation-state; identity politics; colonial archives; the counter-gaze

Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History,” in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 27–46.

The first chapter of Dipesh Chakrabarty’s seminal book *Provincializing Europe* outlines the dominant scholarly understanding of European history as the master narrative against which the other, subaltern histories are constructed. One of the founding members of the Subaltern Studies Collective, Chakrabarty departs from the group’s preoccupation with problems of identity, and in this book addresses instead the implications of Europe as a constructed entity for the academic discipline of history. The result is a prominent and much-cited contribution to the longstanding debate on how to write postcolonial histories. At the center of his argument is the concept of “historicization” and

the proposal that historicizing carries specific European assumptions about temporality, progress, secularity, and sovereignty. Against such metrics, the subaltern subject can only be interpreted as lacking. Although the book was published only in 2000, Chakrabarty clarifies in a postscript to this chapter that the text is an abridged form of his first attempt at articulating the problem of European history and postcolonial historiography in 1992. Using his earlier work as a point of departure, he sees the rest of *Provincializing Europe* as expanding on the “need to critique historicism and to find strategies for thinking about historical difference without abandoning one’s commitment to theory” (46).

Chakrabarty’s argument about Europe centers on its identity as a carefully constructed concept. Europe and India are treated as imaginary figures with indeterminate geographical referents, as opposite structures of domination and subordination.² He argues that while European historians produce their work in relative ignorance of non-Western histories, this remains a gesture that historians of the Global South cannot reciprocate, leading to an asymmetry of ignorance. The crux of his argument is the paradox that only the figment of Europe is theoretically knowable, while all other histories are a matter of empirical research that fleshes out the skeleton that is Europe; only European philosophies have the capacity to produce absolute theoretical insights while “oriental philosophies” (here he quotes Husserl) are assigned a practical “mythical-religious” character (29).

The second section of Chakrabarty’s chapter delves into the narrative of absence or loss that shadows the colonized. In the narratives imposed by imperial but also nationalist imaginaries—the incomplete transition towards modernity, the inadequacy of the working class, the failure to decolonize—the subaltern subject is always viewed as a figure of lack. The subaltern classes are therefore “given the cross of ‘inadequacy’ to bear” (33): it was always *they* who needed to be educated out of their ignorance or false consciousness, placing the onus of modernization on the subaltern subject rather than on the colonizer.

If the conventional Western position places European modernity as the desirable end of history, then Chakrabarty’s method is to read this history otherwise—to expose the ways in which these subaltern subjects contest their supposedly anti-historical, anti-modern identity. Using examples of the masses contributing to India’s freedom struggle, Chakrabarty draws attention to histories in which Indians arrogate statehood to themselves through collective mobilization. His proposal attempts not to reinscribe subaltern subjects within a European sense of historicity, but rather to recognize the multifarious struggles and non-modern processes of remembrance that build a collective memory. In this sense, Chakrabarty claims that “antihistorical devices of memory” can work against capitulation to a European construction of temporality (40).

Chakrabarty’s proposition, although seemingly rudimentary in its binaries, constitutes the first step in a decolonial process: challenging the construction of history itself. He argues that history as a knowledge system is so firmly embedded in narratives of modernization that it cannot but invoke the nation-state at every step, leading him to ask: “Why should children all over the world today have to come to terms with a subject called ‘history’ when we know that this compulsion is neither natural nor ancient?” (41) Ironically, Chakrabarty is himself a professor of history at the University of Chicago, but he places the onus on historians to critically negotiate the narratives on their own terms. This does not, however, resolve the bigger questions: Is a decolonial pedagogy dependent on the dismantling of institutionalized disciplines? And does a decolonial methodology require a renunciation of one’s disciplinary training?

Rustom Bharucha, “Beyond the Box: Problematising the ‘New Asian Museum,’” *Third Text* 14, no. 52 (2000): 11–19.

In this text, Rustom Bharucha—professor of theater and performance studies at the School of Arts and Aesthetics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi—calls for a

collapse of the sides of the “box,” understood here as both the “black box” of the theatre and the “white cube” of the gallery space. The goal of opening up the box, for Bharucha, is to envision a museum in a postcolonial nation amidst its ongoing colonial legacy.

Bharucha begins by critiquing the current state of postcolonial museums in South Asia by asking, “To what extent does this ‘Asia’ continue to be part of a residual Orient that refuses to die even as it is in the process of being deconstructed?” (11) The model of the museum in India, like in other postcolonial nation-states, thus continues to be the product of colonial fantasies about that region; once called *Ajaib Khana* (place of wonder) and *Jadu Ghar* (magic house), it peddles what Bharucha calls “an unconsciously grotesque parody of orientalism” (14). Bereft of cafés, gift shops, and interactive technologies, these museums exist in a “time-warp [of] colonial spectacle that could be the subject of a postmodern fiction were it not so depressingly evocative of the ruins of a (post)colonial present” (14).

Questions of repatriation and restitution that come to the fore when thinking through the decolonization of Euro-American museums are not necessarily applicable to collections in the Global South. Rather, the problem that Bharucha introduces in regards to Indian museums concerns their fundamental structure as repositories of the past. The classification and periodization of artifacts that shapes Euro-American ethnographic museums is based on a fossilized history divorced from the present. This makes such museums redundant in countries like India, where the past is alive and continues to make incursions through shifting narratives in the public sphere. For a culture that is constantly mutating and hybridizing, there are political implications to calling it to a standstill within the walls of a museum. Neither, however, does Bharucha choose to resort to what he calls the “safe hypothesis of a ‘museum without walls’”—giving the examples of public art practices like *kolams* (traditional floor drawings) and sculpted figures of deities during Pujas (religious festivals). Instead, Bharucha tackles the

challenge of retaining the structure of the museum, arguing that a “new Asian museum” would need to embrace erasure (a term he takes from Derrida) and use this as a principle to think about translating various lived practices into a public culture.

Two decades after Bharucha’s article was written, the conditions of national and state museums in India remain as he described them: “Their exhibits are layered in dust; the rooms are not always lit; there is almost no security; and the buildings themselves are often in a state of disrepair.” (15) An art infrastructure in recent years has emerged instead in the form of private art museums like the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art in New Delhi and Noida, the Devi Art Foundation in Gurugram, the Museum of Art and Photography in Bangalore, and a number of local galleries across these cities and Mumbai. National and state museums are gradually being challenged by autonomous artist-run spaces like the Khōj International Artists’ Association in New Delhi and the artist-curated Kochi-Muziris Biennale in Kochi, Kerala. In this light, Bharucha’s lament over the state of postcolonial Indian museums at the turn of the century may have been premature. Calling to collapse the sides of the box today perhaps denotes the deconstruction of the national museum entirely, in the face of its reconstitution as the fragmented, and admittedly less accessible, private spaces booming across the country.

Saloni Mathur, ed., *The Migrant’s Time: Rethinking Art History and Diaspora* (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Institute, 2011).

This anthology of essays edited by Saloni Mathur, an art historian at University of California, Los Angeles, borrows its title from a 1998 essay by historian and social theorist Ranajit Guha that is reprinted as the book’s opening contribution. For Guha, the question of belonging is not merely a spatial problem but also a “temporal maladjustment” involving disjunctions between the past and present (vii). His phrase “the migrant’s time”

therefore works on two levels, referring both to the unsettling temporality of the experience of the migrant, and announcing that their time has now come, that the present and future one must learn to inhabit is the time of migration and mobility—the time of the nomad. While notions of migration and displacement permeate discourses of decolonization across the Global South, they have been especially potent in the context of South Asia, where the etymologies of postcoloniality are inextricably linked to the mass migration that occurred as a result of the Partition of the subcontinent in 1947.

Following Guha’s idea, Mathur describes the aim of this volume as a response to the question: “How have experiences of migration and mobility found expression in the practices of the visual arts?” (xviii) Mathur explains that the project does not attempt to search for a coherent aesthetic, an “art of diaspora” or an “art of migration” (viii). She remains cautious of such categories, attempting instead to analyze how a paradigm of mobility has been brought to bear upon the visual arts. Following the precedent of scholars like Raymond Williams and Edward Said, she argues that the question of migration stands at the center of modernism’s capacity to construct new political spaces. Mathur cautions, however, that the privileging of the migrant is not intended to celebrate that which is nomadic, nor to present the migrant as a trope synonymous with spaces of resistance. Instead, the migrant brings into view the unsettling crises of dislocation and non-belonging, the question of how to connect to a community, and problems of translation and exclusion.

According to Guha, one of the greatest challenges of the present is a synchronization of a field of vastly different temporalities, and the reshaping of a colonial inheritance into a shared yet unequal present. The essays in this volume thus chart the long history of the suppression of the “time of the Other” in museological, art historical, and anthropological representations (ix). The book is loosely organized into three parts—Mapping Migration, Dialectics of Displacement, and Modes of Engage-

ment—and contends with the same pitfalls of temporal and spatial disjunction that Guha cautions against. The issues raised in each chapter seep into the other, simultaneously lending cohesion to decolonial methodologies across regions while also making redundant the division of the book into sections. With the exception of Part Three, which focuses on individual artists from Asia, most of the book ebbs back and forth between broad theorizations (like May Joseph’s chapter on modernity and globalization) and more specific case studies (like Kobena Mercer and Richard J. Powell’s chapters on art of the Black diaspora).

The collection covers an expansive range of geographical regions, including the Middle East, South Asia, and North Africa. The constellations of artworks are broad and nomadic: from Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba’s physical and psychic performance work thematizing the plight of Vietnamese refugees, to Zarina’s woodcut prints of minimal architectural footprints and abstract renderings of maps. Yet, they come together under Guha’s rubric of the migrant’s time, finding common ground in the conditions of global migration, mobility, multiculturalism, diaspora, and exile that frame all the narratives of decolonization presented here.

Karin Zitzewitz, “Infrastructure as Form: Cross-Border Networks and the Materialities of ‘South Asia’ in Contemporary Art,” *Third Text* 31, nos. 2–3 (2017): 341–358.

Art historian at Michigan State University Karin Zitzewitz explores the circulation networks of contemporary art by looking at three international artist workshops that took place across South Asia between 1997 and 2011. Zitzewitz begins with a reference to the ongoing conflict between India and Pakistan that has its roots in the 1947 Partition, which led to the displacement of millions followed by brutal carnage on both sides. The issue of borders continues to dictate the legacy of this conflict between the two nations, even permeating art infrastructures (which she defines as “a network built from human and

non-human entities,” 357). Through a case study of workshops organized by the Triangle Network (established 1982), she addresses the collaborative efforts of South Asian artists to circumvent and break down the constraints imposed by their nation-states.

The Triangle Network was founded in London by sculptor Anthony Caro and philanthropist Robert Loder, and the first triangle comprised artist workshops in the US, UK, and Canada. Over time, they expanded to Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, the Americas, and the rest of Europe. South Asian partnerships included workshops in relatively isolated sites in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, which went on to shape the character of art practices in regional centers across the entirety of South Asia. Zitzewitz discusses the first Triangle workshop in South Asia, held in Delhi in 1997, its offshoot project Aar-Paar (2000–2004), and its formalized organization as South Asia Network for the Arts (SANA, 2004–2011). The aim of the workshops, as Zitzewitz describes them, was not only to develop an infrastructure of institutions capable of moving across national borders, but also to build a network of artists who share a common understanding of one another’s work and ideas across this contested region.

Although Zitzewitz’s method relies on actor-network theory, throughout the article she reinforces a dialectic of material and immaterial: the constraints of infrastructures (like an unreliable postal service, unavailability of technology such as video cameras, and national restrictions on receiving funds from abroad) versus the ephemeral (conceptual art and performance, friendship, shared discourse, and even love). She discusses the difficulties faced by artists collaborating across borders (the refusal of spaces to show work, police surveillance, and public harassment), which reveals the material realities of jingoist nationalism that pressure the “transcendental, redemptive” aims of the workshops (349). The formalization of these projects into SANA, a long-term residency program that worked towards slower and more enduring forms of institution-building,

indicates the deeper impact of cross-border collaboration. The relationships between artists across nation-states, kindled by the first Triangle workshop, have given rise to a regionally inclusive art world, rather than a nationalist one—in direct contrast to the antagonism, especially between Pakistan and India, that continues to characterize mainstream cultural politics.

Dilpreet Bhullar, “From Deframing the Oriental Imagery to the Making of the Alternative Other: Remapping the Spaces of Encounter,” *South Asian Popular Culture* 16, nos. 2–3 (2018): 171–181.

Dilpreet Bhullar works as the art coordinator and associate editor for the Visual Arts Gallery, New Delhi. Her essays on visual ethnography, identity politics, and Partition studies have been published in journals such as *South Asian Popular Culture* and *Indian Journal of Human Development*. This article focuses on two contemporary Indian artists, Pushpamala N. and Devangana Kumar, interpreting their works as visual “remanifestations” or replays of the British colonial concept of oriental representation (171). She argues for what seems to be an alternative approach to decolonization, viewing it not as a removal or separation from a fraught history, but rather a critical revision and remapping of this history.

Bhullar’s argument takes its lead from the number of recent exhibitions that show photographs from colonial archives, but without a contemporary commentary, or what she calls “cultural remanifestations” that would counter the imperial gaze (172). In these exhibitions, the colonial archive is perceived as a stagnant institution, under which the Native (the personification of cultural difference) is flattened by classification and documentation. Seeking to dismantle this history, Bhullar calls for a recognition of the blind spot of postcolonial practices: that the exorcising of Western colonial hegemony fails to also acknowledge local hegemonies that cut across postcolonial societies. In other words, focusing on anti-colonial movements against former colonial powers does

not recognize that a colonization *from within* maintains such unequal power structures. This interesting argument is left hanging, however, leaving Bhullar’s revisiting of colonial narratives in the work of contemporary artists feeling somewhat incomplete.

Turning to Pushpamala N. and Devangana Kumar, Bhullar suggests that the omnipresence of images from the colonial archive opens up the space for the formatting and reformatting of existing content. Under the spell of what she describes as “archive fever” (presumably with a nod to Derrida), these two artists mine colonial sources and thus allow for a reworking of the colonial narrative without negating its historicity (177). She argues that the artists’ creation of an “alternative narrative of the other” operates on two levels, bringing the colonial politics of institutions into the viewer’s consumption of art, while simultaneously enabling the dissemination of a counter-gaze (180). Bhullar considers the reception of their work as entwined in the context of nationalism and transculturalism.

It is certainly interesting to shift away from arguments centered on institutional structures as vehicles of decolonization, and instead to argue for the power of contemporary artists to make themselves heard and to center historically marginalized subjects. At the same time, one does wonder whether placing the onus on the artists, without a consideration of institutional hegemonies, might overstate the implications of their works for a decolonial project.

Bhullar’s text provides a strong analysis of the photographs of Pushpamala N. and Devangana Kumar, making a case for their successful (re)construction of social tropes and a restoration of the identity of once-stateless subjects. In this sense, this text appears as an important variation to the multiple approaches to the decolonization process—by engaging with the complexities of the colonial past rather than simply viewing it as an evil demon to be exorcized.

1. Karin Zitzewitz, “Infrastructure as Form: Cross-Border Networks and the Materialities of ‘South

Asia’ in *Contemporary Art*,” *Third Text* 31, nos. 2–3 (2017): 343.

2. Compare the entries on Comaroff and Comaroff (2012) and Corbet (2019) for a similar use of geographical descriptors (such as Global South and Global North) in a relational rather than geographical way.

Australia

Hadley Newton

In order to clarify how decolonization is understood and instrumentalized by the Australian historians, artists, curators, and administrators included in this bibliography, it is first necessary to recap a few particulars about the continent's history. Since British colonizers arrived in the late eighteenth century, the sovereignty of Australia's Indigenous people has been systematically ignored and refused. The Commonwealth's 1901 Constitution made no mention of the existence of Indigenous people, denying their legal and political status as Australian citizens, and further institutionalizing their widespread subjugation, disenfranchisement, and dispossession. While a 1967 referendum amended the Constitution to grant citizenship to Indigenous Australians, the country remains the only Commonwealth nation whose federal government has yet to acknowledge the sovereignty of their Indigenous people.¹ The entries in the following bibliography show how this colonial legacy has shaped Australia's art institutions as well as curatorial practices for the display of Indigenous art, which was initially held in anthropological collections, rather than in art museums, in accordance with the European model. It was only in the 1980s that Indigenous art began to move into the Australian art museum, a shift that Ian McLean argues was facilitated by the rise of poststructuralism and postcolonial

theory. The other entries in this bibliography, all published within the last decade, take this postcolonial turn as a starting point, suggesting various strategies for the curation of Indigenous art exhibitions, as well as for the reformation of Australian art museums and galleries. Despite their varied approaches, all the authors share a commitment to the notion that Indigenous art has the potential to decolonize Australian cultural institutions and to serve as catalysts for the long overdue advancement of political Indigenous sovereignty.

Keywords: global contemporary; poststructuralism; Indigenous sovereignty; Indigenous agency; Indigenous curatorship; community curating; anti-essentialism; integrationism versus separatism; intercultural education; intangible cultural heritage; the non-colonial; tokenism; repatriation; truth-telling; authentic representation; *mestiçagem*; self-determination

Ian McLean, "Aboriginal Art and the Artworld," in *How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art*, ed. Ian McLean (Sydney: Power Publications, 2011), 17-76.

How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art is a formidable resource for those seeking an overview of the discourse on Australian Indigenous art. Edited by Ian

McLean, art historian at the University of Melbourne, the anthology brings together over 140 excerpts by anthropologists, art historians, art critics, and curators between 1945 and 2006. While the entire collection offers a comprehensive (if overwhelming) array of voices, McLean's introduction provides a concise historiography, tracing the shifting reception of Aboriginal art by what he calls "the artworld" in response to successive waves of academic theory. McLean argues that Aboriginal art was first conceptualized as contemporary art during the 1980s, a rhetorical transformation attributed to the rise of postmodernism and consolidated by the emergence of postcolonial theory in the 1990s, in tandem with a conscious push on the part of Aboriginal artists to engage with the artworld.² Published in 2011, McLean's account stops short of addressing the decolonial turn, instead drawing critical attention to the ways in which Aboriginal art has been historically subjected to "global" theory.

McLean outlines several phases in the reception of Aboriginal art, beginning with the disciplinary shift from the anthropological to the art historical. He attributes the first mentions of Aboriginal art (particularly Arnhem bark paintings) as "fine art" to the work of Western anthropologists in the first half of the nineteenth century and acknowledges the role of nascent collections of private and public galleries. McLean argues that by the mid-twentieth century, art critics began to consider such Aboriginal artworks within modernist frameworks of primitivism and formal affinity. In this paradigm, which persisted through the 1970s, Aboriginal art was viewed as peripheral and not intrinsic to modernism. McLean recounts that, while curators, critics, and art historians increasingly turned their attention towards the collection, exhibition, and interpretation of Indigenous objects, a seismic shift in its reception was not felt until 1982, with "shockwaves" in the later 1980s and 1990s (38). In 1982, there was a flood of interest among international art critics and historians in Papunya painting and, particularly, its resonance with postmodernist ideas of expanded media, performance, and multi-

culturalism. Most importantly, Aboriginal art, long positioned outside modernist discourse, now appeared to offer an alternative model to postmodern theorists, one which escaped Western hegemonic discourses. According to McLean, the postmodern embrace of Aboriginal art was reflected in the expansion of exhibitions and art markets and the hiring of Indigenous curators in Australia. McLean then notes a subsequent reactionary shift, in which Aboriginal art was co-opted into a "postcolonial critique of postmodernism," one which emphasized "Aboriginal voices and subaltern themes," re-inscribing the importance of spiritual and political content over formal attributes and "the Eurocentric bias of postmodernism" (54-56, 61). From anthropology to postcolonialism, intellectual theories imported from outside Australia are positioned as the prime determinant of the reception of Aboriginal art.

It should be mentioned that Indigenous agency is not left entirely out of this formulation. According to McLean, Aboriginal artists initially "align[ed] themselves with the anthropological paradigm" in an effort to resist assimilation (28). Later, through concentrated efforts of the Aboriginal Arts Board (established 1973), Aboriginal artists began to promote their work outside of dominant modernist narratives. As the tide of theory turned towards the postmodern, McLean argues that Aboriginal artists consciously and strategically incorporated these discourses into their production. With the rise of postcolonialism, Aboriginal artists fully assumed their role not only as creators of art but as critical voices in its interpretation. However, despite McLean's attention to Aboriginal intentionality, it is clear that Aboriginal actors (as well as other Australian scholars, critics, and curators) are subsumed by global theoretical currents.

Although McLean's historiography ends around the beginning of the millennium, he avoids the recent discourse of the decolonial. It is not clear if this is because McLean decided that this turn had yet to gain a foothold in Australia by 2011, or because he had not yet determined its effects. Regardless, were McLean to consider the decolonial turn,

it might help the author to further address a tension inherent to his argument: the Australian artworld may embrace Indigenous art as “contemporary,” but the category of “contemporary,” as McLean portrays it, is largely grounded in Eurocentric frameworks. A consideration of decolonial theory might alternatively foreground moments of epistemological dissidence and question universalizing categories such as the “global contemporary.” McLean concludes that “Aboriginal contemporary art [...] has invited us to enter a global world,” but today one might question his subject position within this formulation (69). Is Aboriginal art a ticket for the art historian to enter a space of international cultural validation, styled as the global contemporary? By recounting the dominance of Eurocentric frameworks, McLean seems complicit in their reproduction. Could we imagine the story told otherwise, from an Indigenous perspective and using Indigenous categories of knowledge?

Stephen Gilchrist, “Indigenising Curatorial Practice,” in *The World is Not a Foreign Land*, exh. cat. (Melbourne: Ian Potter Museum of Art/University of Melbourne, 2014), 55–59.

Commissioned to write a catalogue essay for an exhibition of contemporary Indigenous works at the Ian Potter Museum of Art in Melbourne, Stephen Gilchrist—a curator and university lecturer, as well as a member of the Yamatji people of the Inggarda language group of Western Australia—chose not to comment on the exhibition’s content. Instead, his contribution analyzes the problems faced by curators of Indigenous art working in Western museums and suggests strategies for developing a “new Indigenous museology” (55). He offers a theoretical text positing the Indigenous curator as “a model of the possible,” arguing that certain principles inherent to Indigeneity, including anti-essentialism, inclusive pedagogy, multi-disciplinary methodology, and cultural exchange, might be mobilized to “foster and sustain different modes of curatorship and by extension, spectatorship” (55–56). By the end of the essay, he makes more concrete

suggestions as to what these Indigenous principles might look like curatorially.

The author begins by acknowledging that art institutions in Australia are already in the midst of a process of critical self-evaluation and have initiated a shift “from a methodology of cultural preservation to cultural activation,” evident in the hiring of Indigenous curators and the newfound emphasis on consultation with Indigenous communities (55). At the same time, the Indigenous curator must make further interventions to facilitate “the participatory and relational experience of culture” (55). It is important to clarify that while Gilchrist acknowledges that his model is ethnically defined, he appears to use the term “Indigenous curator” broadly to describe any curatorial practices taking up Indigenist perspectives (i.e., it is not a “phenotypical descriptor,” 56). Gilchrist argues that these perspectives will likely lead the curator to balance two approaches often perceived as contradictory, the pluralist/integrationist and the separatist (56). Each approach affords certain benefits, but also risks essentialism. The pluralist/integrationist stance, which can include hiring Indigenous curators in Western museums, encourages a diversity of viewpoints, but also may invite tokenism and assimilation; similarly, the exhibition of Indigenous art at large institutions can give visibility to these practices but also inscribe them within Western value systems. By contrast, the more radical path of separatism offers the potential for curatorial practices freed from colonial frameworks and settings, but also “endorses a racialised paradigm,” solidifying a divide between Western and Indigenous viewpoints (57).

Gilchrist suggests that one path need not preclude the other; the Indigenous curator must combat essentialism by employing both strategies of inclusion and epistemic disruption inherent to Indigenous sensibilities. For example, he argues that intercultural education “naturalizes the idea that Indigenous galleries are spaces of Indigeneity and not only *for* Indigeneity, [...] creating autonomous zones of alter(native) citizenship within its imperfect armature” (56–57).

Inclusive pedagogical programs have the power to reconfigure the gallery as a place of cultural practice, challenging the museum’s assimilative forces from within. However, he also acknowledges the potential power of separatist Aboriginal hangs that challenge Western expectations of accessibility and foreclose integration.

Gilchrist suggests the apparent contradiction between separatist and pluralist modes of curation might be a product of art history being a Western discipline. He argues that a multidisciplinary methodology of curation might help forge a “new linguistic repository that can speak to the complexities Indigenous art presents” (58). This multidisciplinary approach would be capable of accommodating complex (rather than contradictory) modes of Indigenous thinking and promote both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. For example, Indigenous terms could be introduced to art criticism, just as Indigenous rituals (such as “singing” a work into the collection) might transform museum practice (58–59). Ultimately, Gilchrist suggests that the museum can be a relevant site for Indigenous experience, since exchange is a constitutive principle of the latter.

Gilchrist does not contextualize his approach within a decolonial discourse. Although he describes the “post-colonial paradox of theory and practice” as perpetuating some of the problems of essentialism in museum practice (particularly “affirmative action” hiring), he steers clear of presenting this critique within a decolonial framework (56). Later, in a 2016 interview with Henry F. Skerritt, he contrasts philosophies of decolonization with those of Indigenization, explicitly indicating his preference for Indigenization’s insistence on autonomous “doing” over decolonization’s “undoing.”³ His words seem to suggest an ultimate preference for separatist practices. While his approach may include strategies of defamiliarization and epistemic disobedience evident in decolonial theory, he is insistent that his methods are grounded in Aboriginal and Indigenous principles and are not merely formulated in response to theorizations of coloniality that have emerged from Latin America.

Paola Balla and Max Delany, eds., *Sovereignty*, exh. cat. (Melbourne: Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2016), 6–33.

“Sovereignty,” an exhibition of contemporary Indigenous Australian art at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA) in Melbourne offers a compelling example of an exhibition conceived and staged with an explicitly decolonial agenda. The accompanying catalogue presents the show’s thematic focus and method, advocating for its role in a larger decolonial project for the advancement of Indigenous sovereignty. The structure of the catalogue mirrors the exhibition’s proclaimed “consultative, collaborative curatorial model” (7), with two introductory essays by the exhibition’s co-curators: a non-Indigenous institutional voice (ACCA artistic director Max Delany) and a Wemba-Wemba and Gunditjmarra voice (artist and curator Paola Balla).

Delany introduces the show’s scope, theme, and aims. By selecting and commissioning works by more than thirty Indigenous artists, in consultation with Indigenous curators and communities, ACCA endeavors to stage an exhibition which not only explores “diverse narratives of self-determination, identity, sovereignty and resistance,” but which also functions as a “platform for Indigenous community expression” (7). Delany clearly marks out the political context for the show, citing recent Aboriginal activism and the formation of the Referendum Council, a federal initiative to determine how best to recognize Indigenous Australians within the Constitution. Within this political situation, Delany argues that the exhibition offers Indigenous artists the opportunity to seek recognition and sovereignty on their *own* terms (rather than in the colonial framework of a federal document). Further, he frames his approach as a response to curator Ivan Muñiz-Reed’s call for a “decolonial curatorial practice [that] would advocate for an epistemic disobedience, replacing or complementing Eurocentric discourses and categories with alternative perspectives” (10).⁴ Delany explains that through collaborative curating and extensive programming which give Indigenous artists and com-

munities a platform, he hopes to introduce “alternative perspectives to the ACCA” (10). However, Delany does not elucidate the process by which he and Balla selected the thirty “alternative perspectives” (i.e. artists) featured in the exhibition, nor does he specify the roles and contributions of “community participants” in the exhibition’s curatorial development (10).

Balla’s essay also describes the exhibition as a decolonial project born out of political urgency, though she is more attentive to teasing out what sovereignty, as defined by an Indigenous feminist, might mean. For Balla, “to be sovereign is in fact to act with love and resistance simultaneously” (15). As such, she aims to select artists whose “vocabularies” are “cultural, de-colonised, de-colonising, and regenerative” and describes her own efforts as an exercise of “cultural and political responsibility to *speak back* whilst collaborating with non-Indigenous practitioners” in order to “de-colonise and to Indigenousise the very places that have represented us through the colonial gaze” (15–17). For Balla, exhibition-making itself can be an act of sovereignty, one which combines collaborative and critical approaches to subvert the colonial framework of the museum.

The catalogue essays that follow are also by Indigenous writers. Renowned author and academic Tony Birch writes, “simply put, what the concept of Sovereignty confronts is that we, as Indigenous people, should not be here” (19). He examines the works in the exhibition as evidence of the failure of colonizers to eliminate Indigenous peoples and of the triumph of continued Indigenous presence. Kimberley Moulton, a Yorta Yorta curator, similarly describes “existence [a]s the ultimate act” of sovereignty, but is more critical of the idea that museums can be decolonized when First Peoples still do not have formal acknowledgment of sovereignty and a treaty (27). Ultimately, she seems to prefer the term “non-colonial” to describe art spaces of self-determination (29). The exhibition’s decolonial framework is thus questioned within the very pages of its catalogue.

“Sovereignty” was the first survey exhibition of Indigenous contemporary art at ACCA

since 1994. The catalogue’s collection of varied and sometimes conflicting voices presents decolonial curatorial practice in Australia as an open and ongoing project, one which works to generate creative contestation rather than reconciliation. Indigenous writers and artists rhetorically and physically seize a colonial space as platform for a debate on their own terms. While the exhibition was a critical and commercial success, several Australian scholars, including Quentin Sprague, cautioned that the survey format risked tokenism, especially if it was not followed by subsequent exhibitions that integrated Indigenous artists.⁵ The issues and topics raised by “Sovereignty” merit continued curatorial attention, especially considering that the Australian government has yet to acknowledge the sovereignty of First Nations Australians, either in its constitution or through treaty.

Terri Janke and Company, *First Peoples: A Roadmap for Enhancing Indigenous Engagement in Museums and Galleries* (Sydney: Warralang Projects, 2018), 1–40.

First Peoples: A Roadmap for Enhancing Indigenous Engagement is a policy proposal commissioned by the Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA), a national nongovernment, nonprofit association for the museum and gallery sector in Australia, established in 1994 with the aim of “protecting and promoting Australia’s arts, culture and heritage” (5). Terri Janke, a Wuthathi/Meriam lawyer and expert on Indigenous cultural and intellectual property, was hired to research and write this roadmap for “improving Indigenous engagement and employment” in Australian museums and galleries (1). *First Peoples* draws on the results of a 2017 audit of 214 organizations, professionals, Indigenous stakeholders, and visitors, and the findings of a subsequent report (published 2018) that analyzed the qualitative and quantitative data of the audit. Janke’s policy paper proposes a ten-year plan to increase Indigenous representation in the content and creation of exhibitions, in the makeup of museum staff, executives and boards, and in museum and gallery audi-

ences. It also suggests key revisions to the policy ratified by AMaGA in 2005 (*Continuing Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities*) to be officially incorporated into operating policy at the AMaGA National Conference in October 2020.

Janke situates the proposal as a response to Indigenous people’s “call for the ‘decolonising’ of museums and galleries to enable their stories and perspectives to be represented” (14). This decolonial impetus is reflected both in the research method underlying the proposal and in the content of its policy suggestions. First, by relying on a method of consultation (collecting information through the audit and workshops), Janke endeavors to incorporate the concerns and recommendations of Indigenous voices, often quoting Indigenous individuals directly within the proposal. Second, each of the five key elements of the proposal—“reimagining representation,” “embedding Indigenous values in museum and gallery practices,” “increasing Indigenous opportunities,” “two way caretaking of cultural material,” and “connecting with Indigenous communities”—primarily seeks to introduce and reinforce Indigenous input and collaboration at every stage and level of exhibition development, museum administration, and audience programming (7). While AMaGA has long proclaimed a desire to integrate Indigenous perspectives in Australian museums (evident in its 2005 policy), this proposal makes several key suggestions that demonstrate a shift towards making changes that benefit not only the museum sector but also Indigenous audiences. For example, the proposal suggests that the digitization of collections and the creation of a central database would enable Indigenous communities to identify cultural property for repatriation. Janke stresses the importance of fair and equitable compensation for Indigenous curators, staff, and cultural advisors, as well as the need to incorporate Indigenous businesses into the supply chain of museum operations. A further recommendation is the establishment of an Indigenous-run National Keeping Place, as a place designated for “Indigenous self-determination” (35). These recommendations signal a policy that increasingly

supports the well-being and self-determination of Indigenous people, in addition to the responsible display of Indigenous objects in museums and galleries.

This proposal is also a noteworthy departure from the 2005 policy in that it places an emphasis on actionable change at a national scale. The roadmap lays out four processes of development for the AMaGA and its member institutions: “Alignment, Transformation, Acceleration and Realignment” (40). Each process is defined by “critical pathways,” concrete milestones of progress that are intended to aid museums and galleries as they align by “shifting away from Eurocentric structures,” transform by “increasing Indigenous staff and visitors,” accelerate by “engaging externally” with Indigenous peoples, and realign by “internal organisational review” (8–9). Institutions are to be held accountable by creating Reconciliation Action Plans with the organization Reconciliation Australia, developing points of feedback and reflection. It should be noted how these processes highlight the proposal’s top-down approach, advocating for policy changes at a national scale, partnerships with existing national organizations, and the creation of additional national networks for Indigenous support and recruitment.

Further, the very premise and presentation of the proposal underscores the AMaGA’s corporate and managerial aspirations. The roadmap envisions a *destination* in which Indigenous people are transformed into *stakeholders* and, thus, incorporated into existing organizations of museum governance. The critical pathways to inclusion and representation of Indigenous people in museums are laid out in simple, colorful graphics and timelines, rendering the systemic exclusion and misrepresentation of Indigenous people and art as a mere “roadblock” that can be definitively cleared by clear, managerial goal-setting and attractive rebranding. While the proposal advocates the adoption of “Indigenous values” and “cultural competency training” for all employees, the document does not explain what those values might be, nor does it reflect upon the potential spiritual or ritual significances

of Indigenous objects, which have been, in many cases, improperly accessioned and held in museum collections (18, 20). The proposal places the responsibilities of “truth-telling,” “authentic” representation and non-Indigenous audience education on Indigenous people (4, 15). Ultimately, the proposal seeks to improve and augment the representation of Indigenous people on museum staffs, in exhibitions, and in audience metrics, but it does so in the hopes of strengthening the existing Australian museum sector and its status as a place of cultural authority and legitimation.

David Corbet, “Decolonising the Exhibitionary Complex: Australian and Latin American Art and Activism in the Era of the Global Contemporary,” in *Mapping South-South Connections: Australia and Latin America*, ed. Fernanda Peñaloza and Sarah Walsh (Cham: Springer Nature, 2019), 23–57.

David Corbet’s essay offers a comparative study of Australian and Latin American (predominantly Brazilian and Mexican) curatorial practices, examining the degree to which concepts of decolonial theory might pressure the hegemonic “exhibitionary complex”—a term he takes from Tony Bennett’s landmark study *The Birth of the Museum* (1995). A Sydney-based writer, curator, and artist, Corbet contributed this chapter to *Mapping South-South Connections*, a book that investigates “how Latin America is imagined, and approached, within an Australian-based academic framework that critically engages with South-South perspectives, cultural processes and flows” (4–5). The editors position the collection as a part of a larger project, based in Latin American scholarship, to de-emphasize North-South paradigms and to promote the notion of a “southern’ perspective” (13).⁶

From the outset of his essay, Corbet explicitly takes up a decolonial approach, suggesting that by comparing exhibition practices in Australia, Mexico, and Brazil, he is engaging in a decolonial project of “reparative contextualisation” that promotes peripheral

practices in order to “disrupt hegemonic North Atlantic templates for exhibition-making” (24–25). Central to his argument is a problematization of the category of the “Global Contemporary,” which he identifies as an ideological outgrowth of Eurocentric modernism, and which he ultimately suggests might be co-opted and reimagined by Southern actors. The first section of the essay, “Modernism Redux: Re-Thinking the Meta-Narrative,” provides a sweeping art historical overview of the internationalization of modern art during the mid-twentieth century, and the subsequent fragmentation of modernism initiated by Northern post-modernists, a term he uses to describe “the sixties advent of American and British Pop Art and its precursors and variants, followed by the rapid proliferation of Happenings, Land Art, Performance Art and Conceptual Art” (29). This postmodern turn allowed for the inclusion of Indigenous and self-taught artists under the expanded umbrella of contemporary art.⁷ Corbet notes that, in the 1980s, the acrylic paintings of the Australian Western Desert artist co-operative, Papunya Tula, gained acclaim in Northern art centers, a shift that he argues was echoed by the acceptance of Tupinambá art from Brazil and Huichol art from Mexico into global contemporary markets (29–31).

The second section, “Learning from Brazil: *Mestiçagem* as Method,” argues that Australian intellectuals and curators have been resistant to embracing decolonial approaches, clinging instead to Northern methodologies. He suggests that Australian curators might look to Brazil’s concept of *mestiçagem* as a model, one that would allow Australian exhibitions to present creolized cultural identities, rather than simply including Indigenous art in an ad hoc formulation of the contemporary. Several Latin American exhibitions are held up as exemplars of decolonial curating (for example, Adriano Pedrosa’s 2014 show “*Histórias Mestiças*” [“Mestizo Histories”] at the Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo), while contemporaneous Australian exhibitions or biennials and their shortcomings are, for the most part, described in generalities. Corbet does not venture far enough into Australia’s socio-

political context to examine *why* a model of creolization has not appeared there. Such an exploration would require moving beyond art history, and taking a deeper look at how Australia’s socio-historical context differs from that of countries in Latin America. Corbet instead chooses to focus on the two region’s similarities, presumably in the hopes that the Latin American decolonial model might be imported into his local context.

In the third section, “The Rise of the Global Contemporary,” Corbet argues that decolonial curatorial practices are perhaps best-suited to biennials, particularly those in the South, funded by nongovernmental sources and organized by guest curators. He suggests that such biennials have the potential to reformulate global contemporary art as an expression of diverse, peripheral perspectives. Corbet’s faith in the biennial as a potentially decolonizing framework warrants further review; as an Australian independent curator, he advocates circumventing the country’s museum sector entirely, arguing that its ties to government funding preclude any instantiation of decolonial strategies. Finally, in “The Artist/Curator as Activist,” Corbet situates the present global moment as one of rising nationalism and thus at risk of re-colonization—a risk that might in part be combatted by the “growing nexus between the work of artists and grassroots activist movements,” already evident in the work of Indigenous artists across the Global South (53). While worthy of further consideration, his invocation of the artist/curator as activist comes across as a belated (and somewhat vague) attempt to instill a sense of socio-political urgency and to integrate the possible agency of artists into his argument.

Corbet offers compelling points as to why Australian museums, in comparison to their Latin American counterparts, may be slow to develop a decolonial approach to curation: government funding, the suppression of Indigenous curators, and a desire to overcome provinciality are some of the causes. But by grounding his analysis in Latin American models and practices, he imposes an implicit hierarchy of (superior) Latin American decolonial approaches over

existing Australian theorizations of colonialism and Indigeneity. Corbet’s concluding thought—that biennials and activist art “will play a critical part in enabling alternative knowledges and progressive futures”—invites skepticism (54). Are these inherently decolonial operations or might they be co-opted and colonized by global markets and Northern exhibitionary complexes?

1. A note on terminology: The authors featured in this bibliography use the terms “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples,” “Aboriginal Australians,” “Indigenous Australians,” “First Nations Australians,” and “First Peoples of Australia” to refer to the original peoples of mainland Australia and its nearby islands. McLean’s 2011 text primarily uses the term “Aboriginal,” whereas the other authors’ more recent texts most frequently use the term “Indigenous.” While the terms are employed interchangeably in the following entries, it is important to note that both are used with an understanding that the cultures of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are varied and diverse.

2. For a similar argument about the postmodern inclusion of Indigenous art under the expanded umbrella of contemporary art, see the entry on Corbet (2019).

3. Stephen Gilchrist and Henry F. Skerritt, “Awakening Objects and Indigenizing the Museum,” *Contemporaneity: Historical Presence in Visual Culture* 5, no. 1 (2016): 108–121.

4. See also Ivan Muñiz-Reed, “Thoughts on Curatorial Practices in the Decolonial Turn,” *Broadsheet* 45, no. 2 (2016): 16.

5. Quentin Sprague, “After ‘Sovereignty,’” *The Monthly*, May 17, 2017.

6. Corbet’s contribution to the book frequently refers to the concepts of the Global North and the Global South in order to evoke “a relational or topological connectivity,” rather than a simple geographic division (24). While the author identifies hegemonic, Western ideologies as inherent to the Global North, he (rather vaguely) aligns the Global South with “marginalised groups” and perspectives, arguing that certain communities (particularly Indigenous Australians) may be thought of as “internal Souths” within developed nations (24). For

a comparable use of the concepts Global South and Global North, and a similar ambiguity around these terms' geographic specificity, see the entry on Jean and John Comaroff (2012).

7. For a similar argument about the postmodern embrace of Aboriginal art as a global contemporary art form, see the entry on McLean (2011).

Canada

Anna Orton-Hatzis

If decolonization is interpreted as any act that challenges colonial rule, then acts of decolonization on the territory known today as Canada have been manifold and diverse since after the War of 1812, when the British agenda towards Indigenous nations shifted from one of relative allyship and acculturation to one of assimilation and colonialism.¹ However, in the context of art history in Canada, the discourse of decolonization is far more recent. One can trace its roots to the Indigenous Rights Movement of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s and identify key Indigenous artists who called for recognition and inclusion into the art historical canon: Daphne Odjig (1919–2016), Bill Reid (1920–1998), Kenojuak Ashevak (1927–2013), and Norval Morrisseau (1932–2007), among others.

These calls for inclusion by living artists coincided with demands for more thoughtful and accurate representation of Indigenous material culture in the museum and in art historical narratives. For instance, landmark exhibitions of Indigenous material culture, such as the widely praised Indians of Canada Pavilion at Montreal's Expo 67 or the harshly criticized Glenbow Museum exhibition "The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples" (1988), each illustrated the failings of an ethnographic voice and the need for greater consultation with Indigenous representa-

tives when displaying Indigenous material culture. Indeed, the criticism of "The Spirit Sings" was so acute that it resulted in the creation of the 1992 Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples. Its main recommendation was to increase the involvement of Indigenous representatives in the curation of Indigenous material culture, to increase access to museum collections and to create clearer paths towards repatriation of human remains and sacred objects from museum collections.² The Task Force may be considered emblematic of a shift within the discourse on Indigenous art in Canada: from calls by activists for recognition and inclusion to demands for greater self-determination and agency over the representation and custodianship of Indigenous material culture. These calls for greater self-determination have joined a broader, long-standing movement for Indigenous sovereignty over Indigenous lands, languages, and culture.

Today, decolonial discourse seems to have shifted once again. Although there remains a need for greater diversity and inclusion of Indigenous art, artists, and material culture within Canadian art institutions, decolonization now seems to denote the need for a greater systematic overhaul of the structures of power that continue to enforce the hegemony of settler colonialism. For some activists, such as Anishinaabe cura-

tor at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Wanda Nanibush, this means an Indigenization of the museum wherein Indigenous perspectives, ideas, and values are foregrounded in her curatorial approach. For others, decolonization necessitates the rejection of the museum altogether. Indeed, some young Indigenous artists and curators in Canada have looked for alternatives to the museum, such as the growing number of street artist collectives or the Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace (AbTeC) arts collective who turn their gaze away from the past to create instead imaginary futures in sovereign, Indigenous cyberspace.

Keywords: Indigenous sovereignty; self-representation; diversity and inclusion; structural change; self-determination and agency; the ethnographic; Indigenized museums; authenticity; imaginary Indian; essentialism; multivocality; hybridity; Indigenous voice; Indigenous curatorship; repatriation; fugitive Indigeneity; imaginary futures; Indigenous cyberspace

Marcia Crosby, “Construction of the Imaginary Indian,” in *Vancouver Anthology: A Project of the Or Gallery*, ed. Stan Douglas (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1991), 266–291.

Marcia Crosby, an academic of Haida-Tsimshian descent, published this article shortly after graduating with a BA in art history from the University of British Columbia. It has since become required reading for Indigenous studies and Canadian art history classes alike. Writing in the wake of postcolonial theorists such as Linda Nochlin, Edward Said, and Gayatri Spivak, Crosby was among the first to apply a postcolonial lens to the study of Canadian art. In so doing, Crosby identifies what she coins the “Imaginary Indian”—a reference to Linda Nochlin’s article “The Imaginary Orient” (1983).³ She argues that at its core, the Imaginary Indian is a construction—a stereotypical and often self-contradictory view of Indians that serves as a foil or Other in Western discourses of art (and beyond).

As an undergraduate, Crosby had noted the frequency of stereotypical images of Indigenous peoples in historical Canadian paintings: “For the most part, the ‘Indians’ I encountered were Eurocentric constructions of either the bloodthirsty savage, or passive, colonized Indian-as-landscape.” (272) Crosby makes evident that these representations are far from politically neutral. By placing these images in their respective historical contexts, she reveals the function of these stereotypical images and their reinforcement of the dominant narratives of colonial discourse in Canada. For example, Crosby shows how the Irish-born Canadian painter Paul Kane (1810–1871) contributed to the myth of the “vanishing race” (the perception that Indigenous peoples and their way of life were doomed to extinction). Kane was explicit in his mission, seeking to paint portraits of Indigenous peoples and their customs to create a record of what he believed to be “a dying people” (274).

Crosby shows how Kane’s insistence on their mass extinction perpetuates a myth of the Americas as *terra nullius*, legally unoccupied (or soon to be unoccupied) territory available for conquest. Moreover, his paintings suggest the contradictory myth that there exists an authentic Indigenous way of life—one relegated to the past and incompatible with modernity. This widespread perception of Indigenous incompatibility with the modern, industrial world serves as justification for the denial of rights and land to Indigenous communities. Kane’s paintings also position him, like the anthropologists he was adjacent to, as an expert on Indigenous ways of life. In a further contradiction, the material culture and heritage of Indigenous peoples was seen as worth saving (what Crosby calls the “salvage paradigm”), and this justified its extensive removal from lived culture (274).

In “Construction of the Imaginary Indian,” Marcia Crosby reveals a historical lineage of Canadian painters invested in these same narratives. Generations of artists in Canada have continued to perpetuate these harmful tropes in their works, including Emily Carr (1871–1945) and Jack Shadbolt (1909–1998). Carr’s celebrated oeuvre, for instance,

appropriates Northwest Coast imagery as a means of creating a recognizable, regional style for herself—co-opting Indigenous art (literally and figuratively) within the guise of Canadian heritage (278). Her achievement is thus to illustrate an alternative narrative to the dominant discourse on some of the most famous Canadian artists by successfully injecting a critical awareness of colonial history into the country’s art historical canon.

Crosby’s foundational essay has stood the test of time as an early foray into postcolonial art history and her work continues to be frequently referenced by art historians, curators, and artists alike. Most recently, Sobey Prize–nominated contemporary artist Sonny Assu explicitly references her work in his series “Interventions On The Imaginary” (2014–), which digitally hijacks paintings by Emily Carr. In his artist’s statement he directly alludes to Crosby’s essay: “These interventions participate in the growing discourse of decolonization, acting as ‘tags’ to challenging the colonial fantasy of *terra nullius* and confronting the dominant colonial culture’s continued portrayal of Indigenous peoples as a vanishing race.”⁴ Despite being written nearly three decades ago, Crosby’s essay remains relevant to even the most radical post- and decolonial practices in art today. Her article has been foundational for its insistence on recognizing and incorporating Indigenous artists into the canon of Canadian art and for simultaneously calling for the revision of the damaging, stereotypical narratives that so often describe Indigenous art. More recently, however, her work appears to be more introductory, because the discourse has moved beyond calls for inclusion and revisionism.

Skawennati Tricia Fragnito, “Five Suggestions for Better Living,” in *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery*, ed. Lynda Jessup and Shannon Bagg (Hull, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2002), 229–237.

Mohawk artist, independent curator, and Indigenous rights activist Skawennati Tricia Fragnito presents five concrete recommen-

dations for the future success and promotion of Indigenous art in museums and galleries. Although her recommendations are straightforward, they respond to decades-long debates about the treatment of Indigenous art—beginning with the fraught definition of “Native art” itself. Fragnito outlines best practices for art institutions and their curators by drawing from her personal experience as both an artist and curator who, from the very beginning of her career, has had to negotiate this category. She advocates institutional practices that would enable a more equitable and diverse distribution of resources to Indigenous artists, her goal being to encourage art institutions of all kinds to address the lack of professional (and paid) opportunities for artistic and career development that are currently available to Indigenous artists.

Fragnito’s first stipulation is that “any art made by a Native person is Native Art” (230). She rejects any definition that might impose expectations or restrict Native art to subject matters or materials deemed “authentically” Native. Artists are encouraged to broaden their practice and to spurn all notions of a homogenizing “Native authenticity,” since the term harkens back to an antiquated and racist anthropological discourse that seeks to measure Indigeneity through a blood quantum. As an artist of mixed ancestry, Fragnito recommends that Indigenous artists also make art that relates to the parts of their identity that are not Indigenous—such as their non-Indigenous spouses or adoptive parents. She emphatically claims that this should under no circumstances result in their being considered any less Native, because it is the diversity of their unique perspective and life experiences that will make for better art while also challenging the expectations for art made by Indigenous peoples (231).

Despite being someone who benefitted from equal opportunity initiatives during the 1980s, Fragnito proclaims, in her second stipulation, that “the time for exclusively Native group exhibitions is over” (232). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, group shows played an important role in building community among artists and in showing the breadth of the works being made by

Indigenous artists. Today, however, shows organized around Indigenous ethnicity can be essentializing and risk becoming insular. One's peer group should be *all* artists.

The three subsequent recommendations all address the curation of Indigenous art. Number three, "more solo shows for Native artists" (233), is self-evident. Her final two suggestions are that exhibitions in general should be organized thematically: "include a non-Native artist in your next show" and "include a Native artist in your next show" (234, 235). Her hope is that curators will pick artists whose works respond to a curatorial theme or question, rather than selecting artists on the basis of their ethnicity (even though this seems to be what the last two of her demands imply).

"Five Suggestions for Better Living" presents the art world with five concise ways to tangibly improve the opportunities available to Indigenous artists. Nearly twenty years later, it would seem that most of her recommendations have been adopted by Canadian institutions. Indigenous artists have been nominated for (and won) highly coveted Sobey Awards, represented Canada at international biennials, and received solo exhibitions in Canada's most prestigious museums and galleries. But in the decades since the publication of Fragnito's essay, younger artists and curators have called for a more radical rejection of the systems to which she sought entrance, including for example, the young artists contributing to Canada's burgeoning Indigenous street art movement. Today, it is possible to see the limitations of her calls for diversity and inclusion, which seem dependent on the goodwill of a handful of individual curators, and to envisage more thoroughgoing structural changes to address racism and the legacy of colonialism.

Ruth B. Phillips, "Commemoration/ (de)celebration: Super-shows and the Decolonization of Canadian Museums, 1967–92," in *Postmodernism and the Ethical Subject*, ed. Barbara Gabriel and Suzan Ilcan (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 99–124.

Canadian art historian and curator Ruth Phillips sets out to describe the changes in relationship that occurred between Canadian museums and Indigenous nations between 1967 and 1992. To do this, she looks at four case studies of Indigenous art exhibitions: Montreal's Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo 67; "The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples" (1988), held at the Glenbow Museum, created for the Calgary Winter Olympics; "Indigena" (1992) at the Canadian Museum of History, then known as the Canadian Museum of Civilization; and "Land, Spirit, Power" (1992) at the National Gallery of Canada. Throughout her description and comparison of these exhibitions, Phillips is keen to celebrate the progress towards what she terms an "ethics of multivocality" (99). According to Phillips, successful postcolonial exhibitions include many voices and perspectives and thus necessitate a collaborative process between archaeologists, ethnographers, curators, art historians, and Indigenous communities.

Through a brief comparison of the four exhibitions—their successes and their failures—the reader gleans a list of guiding principles for what Phillips calls "revisionist exhibitions" of Indigenous arts in Canada (119). For example, she praises the Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo 67 for decentering colonial narratives of history by emphasizing lived Indigenous cultures and by rejecting the typical ethnographic voice in wall texts—for example, by replacing the third person with "you" and "we" (108). Although the pavilion presented contemporary artists whose works conveyed a nuanced and accurate vision of Indigenous life in Canada, Phillips criticized its exclusion of female artists and organizers (108).

When analyzing the controversial exhibition "The Spirit Sings" (on whose curatorial team she served), Phillips first describes the exhibition and then the criticism levelled at the show by Aboriginal protestors—namely, its appropriation of Indigenous artifacts to present a vision of Canadian identity internationally, and its problematic corporate sponsor, Shell Oil (110–12). Yet the author neglects any discussion of the dubious prov-

enance of many of the hundreds of loaned pieces of Indigenous material culture, which were borrowed largely from private collections worldwide and which were a primary motivation for the exhibition's boycott. Phillips seems to justify "The Spirit Sings" as a catalyst for the subsequent 1989 Task Force on Museums and First Peoples (in which she also participated) and yet is inconclusive when evaluating the latter's effectiveness as compared to the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act in the United States (113).

Phillips suggests that the two 1992 exhibitions, both by highly influential Indigenous curators, attempted to respond to the criticism waged against "The Spirit Sings." At the National Gallery, artist-curator Robert Houle situated Indigenous art in the present and celebrated the breadth and diversity of Indigenous contemporary art to a wider Canadian audience, while Gerald McMaster's vision at the Canadian Museum of Civilization was to foreground Indigenous perspectives on colonialism through an exhibition of largely material culture. Both curators sought to reinterpret Indigenous art and material culture within two of Canada's largest museums (a stone's throw from Parliament Hill); in 1992 these efforts were *avant-garde*, even while they also looked back to the achievements of the pavilion at Expo 67.

Writing over a decade after these two exhibitions, Ruth Phillips's historical account of decolonial curating in art institutions in Canada between 1967 and 1992 seems incomplete. It is strange that her article culminates with the creation of the Task Force and the promise of the Task Force Report, but without addressing its recommendations and how they might reflect the strengths and weaknesses of her four case studies. Indeed, it would seem that the report's contents would be the paramount information to convey to the broader, international readership who would read a volume titled *Postmodernism and the Ethical Subject*. This is perhaps the motivation behind Phillips's longer 2011 book on the subject that outlines a broader history of Indigenous art in Canadian Museums.

Ruth B. Phillips, *Museum Pieces: Towards the Indigenization of Canadian Museums* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011).

Seven years after contributing a chapter to Gabriel and Ilcan's *Postmodernism and the Ethical Subject* (2004), Ruth Phillips expands on the topic of decolonizing Canadian institutions in her full-length, four-part book *Museum Pieces*. Using the same method of case study exhibitions, Phillips aims to chart the "Indigenization" of museums in Canada (8). For Phillips, Canadian and Indigenous curatorial practice has evolved since the late 1960s, culminating in a pluralistic and hybrid model of the museum. Indigenized museums maintain many characteristics of the dominant Western model while simultaneously adopting Indigenous practices, such as a more democratic and collaborative consultation process with Indigenous advisors. For Phillips, decolonial practice consists largely of efforts to foster greater diversity and inclusion within Canadian museums.

In Part One, Phillips outlines what she terms a "mini-history of change" in Canada, beginning in 1967 where she identifies a critical shift away from the "settler museum" (24, 26). This section includes discussions of Expo 67, "The Spirit Sings," and the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, largely mirroring her 2004 chapter in *Postmodernism*. In Part Two, Phillips turns to exhibitions that rethink the museum, subjecting it to the insights of poststructuralism and postcolonial theory. The section begins with her popular chapter about categorization and museum taxonomy, "How Museums Marginalize," in which she questions museum naming strategies, including their reliance on distinctions between categories such as "art" and "ethnography." The section ends with two chapters on the topic of repatriation that briefly outline the history of the removal of Indigenous objects since contact and thereby contextualize the successful repatriation of specific objects from Canadian museums and beyond, including the return of Onkwehonwe medicine masks from the Harvard Peabody Museum. In Part Three, Phillips argues that

some exhibitions of Indigenous art can have transformative political effects on the communities they represent, such as when the exhibition of Islamic art, titled the “Spirit of Islam” at Museum of Anthropology at UBC, coincidentally opened shortly after the fall of the World Trade Center. The exhibition stood as a symbol of solidarity with Islamic communities in Vancouver against the growing Islamophobic backlash they faced after 9/11. In Part Four, she describes a range of recent exhibitions that exemplify a hybridized, collaborative curatorial model for the Indigenous museum.

As always, Phillips is optimistic: the Canadian approach to repatriation is not perfect, but museums are making progress. She is sympathetic—perhaps too sympathetic—to the difficulties faced by museum curators confronted with the challenging task of creating exhibitions that please museum goers, Indigenous advisors and activists, and students steeped in institutional critique. In the preface to *Museum Pieces*, she stages this struggle in a fictional conversation between her two halves, the curator and the academic. She expresses her frustration with idealistic student critics who start from the assumption that “any representation in a museum obviously ha[s] to be an example of neo-colonial and hegemonic oppression” and who fail to account for the practical limitations that curators encounter (17). In response, Phillips comes to the defense of curators. She implies that most anticipate the criticism their exhibitions will face but that, essentially, they do their best within the limitations of the museum. She seems to believe that student critics are naïve and do not fully comprehend the realities of a collecting institution.

And yet, if museum curators are unable to respond to criticism due to the confines of the museum itself (particularly if this criticism can be anticipated), shouldn't the museum model be reconsidered entirely? Perhaps more significantly, if museum curators are unable to address criticism from the next generation, this doesn't mean that solutions simply don't exist. Rather, it implies that the current generation of curators will not be the ones to

find them. Student idealism and naïveté may be, intentionally or not, a thorn in the side of curators—but these qualities may also foster more creative solutions to the “complicated situations” Phillips describes (17).

Jarrett Martineau and Eric Ritskes, “Fugitive Indigeneity: Reclaiming the Terrain of Decolonial Struggle Through Indigenous Art,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 1 (2014): i–xii.

In their introduction to the special issue “Indigenous Art, Aesthetics and Decolonial Struggle,” Indigenous scholar Jarrett Martineau and *Decolonization* journal co-founder Eric Ritskes succinctly chart how the term “fugitive indigeneity” has been mobilized in decolonial discourse on art in recent years. They begin with the claim that “indigenous art is inherently political” (i). Indigenous art should first and foremost be understood as a means of resistance to settler colonialism; second, this means of resistance (and resurgence) can be viewed through the lens of what they term a “fugitive aesthetic,” an idea they develop from Anishinaabe cultural theorist Gerald Vizenor. In their own words:

Indigenous art evokes a fugitive aesthetic that, in its decolonial ruptural forms, refuses the struggle for better or more inclusion and recognition [...] and, instead, chooses refusal and flight as modes of freedom. [...] The freedom realized through flight and refusal is the freedom to imagine and create an elsewhere in the here; a present future beyond the imaginative and territorial bounds of colonialism. (iv)

In other words, the authors reveal how the qualities associated with the fugitive—such as the ability to evade or to keep in constant motion—equally describe the strategies that Indigenous artists employ to successfully challenge the structural hegemony of settler colonialism.

According to Martineau and Ritskes, these strategies are currently being used to subvert the settler colonial expectations or

limitations placed on Indigenous artists, as analyzed in several of the volume's contributing articles. For example, Susan D. Dion and Angela Salamanca illustrate how Indigenous art may remap or reinscribe Indigenous presence in urban areas—challenging, for instance, the perception that Indigenous peoples cannot be modern (vii).⁵ When these fugitive artistic tactics are connected to the fight for Indigenous land rights, languages, and culture, the authors claim that “art reveals its power in fugitive motion by disrupting and reconfiguring the normative order of sensible experience” (x). In other words, the power of Indigenous art is not only a power to represent or reveal settler colonial inequalities or injustices, but rather to find alternatives to the structures of power that uphold them.

By contextualizing their introduction in relation to earlier post- and decolonial contributions to the discourse on Indigenous art, Martineau and Ritskes seem to implicitly argue against earlier models that sought to amend or reform existing art institutions. Accordingly, this article does not call for inclusion, diversity, or revision, but rather acknowledges the potential for Indigenous art to resist, dismantle, and ultimately create alternatives that “liberate Indigenous lands, languages and lifeways” (x). As such, this thinking seems more in line with the current discourse on anti-racism in the academy. Indeed, Crystal Marie Fleming, professor of sociology and Africana studies at Stony Brook University, makes this evident in her now viral tweet: academia's version of “thoughts and prayers” is “diversity and inclusion.”⁶ In other words, they are simply not enough.

Jason Edward Lewis, “A Better Dance and Better Prayers: Systems, Structures, and the Future Imaginary in Aboriginal New Media,” in *Coded Territories: Tracing Indigenous Pathways in New Media Art*, ed. Steven Loft and Kerry Swanson (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2014), 49–77.

Jason Edward Lewis, a Hawaiian and Samoan digital media artist, poet, and

software designer, investigates cyberspace as a means of creating Indigenous place in imaginary futures. Much like his work as co-director of the Initiative for Indigenous Futures, this essay responds to the mistaken perception that Indigenous peoples belong to the past and therefore cannot be modern, let alone technologically literate. He points out that in many of the dominant cultural modes of staging future imaginaries, such as science fiction and videogames, Indigenous people have long been excluded from representation. For Lewis, it is increasingly important to challenge this perception: “Our absence from the future imaginaries of the settler culture should worry us. Absence implies non-existence, or, at the very least, non-importance. A people that are absent in the future need not be consulted in the present about how that future comes about.” (58) In other words, a lack of Indigenous representation in imagined futures might negatively impact upon how their voices are considered in real-life future planning.

Lewis describes how Indigenous peoples have recently adopted cyberspace as a means to fill this gap in representation. In 2008, Lewis and Skawennati Fragnito created the collective Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace (AbTeC) that sought to meld Indigenous storytelling techniques with video game design, through workshops that encourage Indigenous youth to create video games. On the one hand, AbTeC provides technical knowledge to a whole new generation of media producers who were given the means to create videogames featuring characters that look and sound like them. On the other, AbTeC also offers a new and exciting way to digitally preserve Indigenous oral histories, traditions, and languages. As Lewis notes, Indigenous youth were already invested in these online platforms and social networks, and so these workshops became a way for them to become producers of online culture rather than simply consumers (64).

The author gives examples of artists who have turned to cyberspace as a means to imagine a utopian, Indigenous future. In the early 2000s, Fragnito created the series Time Traveller™ using a platform called

machinima, which appropriates real-time computer-generated animations (such as those of the online game *Second Life*) to create cinematic productions (70). The ten episodes followed *Hunter*, a young Mohawk man from the future, who time travels back to participate in ten important moments in the history of Turtle Island (an Indigenous term for North America). By exploring events as disparate as an Aztec festival in 1490 and the 1990 Oka Crisis, *Hunter's* adventures foreground an Indigenous perspective and create an engaging way to interact with the past through an imagined future (69). The series thus reappropriates history from a future, Indigenous point of view, by harnessing an aesthetic of “future-retro” (70).

Both *Fragrito* and *Lewis* aim to create sovereign Indigenous places in cyberspace as a new and postcolonial means of self-representation. Together, they have found ways to adapt new technologies to inspire and empower their communities. And yet, as *Lewis* acknowledges, these approaches remain reliant on Western computational sciences: “What happens when we seriously approach the problem of designing and building computational paradigms based on different epistemological structures—Mohawk or Cherokee, for example? Would such systems even be recognizable as ‘computational’?” (71) Nevertheless, their experiments make a first step towards a more equitable Indigenous presence in cyberspace; the next would be greater Indigenous influence over the broader computational structures that underlie these videogames, social networks, and animated series. *Lewis* doesn’t suggest what these might look like, but *AbTeC* and *Time Traveller™* provide two models for a public, decolonial art practice that escapes the boundaries of object-centered museums by creating a story-centered, sovereign space in imaginary futures.

1. For an in-depth discussion of this shift, see Mark Aquash, “First Nations in Canada: Decolonization and Self-Determination,” *in education* 19, no. 2 (Autumn 2013): 120–137.

2. Assembly of First Nations and Canadian Museums Association, “Task Force Report on Museums and

First Peoples,” *Museum Anthropology* 16, no. 2 (June 1992): 12–20.

3. Linda Nochlin, “The Imaginary Orient,” *Art in America* 71, no. 5 (May 1983): 118–131, 186–191.

4. Sonny Assu, “Interventions On The Imaginary,” accessed June 19, 2020, <https://www.sonnnyassu.com/pages/interventions-on-the-imaginary>.

5. Susan D. Dion and Angela Salamanca, “inVISIBILITY: Indigenous in the City: Indigenous Artists, Indigenous Youth and the Project of Survivance,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 1 (2014): 159–188.

6. Professor Fleming (@alwaystheself), Twitter, June 5, 2020.

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