

THE IMPACT OF COLONIALISM ON INDIGENOUS ART

Anirban Dhar,

Asst. Professor, Department of Visual Arts, Graphic Era Hill University,
Dehradun Uttarakhand India

ABSTRACT

The colonizer's world did not exclude indigenous aesthetics entirely. However, throughout the vast majority of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it was considered 'primitive art.' "Ethnographic objects were thought to have come before the great "art" traditions of Western civilization in an evolutionary sense." In the framework of developing a 'national' culture distinct from the imperial core, indigenous aesthetic designs began to emerge in settlement structures, on stamps, coins, and other tangible goods. In addition, understanding is born out of the interdependence and inseparability of the human, spiritual, and material realms.

KEYWORDS: contemporary, Indigenous, art,

INTRODUCTION

Supporters of the Standing Rock Sioux and their efforts to block construction of the Dakota Access oil pipeline (DAPL) flocked to the streets on November 15, 2016, a "National Day of Action," from New York to Los Angeles. The tribe's water supply, according to tribal authorities, is in grave danger, and the pipeline's projected 1,172-mile length will destroy or harm dozens of sites of spiritual or historical value. Less than a mile from the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota, thousands of Native Americans and their allies camped out along the pipeline's path from April 2016 to February 2017. As of this writing, the camps had been dismantled, but the Trump administration had announced its intent to complete construction of the pipeline as part of a larger rollback of environmental regulations that included the United States' withdrawal from the Paris 2015 climate pact. Regardless of how this crisis ends up playing out, the widespread support for the DAPL opposition movement has elevated issues of Indigenous sovereignty and land and water rights to the forefront of the public consciousness in the United States to a degree not seen since the standoff at Wounded Knee in 1973.¹ Another concern is whether or not the public's attention can be kept on such critical problems. The ongoing abrogation of the rights of Indigenous peoples in North America is one of the ugly foundational truths exposed by the protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) and the broader Idle No More movement, which began in Canada in 2012 and spread to the United States in 2014.

The Aboriginal Memorial in 1988 effectively summarizes many of the ideas presented here. Although they used a time-honored medium steeped in history and symbolism, the artists conveyed a message that was very modern and political via their installation. Indigenous artists like Canadian Gitksan elder and artist Doreen Jensen have stated that dividing Indigenous visual art into "traditional" and "contemporary" categories is "at best irrelevant; at worst... racist". The Aboriginal Memorial 1988, which employs a traditional artistic mode, reminds viewers, Indigenous and anyone, of the need of addressing the legacy of colonialism. It does two things: it validates the importance of Indigenous law and culture, and it challenges the seemingly undisputed sovereignty of the Australian state. The link between Indigenous art and the settler colonial nations examined in this chapter is deeply entangled with ideas of colonial and postcolonial identities, law, colonialism, and sovereignty. While many Indigenous artists may have divergent views on topics like the value of art, feminism, multiculturalism, and political activism, they often share a focus on issues like "resistance, the struggle for sovereignty, and the right to perform traditional cultural practices; [and] analyses of the use of symbols of native heritages in ways that are not necessarily respectful," as Farris points out in her review of the US exhibition *Visual Power: 21st Century Native American Artists/Intellectuals*. An entry point for comprehending the connection between visual criminology and Indigenous art is provided by the triad of sovereignty, power, and resistance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mariah Ribeiro (2020) Scholars have been able to re-contextualize American history in recent decades thanks to post-colonial theory, calling into question the legendary narrative of the United

States' creation and settlement. This comprehensive understanding of settler colonialism's effects necessitates collective responsibility for eradicating colonial legacies in the Americas. This new perspective naturally leads to questions about the arts, such as how visual arts and its institutions operate in the settler-colonial setting of North America. Native American artists are in a unique position to help remove the colonial heritage of art institutions since they are the targets of current settler-colonialism. This article delves into how modern indigenous artists are challenging Western art canons, colonial histories, and the assumptions of non-Native museum-goers to become a vanguard of postcolonial interrogation of the art museum. My argument is that Native American artists are able to achieve this portrayal by embedding a message of indigenous resilience and self-determination within their work, and that this is why indigenous forms of self-representation are crucial to the development of a successful post-colonial art discourse. By analyzing the works included in Jeffery Gibson's recent show *Like A Hammer*, I want to demonstrate how the experience of survival may be utilized to question, reappropriate, destroy, and ultimately recreate (re)presentations of indigeneity beyond the mythologized "Indian." So, this article takes a close look at how indigenous peoples' continued existence challenges settler-colonial canons and museum exhibits.

Dr Vanessa Russ (2020) With the goal of stimulating more research into the Australian Aboriginal art in the Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt Collection at The University of Western Australia, this essay contributes to the continuing conversation about a New Art History. The ongoing difficulty of figuring out how to properly include Aboriginal art into an Australian and, by extension, European art history is a symptom of the lack of study into the topic and Australia's position as a colony within this discourse. Aboriginal art is still considered a parallel history, despite the fact that it has been the subject of many academic articles, museum exhibits, and anthologies. The goal of concentrating on Aboriginal and Asian art is to generate fresh thoughts while maintaining some degree of order in the form of a single collection.

Francesca V. Mateo (2016) The Philippines were colonized by the Spanish and the Americans for a combined 350 years. The Philippines gained its independence from the United States in 1946, but the colonial mentality (CM) of its people has not changed much in that time. For many Filipinos, CM manifests as an unconscious bias toward European and American culture and an outright rejection of everything indigenous to their own country. Filipinos exhibit certain characteristics of a CM, yet there are other Filipinos who are actively resisting CM via Philippine art. Filipino visual art, literature, music, and dance that celebrates Philippine culture are all considered forms of Philippine art. Through this study, we learn that members of the Philippine art scene are aware of the lasting influence of colonialism on the country's current aesthetic norms and practices.

Margaret Bruchac (2014) Indigenous communities all around the globe have maintained unique worldviews gleaned from accumulated cultural knowledge and used to shape interactions between humans and other species in their own environments. The term for the corpus of information that emerges through such exchanges and comprehensions is indigenous knowledge, which is also known as traditional knowledge or aboriginal knowledge. Archaeologists digging at Indigenous sites may find material evidence of Indigenous knowledge, but the significance of this evidence may be lost on non-Indigenous or non-local investigators. Because they frequently include crucial information that may assist evaluate and contextualize scientific facts, indigenous traditions may be a wonderful resource for scholars. Still, it is imperative that archaeologists take special care to avoid disturbing sensitive materials, sacred sites, ritual landscapes, or valuable relics. Researchers must work with Indigenous knowledge-keepers from the area to ensure ethical behavior and prevent any harm from coming to culturally important sites or practices.

INDIGENOUS ART, VISUAL CRIMINOLOGY

When used to the field of visual criminology, Indigenous art raises a number of questions and challenges. Understand that Indigenous visual "art" is not always of high quality compared to that of the West. "Among the ancient languages there is no term for 'art,'" Iroquois artist Tom Hill claims. The majority of Aboriginal art has some kind of functional purpose. Every object had a specific function for the North American Indian, and the entire concept of displaying artwork on a wall was unheard of. Yolgnu elder Galarrwuy Yunupingu said, "Painting is our foundation," which is another way of saying the same thing. The Europeans have deemed it art. The Western argument for labeling Indigenous art as primitive, as artefact rather than Art, was in part based on the fact that its

functioning was separated from the greater cosmological and ontological implications. To paraphrase, "as material culture objects they were viewed as having functional roles in their producing societies that had nothing to do with the [aesthetic] categories established by Western art history."

There are no clear lines to draw between the visual and performing arts. For instance, in the Australian East Kimberleys, during the Krill Krill dances, participants carry painted boards on their shoulders depicting mythical stories of ancestors and their lands. These boards were originally discarded after the dance ceremonies, but they have since become popular pieces of Aboriginal art that are produced and collected by enthusiasts (Caruana, 2000). Richard Bell's artwork "Scientia E Metaphysica (Bell's Theorum) or Aboriginal Art" depicts the Western appropriation and commercialization of Indigenous art. Simply said, "It's a White Thing." ¹ Even yet, there was never any simplicity to this appropriation. Artists such as Rover Thomas used the accounts of colonial atrocities of the native Gija people as inspiration for their paintings based on the Krill Krill dances (Caruana, 2000).

Carrabine (2012: 465) draws on Becker and Bourdieu to address the future of visual criminology and concludes that "ultimately, the origins of artistic worth do not reside in the artworks themselves, but in the social institutions in which they are produced and consumed." Despite their disagreements, both Becker and Bourdieu are interested in how art is shaped by the interactions of its audiences. Indigenous art, as I have said before, "unshackles colonial law as an abstract expression of power and grounds it firmly in the lived experiences of Aboriginal people." Artists of indigenous communities often explore themes of colonialism, legality, and the penal system. Their accounts document and illuminate the mechanisms of an oppressive state creation and the many responses to it. This material is significant as an expression and critique of the colonizing process because it serves as both a record of historical events like massacres, segregation, and the denial of civil and political rights and a continuing postcolonial critique of the results of colonization and racial discrimination in the present day. The picture becomes an important resource for analyzing the nature of oppression and the outlines of resistance.

It offers this, and more besides, especially when it comes to concerns of ontology, epistemology, and Indigenous law. In a civilization that has never relied on written language for the transmission of law, indigenous art takes on a unique significance. When compared to the commodity status of art in today's capitalist countries, the image's hallowed importance in this setting is striking. The question therefore arises as to whether or not the cultural outputs of the Indigenous world are incommensurable with 'art' as it is regarded in Western eyes.

GENOCIDE, MASS INCARCERATION AND COLONIAL PENALTY

Mounted papers, maps, and photographs convey the tale of "What Ever Happened to the Native People?" in a show at Austin's Texas State History Museum. Several hundred 'groups' (not countries) had been whittled down to just a few by the 1860s, we are informed. One by one, the stories of the Karankawa, whose last remaining members were killed when "a Texan force attacked and killed the last remaining band," the Tonkawa, whose numbers were reduced when "some Texans distraught over Indian raids attacked the reservation and killed many of the residents," and the Lipan Apache, whose numbers were reduced when "the army killed virtually all the remaining Lipan," are told. Of the Comanche, "the few who survived were deported to a reservation in New Mexico;" of the Caddo, "the once powerful Caddo survived but today the majority no longer live in Texas;" and of the Kiowa, "who also survived but were forced onto reservations outside of Texas and then settled in Oklahoma." The colonists' belief that the Indians' eradication was essential to the success of the colonies comes closest to describing genocide in the history of Indigenous peoples.

The Native Americans occupy a minor role in the triumphalist exhibits that dominate the Texas Museum. Killing large numbers of Indigenous peoples is an uncomfortable part of the narrative of nation creation in every settler colonial society.⁴ Similar to how the dominance of liberal and social democratic traditions in the 20th century clashes awkwardly with long-standing legacies of racial discrimination and coerced assimilation. However, Indigenous art often deals with taboo topics like these hidden histories (Cunneen, 2010). The Mori artist Robyn Kahukiwa captures these ideas well in her painting "Tangata Whenua - Still Here," which focuses on the concepts of survival and unwavering sovereignty.

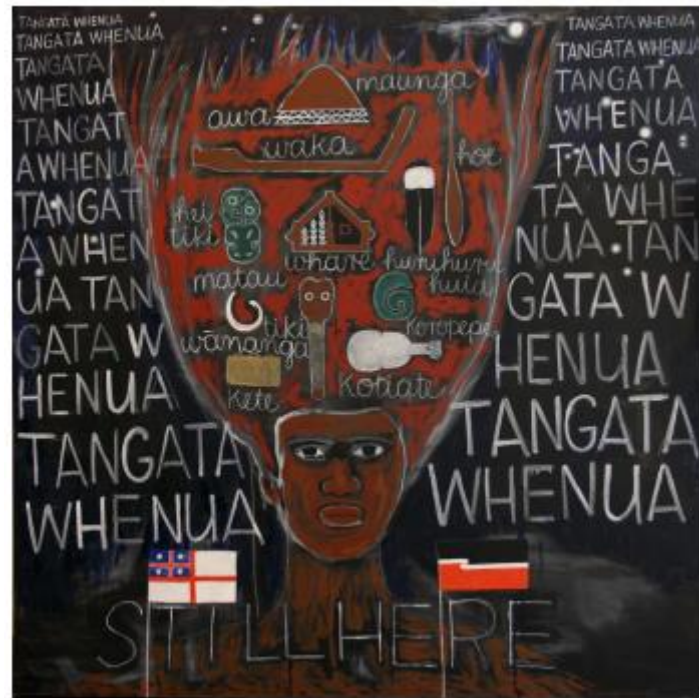


Image 4 Robyn Kahukiwa 'Tangata Whenua – Still Here', 2015.

The social Darwinist prediction of the extinction of indigenous peoples has not come to pass. However, under settler colonial nations, just being "still here" means you are automatically liable to mass incarceration (Cunneen & Tauri, 2016). Michelle Brown says, "subjects still find ways to make their existence visible," in reference to those who are incarcerated in large numbers. Counter-images of carcerality provide a challenge to "our understandings of penal institutions, penal subjectivities, and their relationship to the state" (2014: 180), as they are produced by prisoners, community members, academics, and activists in response to mass imprisonment. As Cunneen (2010) points out, Indigenous art has offered an alternative perspective on criminal justice problems such as incarceration, police brutality, and inmate fatalities. Furthermore, Brown (2014: 178) argues that we need to broaden our view of carceral settings and criminal subjects in order to comprehend "the many configurations of confinement across neoliberal landscapes" and the visual battles that are inscribed within them. Indigenous art has a lot to offer in this regard. While indigenous depictions of punishment provide a challenge to the current system of mass imprisonment, they do so within the context of the cumulative effects of many carceral regimes intrinsic to the colonial endeavor.

One of the most important forms of colonial punishment was the institutionalization of segregation on government reserves and church missions for Indigenous peoples. The penal systems of the reserves and missions operated independently of the regular criminal justice system. Australia's protectors and superintendents, for instance, had broad legal authority to control everything about the lives of Aboriginal people living on reservations, including whether or not children should be institutionalized, food distribution, marriage and family structure, employment and financial opportunities, access to savings accounts, and even where they could and could not live. Indigenous reserves under European management had their own police force, judicial system, and penal system.

It is unclear, according to a more nuanced analysis of colonial penalty (Cunneen et al., 2013: 36-37), whether recent shifts in incarceration indicate a break with earlier eras or, alternatively, show continuity in a penal complex that specifically targeted Indigenous peoples through various forms of confinement. The premise of the "mass incarceration" thesis is that liberal welfare measures implemented after World War II gave way to a focus on punishment and confinement in more recent decades. These beliefs are, however, called into question by the connection between the colonial goal and the prison system's past. Wedge's welfare system is a monster that preys on Indigenous families; it is neither helpful nor kind.



Image 5 Harry Wedge, 'Welfare', 1990, National Gallery of Victoria.

Recent debates about a new "penal excess" call for a reconsideration of nineteenth-century penal reform movements, such as the elimination of flogging and the advent of a system that emphasizes reform and rehabilitation rather than punishment. Long after they had been abolished for European criminals in settler colonial states, the practice of harsh physical sanctions against Indigenous people remained. According to Mark Brown's (2014) analysis, the development of the colonial state was predicated on the idea and practice of criminal excess. It is demonstrated that the "novel shifts in penal modernity toward penal excess" that he describes have been there for a long time and were crucial to the development of the modern colonial state. The 'Blood on the Spinifex' exhibition at Melbourne's Ian Potter Museum of Art (Oliver, 2002) provides a glimpse into the way that many Indigenous artists think about the colonial roots of racial selection and criminal excess.

CONCLUSION

In my opinion, Indigenous art provides two important and interconnected additions to the field of visual criminology. Indigenous art, first and foremost, introduces a decolonizing politics, a new way of looking at and being in a world shaped by colonial and neocolonial forces. In reference to Native American women artists, Powhatan artist Phoebe Farris makes the following observation: "[we] have expanded the scope of politically significant art in contemporary United States." The foundation of this alternative viewpoint is the recognition of the inherent value of Indigenous aesthetic and cultural practices. Second, the positivist foundation of criminology is contested by Indigenous methods of knowing. Stories, rituals, and ceremonies are all highly visual and performative forms of information transmission. In addition, understanding is born out of the inseparability and interdependence of the human, spiritual, and material realms. As I have said earlier, criminological discourses might learn something from the study of visual pictures by reflecting on the relative importance we give to various forms of information.

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