Identity and Authenticity: A Study of the Contemporary Native American Experience through the Works of Fritz Scholder and James Luna

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IDENTITY AND AUTHENTICITY: A STUDY OF THE CONTEMPORARY NATIVE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE WORKS OF FRITZ SCHOLDER AND JAMES LUNA

by

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B.A., University of California, Riverside, 2012

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Identity and Authenticity: A Study of the Contemporary Native American Experience through the Works of Fritz Scholder and James Luna 
written by Amanda Renee Saracho 
has been approved for the Department of Art History

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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.
This study aims to address how Fritz Scholder’s *Indian Series* and James Luna’s performance pieces—*The Artifact Piece, Half Mexican/Half Mexican, Indian Tails, Take a Picture with a Real Indian* and *Emendatio*—contributed to a larger study of identity and presence that contemporary Native American artists of the twenty-first century strive to recognize. Scholder’s radical approach to portraying the Native American figure in painting during the mid-twentieth century altered the expectations reserved for Native American artists. Through this change arose a desire for Native artists to not only utilize painting to express their modern existence, but embrace performance and installation. As a performance and installation artist of the late twentieth-century to present, James Luna has sought to disavow the notion of authenticity and instill identity through his contemporary experiences as a Native American artist. I examine how this radical and abrupt shift in Native American artistry inspired currently practicing contemporary Native American artists to invoke sexuality, colonialism, violence and identity through new mediums.
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Mom and Dad I dedicate this to you. This is as much yours as it is mine. I am grateful for every call you answered, letter you sent, visit you made and moment you told me I could do this.
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Introduction

Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, Native American artists exercised the ability to enter the contemporary art world as masters of their mediums and carriers of their dual Native and American heritage. Achieving a balance between the desire to enter the mainstream art world and maintain traditional practices has driven artists, such as Fritz Scholder and James Luna to carve their place in the art world, and the museum. Negotiating their role in the art institution, which has driven the dissemination and selection of Native Art, entailed challenging the fields of art history, anthropology, ethnology, the museum, and history. Together these disciplines govern the role Native American arts and artifacts have held since the mid-nineteenth century.

In the twenty-first century, the exhibition of various contemporary indigenous artists, both independently and with non-indigenous artists, has worked to acknowledge Native art as having a global presence. In 2013 the National Gallery in Canada (NGC) exhibited their summer show *Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art*. The exhibition consisted of 150 recent works of indigenous art by over 80 artists from 16 countries. Showcasing what it means to be indigenous today, participating artists demonstrated the myriad of ways in which an indigenous artist of today questions colonial narratives and present histories. Through placing an emphasis on the homemade, discovering relationships between the spiritual, every day, and uncanny, these artists are able to evoke personal responses and experiences regarding the cultural and political trauma felt over the years of displacement, misrepresentation, and violence. The organization of the exhibition revealed a global perspective by not only exhibiting the works of international indigenous artists, but by also completing this show with the help of an international team of
curatorial advisors. The show’s international acclaim also attested to a push for the exhibiting of indigenous arts on a global and local level to form relationships between the museum and indigenous communities.

_Sakahàn_ maintained its emphasis on building relationships between Native and non-Native communities through inclusive exhibitions that incorporate all forms of artistry, such as beadwork, painting, sculpture, performance, or pottery. In the United States institutions as the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), the Peabody Museum, the Heard Museum, and the Denver Art Museum (DAM) have organized exhibitions that seek to showcase the Native American artist as a contemporary indigenous artist. Exhibitions such as _Remix: New Modernities in a Post-Indian World_ at the NMAI and the Heard Museum in 2008 sought to present works by a younger generation of Native artists. This exhibition captured this group’s mission to move past the restrictions of earlier times and inspire a new connection between Native identity and tribal customs. Their result is a “post-Indian world” that allows for emerging artists to create without limitations of style, medium, content or technique.¹

The politics, current events, and popular culture of the twenty-first century all shape the realities of contemporary Native artists to create art that simultaneously speaks to their heritage and future. Native artist Kent Monkman was one of the fifteen artists whose work was exhibited in _Remix._ The exhibition catalog explains how Monkman’s paintings and performances test the “power dynamics within sexuality to challenge historical assumptions of sovereignty, art, commerce, and colonialism.”² His pointed paintings and performances juxtapose the realities of his past (colonial hegemony, rape, commerce, and violence) with the realities of his present (sexuality, nostalgia, identity, and circulation). Monkman exhibits these truths in large scale

² Ibid, 74.
paintings that echo the late nineteenth-century works of Albert Bierstadt, George Catlin and Thomas Cole. He inserts his alter-ego “Miss Chief Eagle Testickle” and other figures such as male cowboys into the empty landscapes of the West to instate the invisible role of the gay male in the United States and Canadian history. His 2010 work *Kiss the Sky* expresses the vastness of the American landscape and fills the scene with four figures, one being Miss Chief (Fig. 1). This beautiful scene joins sorrow with hope to arouse questions of identity, place, and newfound relationships. In his artistry as a performance artist and painter, Monkman responds to the early institutional training that Native American artists have received in the early twentieth-century. Native Americans were not taught the same high modernist techniques and styles that were shown to figures, such as Albert Bierstadt or George Catlin. Monkman paints the American landscape as if he was able to receive such training and goes further to insert his own narratives.

Monkman and other contemporary Native artists, such as Erica Lord, Rebecca Belmore, Virgil Ortiz, Jeffrey Gibson and Rose Simpson work to create art that questions, challenges, and exposes untold histories, misconstrued realities, and a forced suppression of identity. Gibson’s *American Girl* (2013) echoes early tribal practices of beadwork sewn on a punching bag with a wool blanket, steel studs, artificial sinew, tin jingles and chain (Fig. 2). The harsh lines of the metals juxtapose to the saturated colors of the glass beads formed into intricate patterns all engrained into the punching bag that crosses lines as much as cultures.

Examining the mediums and missions of contemporary Native American artists recalls the efforts and existence of Native American art in the United States that extends farther than the twenty-first century. In the past Native American art was relegated to being defined by Western ideals, but in the last half of the twentieth-century changed fast and radically. Their push has not been to assimilate, but to change the art institution that has been directed by colonialism,
hegemonic rule, and “Western” ideals concerning art practice. Artists as Lord, Monkman and Gibson have expanded the peripheries set by earlier artists such as Fritz Scholder and James Luna. In this thesis I argue that the early radical efforts made by Scholder and Luna created an avenue for later Native American artists to push the boundaries of medium, sexuality, and continue expressing identity through art.

Scholder and Luna have successfully entered the mainstream art world as artists capable of contributing works that are both stylistically structured and controversial while encouraging a new representation of the Native American figure. Through this representation Scholder and Luna’s work have taken the roles set for them by colonial hegemony and museum classification systems and have transformed them into an engagement and re-appropriation of clichés and stereotypes that have slandered their heritage. Artist and writer, Jean Fisher, has suggested that although resistance is proven through the sustaining of non-Western cultures amidst hegemonic rule of Western culture, there also remains a question of reconceptualization to completely move away from this hegemony. Fisher proposes a reconceptualization of the current practices of transmission and reception in order to relieve the hegemonic rule of Western culture.

Scholder and Luna no longer hide behind the Noble Savage who is wise, “primitive,” gentle and a warrior. The figure of the Noble Savage, a mythic representation of a romantic primitivism, is attributed to the eighteenth century writer and philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Later this figure would be considered a tradition in anthropology. Moving past this figure, contemporary Native American artists are choosing to reject romanticized authenticity for one that reveals Native artists as “individuals of this century.”

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4 James Luna, interview by author, Boulder, CO, March 25, 2014. The phrase “an individual of this century,” was used by James Luna during an interview I obtained while completing my research. He described himself and Fritz Scholder as having been the products of this century.
Being a person of this century means discussing sensitive issues of alcoholism, diabetes, displacement, misrepresentation, and exploitation of Native imagery in the tourist industry and commercial setting. For Scholder engaging such sensitive topics meant doing so through painting; painting that was structured, had clear positionality and was controversial. Through viewing Scholder’s *Indian Series* (1967-1980), one can also gain an insight into how Scholder, as a Native American artist views his own heritage. He has a distinct perspective as an individual who understands the duality of an American and Native American identity. He invokes this duality in his works and demonstrates that his artistry could benefit artists as a whole, as well as himself.

For Luna, this change began when he moved to the La Jolla Indian reservation in the mid-1970s. This move allowed for personal growth and contentment that has fostered personal and tribal relationships with others on the reservation, especially through his involvement in tribal council and mentoring the local youth. The artist’s passion for mentoring and counseling youth has also produced experiences he uses in his performances and installation pieces. For Scholder, changing his role in the art world meant channeling his heritage through art without living on the reservation and maintaining an upbringing without traditional Native values or customs. Scholar of Sociology and Native American Studies Eva Marie Garroutte discusses the Native’s choice claim tribal affiliation or live on a reservation in her publication *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* from 2003. When considering tribal ancestry and the suppression or affiliation with it, there are various degrees to study and a question of who claims, is unsure to claim, or has no claim to a tribe. Making a decision to choose a reservation or non-reservation lifestyle highlights the Native’s role as an autonomous figure. Because of these preferences, I will refer to Scholder as either an “American” or “Native American” painter. In his
artist statement Luna refers to himself as an “Indian” or “contemporary Native American artist” and also “Mexican American,” therefore, I will address him as such in the following paper.

**Structure of the Thesis**

Chapter one examines the role Native American art has held in the art institution. How Native American objects have been collected in the context of anthropology, ethnology and the use of authenticity are factors as to why these objects were misrepresented in exhibitions during the early twentieth-century. This discussion includes what training early Native American artists received in the early to mid-twentieth century. Institutions as the Santa Fe Indian School, the University of Oklahoma, and at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, sought to instill an individuality and modern influence in young Native American artists. Lastly, this chapter will study Native American artists in the context of Postmodernism, the influences of 1960s and 1970s United States civil activism, and the inclusion of Native American art in the field of art history.

The third chapter is dedicated to James Luna, his beginnings, and four of his performance and installation pieces. This chapter examines how Luna has changed the dynamics between artist, art work, and institution through performance. The importance of performance as a medium for representing presence, the body, and time channels much deeper sensibilities associated with Native peoples and traditions. Luna’s use of the traditional and non-traditional creates an instability that generates a dynamic response from museum and academic audiences. This chapter will go into detail on four of Luna’s performances: *The Artifact Piece* (1987), *Half Indian/Half Mexican* (1990), *Indian Tails* (1997), *Take a Picture with a Real Indian* (1992-93) and *Emendatio* (2005).

Lastly, the conclusion of my thesis will argue that Fritz Scholder’s *Indian Series* and the James Luna’s performances and installations marked significant changes for the criticism, study, and exhibiting of Native American art in museums and the field of art history. In particular, this chapter will conclude that the efforts of Scholder and Luna were to advance the influence and agency of future Native American Artists. Specifically, how artists such as Kent Monkman and Rebecca Belmore have paved the way for the use of various mediums to channel a colonial past, violence, gender and misrepresentation.

I seek to remain sensitive to the presence, dynamism, and history of Luiseño peoples and all Native American nations found in the United States and Canada. The goal of this paper is to further integrate Native American arts and artists into the larger art historical canon. Through such a study I will illustrate how the art of Scholder and Luna has been vital to furthering the cause for creating a dialogue between Natives and non-Natives.
The spiritual and narrative purposes Native American objects hold for various tribal groups in the United States greatly differ from what they represent to “Western” society. The term *art* itself connotes distinct opinions of value, judgment, aesthetic pleasure or cultural value for both Americans and Native Americans. In a “Western” context, art can describe style, shape, technique, or color of an object. However, outside of this “Western” framework art may indicate basic properties related to a practice or tradition that bears little meaning for a non-Native audience. For Native Americans the term *art* in various instances does not describe a practice or custom, but actually refers to a way of *seeing*. This act involves more than sight; it concerns participation, sensitivity and a way of interpreting time. The construction and narrative that is instilled in Native American objects involves acknowledging a past, present and future.

Fallacies in interpretation were results of collecting with little regard for context that includes provenance, tribal affiliation, and year or artist identification. For the early collectors of Native American art and indigenous arts in the mid-nineteenth century, these objects were physical embodiments of what it meant to be “primitive.” That is to say indigenous arts acted as direct opposites to the technological advances and progress of the mid to late nineteenth-century. Due to this reason indigenous arts were collected and displayed in cabinets of curiosities. The collecting of these objects derived from an earlier practice by anthropologists to gather Native American and indigenous artifacts meant to preserve traditions, cultures and practices.

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During the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries American Indian objects and materials were methodically collected by anthropologists. The collecting habits anthropologists fostered directly influenced exhibitions curators organized. These exhibitions would then influence the public’s understanding of Native American culture through the displays housed in museums. Exhibitions of the 1930s and 1940s strove to remove the stigma that Native American objects were specimens of a culture on the verge of extinction. It is projected that a mere 250,000 Indians were alive in the United States by the turn of the twentieth-century.

Despite these staggering low population rates, and the search by collectors for an “authentic” representation of Native Americans, there were continual pressures for Natives to assimilate into American society. The ongoing effects of assimilation included displacement, an inability to practice traditional religious ceremonies, and disease among others. Disease played an important role in the collecting of wholesale Native American objects. Disease perpetuated the vanishing race notion and was a way to dispossess Natives of their material culture. Anthropologists as Franz Boas, William Orchard and Robert Lowie, hired by the Arts and Crafts Board, sought to preserve Native American and indigenous practices. This included documenting and collecting items used to teach Native American artists about traditional practices who were divorced from their heritage.

9 Lonetree, 9.
10 In 1887 the United States enacted the Dawes Act in 1887 in order to assimilate Native Americans into mainstream society. The Dawes Act is thoroughly discussed by Amy Lonetree in the context of the museum. Refer to Amy Lonetree, Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 11.
11 Lonetree, 9.
However, through these efforts there still remained instances of neglect for properly recording artist’s names, tribes or tribal region, date or provenance. Native American items soon became novelties representing a group of peoples without documentation of specific tribes, dates, or geographical areas from which these objects came. Lack of documentation has hindered many art historians producing scholarship on Native American arts and history. For the museum, this has slowed the process of repatriation, the altering of object labels to be integrative of tribal requests or preferences, and creating complete records of indigenous objects that museums possess. Generating comprehensive records of Native American objects clears a path for the current change in decolonizing museums in order to ease unresolved grief. The decolonization of museums involves truth-telling and community engagement in order to promote healing.

“Indian Arts of the United States” at the Museum of Modern Art

Shows as the 1931 “Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts” at Grand Central Art Galleries in Manhattan and the 1941 Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) exhibition “Indian Art of the United States” were considered the first to present Native American objects as art, and not as artifacts having association with anthropology or ethnology.

“Indian Arts of the United States” showcased Native American objects, such as pottery, baskets, tools, weaponry and textiles. The show’s emphasis on the simplicity and naivety of Native American objects proved that although these objects were placed in a modern art museum, their esteem as “primitive” art was not completely removed. Although this fact remained a question for Indian arts, this exhibition also recognized the importance of cultural and historical context. Curators Frederic H. Douglas and Rene D’Harnoncourt write the following in the introduction of the catalog: “Only with knowledge of the background of a work of art are we able to synchronize, in effect, our pattern of associations with those of the culture.
that produced it and thus see it clearly enough to judge its merit.” The curators, as disseminators of knowledge and artistic taste, have recognized the need to appreciate Native American culture and history in order to connect that context with esthetic value. Furthermore, it sought to give much deserved credit to Native American art for its intricacy, beauty, cultural and traditional significance, and to solidify Native American artists’ place in the museum and art history.

“Indian Arts of the United States” marked a turning point for indigenous arts in art museums. This exhibition demonstrated that Native American arts could be included in contemporary discussions concerning cultural difference and American history. In 1940 New York Times writer Thomas C. Linn described the impending 1941 MoMA exhibition in “Art of the Indian to be Displayed: Largest Show of Its Kind Is Planned by Modern Museum.” Specifically, Linn discussed MoMA’s desire to exhibit art that had not fully been appreciated in order to prove that contemporary Native American artists had a contribution to make towards enriching the American future.14

In 1941, a week after its opening, New York Times writer Oliver La Farge described the show in “The Indian Artist: The Indian as Artist” as enlightening for a contemporary American audience and long overdue. La Farge writes that the Native arts Americans are aware of remain products of a white man’s ideas persuaded over years of forced abandonment of Native’s adaptable designs for something resembling savagery. Additionally, La Farge goes on to say, “But now, smashing across all our pre-conceptions, comes the Indian exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. We are able to see examples of Indian culture that bear small resemblance to the

examples the tourists bring home…their abstract forms are equal of any abstract art from abroad.”

He describes a Navajo rug in the show as elaborately beautiful and abstract. From this rug La Farge questioned whether an individual, prior to being told it is Native American, may even guess it is modern French. La Farge’s sentiments insinuate contradiction in American ideology regarding Native Americans. His review realizes the underrepresented state that Native Americans have felt in the United States and art world.

The Oklahoma Painters and the Santa Fe Indian School

The role Native American objects held in the early twentieth-century tourist market and the museum was based on the criteria of how they were established in the mid-nineteenth century. In particular the notion of authenticity has been critiqued for its role in the tourist market of Native American arts. Ruth B. Phillips has written on the notion of authenticity in regard to Native American cultures. She examines the contradictory nature of Native objects as both representing authenticity in replicated objects and their role in souvenir fields. In her seminal work, Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900, Phillips discusses the notion of authenticity in the context of Native artistry and role in a tourist industry. Trading Identities also presents the ethical issues that followed the tourist boom of Native objects and the role they held in museums.

The tourist industry’s emphasis on authenticity, circulation and value translated into the training and teaching of young Native American artists in Santa Fe and Oklahoma. In particular, it is Santa Fe that has housed a fruitful and economically beneficial tourist market and was the location for the Santa Fe Indian School in the early twentieth-century. The prosperous location of Santa Fe, due to its landscape and Native population, led to the establishment of institutions that would further the training of aspiring Native American artists and in turn supply the tourist

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market. This period was considered to be the Santa Fe movement and a renaissance of Indian arts. Many took interest in this renaissance of Indian arts and considered that awareness to be an act of preserving the remnants of an indigenous past.\(^\text{16}\) This past included the traditional practices of creating objects that Native Americans prescribed to and was specific to their tribe. The need to preserve an earlier time fit the surrounding area which housed the Navajo, Apache, and Pueblo tribes living in the same villages and lands for a thousand or more years. The adobe structures and bright colors that paint the town of Santa Fe, its diversity and location allowed for tourism built on an interest in Indian arts. Tourism, landscape, and the population served as a harmonious trio that maintained the idea that Native Americans living in the Santa Fe area could remain part of the landscape.

In order to maintain the Santa Fe marketplace there were schools founded to train Native artists so they may be able to master their artistry. As early as 1905 various attempts were cultivated to educate Native American artists in Indian schools. Initiatives founded by individual teachers to instruct artists in private meetings were unsuccessful due to its opposition to official Indian Bureau policies. A shift occurred in 1932 when the first organized and continued effort was made to discover both the personal and professional benefits of training Native Americans at government sanctioned Indian schools.\(^\text{17}\) This allowed for an opportunity for Native artists to express themselves through art and enter the mainstream art world as individual artists and exercise their choice to be separated from a Native American tourist industry. This institution would become the Santa Fe Indian School.

The successes of this institution lead to its influence on art departments at other Indian schools. The training cultivated at the Santa Fe School predicts the mission and instruction

\(^{16}\) Brody, 119.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.
adopted by the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA), which maintained a respect for the nature of tribal art to be anonymous and allowed for individual expression. Embracing individuality was difficult for Native American artists to accept. Partly because it was a foreign concept to consider their art as art.\textsuperscript{18} Practicing painting as a way to paint their own desires as artists rather than the traditions of their heritage remained a difficult transition for artists, even when the IAIA was established in the early 1960s.

The Santa Fe School’s mission to teach individuality and self-respect for one’s traditional heritage was neither of importance or accepted by patrons or collectors of Native art. Rather, these individuals preferred the mastering of the Noble Savage as previously executed by artists as Charles Marion Russell. Russell’s painting \textit{Planning the Attack} from 1901 depicts a group of Native American individuals riding horses, holding spears and peering around a bend at individuals in the far distance (Fig. 3). This portrayal narrates the life of Native Americans in the American West as masters of the landscape and ready to attack. The use of the word attack in the title signals an impression of Native Americans to be warriors or defenders of their landscape or tribe. This painting makes no mention to what tribe or region these individuals derive. These four figures become part of the landscape, anonymous and displaced. They embody the romantic image meant to capture a wise, gentle, wild figure uncorrupted by the evils of civilization.\textsuperscript{19}

The Santa Fe Indian School was seeking to instill individuality in their artists, but also sought to reteach tribal art traditions that many Natives had been divorced from. This institution was not only encouraging new styles for their students, but was also teaching them about their own traditions. This is especially significant considering the craft revival of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which fulfilled the tourist industry demand, as well as, an artist’s

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 129.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
desire to gain income for their art. The conflicting connection between the demand of Native American arts for a tourist industry and the wish of Native American artists to be a part of a mainstream art world further plagued the role of the Native American artist even in the mid-twentieth-century.

The Santa Fe Indian School would not remain the only institution where Native American artists could receive training. In the late nineteen teens to mid-1920s five selective Kiowa students received advanced art training at the University of Oklahoma. Prior to this, classes received were unofficial and extracurricular which paralleled the contemporary situation in Santa Fe. These five students were perfecting their art and the result would become a stereotyped style associated with Native American art. The niche for Native American art in Oklahoma was governed by decorativeness and an art form that differed from that created by non-Native artists.²⁰

The Oklahoma art form was considered different for its stencil qualities, flatness, and attention to cultural details. The stencil influence extended farther due to its illustrative quality that was common with the first institutionalized painters, which related to Midwestern American Regionalism.²¹ Marking differences between the art forms cultivated during this time developed three distinct types of influence- social, commercial and illustrative. The social and commercial methodology resulted in paintings that were more stylized and drew heavily from Native American dances and ceremonies. The illustrative method was more nostalgic and drew from nineteenth-century aspects of Plains life.²² Kiowa painter Stephen Mopope’s work *Buffalo Hunt* from c. 1930-40 is representative of a flat application and maintained an illustrative approach (Fig. 4).

²⁰ Ibid, 121.
²¹ Ibid.
²² Ibid, 124.
The Kiowa artists from Oklahoma witnessed the promotion of Indian art based on the authenticity of expressing cultural traditions and having documentary value. The development of romantic myths in the Santa Fe area, in turn, legitimized the new forms of the craft revivals and paintings being promoted. This legitimization is what Fritz Scholder moved away from when he began his *Indian Series* in the late-1960s. Instead, he chose to approach ‘New Indian Art’ from his own perspective without romanticism while at the IAIA.

**The Institute of American Indian Arts**

Having been established in 1962 by the United States Department of the Interior, the IAIA maintained an “objective of making Indian art students more secure as individuals.” This quote, said by Scholder in “On the Work of a Contemporary American Indian Painter” in 1973, reveals his own stance on the institute and what the IAIA sought to provide to aspiring Native American artists. Although the institute wanted to instill confidence in Native artists to express their individuality, this mission proved problematic, as described by scholar Bruce Bernstein, for its direct contrast to “the communal nature of many Native American societies.” The institute did not wish to reject shared artistry and understood this undertaking could create fissures between Native and non-Native artists, as well as damage relationships between Natives. This is why the IAIA encouraged a mixture of the old with the new in order to move forward.

Bernstein suggests, “The IAIA did not expect homogeneity on the part of the predominantly Indian student body, but rather encouraged students to find themselves as artists of the world on a purely personal bias.” Bernstein is not only referring to Native communal traditions, but also to the reputation Native American art held in Santa Fe. The marketplace in

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23 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
Santa Fe was strong and maintained its production of communal Native American arts, such as baskets, pottery, textiles, weaponry, and jewelry. The individuality fostered at the IAIA could potentially be detrimental to the economy of the Santa Fe area for its emphasis on teaching all types of arts, media, non-Indian art forms, and having a global perspective that would steer Native American art into the modern era. Furthermore, curators and art patrons in Santa Fe felt they held control over the market and value of Native American culture in the United States, but would change with the establishment of the IAIA. The individuality instilled at the institution affected the homogenous artistic identity that Santa Fe fostered for so long. In turn, this region would lose its reputation and power as a breeding ground for Native American arts.

The patrons and collectors of the marketplace in Santa Fe were unaware that the arts they thought to have been homogenized were actually continually renewing and fostering traditional Native values through the telling of histories and the preserving memory. Herein emerges the mission of the IAIA. Amidst change and misconceptions Native art continued to preserve memory through emphasis placed on communal artistry and individual creativity. Scholder understood this stance and implemented his own perspective by substituting mysticism and romanticism for contemporary Native American experiences.

**Negotiating “Self and Other” through the Institution**

Exposure to individuality led the Native American artist to cultivate agency in both the art world and the world. Native artists who came out of the Santa Fe School and the IAIA redefined what it meant to be a Native American artist who opposed dichotomies between “Self and Other” and “Western and non-Western.” Agency holds a place in an artistic and historical context. In an artistic context agency can mean the ability to negotiate one’s position in the world; whereas in a historical sense agency can be associated with colonization, culture, and it
can have sociopolitical meaning. For the purposes of this discussion, the role of agency in the context of colonization will be of focus. In colonial discourses agency can be considered a predetermined obstacle. There is a question of whether an individual who has been colonized can be trapped in their assigned roles or is capable of escaping that assigned role to adopt a new one. Through this adoption an individual can find a new space to exist where they can foster an act of liberation. Moreover, this act becomes the fostering of continuity and can be supplied in the form of memory, narrative, tradition, culture and history. In particular, Fritz Scholder and James Luna have encouraged continuity through memory within the relationships between artwork and viewer, and artist and institution.

Challenging these relationships, opposing institutions, critics and scholars involves debating ideological assumptions that have been continually perpetuated. In a postmodern and postcolonial discourse distinctions made between “Western” and “non-Western” have been critiqued, and the question remains whether this system continues to thrive. Attempts made by scholars and artists to uncover issues of repression, misrepresentation, repatriation, and equality, in the context of Native American peoples and history, can potentially eradicate dichotomies, such as that between “Western” and “non-Western.” Doing so encourages further study that is predicated on a global perspective.

In particular, the dichotomy between Self and Other has been studied by various scholars, such as Homi K. Bhabha; especially his study of ‘ambivalence.’ Ambivalence is the source from which the colonial “Other” arises. In this space of ambivalence there appears a discontinuity between what the colonial perceives as the “sameness of the native,” and the “otherness of the

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native.” Sameness refers to an ideal image of the self; whereas otherness refers to what the self perceives as discontinuity of the self. The relationship between the ideal self and otherness can be recognized in the connection artists maintain with the art institution, which includes the museum, audience, critics and the field of art history. How artists redefine the relationship between them and the institution, in which they exhibit or contribute, can be through an act of negotiation. Negotiations being made between an artist and institution present opportunities for revitalization and recognize the artist as a figure possessing agency. This translates into a strategy an artist adopts in order to further their position in the art institution and assert their identity. Furthermore, artists have the ability to use agency to remove boundaries established by years of American-European encroachment on indigenous communities, in order to show how those indigenous communities have survived and are dynamic.

**Native American Art and Art History: Twentieth-Century and Postmodernism**

Contemporary Native American artists of the mid-twentieth century, such as Fritz Scholder and James Luna, have established an individuality that considers both the traditions of the past and the happenings of the present. The preservation of this balance allows for the removal of romantic myths meant to legitimize Native American artistry. However, amidst these changes, what has remained is the issue of authenticity. How does authenticity apply to the work of contemporary artists? Furthermore, does authenticity still determine the circulation, collecting, and purity of art works? Such questions have been challenged by scholars as Ruth B. Phillips and W. Jackson Rushing III.

In 2013 Ruth B. Phillips published an essay as part of the *Art Bulletin’s* interest in conveying what the term ‘tradition’ means currently. She suggests that authenticity has been

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disputed in two separate arenas during the postmodern period. The first is in an anthropological and art historical critical discourse; and the second is by Native North American artists. When discussing authenticity in the context of Native American art there are two contested avenues. The first is that Native American artists feel the need to dispute a stereotype and cliché that has been created for or about them. This leads contemporary Native American artists to create art that opposes such clichés. These include authenticity, alcoholism, diabetes and a romanticized image. Specifically the correlation between authenticity and stereotype stems from an earlier representation of a pure figure untouched by modern civilization. The stereotype becomes an extension of what this untouched figure means in a “Western” context, as well as the role this image carries in a tourist industry. The second contested avenue is that the art work produced does not wish to refute clichés, but engage them in order to change the “Western” standard.

In an artistic context this can apply to characteristics, practices and traditions. In a post-colonial context the “Western” standard refers to the position of the Other. In his influential text *Orientalism* Edward W. Said discusses the European creation of an oppositional identity that marks fundamental differences in their non-White counterparts. Characteristics that signify physical, cultural or artistic difference extend farther to the innate memory and presence, whether myth or reality, of an individual culture or society. Acknowledging the existence of these qualities in the context of indigenous art, and its history, is a step forward to changing the “Western” standard and its classification of Native American art.

Distinctions intended to further separate Natives and non-Natives have translated into the stereotypes found in Western art and pop culture of Native American artists. Engaging clichés and stereotypes by early Native painters from the Santa Fe School or the IAIA became an avoidance of hybridity; whereas contemporary Native American artists of the twenty-first
century are outwardly engaging these clichés to merge old traditions with new ones and move past misrepresentation and the ‘authentic.’ This negotiation is what Phillips suggests to be the new approach adopted by contemporary Native American artist. She uses the example of Jeffrey Thomas’s photograph *Culture Revolution* from 1984 (Fig. 5). In this print Thomas photographs his son Bear standing in front of a brick wall with the phrase “culture revolution” drawn on it. Bear’s baseball cap depicts the image of Cheyenne leader Two Moons captured by Edward S. Curtis who, in early twentieth-century staged reenactments of traditional indigenous life, made the careful decision to eliminate any references to a modern world. The juxtaposition between Curtis’s photo and the phrase on the brick wall prompted Thomas to conclude that his mission as an artist was that of an interventionist; an individual showcasing the modern existence of a Native American without reenactments.

Phillips’s study of *Culture Revolution* correlates with the efforts of Scholder, Luna and Monkman. These three artists have chosen to juxtapose a past depiction of clichés with contemporary instances of pop or material culture, politics and sexuality. For Scholder this included juxtaposing the American flag, which has its own societal and political connotations, with a Native American figure dressed in traditional costume. Luna uses his body as a medium to alter the way Native American and indigenous cultures are represented in the museum, and other public venues, through the challenging of authenticity and identity. Monkman embraces painting to fill the empty landscape paintings of the late nineteenth-century that aggrandized the American landscape as waiting to be occupied. Each incited new discussions involving identity and its role in their artistry and everyday experiences.

Claiming an identity as an artist or as a member of American society stems from United States (U.S.) political and social discourse of the mid-twentieth century. Instances of cultural

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renewal and rehabilitation arose in the 1960s during the sociopolitical and cultural changes that fostered activist and government involvement in the U.S. The Cold War and Civil Rights Movements directed American society toward a period of uncertainty. This resulted in a loss of pride and security, and created a momentum in minorities to continue the fight for civil liberties. The 1970s saw a newfound emphasis on individuality, ethnicity, and the shift from private to public in American society. For minorities, specifically Native Americans, movements such as the American Indian Movement (AIM) became a way to engage society and promote awareness of inequalities. In 1978 the U.S. government passed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act. Enacted to protect and preserve traditional religious rites and cultural practices of Native Hawaiians, Eskimos, Aleuts, and Native Americans, this law removed certain control government agencies exercised. It also mandated that all government agencies not interfere with the Native American right to practice religion and to accommodate the use and access to religious sites.

During the 1970s Native American culture also became a point of contention for art historians. Art historical scholarship throughout the 1970s expressed a desire to spark a dialogue between anthropologists, museum curators, art historians, collectors, and artists to consider an indigenous artifact as art. This discussion supplied possibilities for interpreting art, but conflict arose between the ‘authenticity’ of this art object and whether it simply embodied material culture. Even with these conflicts, Bernstein acknowledges that Native American objects were considered art and “equal in stature to other world art traditions.” However, this equivalence is a misconception. Rather, Bernstein suggests that Native American objects have always held the

30 Bernstein, 57.
31 Ibid, 57-58.
same dynamism, creativity, technique, and improvisation as art from “Western” traditions. In the context of collective identity, his statement recognizes the dynamism that has been upheld in communal Native artistry. However, when considering individual identity, Bernstein’s statement allows for the continual creativity that can be fostered in new settings and allow for growth.

In “Native Art as Art History: Meaning and Time from Unwritten Sources” from 1986/1987 anthropologist Joan M. Vastokas discusses the indifference towards Native American art in the discipline of art history. As an anthropologist, Vastokas is aware of the ethical and scholarly issues that arise when discussing Native American artifacts and objects in the context of anthropological history. She suggests one significant reason for minimal scholarship written by art historians is lack of documentation. There remains a methodological impossibility that scholarship can be produced on Native American art. This assumes that art historical interest in the arts is predicated on documentation that includes provenance, records, artist statements and patron or donor information. Although evidentiary support is necessary for art historical scholarship, what also bears weight is the significance works of art hold for a community. This results in information that can be extracted from a work of art which informs its historical conception and cultural significance.

In 1985 American scholar George Stocking, Jr. argued in *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture* that the removal of an object’s context perpetuates *Othering*. Stocking indicates that the removal of context inducts “non-Western” art works into an art market where opportunities for aesthetic critique reside. By doing such one has forfeited an object’s contextual value for its role as a commodity. Stocking iterates the importance of reinstating cultural context and heritage when discussing indigenous communities and objects.

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In the context of art history context indicates a change in artistic style and approach. Beginning in the 1960s context versus formalism became a point of contention and would translate into the works produced in the 1980s. This marked a transition from a state of modernism and formalism to one of performance and context, Pop, Minimal Art, and conceptual art. There was no longer a preservation of refinement or of line, shape, color and technique; rather, it was now on the infiltration of everyday life. A desire to represent the ordinary expanded the subject matters, political stances, and styles that artists could assume. Performance could transform the viewer to participant; Pop art dismissed distinctions between art culture and consumer culture; and figurative art became an act of transforming familiar historical stereotypes into uncanny images.\(^{33}\)

Performance artists of the 1960s, such as Carolee Schneemann, embraced video as a way to evoke gender, sexuality, politics, and creativity. She transformed her everyday experiences in the art world and American society into beautiful scenes of human interaction to inspire change. Art itself became a tool for social activism and acted as a shift towards a world of mass media, reproduction, circulation, and the removal of boundaries between private and public. Coming out of this artistic and historical period Scholder and Luna both experimented with their portrayal of Native American individuals and life. For Scholder figurative art acted as an instrument to engage clichés and cope with his own identity as a Native American who was raised without Native values or traditions. Luna chose performance and installation as a way to blur the lines between viewer and artist.

Tracing the development of Native American art in the context of the institution has sprung debates of what its role has been. Whether it be its function as an ‘authentic’

representation of Native culture and history for tourism; or as opportunity for contemporary
Native American artists to engage clichés and stereotypes inscribed for them in Western pop and
material culture. As early as the 1920s, while at institutions such as the Santa Fe Indian School
or at the IAIA, Native American artists have cultivated individuality and remained dynamic
figures in the art institution. With this beginning Native arts have been inducted into a
contemporary art historical discourse where a modern existence of Native American artists and
communities is promoted.
Peering at the empty gazes, saturated colors, structured compositions and juxtaposing references to American society in Fritz Scholder’s *Indian Series* (1967-1980) suggests his own struggles with identity and position during the 1960s. As one-quarter Luiseño, one-quarter Italian, one-quarter French, and one-quarter English, Scholder considered himself an American painter with a multi-national heritage. Derived from his non-Native upbringing, education in White schools, and minimal exposure to his Luiseño heritage as a young child, Scholder considered himself an American painter. Coming out of this context he gradually found his place, and discovered how to trace and embrace his Indian heritage through art.

In the early 1950s Scholder made a conscious decision to make a living as an artist and drew from the influence of painter Oscar Howe. This artist’s experience with contemporary art in Paris, while completing his military service during World War II, influenced Scholder to experiment with cubism and use cubistic characteristics in his paintings. He further experimented with techniques and styles during his and his family’s move to California in the late 1950s. Between 1957 and 1958, while at Sacramento City College, Scholder was introduced to the artist Wayne Thiebaud who taught him abstract-expressionist techniques and some aspects of Pop art. Scholder’s abstract expressionist influence can be seen in his 1961 painting *Movement* (Fig. 6). The complementary colors, swift brush strokes and unintentional order speak to an abstract

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expressionist foundation. Time spent with Thiebaud was enlightening and allowed for continued familiarity with art work created by Nathan Oliviera and Francis Bacon.

In “On the Work of a Contemporary American Indian Painter” Scholder expressed his belief that Bacon was “one of the most important living painters. Like him, I paint monsters.” The artist’s affection for Bacon continued into his artistry and portrayal of grotesque, uncanny figures. The poses, horizontals and verticals, and shadows found in Bacon’s painting Man in Blue I (1954) can be seen in the works of Scholder (Fig. 7). In Man in Blue I Bacon paints a figure absorbed in shadows sitting at a countertop with his arms crossed and right arm exposed. This pose is modeled in Indian with a Beer Can (1969), which will be discussed further in this chapter. These similarities aside, both Scholder and Bacon enjoyed portraying a bleakness and solitude among monstrous figures. Such figures had distinct meanings for these two artists, but both created them with enough uncanniness and unnaturalness that a vulnerability and uncomfortableness could be felt by the viewer.

While acquainting himself with Theibaud and Bacon at Sacramento State College, Scholder graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree and later enrolled in the University of Arizona, Master of Fine Arts program. Here he maintained a teaching position as a graduate assistant for design and drawing. During this time his artistic practice was based on a style that could stimulate the private and public realities of contemporary urban life.

During the early 1960s Scholder spent a majority of his time at the University of Arizona and in 1961 won a full scholarship to participate in the Southwest Indian Art Project under the patronage of the Rockefeller Foundation. This project aimed to expose Native Americans to a

35 Scholder, 110.
37 Breeskin, 17.
past and present art, as well as exposure to new artistic styles and techniques.\textsuperscript{38} Participating in a project that was dedicated to aspiring Native American artists is one of the first instances in which Scholder acknowledged his heritage in order to receive an opportunity to advance his career. Involvement in this project marked the beginning of Scholder’s interest to identify with his heritage and document his perspective in his \textit{Indian Series}.

Soon after the Rockefeller Institute Project Scholder received the John Hay Whitney Opportunity Fellowship, and gained the attention of individuals as such James Johnson who awarded Scholder first prize at the “West Virginia Centennial Painting Exhibition” in 1963.\textsuperscript{39} Scholder was quickly establishing himself as an artist and, in 1964, accepted a teaching position at the IAIA in Santa Fe, New Mexico, as an instructor of advanced painting and art history.

\textbf{Scholder at the Institute of American Indian Arts}

In the early 1960s Scholder began to acknowledge a new side of himself as both a man and artist who desired to engage contemporary Native American life. This entailed understanding relationships, paradoxes, experiences and carrying one’s identity through these three factors. Identity has shaped the field of Native American art and has greatly influenced distinctions made between Native American artists and artists who have Native blood.

American painter Robert Rauschenberg was half Cherokee, half German.\textsuperscript{40} However, unlike Scholder, Rauschenberg was not identified as a contemporary Native American artist and did not portray Native American subject matter in his work. This distinction signals a disparity between those artists who are of Native American ancestry and portray this in their art, compared to those artists who are simply Native American and are considered American painters. Does an artist’s

\textsuperscript{38} Scholder, 110.
\textsuperscript{39} Breeskin, 17.
\textsuperscript{40} John Haworth, preface to \textit{Indian not Indian}, by Lowery Stokes Sims, Truman T. Lowe and Paul Chaat Smith (Munich; New York: Prestel, 2008), 15.
identity become another arena in which they publicize and defend their art, and position, in society? Does identity become signifier for cultural difference? Such questions direct the current discussion as to how Scholder, with his Indian Series, approached identity in art as an avenue to defend his own political and societal perspective. His modern stance enabled future Native American artists to go beyond depicting alcoholism in painting to challenging the museum, body, and audience through performance and installation.

During the mid-1960s training students in a style unlike any other attempted by a Native American artist stirred controversy. This debate centered on the shift from portraying the Noble Savage to illustrating Native Americans with ice cream cones, beer cans, and the American flag. Juxtaposing items of popular culture to traditional Native clothing or imagery altered the expectations set for Native American artists that began in the early Santa Fe and Oklahoma institutions. Removing the Noble Savage in painting meant deterring Native artists from mastering a figure that many White painters had already grasped. American painters, such as George Catlin, Charles Marion Russell and Henry Farny were known for their interpretations of the Noble Savage. George Catlin’s Kee-o-Kúk, The Watchful Fox, Chief of the Tribe (1835) is exemplary of such a style (Fig. 8). This portrait of a Native American chief depicts him dressed in traditional Native costume, holding a staff and ax, and wearing a shield. This warrior stands in a blank background gazing off into the distance conveying both a wild and wise sentiment. Although he does not appear to be gentle, his stance is one of nobility, not tension, which insinuates pride instead of intimidation. Catlin’s figure shows an older tradition, a past; whereas Scholder desired to portray the present. Not only was Scholder in contrast to artists as Catlin, but he also opposed the formal artistic training of the Santa Fe Indian School and the Oklahoma Painters.
Scholder’s time at the IAIA lasted until 1969 when he left to continue developing his *Indian Series* and travel. He remained indebted to the students he taught and the experiences he gained from being an instructor at the IAIA.

**Identity and Historical Context of the 1960s and 1970s**

In 1973, while painting his *Indian Series*, Scholder stated in “On the Work of a Contemporary American Indian Painter,” “I have been called a ‘New Indian’ painter. That is correct if it means I am an Indian of today, who is proud of his heritage, one who is willing to participate fully in modern society but is also desirous of identifying with his people’s heritage.”

Scholder’s use of the word participation speaks profoundly to his early years entering the Rockefeller contest and later joining the faculty at the IAIA. Maintaining his stance as a ‘New Indian’ painter meant critiquing the standards of earlier Native imagery, choosing to embrace his heritage, and a willingness to present his controversial works to the world. Scholder’s participation may not have mended fissures between Natives and non-Natives, but it radically altered the perceptions of art historians, critics, and the museum on what Native American artists are capable of contributing.

The involvement of artists in the art institution echoed the sociopolitical activism exercised by minorities during the late 1960s and 1970s. This period signaled an emphasis on ethnicity to change the livelihood of minorities. A collective consciousness emerged among minorities, gays, the young, and women to dissolve past binaries of Self and Other, and eliminate cultural, gender, and racial prejudice. There is no indication that Scholder participated in civil activist movements of the 1960s or the AIM of the 1970s, but his work does parallel the efforts

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41 Scholder, 109.
of the period to welcome a fresh American perspective that is not assimilation; rather, it is heterogeneous individuality.

***Indian Series***

Scholder began his *Indian Series* in 1967 and developed it until 1980. After 1980 he did continue to paint images of Native Americans, but it was this thirteen-year period that Scholder chose to classify his Indian paintings. These classifications included: “Monster Indians,” “present-day Indians,” “cowboy-type Indians,” “Indian Massacres,” and “Very Gentle Indians.” As these categories suggest, Scholder was particular on just what type of Native he wished to represent. He was aware of the stereotypes associated with Native Americans and placed them at the forefront of his project. These five categories composed more than three hundred paintings into his *Indian Series*.

On a winter evening early in 1967 Scholder painted his *Indian No.1*, the first of his series (Fig. 9). Strikingly different from the rest of his paintings, *Indian No. 1* portrays a Native American man in a frontal view wearing a feather in his hair and a decorative necklace. In the upper right corner Scholder has written out the word ‘Indian’ as a signifier for who is being depicted. Scholder’s diagonal strokes with complimentary colors guide his parted composition. On the right side, where the letters reside, Scholder paints the figure disappearing into the background. Scholder tests the bonds between signifier and signified, light and dark, and clear and blurred. The figure’s facial expression is contemplative, but stern. The figure, colors, and composition together reveal an indecisive restraint. The figure is both appearing and disappearing on the canvas, physically represented by a body and text, and outlined by line and

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44 Scholder, 111.
blots of color. Scholder’s study of the Native American would gradually change through his use of color, humor, paradox and composition.

The following year Scholder produced Monster Indian which still has the diagonal strokes, feather, and necklace, but he has chosen a close-up frontal view (Fig. 10). This particular pose forces the viewer to see the uncertain and curious facial expression of the Native figure. His eyes are piercing and staring off into a distance unfamiliar to the audience. Scholder’s play with the facial expression as near, but blurred, is a characteristic he develops in the rest of his series. The result is a type of disguise the figure wears that hinders the ability to fully read their expressions creating an ambiguity.

In 1969 Scholder shifted his technique and style to paint what would become the beginning of his controversial works. Indian with a Beer Can became the first instance in which Scholder juxtaposed a Native American figure with an item associated with American culture (Fig. 11). This work centered a dialogue between a Native figure and the Coors can of beer that sits next to him. The title Beer Can alludes to the emptiness of the can. The can itself has been drained as the man’s skeletal face appears to be as well. The death like imagery of the figure, his glasses appearing as sockets, refers back to Scholder’s influence of Francis Bacon and the monstrous. The strokes he adopts, the chaotic rendering of the man’s shirt and face, and the darkness of his hat create a picture plane that is both dark and humorous. In this duality lies Scholder’s reference to drinking in the context of Native American life.

There is a clear contradiction between the figure’s jarring teeth, black cowboy hat, and the brightly painted Coors can. His uncanny smile and gaudy hat alludes to dark humor. Comanche writer and curator Paul Chaat Smith states in “Monster Love” from the exhibition catalog Fritz Scholder: Indian/Not Indian that, “The picture blew a hole right through the
viewer’s head, and the holes were different depending on who you were.”  

Scholder took a risk in contrasting a Native figure and Coors beer can. Admitting to the world a Native’s issue with alcoholism was blasphemous for many, but also liberating for others. Scholder proudly inserted this contrast for all to see. Although he did not claim a Native identity, he benefited from his portrayal of Native Americans and entered the mainstream art world. For some Natives this painting set them back years of rehabilitation. It was a brutal revelation for Americans and Native Americans alike. Not only was it detrimental to many Native communities who maintained a traditional perspective amidst stereotypes and clichés, but for the market in Santa Fe who thrived on the clichés it was a shock. So much so that even forty-five years later, this work is still hated by many.  

The act of drinking, especially in the context of Indian life, can be a sign of weakness and chance to escape the reality of a troubled history and bleak future. Drinking alcohol becomes an act of relief or shame. The man in the painting does not need to drink the Coors beer to have it be a part of him or who he is considered to be. The state this figure is in, drinking, becomes a way of life; it becomes an act that man can sympathize with, not only Native Americans.  

In Indian in Gallup (1970) Scholder paints a ghost-like figure walking away from a sign that says “Bar,” wearing a cowboy hat, and standing in front of a neutral background (Fig. 12). The blue of the bar sign, the figure’s pants and shoes standout compared to the off-white background, which the man’s face blends into. His eyes appear as sockets while he walks toward the edge of the canvas. Although the man is not painted drinking or with alcohol, the title alone suggests a sentiment known to locals of the New Mexico area that Gallup is known for its  

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47 Ibid.
struggle with housing Natives who are drunks. This local mentality speaks to Scholder’s own experiences in Santa Fe and the surrounding areas.

Scholder continued his depiction of drinking or bar scenes in *Drunk Indian No. 2* (1972) in which he paints what is presumed to be the figure of a woman with a windblown dress (Fig. 13). The woman's identity is unknown as well as her face. Unlike with *Indian in Gallup* (Fig. 12) or *Indian with a Beer Can* (Fig. 11), Scholder does not make reference to the act of place of drinking in *Drunk Indian No. 2*. The woman embodies Scholder’s contemporary existence as a man who encounters drunken Native American individuals.

In *Walking to the Next Bar* (Fig. 14; 1974) or *Navajo Leaning Against Invisible Bar* (Fig. 15; 1974) Scholder further acknowledges a drunken state of living. Both of the figures in these paintings are alone surrounded by a brightly colored background. Scholder paints these figures as having been or walking towards a bar. Of these two case studies, *Navajo Leaning Against Invisible Bar* is interesting for how it places this figure as leaning up against his invisible vice. The physicality of the bar can remain absent while for the man what it symbolizes is quite real and tangible.

In the 1970s Scholder continued to develop his *series*. He utilized American symbols, such as the American flag, and incorporated more monstrous and grotesque imagery with a Pop influence. Three paintings Scholder painted in 1970 fell into his classification of “Present-day Indians” and “Very Gentle Indians.” *Waiting Indian No. 4* depicts a Native American figure dressed in a traditional costume, his hands clasped, and his face shadowed in darkness (Fig. 16). Compared to *Indian No. 1, Waiting Indian* Scholder has depicted traditional Native costume differently. In the former Scholder painted this figure’s attire with simple lines and details; whereas the latter depicts clothing as overwhelming the man’s stature. Both the dog and the man
stare in the same direction, waiting in the same empty yet defined space. With the use of one dark line in the lower right-hand corner, Scholder has created a sense of depth. This figure is monumental and recognizes a preservation of identity despite “Western” influences of material culture.

Scholder captures the uncertainty, balance, and American influence on Native peoples through his use of Abstract Expressionist techniques, and his early introduction to Pop art and Francis Bacon. Andy Warhol’s Skull from 1976 speaks to the type of color blocking, solitude of one image, and line definition of space that Scholder utilizes (Fig. 17). Although Warhol’s Skull is six years before Waiting Indian No. 4, it certainly is representative of Warhol’s use of color and line merged with objects of material culture.

Commodity is another significant characteristic of Pop art. Scholder was aware of the use of Indian Kitsch by others for advertisements in non-Native culture. Scholder did not use objects of material culture as much as Warhol; however, Scholder did select a ubiquitous object used and admired by many—the American flag. Many paintings from his series showcase Native figures wearing the American flag as a shawl or full-length dress. In American Indian from 1970 Scholder paints a tall, statuesque man who overwhelms the canvas, holding an ax as delicately as a rose by a pageant winner all while smiling (Fig. 18). The American flag worn by the man is humorously depicting pride and glory.

In comparison American Portrait with Flag from 1979 again shows a Native Figure wearing an American, but this figure is not shown humorously (Fig. 19). His eyes are not shown and the rest of his face is darkened in black and brown tones. The flag that he wears no longer has the same whimsy or pride that is shown in American Indian (Fig. 18). The flag insinuates a dual identity. The flag covers the right side of his body; whereas feathers conceal the left side.
This duality opposes the simplicity of the individual in Waiting Indian No. 4 who stands with no influence of White culture.

In comparison, Scholder’s 1971 work Super Indian No.2 undoubtedly merges Native tradition with a non-Native influence (Fig. 20). The artist paints a fearsome chief wearing a buffalo headdress while delicately holding a double-dipped strawberry ice cream cone.48 Here Scholder has channeled the whimsy of many of his other works. In the 1972 exhibition catalog Scholder/Indians the artist assigns a description to the Native figure:

He tried to ignore the hoard of ugly tourists as he left the others. In the old days there were few white watchers along with the old professional Indian lovers. Now it had turned into a carnival. He stepped up to the red, white, and blue concession stand and ordered and ice cream cone- a double-dip strawberry.49

Scholder’s words are nostalgic and express a feeling of succumbing. The effects of tourism and modern society, although what Scholder sought to bring into his works depicting Native life, are unquestionably the result of colonization. This painting embodies both resistance to and acceptance of a colonized past.

The whimsy of Super Indian No.2 is juxtaposed to the uncanny nature of Scholder’s 1972 painting Portrait of a Massacred Indian (Fig. 21). The distorted, unnatural figure holding an object resembling a bow contrasts the brightly painted pink and yellow background. The ambiguity of the figure and the colors suggests Scholder’s experimentation with portraying contemporary artistic influences with a gruesome and grotesque subject matter.

Between 1974 and 1980 Scholder continued his experimentation with juxtaposition, paradox and humor that resulted in images of cowboy Indians such as Indian Cowboy (Fig. 22; 1974). Other works that Scholder produced consisted of ceremonial dancers and teepees, but in 1980 the artist shifted focus from Native American imagery to material objects, animals, and

48 Turk and Scholder, 60.
49 Ibid, 14.
women. However, Scholder would be known for his *Indian Series* and many exhibitions between 1967 and 1980 were governed by his *Indian Series*.

Scholder’s *Indian Series* highlights the effects of colonial hegemony, and early institutional and cultural assimilation that has plagued the future of Native Americans in the U.S. Additionally, these paintings exposed the personal, nostalgic and contemporary life of Native Americans. For these reasons, Scholder’s *series* became exemplary of his artistry. The fact that he was both known for this *series* and the reasons why he was able to create it generated contrasting reception to his *series*. Being one-quarter Luiseño gave Scholder the ability to create works as a Native American artist and portray the Native figure in his works. Along with his early desire to accept opportunities to advance his career as the Rockefeller project or teaching at the IAIA, Scholder was able to enter the mainstream art scene by carving his own way and adopting a strategy to do so. The complexity of his relationship to his Native American heritage as both a man and artist were reasons why he was criticized by other artists who came after him. Herein rest the intergenerational conflicts derived from unresolved complexities that contemporary artists of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries recognize and seek to resolve.

Scholarship has discussed Scholder’s *Indian Series* as both detrimental to Native communities and beneficial for their progress, but in an artistic context his *series* opened a path for aspiring contemporary Native American artists; regardless of whether Scholder identified as a Native American or American painter. *Indian Series* has been acknowledged by many contemporary Native American artists as revolutionary and inspirational.

However, the perceptions of contemporary Native American artists concerning Fritz Scholder have varied. Performance and installation artist James Luna discussed, in a private
interview conducted for this thesis, Scholder’s *Indian Series*. His honest, albeit strong, comments revealed a side of Scholder invisible or kept secret in scholarship. Luna spoke openly about Scholder’s paintings as being “great; there’s something there that is not that typical romantic, spirituality that Indian art had been noted as.” Luna’s opinions concerning Scholder’s personal approach to painting the Native figure was predicated on his desires for fame. At that height of fame, Scholder sought to “be more than an Indian painter; he wanted to be a famous painter. He spoke about his Indianness, made his money on our backs, and made a conscious effort to water down the Indianness.” The “Indianness” that Luna refers to is a term of acknowledging a part of Scholder’s identity and body that is Native. Meaning the blood that runs through his veins and the history he paints derives from ancestral connections to this culture.

Emphasis placed on value and exploitation is a point of contention for Scholder in *Indian Kitsch: The Use and Misuse of Indian Images*. This collection of photographs was published after having been displayed for an exhibition at the Heard Museum in 1979. The photographs, however, are a collection of impressions recorded by Scholder in 1978. Scholder writes that, “It was the Indian who was exploited; later even the Indian would dilute the Indian.” The sentiments that Luna express are in direct contrast to Scholder’s quote. The difference of opinion marks the transition from one generation to the next. For Scholder showcasing images of teepees used for signage or objects from the tourist industry was enough to prove a point. He sought to penetrate the stereotypes Natives had lived with for so long; whereas newer generations of Native artists are looking to break them apart and examine the pieces that make up the whole. Luna iterates that through various mediums, specifically performance and installation, one can continue to expand the field of Native American art socially and politically.

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51 Ibid.
As a spiritual man dedicated to the livelihood of his tribe and artistry, James Luna’s beginnings as an artist were difficult, but through these experiences he has garnered a reputation as a contemporary risk-taking conceptual performance artist. Raised Roman Catholic by a Mexican father and Luiseño mother, Luna lived a life of dual identities as part Mexican and part Luiseño. This tribal group resides inland of the North San Diego, CA region; however, before moving to the La Jolla Band Indian Reservation Luna in the non-Indian neighborhoods of San Diego. His father was more inclined to assimilate and encouraged his children to ‘fit in’ in the neighborhoods they lived in. As a young man Luna was aware of his father’s experiences of rejection because he married an Indian woman, but for Luna his Native heritage was what he felt closest to. Throughout his youth, he developed a bond with his mother’s family, as they lived in close proximity to his San Diego home.

From this close relationship to his Luiseño heritage he felt a deep connection to his family that would be a lasting influence on his life. However, in 1975, at the age of 25, he made the decision to move to the La Jolla Band Indian Reservation where Luna expressed a feeling of always having been there. On the reservation, Luna immediately felt an acceptance and level of comfort that has acted as the inspiration and basis for much of his work. Additionally, his Catholic upbringing and early exposure to Indian fiestas and funeral rites from his mother would be influential for the subject matter and technique of his performances.

A year after his move to the reservation, Luna received his Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of California at Irvine. At UC-Irvine, Luna not only developed his personality as a
performance artist, but also benefited from the guidance of Dutch conceptualist, Bas Jan Ader. While completing a temporary residency at the university, Ader taught Luna a number of sensory improvisation techniques that allowed him to lower his guard and let go of pretenses, thereby making his performances more impactful. Through these exercises Luna established a method of looking within him, and shows that side to the world. In a sense it allowed for Luna to adopt a vulnerability that was accessible for all. During this time Luna also produced a number of commercially successful geometric paintings referencing Luiseño ideography while also demonstrating a more “Western” formalism. Luna describes this period of painting as an opportunity to “still be spontaneous, but you can only control the paint so much. So many things were going on with the Vietnam War and ethnicity; painting just wasn’t doing anything for me. I was introduced to performance and it answered my prayers."

Luna carried the formalist aspects of his minimalist painting style into his performances. He chose a formalist style whereas other artists were choosing theater or comedy to express themselves. Through this formal approach Luna fostered ritual and ceremonial acts and allowed him a natural transition into another medium without leaving his foundations.

Expressing himself through performance is a powerful and precise way of creating an immediate relationship that is felt for both the artist and viewer. It allows the artist to create a literal contemporary Native presence that speaks to human experiences and the realities of both an Indian and Mexican life. Performance allows for an artist to create a forum in which the artist is able to participate in real-time as a way to explore and enact personal presence. For Luna, the modern Native presence means removing past distinctions between the private man, the Indian,

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54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
and the artist. He merges these three personas to create one fluid piece that invokes a new way of representing traditional Native practices with conceptual techniques.

One such way that Luna executed this merging of personas is by making the decision whether or not to confront alcoholism in his pieces. While avoiding this prominent issue in his work would be negligent of those Native peoples who do struggle with alcoholism, incorporating it as an artistic theme also runs the risk of perpetuating a malignant stereotype. Another point of contention in his work is reservation life and history. Luna’s sentiments on institutional repression also became a point of contention. Writer, artist, and professor, Judith McWillie, writes that Luna “rejects distinctions of classification and order—such as among folk, popular, and classical art; ethnography and art; or fine arts and applied arts.”56 Distinctions such as these create opposing factors that parallel distinctions originally made in the colonial era and modernist period. They perpetuate a life of labels and dichotomies that Luna is seeking to refute by creating a newfound space for Natives to perform, express themselves and prosper. This is why as he was developing as an artist Luna rejected the exploitation associated with preferred “Indian arts.”57 By rejecting such artistic and cultural limitations, Luna rejects a single perspective on what it means to be a Native artist and what that artist is supposed to produce.

Through his desire to alter perspectives and perpetuate universality instead of locality, Luna drew attention to his art work, but also paralleled the changing discourse of contemporary art throughout the last half of the twentieth-century. No longer was there an emphasis on nineteenth-century Western ideals concerning culture as a fusion of language, history, and identity. Rather, contemporary art historical discourse turned towards an emphasis on the blending of ways of life, ideologies, realities and experiences; and challenging this old system on

57 Ibid, 4.
a greater, global scale; a change from a singular perspective to a more syncretic one. Such a
distinction is crucial when discussing Native peoples and cultures. For Natives, assimilation, and
even reintegration, are familiar and translate into their everyday lives.

In *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*,
James Clifford expresses the effects of European or Western infiltration on an indigenous
community. Clifford suggests that “what is different about them [indigenous peoples] remains
tied to traditional pasts, inherited structures that either resist or yield to the new but cannot
produce it.” From this Clifford has established that although differences remain, it does not
necessarily suggest that local authenticities of traditional practices or earlier customs will
continue to thrive when, in fact, the age of modernity has yielded the merging of these
communities. This is where Luna, as an artist who opposes authenticity, demonstrates through
his performance a modern presence that still exposes colonial hegemony and misrepresentation.
Luna’s artistry is about moving forward without forgetting the memory of the past.

After 1988, Luna’s work gained national attention for its emphasis on the global and the
local, which paralleled the agenda of art history and criticism at the time. In a post-colonial
context, the local level of society acts as a site of resistance and liberation, which remains a
predicament for those exposed to Westernization and colonization. This level acts as a newfound
power among social groups demanding recognition for their social existence against a modernity
that has denied historical and political presence. As an artist in tune with the local and what can
be accomplished at that level, Luna explored issues of place and memory but also opposed the
notion of authenticity in the local context. Authenticity is a point of contention for Luna,

59 McWillie, 6.
especially when it served as a measure for the production and collectability of indigenous arts in the late nineteenth-century and continues to be a factor in the critique of Native communities and arts. Luna acknowledged these factors and suggested that authenticity served as a type of prison for Indian people.\textsuperscript{61} In this sense, authenticity no longer serves as a measure to be met by Natives, and instead it becomes an act of repression and disdain. For this reason Luna includes indicators of authenticity in his work not to perpetuate it, but to show its loss of power for Natives.

**The Artifact Piece**

James Luna’s performance, *The Artifact Piece*, at the San Diego Museum of Man in 1987 is considered one of the most famous and influential works completed by a Native American artist (Fig. 23). Luna’s artistic decision to place on display his own body to invoke permanence and presence stirred responses of critique, accountability, confusion, and embarrassment by some who were unaware that they were peering in at a living man. The San Diego Museum of Man is known for its renowned collection that documents Indian life, especially its collection of Edward S. Curtis’s turn-of-the-century photographs. Curtis was capturing a “vanishing race” and posed Native American individuals completing everyday tasks or out in nature. This can be seen in his *By the Sycamore*, 1906 (Fig. 24). Due to this, museum visitors expected to see pictures and displays of a “vanished race.”\textsuperscript{62} For this reason, visitors were surprised and startled when they witnessed Luna breathing, sitting still, and in real-time, shocking viewers, and deflating the audience’s romanticized expectations.

Not only did the artist want to communicate that his Natives have a modern presence, but he used his own body and personal artifacts to stress his point. How could a living man be


\textsuperscript{62} McWillie, 3.
avoided? In this sense, Luna was “talking back” to the art institution and sought to speak to those individuals part of patriarchal institutions and academic disciplines that have collectively ignored Native sovereignty and their dynamic presence in current society. Angela L. Miller suggests, in *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity*, that this institutional critique, which utilized Minimalism, Pop, Conceptual and Performance Art sought to expose the “social and political conditions of the art museum (its funding, structures, its class, race, and gender biases) that are neutralized or rendered invisible by traditional practices of display.”

Performance in particular is what Luna used to evoke sentiments of identity, place, memory, and rehabilitation.

Luna channeled these ideas by lying on a bed of sand in a display case wearing a cloth around his waist surrounded by two other display cases housing personal artifacts (Fig. 23). The first display case housed Luna lying horizontally with a row of labels in front of him that pointed to visible scars Luna received from drunkenness or physical altercations. One of those inscriptions read:

> Drunk beyond the point of being able to defend himself, he was jumped by people from another reservation. After being knocked down, he was kicked in the face and upper body. Saved by an old man, he awoke with a swollen face covered with dried blood.

Thereafter, he made it a point to not be as trusting among relatives and other Indians. The label expresses a sadness, detachment and vulnerability that the audience becomes a part of. Luna discusses issues of alcoholism, anger, frustration, and loyalty that Indians feel amongst each other. He points the viewer into the direction of his scars; he wants them to see them, read them and know how they play a role in his story. The labels themselves were to be presented with museum quality and printed precisely to show believability.

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63 Miller, 613.
The other two display cases contained “artifacts” of his life. One held photographs of his children, photographic records, toys, and tapes. The second case contained contemporary ritual objects used on the La Jolla reservation. The mixture of contemporary and traditional objects expressed an identity that Luna and many individuals feel; one that is balanced by memory and a modern existence. He evokes a balance between spirituality and realism, and art and healing.\(^{65}\)

In *Action and Agency: Advancing the Dialogue on Native Performance Art*, Chief Curator and Curator of Native Arts at the Denver Art Museum Nancy J. Blomberg, suggests that these vitrines “displayed the possessions of this “authentic” Indian.”\(^{66}\) In this sense Luna indeed has presented his artifacts as “authentic” possessions, but he also mocks the act of defining an object, person, or community as authentic. It is a humorous, yet very real, acknowledgement of how native and indigenous peoples are displayed to the world. Luna has taken an activist stance to embody those human remains of his killed and displaced ancestors, personal artifacts, and ceremonial or traditional objects coined as authentic possessions of a “vanished race.”

At the time of the performance, *The Artifact Piece* garnered both positive and negative responses. On the one hand Luna established a way for Natives to express their grievances to the institution they are a part of. Luna’s influential performance ignited the agency for other artists to challenge the institutions they are a part of by creating a work that was audacious and controversial. The implications of *The Artifact Piece* launched an impact on the art world to change the display practices of Native American art.

*The Artifact Piece* instilled a feeling of responsibility in the viewer and highlighted their role in the construction of historical experience. Luna’s piece was successful in redistributing authority. Who was looking at whom? Who was receiving judgment? Who was naïve once the

\(^{65}\) McWillie, 3.

tables were turned? Asking such questions prompts the conclusion that the modern existence of
the Native artist is not necessarily reinventing memory or transforming old into new; it is about a
balance of the two to establish immediate relationships between viewer and artist, Native and
non-Natives, and artist and institution. However, what does this do to the relationship between
Natives and non-Natives, which Luna’s work is directly referencing? While this particular
performance certainly altered this relationship, studying his other works will also help in
answering this question.

**Half Indian/ Half Mexican and Indian Tails**

Living on the La Jolla Indian Reservation in North San Diego County acts as a reminder
to Luna of the life his fellow non-Indian neighbors live, and the history, practices, and
idealization of indigenous life in the area. Luna’s life in San Diego, his heritage, and the life he
leads as a counselor to Native youth all contribute to his identity as an Indian and Mexican-
American man. Luna describes his search for identity as: “Looking back at the works
[performances and installations], I was searching for the Indian inside me or how to define it.
Pan-Indian thought. Not specifically tribal. Being a peer counselor has shot me from the
movement to doing something for the people.”

Engaging a Native community to educate the
youth and expand his own desire to maintain a social and political stance in his art has allowed
Luna to challenge identity through performance and installation.

In 1990 he channeled his dual heritage in *Half Indian/ Half Mexican* (Fig. 25). Moreover,
this piece became an embodiment of intermarriage. This photographic triptych depicts Luna in
three different poses; two in profile and one a frontal view. The profile views show the physical
changes Luna made to his outer appearance. In the left photograph one can see the earring he
wears along with his long hair reminiscent of his Indian heritage. The right photograph channels

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his Mexican heritage with half of his long hair slicked back to appear short and he wears a half-mustache. Both sides also represent his parents: his Luiseño mother and Mexican father. The center image shows Luna as both Indian and Mexican. This image serves to explain the duality of identities in one picture plane.

To further this duality Luna laid out objects underneath the triptych that include Indian baskets, moccasins, and corn grinding stones for his Indian heritage. Juxtaposed to these objects were Mexican votive candles, heavy shoes, and identifying photographs; joined with this display music from both cultures played simultaneously in the background. Luna’s “half-ness” spoke to not only his feeling of being ethnic compared to White, but also being Indian compared to Mexican. He doesn’t distinguish the two, but instead claims two half identities.

In 1993 for Indian Tails Luna channeled his Indian identity. For this performance Luna joined oral story with performative practices of his ancestors in order to disorient his viewers. For this he spoke to the audience and altered his voice to evoke more and more anguish as the performance progressed. His monologue read as, “I don’t want to be an Indian anymore. Everybody wants to be an Indian… I don’t want to be an Indian anymore; I don’t want to be an Indian anymore. I don’t want to be an Indian for historical reasons. I don’t want to be an Indian for commercial reasons. I don’t want to be an Indian for “Sentimental Reasons.” I don’t want too…”68 The power in his words combined with his changing tone prompted questions from the non-Indian audience members. They were unsure as to why Luna, as a Native American, was rejecting his heritage.69 For the Native audience members there is a feeling of anguish that comes with the act of assimilation and stereotyping. It becomes a reciprocal feeling between the Natives and non-Natives who are vying to be each other.

69 Ibid.
Beyond this newfound realization and relationship, Luna spoke to the moments in his life that he gave oral testimonies in alcohol support groups, tribal councils, and from his preparation in psychology. Again, Luna has stimulated the bond between art and healing. In these three arenas one has to relieve of anguish, channel memory, and discuss experiences by orally expelling them. For many this is a true and real experience which is why Luna has taken local, personal experiences and has been able to touch individuals on a global scale in the contemporary manner of performance art.

*Take a Picture with a Real Indian*

Reaching a wider audience as a modern Indian artist who sought to challenge authenticity and commodity were two contributing factors found in Luna’s 1992-93 performance *Take a Picture with a Real Indian* (Fig. 26). This piece continued Luna’s desire to confront his audience and do so by controversy, humor and participation. For this performance Luna arranged images of an Indian for willing audience members to pose and be photographed. One photograph could be taken with Luna in person, or with a cardboard cutout of Luna wearing a breechcloth or in street clothes. *The Artifact Piece* certainly struck its audience to question authenticity in the context of the museum, but *Take a Picture with a Real Indian* places that discussion at the forefront between the audience’s choice to participate, or their ability to stare in at the scene.

The act of taking a photograph insinuates comfort, an allowance to experience intimacy, but this “Western” action of taking a photograph becomes tense, intrusive and dependent on a willingness to participate. Asking the audience to share in such an act as being photographed with a “real Indian” creates a vulnerability that can produce humbleness and confusion or frustration. Participating in this performance is questionable. On the one hand, if one chooses to engage in the act of being photographed they are a part of a system perpetuating authenticity. On
the other hand, to overlook the performance may become an act of ignoring the derogatory nature of authenticity and its falseness in symbolizing a pure civilization or individual. Aside from its critique of authenticity, this work also engages the commoditization of Native American art. The act of taking a photograph implies the ability to create a tangible memory to take with you, just as a commodity purchased in a tourist shop would capture the moment or visit a person makes. Authenticity and commodity have supported the risk Luna took in exhibiting such a work. It proves the desire for contemporary Native American artists to refute the claims made by years of colonization, but also attests to the lines artists must cross in order to continue their artistry. Moreover, the lines Native Americans needed to cross in order to survive. Luna has created a work that further engages his audience while maintaining his own desires, as an artist, to continually move forward.

*Emendatio*

As a cohesive performance piece *Emendatio* channels a different type of artistry that Luna sought to employ. In 2005, for the Venice Biennale, Luna performed *Emendatio* for a global audience (Fig. 27). He made a circle with stones, the four corners of direction laid out in saltine crackers, a package of spam, and various bottles of insulin with syringes. He created a literal animation of the life that surrounds him. Not only does Luna have diabetes but he showcased diabetes as much more than a disease. He brought to mind how this disease was brought about by the foods shown to Indians by outsiders or non-Natives. The circle, food, and diabetes related items were stagnant and never altered or removed. For the performance Luna showed vignettes of him in various costumes holding traditional Native ceremonial items while a mix of Indian music played in the background. Through these vignettes, Luna transformed his image from wearing a loincloth to a full Native outfit to a maroon tuxedo suit. His physical
transformations changed the dynamic of the circle, but it never altered the circle. This acted as a
metaphor for the identity one feels but cannot change, the struggles one subdues but never cease,
and the history that one can retell but never changes. The power of this *Emendatio* derives from
Luna’s ability to create moments of humor, sadness, anger, or indifference simultaneously in one
performance. Aside from many of Luna’s pieces, especially the ones already discussed, for
*Emendatio* Luna expressed a clearness but also an ambiguity. He did not speak but had his
actions speak for him.

*Emendatio* showcases how much inspiration Luna has received from his past
performances and his living on the La Jolla Band Indian Reservation. Compared to his earlier
work, such as *The Artifact Piece* and *Half Indian/ Half Mexican*, Luna has incorporated more of
ceremonial practice and sensitivity to the traditions of Native arts and performances.

James Luna as a contemporary performance artist has imbued his personal experiences of
alcoholism, diabetes, reservation life, and Mexican-American and Native American heritage into
his various performances. However, it is his ability to merge these factors into one amalgam of
memory, place, and the disavowal of authenticity that captures a modern day presence of Indian
life. He speaks to the stereotypes and clichés of Indians, but wishes to tell the truth and have no
shame in sharing the consequences of colonization, displacement, and hardship. Luna’s various
performances and installation pieces speak to the struggles all artists face about identifying who
they are, whether in the context of commodity, circulation, popularity, fame, their cultural
heritage or place in American society. Luna says, “It’s up to us to define who we are, Natives
and women. You come in and are doing work that has nothing to do with indigenous thought and
it’s made Indian for you. Or you intentionally make good art, and you want to be seen as more
than native and then you’re stuck.”\textsuperscript{70} These feelings of being pulled in various directions, uncertainty, assumption and lack of control translates into a state that artists on a global scale can empathize with. Luna’s artistry has not only crossed into the mainstream, but has intersected the dialogues and sentiments felt by both Native and non-Native artists.

\textsuperscript{70} James Luna, interview by author, Boulder, CO, March 25, 2014.
Chapter 4
Conclusion

Examining the works, life, and struggles of Fritz Scholder and James Luna, respectively, illustrates how contemporary Native American artists have secured a modern existence of their heritage and artistry. Reimagining traditional practices as contemporary art forms challenged the implications of structured institutional training taught to early Native American artists beginning in the early twentieth-century. The reconceptualization of colonial and “Western” ideals has generated dialogues between the collectors, exhibitors, and patrons of Native arts; and has since joined the current discussion of decolonizing museums.

As one of the first to change the discourse on Native American art in the art institution, Scholder continued to re-imagined his position through painting, printmaking and sculpture with his death in February of 2005. Scholder’s *Indian Series* revealed how his heritage has been represented through commercialization and circulation. Through this Scholder transformed what was the everyday into an examination of contemporary Native American struggles with alcoholism, traditional practices, and spirituality. Such a transformation proved inspirational for other artists to not only evoke their heritage in their paintings and leave behind the Noble Savage, but to embrace the artistic practices of a non-Indian art world. Scholder used his early teachings of Abstract Expressionism and Pop art to create poignant and contemporary works of art that channeled historical memory with fascinations of material culture.

Luna was inspired early on by the experiences from being raised Mexican and Indian in San Diego. His move to the La Jolla Band Reservation, where his comforts of being Indian were fulfilled, instilled in him a realization that politically and socially the efforts of
Native American artists was still developing, and continues to expand currently. Inspiration from participating in tribal councils, and encouraging healing and spirituality were quickly seen in his performance pieces. However, it was *The Artifact Piece* (1987), *Half Indian/Half Mexican* (1990), *Indian Tails* (1993) and *Take a Picture with a Real Indian* (1992-93) that proved especially influential for instilling a modern Native existence equipped with struggles of identity, history, and place. So much so that in 2008 twenty years after the original installation of *The Artifact Piece*, contemporary Native American artist Erica Lord (Inupiaq/ Athabaskan) re-installed Luna’s work and entitled it *The Artifact Piece, Revisited* at the National Museum of the American Indian’s George Gustav Heye Center in New York (Fig. 28). The costume she wears, her gender, her female “Indianness,” age and the labels in front of her body speak to new scars and instances of modern society she faces as an artist of the twenty-first century. Also, she provided an opportunity for a new generation of artists, only able to see Luna’s original installation in pictures, to experience it first-hand in a context they could empathize with. It also revealed how much resistance and agency remains in Native artists to challenge the role of the museum and engage a wider audience.

Both Scholder and Luna have released Native American Art from the ideological confines of invisible agency and ignored identity. Luna and Scholder have brought Native American art into a mainstream art scene that for so many years was governed by the arts of a “vanishing race.” Their art places the political and social implications of the museum and art historical discourse at the forefront of a much needed discussion. Infiltrating the marketplace in Santa Fe as Scholder and challenging the museum for its continued use of ethnographic and anthropological displays promoted many to question their own position in this system. The accountability and self-reflection Scholder and Luna exposed through truth telling proved
inspirational for a reciprocal relationship between Natives and non-Natives. This responsibility is one both Natives and non-Natives carry with them through their own experiences and struggles. Moreover, this relationship has brought to light the modern existence of Native cultures and the struggles they still face from years of repression and displacement. However, it is such struggles and realizations that have presented Scholder and Luna as individuals who have removed the authority institutions have on the shaping of identity, culture, history and politics. Through their paintings and performances, Scholder and Luna remain contemporary Native American artists who have treated their own heritage as a subject matter waiting to be further reinvented and secured for the future.

Currently this future has been governed by the continued expansion of medium. Soon after Luna emerged with his provocative performances and installations artists went beyond Native American identity to challenge the identity all indigenous cultures face. Between 1992 and 1993 Guillermo Gomez-Peña and Coco Fusco took performance to a new level with their very radical and confrontational work *The Couple in the Cage: A Guatinaui Odyssey* (Fig. 29). The ambivalent stares and deliberate response to the spectacle of late nineteenth-century world fairs, nostalgia, primitivism and tourism allowed for Peña and Fusco to create a travelling performance for all to see. Similar to *The Artifact Piece*, audience members were participating in an artist’s act of mocking naivety and belief concerning indigenous individuals. Peña and Fusco dressed in “indigenous” clothing, painted their faces and pretended to not speak English or know about modern civilization. They sat in a cage positioned in public spaces for viewers to watch and interact with the caged individuals. The humor and mockery that Luna, Peña and Fusco channel speaks to the way contemporary Native artists are using the body and other mediums to further acknowledge identity and colonialism. Their performance, as individuals who are not
Native American but Mexican-American, signals a shift in the assertion by artists of a mixed identity and cultural history.

Artists such as Rebecca Belmore and Kent Monkman use their body to symbolize the struggles of their past and prosperous future. Monkman transforms into his alter ego “Miss Chief Eagle Testickle” to expose the realities of rape, male sexuality and the position these factors play in United States and Canadian history. On the other hand, Belmore uses her body to reveal the truths behind female power, voicelessness and violence. This can be seen in her 2008 piece Fringe, which depicts Belmore lying on her side with a white cloth covering the lower half of her body (Fig. 30). On the artist’s back is a beaded scar that slowly moves down her back, reflecting a colonial past and the need to literally engrain and carry traditional memories in the body.

Other contemporary Native American artists have adopted video, photography and printmaking to engage the current role they hold in the United States and Canadian art institutions. Many Native American artists, such as Jody Naranjo, Penny Singer and Fritz J. Casuse are turning to traditional methods of creating pottery, jewelry and clothing. This further expands the category of contemporary Native American art to include crafts and other forms of traditional artistry.

While Luna continues to create works, his and Scholder’s efforts in the mid-twentieth century introduced to the world, and art institution, the capabilities of Native American artists. Their roles are no longer governed by authenticity or misrepresentation, but are shaped by instances of rehabilitation, political drive, and social and artistic activism. Native American cultures, and arts, are far from extinction; rather their dynamism continues to multiply and foster endless possibilities.
Figure 1  Kent Monkman, *Kiss the Sky*, 2010, acrylic on canvas, 47.5 x 59.5 in. Private collection, Toronto (image courtesy of Ken Monkman website).
Figure 3  
Figure 4  Stephen Mopope, Kiowa, *Buffalo Hunt*, 1930-1940, work on paper, 9 x 20 in. MNA Collection, ex. coll. K. Harvey (image from J.J. Brody, *Indian Painters & White Patrons*, figure 54).
Figure 5  Jeffrey Thomas, *Culture Revolution*, 1984, pigment print on archival paper, 17 x 22 in. Collection of the artist (image from *Art Bulletin* 96, no. 4, figure 1, page 535).
Figure 7    Francis Bacon, *Man in Blue I*, 1954, oil on canvas, 198 x 137 cm. Collection of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands (image courtesy of ArtStor).
Figure 8  George Catlin. *Kee-o-Kuk, The Watchful Fox, Chief of the Tribe*, 1835, oil on canvas, 29 x 24 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum (image courtesy of Smithsonian American Art Museum online collection).
Figure 9  Fritz Scholder, *Indian No. 1*, 1967, oil on canvas, 20 x 18 in. Collection of Loren and Anne Kieve (image from Lowery Stokes Sims, Truman T. Lowe and Paul Chaat Smith, *Fritz Scholder: Indian/ Not Indian*, page 43).
Figure 10 Fritz Scholder, *Monster Indian*, 1968, oil on canvas, 45.7 x 50.8 cm. Collection of Loren and Anne Kieve (image from Lowery Stokes Sims, Truman T. Lowe and Paul Chaat Smith, *Fritz Scholder: Indian/ Not Indian*, page 32).
Figure 11  Fritz Scholder, *Indian with a Beer Can*, 1969, oil on canvas, 24 x 24 in. Collection of Ralph and Ricky Lauren (image from Lowery Stokes Sims, Truman T. Lowe and Paul Chaat Smith, *Fritz Scholder: Indian/Not Indian*, page 46).
Figure 12  Fritz Scholder, *Indian in Gallup*, 1970, oil on canvas, 60 x 45 in. Private collection (image from Fritz Scholder, *Fritz Scholder: Paintings*, figure 14).
Figure 13  Fritz Scholder, *Drunk Indian No. 2*, 1972, acrylic on canvas, 101.6 x 76.2 cm. Collection of the Estate of Fritz Scholder (image from Lowery Stokes Sims, Truman T. Lowe and Paul Chaat Smith, *Fritz Scholder: Indian/ Not Indian*, page 98).
Figure 14  Fritz Scholder, *Walking to the Next Bar*, 1974, oil on canvas, 203.2 x 172.7 cm. Collection of Ramona Scholder (image from Lowery Stokes Sims, Truman T. Lowe and Paul Chaat Smith, *Fritz Scholder: Indian/ Not Indian*, page 155).
Figure 15  Fritz Scholder, *Navajo Leaning Against Invisible Bar*, oil on canvas, 101.6 x 76.2 cm. Collection unknown (image from Lowery Stokes Sims, Truman T. Lowe and Paul Chaat Smith, *Fritz Scholder: Indian/ Not Indian*, page 156).
Figure 16  Fritz Scholder, Waiting Indian No. 4, 1970, oil on canvas, 70 x 64 in. Collection of the Arizona State University Art Museum (image from Lowery Stokes Sims, Truman T. Lowe and Paul Chaat Smith, Fritz Scholder: Indian/ Not Indian, page 167).
Figure 17  Andy Warhol, *Skull*, 1976, synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen ink on canvas, 15 x 19 in. Baltimore Museum of Art (image courtesy of ArtStor).
Figure 19  Fritz Scholder, *American Portrait with Flag*, 1979, oil on canvas, 40 x 35 in. The Anschutz Collection (image from Fritz Scholder, *Fritz Scholder: Paintings*, figure 37).
Figure 20  Fritz Scholder, *Super Indian No. 2*, 1971, oil on canvas, 90 x 60 in. Collection of Richard and Nancy Bloch (image from Lowery Stokes Sims, Truman T. Lowe and Paul Chaat Smith, *Fritz Scholder: Indian/Not Indian*, page 51).
Figure 21  Fritz Scholder, *Portrait of a Massacred Indian*, 1972, oil on canvas, 72 x 52 in. Collection of Deane and Susan Penn (image from Lowery Stokes Sims, Truman T. Lowe and Paul Chaat Smith, *Fritz Scholder: Indian/ Not Indian*, page 93).
Figure 22  Fritz Scholder, *Indian Cowboy*, 1974, oil on canvas, 203.2 x 172.7 cm. Collection unknown (image from Lowery Stokes Sims, Truman T. Lowe and Paul Chaat Smith, *Fritz Scholder: Indian/ Not Indian*, page 18).
Figure 23   James Luna, *The Artifact Piece*, 1987, installation. (image courtesy of ArtStor).
Figure 24  Edward S. Curtis, *By the Sycamore*, 1906, photogravure, brown ink, 18.6 x 13.6 cm [image size], 23 x 16 cm [plate size]. Collection unknown (image courtesy of Northwestern University Digital Library Collections).

Figure 25  James Luna, *Half Indian/ Half Mexican*, 1990, three black-and-white photographs mounted on a Masonite board; triptych, each panel 24 x 39 in. Collection unknown (image courtesy of ArtStor).

Figure 30  Rebecca Belmore, *Fringe*, 2008, light box, 32 x 96 ½ x 6 1/2. Collection unknown (image courtesy of ArtStor).
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