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Familiar in Many Shapes: A Historical (and Contemporary) Overview of Museums in Native American Country

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In Indian country, museums can elicit the most contradictory feelings, at once abhorred and imitated, hoped for and denigrated. In 1971 the American Indian Movement made news by protesting archaeological digs and the removal of Native American human remains from their burial grounds. Since then, controversy and the desire to avoid it have powerfully constrained our apprehension of what museums mean for Native American communities. They have made this question a matter of diplomacy between museums and tribal authorities. They have become a matter of law, especially after the passing of the Native Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA 1990). And their study has been more or less the reserved domain of professionals trained in curatorial duties. Indeed, many such studies have been commissioned by museums, preparation for or defense of changes in their museography, attempts to demonstrate their abiding by the law, the rights and sensitivity of the Native American public at large. Reservations—the small portions of their original territories left under the control of Native groups—have rarely been part of these studies as something other than a place to repatriate objects taken out of museums, or to get Native experts able to identify objects and remains held in museum storage or bondage (rarely but not never: as early as the early 20th century there were Native curators or museum

professionals). Repatriation on reservations has been mainly investigated as a victory over museums, not a new lease of life for the relationship tying Native communities to museums in an environment where the latter never disappeared. There are in fact precious few studies of museums as seen from a reservation, and we lack a view of the museum world as seen from a reservation (but see Hartman and Doyel 1982; Jacknis 2002; Nesper 2005; Coonishish 2021).

It takes a while before one realizes that a step in that direction could be taken by examining the quiet familiarity with museums that undergirds it all. Familiarity is a range of engagements covering action and inaction, passive knowledge and the active contribution to knowledge, critical or uncritical attendance, in short: various degrees of proximity running the gamut from foreign to intimate. My contention that museums are familiar in Indian country, indeed have been so for a long time and should be examined as such, is grounded in more than a decade of work as a historian on the Standing Rock reservation. But most of all it stems from my encounter with a Lakota artist, Wallace 'Butch' Thunder Hawk, and with an object that inspired him: the type of dance stick known as 'horse effigy.' I actually encountered the horse effigy in Paris several years before I got acquainted with Butch. In 2014, it figured prominently in a 'Plains Indians' show at the Musée du Quai Branly, and was then attributed to Standing Rock artist Joseph No Two Horn, a cousin of Sitting Bull's. Although this is a contested point, No Two Horn, who worked in the Cannonball district of Standing Rock, the same area in which Butch grew up, did produce a number of well-attested dance effigies. A warrior and a scout, he settled on the reservation and made numerous connections with arts merchants and collectors, with the result that even before his death in 1942, his productions had already been dispersed far and wide in North America and Europe. This was banal at the time: starting in the 1870s, many ex-warriors crafted objects of all kinds for the tourist trade in Lakota country and in many other areas of Indian country. The particular piece exhibited in Paris, a stick strikingly shaped into a leaping horse, is certainly far from banal. In 1977, collector Ralph T. Coe gave it pride of place in his 'Sacred Circles' show, a massive defense of the artistic value of Native American production that was staged in both England and the United States. Coe refrained from giving the piece an author but called the effigy 'unique' and 'a masterpiece of Sioux horse culture.' He further compared it to the *Flying Horse of Gansu* and gave it a mission to enhance mutual understanding between peoples of the world. As effigy sticks began to be exhibited in other museums in the US, the horse did actually further understanding between past Native artists and their descendants—in a world where museums of all kinds were not only present, but actively patronized by indigenous people. [1]

Butch was trained as an artist at home and in design school. He became involved in oral history projects in the 1970s, taught crafts in a tribal college and produced all manners of art, often labeled as 'tribal' or 'Lakota,' from drawings to sculptures, funerary urns or a Christmas ball for North Dakota Capitol's Christmas tree. As a youth, Butch first went to the museum of the State Historical Society of North Dakota (SHSND). He later took his own students there, and visited its halls frequently, notably to study its exhibit of No Two Horn's

horse effigies and so make his own dance sticks. Museums can be analyzed as part of 'global museum assemblages,' as suggested by Peggy Levitt (Levitt 2015). And Butch, who visited the Louvre, was an expert in demand at the time of the Lewis and Clark bicentennial celebration in 1999–2003 and curated his own exhibit at the Harvard Peabody Museum in 2009, is certainly part of nationwide networks with global audiences. But he is also a very grounded local artist whom I would like to take as a guide in investigating what made museums familiar in Indian country: their 'off-stage,' continued existence in between the very dramatic and public moments surrounding exhibitions and the restitution of artifacts or human remains stored in museum basements. This calls for a historical approach emphasizing the local life of museums. In this approach, reservations are not the polar opposite of museums, a mere infrastructure, or a mine from which to extract material or to which to return it. They are part of a larger system of migration and exhibition of people and objects that has involved large sections of the reservation population, as part of a public or as museum workers of various kinds, for over a century. As such, museums are not distant institutions: theirs has been a long reach into Native homes, with the result that their Native patrons have integrated them into their lives, domesticating and, yes, banalizing them. This approach is also interested in the fact that museums are less stable than we tend to think. They can inform many different institutions with their mindsets and processes of conservation, exhibition or pedagogy and they themselves can take on many shapes, indoors or outdoors, from exhibits to shows and ceremonies. This can perhaps best be shown by looking at one place: the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, from which Butch hails.

Reservations' Museum Orientation

The role of US museums in propagating the trope of the Vanishing American is the well-documented backdrop of the development of a familiar relationship between Native Americans and museums. Museum staff often justified their 'Indian' exhibits on the grounds of saving precious information from people that would soon be extinct, a justification that went along with sometimes dubious collecting practices. The collaboration between Ishi ('man'), a hunter from the Yahi (Yana) people, and anthropologist Alfred L. Kroeber at the University of California Museum of Anthropology in the 1910s seemed to offer a spectacular vindication of this approach (Kroeber 1961). Collecting stories, songs, know-how, tools and objects from the person who was supposedly the only remaining one knowledgeable about them and preserving the remaining artifacts were a single movement, leading from fieldwork to the museum room. Scientific racism was at the back of the collection of human remains, an activity funded by major museal institutions in legal or illegal arrangements that often amounted to little more than grave-digging (Redman 2016). These two massive phenomena do not, however, summarize the extent of museum activity in Indian country, nor do they account for all the controversies it generated, which both problematized and animated Indian reservations' connection to the museum world.

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the role that museums could or should have in the survival of Native Americans as individuals and peoples was a hotly debated topic.

Museums, in this context, were more than buildings housing artifacts. It was really the conservation or discouragement of living traditions that was at stake. As early as the 1840s, George Catlin, a traveling painter and showman who successfully toured the US and Europe with a troupe of Native dancers, dreamed of creating 'A Nation's Park, containing man and beast in all the wild and freshness of their nature's beauty' in the midst of North American continent (Catlin 1913: 294–295) . What was then known as the Great American Desert, the plains extending between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains, would then have been nothing but a massive reservation preserving for eternity and the instruction and enjoyment of the American public what Catlin regarded as both a natural state and a stage of human development, represented by Plains tribes. The US government had started conceding reservations to Native groups in the first decades of the US's existence. An enterprising showman, Catlin was essentially daydreaming about the possibility of riding this trend to do on a continental scale what he was already trying to approximate in concert halls: turn Native Americans and the Plains into a living spectacle (Macherel 2006; Datta 2018). His idea of an open-air museum was, on the other hand, greatly offensive to many self-described 'Friends of the Indians.' These practicing and often proselytizing members of the New England Protestant upper middle-class embraced the civilization of Native Americans as a humanitarian measure and powerfully influenced the Indian policy of the US between the 1860s and the 1910s. For these advocates, reservations were to be protective spaces against the cutthroat tactics of the worst of US society, not conservatories for outdated ways of life. A Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) had been tasked since 1849 with training Native Americans for modern life. The museum thus made its way into the discourse of policy makers and administrators of Indian affairs as the perfect foil of their colonial projects. Reservations were, really, anti-museums run by the BIA; museums were regarded with suspicion there and their activities in Indian country were to be monitored. They belonged to an entirely different sphere of society (Moses 1984).

Except they didn't. From the 1880s onward, shows featuring 'real Indians' in regalia provided much needed sources of revenue for reservation-based Native Americans hailing from the very plains which had stimulated Catlin's imagination. These shows were produced by impresarios like 'Buffalo Bill' Cody who always claimed the educational purposes of their often spectacular and violent displays of 'wild Indians' in riding and shooting contests or battlefield reconstitutions. 'Friends of the Indian' could bemoan the fact that such 'living tableaux' were inimical to their civilizing goals; major museums would still sponsor them, at least in their peaceful guises. In 1893, for example, Harvard's Peabody Museum, with some support from the BIA, took charge of an Indian ethnological exhibit at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. It comprised museum cases but also an Indian village—a living, museum-like display of 'primitive' and generic 'Indian life.' Not far from the Peabody's precinct, Buffalo Bill set up his own 'Indian village.' Both proved very popular (Moses 1991). This type of arrangement kept open the boundary separating indoor museum displays, Indian villages, living tableaux and reenactments of all kinds. Or rather, the enforcement of the boundary was somewhat discretionary, a matter of labeling, with the BIA in charge of

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determining what gave offensive stimulation to Native barbarity, and what was only the inoffensive, museum-oriented, educational demonstration of past customs for the benefit of the general public.

In Chicago in 1893, the show went on with official BIA approval. But how did this dynamic play out on reservations? If Standing Rock is to be taken as an example, or at least a case study, it appears that locally, BIA agents were not merely arbiters of the role of museums in their wards' lives; they were themselves participants in museum-oriented practices that involved notables on and off the reservation. While regulating the comings and goings of Native performers, several of the reservation's first agents collected and sold Indian artifacts themselves. Some were really spoils of war, such as artifacts taken from the body of Sitting Bull, the Lakota leader killed at the hands of the BIA's Indian police in 1890. Others were bought. And yet others were given to government officials in ceremonies by reservation leaders, as tokens of friendship or personal alliance. Teachers, missionaries, and regular visitors coming from towns and cities located within proximity of the reservations received the same treatment. By the 1910s, personal collections made up of items gifted, bought and commissioned were being displayed by some of these local notables in window cases, on dedicated walls, or even in reserved rooms in museum-like displays. Glass cases holding Native artifacts could be found in stores, personal homes, and museums, a visual marker connecting their exhibition and suggesting their circulation among these various settings (Hutchinson 2009: 1-50)

At about the same time, tribal members identified as mixed-blood also experimented with collecting and exhibiting Native items. Francis B. Zahn, the son of an American soldier and a Lakota woman, started his own collection in the 1910s. A jack-of-all-trades, he worked, among other ventures, as a guide for the tourists who started coming to the reservation in the same decades. Zahn also modeled for photographers and sculptors as a generic Plains Indian or Sioux. Around 1936, he created his own cabin-size museum of Indian artifacts, to which he treated his guests. He also sold part of its collection to the State Historical Society of North Dakota, and, while another was later donated to the Eiteljorg Museum, in Indianapolis. For small collectors like Zahn, sale or donation to nearby and sometimes more distant museums was often the logical conclusion to years of collecting. The three horse effigies of No Two Horn studied by Butch at the SHSND in the 1980s had, for example, been acquired by a priest, a taxidermist, and a North Dakota congressman, who later donated them to the society. [2]

Local Museums, Local Actors

The interest in 'Indian' material of notables living on or around reservations testified to their desires for distinction—but more importantly here, it made them a crucial link between the wider museum world and local society. This was not because they were major purveyors of the most prestigious museums. While some of them were merchants carrying 'Indian curios' in their inventory, none acquired a national reputation as connoisseurs in Indian material.

For professionals, they remained, well, amateurs. But they did occasionally commission work from local artists on behalf of eastern institutions. Albert B. Welch, a former military man who became postmaster of the city of Mandan, North Dakota, thus became a direct patron of Standing Rock artists after his formal adoption by a prominent tribal member. No Two Horn, in particular, created shields for him, which were displayed in Fruitlands Indian Museum, the property of Clara Endicott Sears. Sears, a 'Boston Brahmin' had enlisted the help of Harvard's Peabody curator in building her own museum (Hail 2010: 184–185). Such indirect connection to Eastern powerhouses did not make No Two Horn a bona fide museum collaborator. The story of his artifacts was, however, typical of the chain of relationships linking reservation craftsmen and artists, 'Indian traders,' collectors and museal institutions through the commerce of personal artifacts and on-demand replicas. Exhibits started in personal homes or shops were a crucial first step in turning the product of Indian craftsmanship and artistry into museum-grade material, as crucial as the relationships established with the sellers by the buyer, who vouched for the piece's authenticity and played up its maker's credentials and authenticity.

These actors' skill at building a clientele of Indian specialists, at once makers, wearers and performers, made them indispensable as organizers of Indian exhibitions and shows during local fairs, local charities' and societies' social functions. As surely as they connected museums and local society, they kept open the boundary between the reservation and the off-reservation world, as they encouraged the use of Native artifacts in living exhibitions by Native and non-Native performers. Welch, notably, was a member of a local branch of the Shriners, a white brotherhood well known for 'playing Indian' (Deloria 1998), to which he introduced Standing Rock representatives and Indian material. Welch was an occasional expounder of the ideology of the Vanishing American that essentially insisted on the replacement of a noble but doomed race, the American Indians, by the sturdier white, European race and, no doubt, appointed himself to the role of savior of relics. And yet, a World War One veteran who had recruited local tribal members for the French front, he also actively propagated the idea that war service, an activity formally central to the lives of Native American men, remained as vital as ever on reservations. Welch participated in war-related dances and ceremonies, and promoted continuity, not break, with the pre-reservation past in this regard. Depending on setting and circumstances, or the age of the Native performer, local white patrons like him, living in the first decades of the twentieth century in territories with large Native minorities, were as likely to describe what they were showing as a relic of the past as they were to praise it as a valuable living tradition. One can well dismiss the hiring of Indian performers for inaugurating museums as tokenism (some tribal members were present when one was inaugurated in 1939 in Rapid City) or note the fact that such participation often served to emphasize interracial reconciliation at the expense of any real accounting of non-Indian responsibility in past violence (for example, when a museum was inaugurated in 1942 at Whitestone Hill, site of the massacre of Lakotas and Dakotas by the US military in 1863). It remains that individuals or entire families were, time and again, asked to sponsor museal institutions. These connections, while rarely

leading to durable employment, fostered a proprietary feeling towards institutions where individual items had been gifted by descendants of the donators, creating a transgenerational relationship.

More Shapes of Museums

In the interwar years, 'playing Indian' started turning into a distinct practice, hobbyism, at the same time as Indian shows and dances gave birth to reservation-based dancing events known as 'powwows.' In this new configuration, the knowledge accumulated by non-Native promoters of Native arts and crafts could sometimes gain them respect from tribal members of the younger generations, who were as interested as they were in accessing old, authentic artifacts for specialized activities like dancing. These exchanges, like those of the previous generation, were inextricably both museum- and show-oriented, and mobilized polyvalent local entrepreneurs accordingly. From the 1930s to the 1970s, Ralph 'Doc' Hubbard and his creations exemplified the connections which this category of operators continued to build between reservations, museums, children and adults, amateur and professional forms of show business and museography in the Northern Plains. Hubbard, a New York transplant to North Dakota, became an important international player in Scouting in the 1920s. He organized Indian dancing exhibits for the Scout movement and authored the 'American Indian Craft' section of its *Handbook for Boys* (Handbook 1927; Ellis 2008). All the while, Hubbard cited literature from institutions such as the Museum of Natural History in New York City and built his own collection of Indian artifacts. The peak years of his activity as a hobbyist saw the mushrooming of museums in Indian country. Museums in the region shared the distinction of being erected near the place where the people whose work they exhibited had lived and where their descendants still resided. All were more or less directly connected to tourist-oriented shows, reconstitutions emphasizing the enduring vitality of Native crafts- and showmanship. But distinctions between them based on funding, size, professionalism or the classification of the artifacts they displayed started increasing. In 1935, the BIA-led creation of an Indian Arts and Crafts Board (IACB) imposed criteria for establishing the authenticity of 'Indian' pieces and elevated some of them to art status, resulting in 1941 in the first show of American Indian Art, organized through the collaboration of the IACB and the Denver Art Museum. At the same time, regional institutions such as the Sioux Indian Museum of Rapid City (1939), the Museum of the Plains Indian in Browning, Montana (1941), the Fur Trade Museum of Chadron, Nebraska (1956) started offering professional-grade exhibits that relegated small exhibitions of 'Indian relics' to the rank of relics themselves—but did not eliminate them.

The regional museum world was by no means a stagnant world of age-old dusty exhibits, foreign to reservation life. In the 1950s, along with dancers or craftsmen interested in old pieces, and school-age children, teenagers and students on outings, Standing Rock tribal members living on and off the reservation started patronizing these new institutions. In the next decade Hubbard contributed his share to the movement. He used his personal collection to start the Fur Trade and Wildlife Museum in Medora, North Dakota (c. 1966–1968), and he

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helped found the cabin-size Wounded Knee museum on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota (1960s) and the first tribally owned museum in North Dakota, on the Three Affiliated Tribes reservation (1964) (Yost 1979; Ralph Hubbard Collection 1993). Butch showed deep respect for the work of Ralph 'Doc' Hubbard as an expert on Indian crafts. And yet Hubbard's work as a museum creator was among the most directly attacked during the rise of the museum-oriented Native activism of the early 1970s. In February 1973, the American Indian Movement, a city-based group of Native American activists occupied the little hamlet on Pine Ridge where 'Wounded Knee: the Museum' was located, to oppose the corruption of the reservation's tribal government. During the two-month confrontation with the F.B.I and local police forces that ensued, the museum which Hubbard had help set up was gutted (Doclar 1966; Reinhardt 2007: 195).

The spectacular take-over at Wounded Knee both signaled and accelerated the diffusion of negative views of museums as instruments of oppression. The sacking of the museum was part of what was originally a local political conflict. But among the justifications given by militants for the dispersion of the Wounded Knee collection was the idea that it had harbored sacred artifacts. By 1973, this was a potent argument. For decades already, invoking freedom of religion had brought tangible results in Indian country, especially in the Southwest. From the 1923 controversy over the supposed immorality of Pueblo dances to the return of Taos Blue Lake in 1970, Natives intent on pushing back against race-based restrictions on their right to conduct ceremonies or access specific territories had found non-Natives willing to help and support their causes to, often, a successful conclusion. The very notion of treating certain Native practices as part of a religion worthy of respect and even imitation (the 'Indian religion,' as the phrase went), had been seeping into popular as well as academic representations of Native Americans. Emphasizing the sacrality surrounding not just ceremonies but craftsmaking was a topos of connoisseurship. An understanding of certain objects as essential to respectable cults also developed (Wenger 2009).

If damning museums as desecration made sense at Wounded Knee, it was not only because of that specific museum's connection to a trading store, tourism and commercialism, but because it was located near the site of the infamous 1890 Wounded Knee massacre. The issue of the respect due to bodies had been raised since Native American veterans had participated in patriotic ceremonies. After World War I, World War II, and the Korean War, the repatriation and reburial of the remains of servicemen who had died abroad had been frequent (Rosier 2009). With the flooding of large portions of Native reservations by massive earth dams on the Missouri River in the late 1940s new conflicts developed around the respect due to the dead. Archaeologists hurriedly worked to salvage what for them were valuable testimonies of the past, whether human remains or artifacts, at the same time as reservation communities had to face land loss and removal, which involved the relocation of entire cemeteries (Lawson 2009). Development outside the reservation similarly exposed remains. In 1971, work on a highway in Iowa, on formerly Sioux territory, unearthed both non-Indian and Indian bodies. The differential treatment they received (Native remains

being shipped to archaeological labs instead of being reburied) scandalized Maria Pearson, the Dakota wife of one of the project's engineers, and she became a vocal advocate of the repatriation and reburial of Native remains held in museums (Atalay 2006). A new configuration tying museums to religion and cemeteries, rather than show and dance, was forming. And the American Indian Movement and other 'Red Power' groups were instrumental in giving it political saliency, through direct attacks on museums if necessary.

Familiar even if contested

It would be tempting to analyze this movement only as a break or a much-needed corrective, instead of part of the continuous development of relationships between museums and Indian country. It is clear that this indignation, channeled in powerful protests, brought immediate results in the region. As early as 1976, Iowa modified its burial law to prevent the desecration of Native graves (Gradwohl *et al.* 2005). As early as 1979 the first mass repatriation of Native remains dug up during an archaeological project occurred in South Dakota (Langdon 1993). By 1982 a repatriation committee had been set up at the SHSND. In the meantime, the passing of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act had started giving official recognition to the by then old idea that some Native artifacts and places could indeed be regarded as sacred. After the 1990 NAGPRA passed, the promotion of spiritual experts tasked with identifying and repatriating remains and artifacts from museum vaults had repercussions in local social hierarchies, conflicts over land, and understandings of history. (Fine-Dare 2000; McKeown 2012) Repatriation changed a lot of things and continues to do so, now that it has become a routine part of museum activities in the US.

And that's precisely the point: repatriation was never about getting rid of museums; it was imagined as the reform of a fraught relationship, not as its end. It naturally interacted with, rather than replaced earlier movements. One of them was the build-up of tribal governments. Since the 1930s, various self-determination policies have devolved to tribal governments the management of various reservation resources. The repatriation movement added the monitoring of museums holding locally made artifacts to the list of tribal authorities' prerogatives. Its overtly nationalistic project merged into local institution-building, resulting in the creation of colleges teaching tribal history and values, new curricula, archives and, indeed, in museums. While items were deaccessioned in some museal institutions, new ones were created and new exhibits set up. Was not, after all, the creation act of the National Museum of the American Indian a companion act to NAGPRA?

From the 1970s onwards, Standing Rock's tribal government and college collaborated with other reservations to document and teach traditional knowledge through oral history. It was by working for one such project, the American Indian Curricula Development Program (AICDP), that Butch started the life-long involvement with the research and teaching of traditional arts that led him to the SHSND museum and to No Two Horn's horse effigies. Similarly, many actors seamlessly moved between teaching tradition in tribal colleges and repatriation, and both activities took them to museums. Seen from the reservation, the Red

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Power movement of the 1970s could thus very well be argued to have increased the relevance of museums in Indian country. Even as the repatriation movement developed, the 'art' label continued to facilitate the transition of recently made and sometimes used pieces such as dresses or quilts from personal closets and powwow arenas to museum rooms. Instrumental in this was attention to 'folk arts' and the active promotion of local craftsmen by tribal and state authorities. This started new relationships between crafts makers, collectors and museums. [3] When a museum opened on Standing Rock in the early 1980s, it was uncontroversially modeled after the old pattern: a set of small, formerly *locally* owned collections, the exhibition of which was tightly connected to the sale of artifacts recently made by equally local Native craftspeople for passing tourists. Glass cases showing Native artifacts could by then be seen in tribal offices, schools, libraries, stores, and casinos; artifacts identified as traditional hung on walls and were exhibited on mantel pieces throughout the reservation. Museums have become a possible dream for tribal entrepreneurs, and as I entered the field in the late 2000s, there were talks of starting a museum at the place where Sitting Bull had been (re)interred in 1953. A museum of natural history lived a short, grant-funded life from 2014 to 2020. Off reservation, the concept of the museum has been capacious and attractive enough to inspire ventures not primarily based on Native artifacts, but rather on Native experience. Projects to turn boarding schools, once regarded as the epitome of hateful colonialisms, into museums are now common enough. [4]

It would be misleading to understand this only as a holdover from the past. The nationalistic program of Red Power had actually reenergized the exhibition of Native artifacts, at the local as well as at the national level. Exhibition of artifacts developed as part of individuals' and institutions' own trajectories characterized by the complex interweaving of rejection, imitation and visit of museums. Sometimes—and we should by now regard this as part of a century-old tradition—this comes in shapes that are evocative of museums rather than directly inspired by them. In the first weeks of my first stay on Standing Rock, for example, I came across a traveling exhibit featuring a mobile version of Washington D.C. Vietnam Veterans Memorial. This 'traveling tribute,' as it was called, was essentially a wall listing war dead and inviting visitors to identify kin or acquaintances on it. It suggested the quiet and reverence perceptible in ceremonies at other war dead monuments and cemeteries in the vicinity—and this was how museums in the area were also approached, routinely: as places holding something from one's dearly departed. The domestication of museums in Indian country has involved many such hybrid forms and ambiguous situations: exhibitions reminiscent of museums, shows emphasizing their 'living museum' quality, places where it is not clear whether the museums are the main attraction or a sideshow, and places whose makers would very much like to see them recognized as museums and which are not quite so; places that are museums without the name or, contrarily, places that claim the name without quite living up to it. Through all of them, by merging their 'stage' with other states, and moving between margin and center, museums have indeed become familiar to those who live in Indian country.

This short sketch of the history of museums in Indian country is, admittedly, full of holes.

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Indeed, it calls for an ethnography of Native American uses of museums that has yet to be born. It does offer a suggestion: individual studies of museums or collections are necessary, but they need to be replaced in a wider history of the role of *the* Museum, as a form of exhibition, a building, a patron etc. in Indian country proper. Bearing in mind the principle that in colonies not everything is colonial, we could and should extend it to Indian country's relationship with museums. Not everything in it is colonial; not every part of the relationship develops along a differential of power between rich, white, powerful museal institutions and poor, Native patrons or claimants. No matter how rooted in colonial mindsets the extension of museums in Indian country has been, we should also pay attention to what made this extension possible in reservation societies themselves. We are bound to find power relationships there as well, involving Native and non-Natives, and social distinctions within tribal groups too. We should pay special attention to intertribal relations, and how they continued to influence this relationship. Ethnographies of tribal members' visits to museums located on reservations other than their own should be most instructive in this regard. We will also find that the appropriation of museums on reservations closely followed the formation of new personal and collective identities, or the development of new political entities such as the tribes. Good or bad, acclimated or forever alien (but rather the former than the latter), museums in Indian country are good to play with. They have come to be places that allow tribal members to do a lot of different things: make a living; sustain a tradition; instruct kids and adults; display an identity for the rest of the world to see, respect, or admire; define a regimen of visibility whereby certain people are allowed to restrict the viewing of certain artifacts; and, yes, try to undo some of the damage done in an earlier configuration of power that allowed Natives to be, at best, junior collaborators, at worst, mere material for exhibition. It is natural that we focus on controversies to try and tell this history. But we should also recognize cases where controversy does not happen; uses that are trivial or banal or unquestioned, not simply because they are waiting to be problematized, but because museums could indeed be regarded as banal institutions, routinely visited and integrated in daily lives, normal, unsurprising parts of the fabric of society, no matter how exceptional or precious or sacred the artifacts exhibited. [5]

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[1] Interviews with Butch Thunderhawk were conducted in 2017 and 2019 in Bismarck, ND. They were not focused on museums but on his career as an artist. The role of museums in them is all the more striking, but it did not cohere in a synthetic position on museums and I certainly do not intend to state it in his stead. I've examined Butch's position regarding the practice of Dakota/Lakota craftsmanship in greater detail in another article (Grillot 2020).

[2] On Zahn's museums, see Vivian E. Luther, 'Community Survey. Fort Yates, ND, Standing Rock Indian Reservation', 1936 Fort Yates Collection, North Dakota State University.

[3] See Ralph T. Coe, *Lost and Found Traditions: Native American Art 1965-1985*, Seattle, University of

Washington Press and American Federation of Arts, 1986, pp. 123–124; Christopher Martin, State Historical Society of North Dakota, North Dakota Heritage Center, *Prairie patterns: folk arts in North Dakota*, Fargo, ND: North Dakota Council on the Arts, 1989. pp. 24–5; A master of traditional Indian arts and crafts: Proposal for a research grant to the OEO [mentioning Regina], to turn AICC into marketing org; letter by Aljoe Agard to Robert Moses, April 21, 1965, Folder 8, Box 2, Austin Engel 10312 Collection, SHSND; Smithsonian, arts and crafts, Folder 7: "American Indian Crafts Cooperative, 1966-1967' and Folder 8: 'American Indian Crafts Cooperative, 1965-1968', in same; and Minutes of Standing Rock Tribal Council, 27 July 1962, p. 1 and 2 October 1963, p. 1, Sitting Bull College Library Archives.

[4] For a museum project involving the former Indian boarding school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, see https://carlisleindianschoolproject.com/future/

[5] This being said, it would also be very meaningful to investigate non-Native uses of Native museums. Take this report: 'John Fadden (Mohawk) works at the Six Nations (Iroquois) Indian Museum. He reports that time and again children 'refuse to come onto the grounds of the museum because of an intense fear of possibly meeting an Indian. Some actually cry and scream'.' (Hirschfelder, Arlene B., *American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children*, Scarecrow Press, 1982, p. 47). A study of the gamut of emotions lived through by non-Natives of all ages would certainly yield a lot of information on the relationship of Natives and museums, too.