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Indigenizing a New Museum:
A Case Study from the Raclin Murphy Museum of Art

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Introduction

The Raclin Murphy Museum of Art is the newly constructed art museum located on the University of Notre Dame's campus, which opened to the public on December 1, 2023. For more than forty years, the university's collection of over thirty thousand objects was housed at the Snite Museum of Art, which became inaccessible to the broader South Bend, Indiana, community as Notre Dame's campus grew around it. This new institution aims to become a top university research and teaching museum. Ultimately, the museum will be a 132,000-square-foot facility built in two phases. The first phase of the museum, which is the building that opened in December 2023, is seventy thousand square feet. It includes twenty-three permanent collection galleries and a five-thousand-square-foot temporary exhibition space. The new building is intentionally designed to be a resource for the broader community. Situated on the edge of campus, with easy access to parking, the new museum is far more accessible to the public. Through intentional curatorial design, exhibitions, and programs, we hope to become a regular destination for people throughout the region.

Planning this new state-of-the-art museum provided the opportunity to rethink the presentation of the Indigenous Art of the Americas and African Art collections. In this article, I will discuss the curatorial approach to the Indigenous Art of the Americas suite of galleries in particular. The suite is located on the second level of the museum in the southeast corner of the building and includes three galleries. From the balcony, museum guests enter into the North American Art gallery, transition into the Mesoamerican Art gallery, and conclude in the Central American and South American Art gallery. In this discussion, I will highlight the theoretical tenets that guided the design, address the actual implementation of these theoretical tenets, and conclude by providing an overview of the galleries themselves.

Theoretical tenets

To begin, I would like to state that what follows is a brief synopsis that highlights the frameworks that guided this reinstallation and is by no means a comprehensive analysis. Works such as Amy Lonetree's *Decolonizing Museums* offer a far richer discussion.[1]

Several overarching theoretical principles guided the development of these galleries. The first, of course, was the lofty goal of decolonizing museum spaces. As stated

by Brandie Macdonald, "Museums are everlasting monuments that replicate colonial erasure and violence through their exhibitions, educational content, and through their curatorial stewardship, and collecting practices. In thinking about these nuanced paradigms, it is essential we critically interrogate how museums can responsibly move forward while being held accountable for past and current colonial harm without being performative."[2] Museums are inherently colonial institutions that were conceived through the actions of colonization.[3] As such, museums can be sites of extreme pain and trauma for many individuals, including Indigenous people.[4] If we are not careful and extremely intentional in the work we as museum professionals undertake, we can reify and uphold these harmful and traumatic colonial legacies rather than contributing to their dismantling.[5]

The question then becomes, what actionable steps can we take as museum professionals to ensure we are working to dismantle centuries of harmful colonial practices? This daunting question emphasizes the herculean nature of this task. In the work I undertook, for example, I certainly do not think I succeeded in decolonizing the museum. Rather, I tried to make it a more inclusive and welcoming space that relied on a greater diversity of voices.

In the summer of 2023, I attended the Ucross symposium Curating Native American Art, held at the Denver Art Museum. In her opening remarks, heather ahtone (Choctaw/Chickasaw Nation), director of curatorial affairs at the First Americans Museum, spoke of Indigenizing gallery spaces rather than decolonizing them. She explained that focusing on decolonizing is setting ourselves up for failure, because museums, as previously stated, are inherently colonial in nature. Instead, ahtone encouraged the curators in attendance to focus our energy on Indigenizing museums. Stephen Gilchrest spoke to the distinction between decolonizing and Indigenizing as different inflections of curatorial practice: "For me at least, the former [decolonizing] is about undoing something that invariably feels like you are forever playing catch up. Indigenization for me is about doing; manifesting, instantiating, and running our own race on our own terms."[6] Majel Boxer describes Indigenizing as a process that involves maintaining and reinforcing Indigenous epistemology.[7] This is accomplished through curatorial processes that place significance and emphasis on Indigenous voices, values, and world views.[8]

In essence, when striving to Indigenize a gallery space, we are striving toward what Ruth Phillips has termed “the second museum age” in which museums are rooted in “programs of socially responsible research and representation.”[9] This work helps make museums more community-relevant and community-oriented spaces.[10] For this to happen, theory and practice need to come together and work hand in hand.

To place theory into practice in designing new galleries with an Indigenizing framework, the Raclin Murphy Museum of Art staff sought to center Indigenous voices and world views. We wanted the most prominent voices in the gallery to be Indigenous artists speaking for themselves, not to problematically force them to serve as a representative for a larger group. We also aimed to use direct quotations from Indigenous artists and scholars in label text whenever possible and to center the texts on Indigenous philosophies and narratives. Two significant commissions were made for this gallery, which we approached with a goal of further Indigenizing the space and collection. For both commissions, no restrictions were placed on the artists. I asked the artists what narratives they would like to contribute to the gallery and how the museum could help facilitate the telling of these narratives. These commissions will be discussed in greater detail later in this essay. I also formed an Indigenous Consultation Committee to ensure that we had a paid group of advisors to run our ideas past as another safeguard to help us avoid inadvertently reifying rather than dismantling colonial practices. The next section describes in more detail the actions that were taken to implement the theory outlined above.

Implementation of theoretical tenets

While the theoretical tenets of Indigenizing and ethical curatorial practice served as the standards I attempted to meet to the best of my ability while undertaking this work, the reality of scheduling and deadlines often forced us to come up short of these ideals. I was hired several years into the planning process and thus was always playing catch-up. Filling the curatorial position that I now hold was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting hiring freeze. I was offered my position in September 2021 and was asked to start working part-time in October. As I was completing previous projects for other institutions, I was unable to relocate to Notre Dame until January 2022. I made three trips to Notre Dame, one per month

between October and January, to spend a few days in person with the collection. Starting in December, I was given three weeks to create the initial checklists, object groupings, and narrative for the African Art Gallery, and in January I was given three weeks to do the same for the North American Art Gallery, then three weeks for the Mesoamerican Art Gallery, and finally three weeks for the Central American and South American Art Gallery. This was the reality of the schedule as it was presented to me in order to meet key deadlines for the physical construction of the building, fabrication of case furniture, and build-out of the galleries. The museum administration wanted to provide me with as much opportunity as possible to weigh in on the actual construction of the galleries, but the process was too far along to give input on the architecture of the building itself. For example, the architecture of the First Americans Museum in Oklahoma incorporates and draws inspiration from Indigenous customs and beliefs. As the physical architecture of the Raclin Murphy had been solidified years before my hire, I was not able to suggest this approach. I needed to work quickly under these intense deadlines while trying to adhere to my theoretical tenets as closely as possible in guiding the rest of the design as ethically as possible.

As I needed to start planning the North American Art Gallery as soon as I arrived on campus, I wanted to understand the role this gallery could and should play at the university. I immediately began working to establish an Indigenous Consultation Committee and at the same time held several conversations with faculty about what role the gallery should play. The resounding feedback I received was that the university needed something that celebrated Indigenous people as modern, vibrant, and still very much present. These conversations played an invaluable role in shaping the gallery.

The creation of the Indigenous Consultation Committee took significantly more time, which was to be expected. The university and museum administrations were both extremely supportive in the founding of this committee; the university's associate vice president for public affairs placed me in contact with Nicole Holloway, the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi's director for the Center of History and Culture. It was important to me that we go through the correct and official channels within the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi in creating this committee. Holloway kindly reached out to several

people she felt would be a good fit for the role.

My goal for the committee was to have one faculty representative, one student representative, and three citizens of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi serve as the founding members. After almost a year of working with Holloway, we had assembled an initial group that included four members: a faculty member, a student, and two practicing artists from the Pokagon Band. These positions are paid, and the expectations outline that we would meet four times per year for two hours. We met for the first time in March 2023, unfortunately far along in the process of designing the North American Art Gallery. The first session, therefore, focused entirely on didactics and label text, which I had sent to the committee ahead of time. During the meeting, we went through every label in the gallery, exchanging feedback and suggestions. It was a productive session, with invaluable feedback that led to edits on a number of the texts.

Whereas in the past museum employees may not have known where to go for guidance, or would have inadvertently expected unpaid labor and service, we now have a standing group of paid people we can turn to for advice in our ongoing process of Indigenizing the museum. I, or any other museum employee, can bring exhibition plans, label text, rotation schedules, educational content, or programing ideas to the committee. While we could not take advantage of their advising as much as I had hoped or intended on the initial installation, the gallery is designed to be flexible with frequent rotations on which committee members will certainly give input going forward. This standing committee for the museum is one step in the ongoing process of Indigenizing the entire institution. It is a way to ensure Indigenous people's voices and expertise are included in the galleries and to help us avoid inadvertently perpetuating colonial violence. It also ensures that nonfaculty committee members are fairly compensated for their time.

I also undertook writing a land acknowledgement for the museum. It was important to me that the writing and approval process demonstrate our commitment to the words we put forward. I coauthored the acknowledgement with two colleagues, Ashlee Bird (Western Abenaki), PhD, who is an assistant professor in the American Studies department, and Erin Oliver (Miami), JD, who is the assistant vice president for institutional equity. When we were satisfied with the wording after several collaborative working sessions, Oliver

presented the statement to the Miami Nation of Indiana Tribal Council for its approval, which it gave. I sent it to Nicole Holloway, the director of the Center of History and Culture at the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi (as mentioned above), who also approved the text. We then sent the draft to a number of artists and scholars for their feedback. Finally, we submitted the statement to the museum and university administration for their approval, which we received.

The land acknowledgment reads as follows:

> The Raclin Murphy Museum of Art acknowledges our presence on the traditional land of the Potawatomi peoples, the Miami peoples, and many people from other Indigenous nations that now call this land home. As an initial step towards reconciliation and out of a desire for a brighter and more equitable future, the Museum is committed to amplifying Indigenous voices and building conversation and collaboration through the hosting and support of Indigenous artists, art forms, and communities.

In preparing to write this land acknowledgment, I attended several conferences and webinars to hear current perspectives on the subject. There are a number of valuable resources online. The one I found most useful was an event co-hosted by the Native Governance Center and the Lower Phalen Creek Project on Indigenous Peoples' Day 2019.[11] While some scholars, artists, and museum professionals do not like the use of land acknowledgements, feeling they are a hollow gesture, we ultimately decided to write one for several reasons.[12] First, it serves as an educational tool to help museum guests learn whose ancestral land we are currently on, which they may not have known previously. Second, it allows us to publicly voice our commitment to ethical collaboration with Indigenous artists and communities so that the institution can be held accountable for undertaking this meaningful work. The acknowledgement, therefore, is a starting place that marks the beginning of the work rather than the end.

To further our commitment to the Indigenization of our gallery spaces, it was also important that the galleries be polyvocal, so museum guests hear and learn from a diversity of voices. We have done this in a variety of ways. First, each of the contemporary artists highlighted in the galleries wrote a statement about their featured work. We included these statements in the galleries on what we have called "artist labels" (see fig. 1). This label type features a photograph of the artist, the artist's statement about the work, and a

DANA WARRINGTON

"Oftentimes in tribal communities across the continent tribal Indian names hold great value as a form of our identity. We believe our higher power uses that specific name to identify us throughout our physical walk on this planet. The name Wapananah translates to Eastern Star or Morning Star. My father carried that name until his Walk on this Earth ended in 2001. . . . In 2017 our brother's second son was born. Our mother was given the honor to name her grandchild. At that time, she felt the urge to revive our father's Indian name and bring it back to the family. That was a beautiful time for my mother and our siblings to honor and remember our father. . . . This sequence of events inspired the creation of this cradleboard. The colors and designs used represent different parts of our tribal identity and beliefs."

Scan the QR code to watch an interview with Dana.

Fig. 1. Example of an artist label in the North American Art Gallery.

QR code that leads to a video interview. A grant from the Terra Foundation for American Art supported the filming of these videos with videographer Angelic (Angie) Rose Hubert of the Research Department at the University of Notre Dame. Each artist decided whether to be interviewed in their studio, on campus, or elsewhere. We have filmed six interviews thus far. The interviews allow the artists to speak directly to museum guests, to introduce themselves and discuss the significance of their work on display, but also to talk about their process, passions, and beliefs. In this way, audiences learn directly from the artists, rather than receiving that information filtered through an institutional voice.

The examples outlined above are some of the ways in which I tried to strategically undertake projects that would help to Indigenize the museum and its gallery at the inception of this new institution. Before the building's opening, we had a standing Indigenous Consultation Committee, a land acknowledgment that outlines our commitment to collaborating with and serving local Indigenous communities, and polyvocal gallery spaces where museum

guests can hear directly from our featured artists. While there is much more that needs to be done, I hope and believe these steps will put the institution on the correct path toward undertaking this deeply important work moving forward.

Overview of the Gallery Spaces

The goal of the Indigenous Art of the Americas suite of galleries is to provide museum guests with a more holistic view of the interconnectedness of people. Arbitrary disciplinary boundaries can at times prevent visitors from seeing a broader view of the interaction and exchange of goods and ideas across the Americas over thousands of years. At the same time, the galleries are designed to celebrate and pay respect to individual cultures. As stated previously, the suite of galleries begins in North American Art, transitions into Mesoamerican Art, and ends in Central American and South American Art.

As guests enter the North American Art gallery, the first display case they reach (see fig. 2) is intended to provide an overview of the suite. This case has three pieces on view: a West Mexican Dog with Corn Cob in Mouth Effigy Vessel from 300 BCE–250 CE done in the Colima style, a whistling vessel in the form of a feline from the Andes dating from 1000–1400 CE, and Rick E. Bartow's *Crazy Coyote*, made in 2000. The case, therefore, includes representations of quadrupeds from North America, Mesoamerica, and South America. It aims to show how a similar form is represented in artworks from across the Americas in very different ways. The three are arranged in a procession of sorts, as if moving across the landscape themselves. The label on the case, titled "Borders," invites guests to consider the free movement of people. The text reads as follows:

In 2013, a site was discovered near Abiquiu, New Mexico, with some of the most conclusive evidence that humans were already settled in North America 37,000 years ago. For the vast majority of those 37,000 years, people freely traveled across the landscape, interacting with different cultures and exchanging goods and ideas. While each culture should be understood and respected on its own terms, to see these intercultural interactions, we must look holistically at the Americas.

This suite of galleries is organized geographically into North American Art, Mesoamerican Art, and Central and South American Art. These galleries should not be seen as distinct spaces. You will flow between them just as people flowed between these regions, bringing what you learned from one region to the next, just as they did. Their ability to

Fig. 2. Case introducing the Indigenous Art of the Americas suite of galleries. Left to right: Unrecorded artist, Whistling Water Bottle (1000–1400 CE); Rick E. Bartow, *Crazy Coyote* (2000); Unrecorded West Mexican artist, Dog with Corn Cob in Mouth Effigy Vessel (300 BCE–250 CE).

move freely across the landscape is the reason that Indigenous communities today do not recognize borders, as borders did not exist for over 99 percent of the time that people have resided here.

In this case, we also included a text that informs visitors about our choice to use the term "Unrecorded artist" when we do not know the name of the individual who created the work. Elizabeth Morton served as visiting curator of African Art in 2017 and began this practice at the institution, and I embraced the terminology for this reinstallation. We use variations of this label in multiple places throughout the Indigenous Art of the Americas suite and the African Art galleries to ensure that visitors will encounter it. The text reads as follows:

Indigenous art has long been collected and displayed without identifying the artists. The identity of these creative and skilled individuals was often only referenced in terms of their tribal affiliation, cultural background, or geographic region of origin. This is due to a variety of reasons; for example, the existence of a violently extractive colonial mentality in which the name of the artist was not important to early collectors and galleries, or in the case of ancient artists, the artist's name was most likely once known to their community, but has since been forgotten. In these galleries, we use the term "**Unrecorded artist**" to restore the individual humanity to Indigenous artists whose names were not written down and cannot be recovered.

North American Art Gallery

The North American Art Gallery (see fig. 3) accomplishes several primary goals. First, it celebrates Indigenous artists as inherently modern, breaking some people's incorrect view of Indigenous art as static and problematizing the incorrect notion that only particular types of Indigenous art are "authentic" based on a deeply flawed understanding of Indigeneity. A second objective was to provide a polyvocal space where visitors hear from a diversity of voices and the most prominent voices are Indigenous. Third, we sought to help museum visitors understand the long history of different artistic mediums, and how the very act of keeping these artforms and mediums alive through the generations and centuries is one of perseverance and resistance. Finally, our fourth goal was to use this gallery to display and support local artists and communities. To accomplish these goals, the gallery tells these stories through eight subsections and fifty-six works of art.

The North American Art Gallery, titled "Modern and Intersectional," is designed to celebrate contemporary artists. Each grouping in the gallery is centered around a work by a contemporary artist. Historic

Fig. 3. Entrance to the North American Art Gallery.

and other modern examples of artwork completed in the same medium surround the highlighted work. The goal of this display strategy is to help museum guests see how approaches to working within a particular medium have changed in some ways and remained the same in others over time. In this way, guests can see how contemporary artists draw on customary practices and place them in dialogue with their other passions. The subsections within this gallery include displays on textiles, beadwork, quillwork, clothing, baskets, and ceramics. A rotating display highlights works from a particular cultural area. For the opening, this was a grouping dedicated to ancestral Puebloan material highlighting a contemporary work by Margaret Tafoya (Santa Clara Pueblo).

We selected this organizational strategy for the North American Art Gallery due to several key factors. First, as discussed previously, the feedback I had received recommended that the gallery celebrate Indigenous art as modern art. Second, the works within the collection allowed for neither a geographic nor culturally based installation; there would have been too many gaps. I developed this approach because it allows us to

discuss particular mediums in detail and to show how the highlighted artists work within those mediums in their own unique ways. In order to tell this narrative effectively, we commissioned two works of art, one by Jamie Okuma (La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians) and one by Jason Wesaw (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi). We also acquired a new work by Dana Warrington (Menominee/Prairie Band, Potawatomi) and secured a long-term loan of a piece by Virgil Ortiz (Cochiti Pueblo). Other highlighted artists include Rick Bartow (Mad River Band, Wiyot), Netadi Frank Hamilton (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi), Christine Marie Rapp-Morseau (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi), and Margaret Tafoya. Works by many other prominent contemporary artists appear throughout the gallery as well, including ones by Wendy Red Star (Apsáalooke) and Fritz Scholder (Luiseño).

Each subsection in the gallery includes the same overarching elements to provide a consistent experience for museum guests. The subtopic panel provides a brief history of the medium and emphasizes why it is important. Each subsection has an artist label, as discussed above, with a photograph of the highlighted artist, a quotation from the artist about the work, and a QR code that leads to an interview with the artist. These labels are important in making the gallery a polyvocal space. In addition to the subtopic panels and artist labels, extended texts and lead paragraphs provide visitors with additional insights or context into the different groupings.

I will briefly discuss one of the subsections to provide an example of how we approached the groupings and demonstrate the types of conversations that exist throughout the gallery. The section on beadwork (see fig. 4) serves as the sightline from the balcony into the gallery. This section centers on Jamie Okuma's new commissioned piece, titled *All the Things I Hold Dear*, which was completed in 2023. This elaborately beaded pair of Prada boots is a physical expression of her relationship with her two sons. Both boots have an attached beaded bag: one of these depicts Destoroyah from the Godzilla franchise, the other depicts Bulbasaur from the Pokémon franchise. These two characters were selected by her sons, Destoroyah by her thirteen-year-old and Bulbasaur by her nine-year-old. Hidden underneath these bags are beaded hearts. While we are allowed to discuss the beaded hearts, we are not allowed to display them. This is because the hearts symbolize her relationship with her two sons, and this

Fig. 4. North American Art Gallery subsection on beadwork, with Jamie Okuma's *All the Things I Hold Dear* at center.

connection between mother and child can never be fully seen or understood by anyone outside of that relationship. Around the hearts are raised beaded bands, thirteen bands around one, nine around the other. This is meant to capture the boys' ages at the particular moment the work was undertaken. The bags and the back of the boots are lined with spikes, which Okuma used as a symbol of protection. On the body of the boots themselves are intricately beaded plants. Each plant is connected to a particular moment and story that the artist associates with her children. In the creation of this work, Okuma used a number of antique beads. When discussing the beads, she said, "they're antique, they were hand-pulled beads. And that's another added element to my work. It's like all these hands from hundreds of years ago that helped make this modern piece. There's so much history in the beads alone that is just it's amazing that the people made those beads, not a machine."[13]

Beaded moccasins are displayed on risers on either side of

Okuma's boots, one pair by an unrecorded Lakota artist and the other by an unrecorded Sicangu Lakota artist. This placement was intentional, to drive home another point that Okuma made. I had asked her how she sees her work as bridging customary practices with modern fashion and she stated, "Yeah, I don't know that it's bridging anything. It's just what we've always done. I wasn't the first to bead on, you know, footwear or to embellish clothing. I've seen the most incredible shoes from the 1800s that were beaded in the manner that I'm beading them. So it's just a traditional concept of beading everything that was available to us at the time and putting our stories on them."[14] Including these moccasins in the display intended to tell that story and show how Okuma is continuing a centuries-old practice.

Above *All The Things I Hold Dear* are two beaded "whimsies"—a term that has become somewhat controversial, as some people feel it is dismissive or pejorative to the art form.[15] This style of raised beadwork used by Iroquois artists became popular among tourists in places such as Niagara Falls and Toronto in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[16] Artists, therefore, drew influence from motifs they knew would be successful in these markets, such as the Victorian-era boot on display in this case. I used this grouping to discuss how Native artists have always been intersectional, drawing on a variety of influences for their beadwork. An extended text reinforces that "whimsies" are another example of how Indigenous artists have always been contemporary to the time in which they work and have never been static.

The grouping on beadwork accomplishes several of the overarching goals for the gallery as outlined above. While it centers on Jamie Okuma's work, it also helps visitors understand that all of the artwork shown was intersectional and modern at the time of its creation. Okuma's voice and words are prominently featured on the artist label, presented front and center in the case, adding to the polyvocality of the space. The grouping presents multiple forms of beadwork from the past 150 years, and the subtopic panel presents a brief history of the medium.

While the display on beadwork does not include a local artist (the fourth goal of the gallery), local artists and scholars are highlighted in multiple places throughout the space. A large quotation appears on the gallery wall from John Low, PhD, JD, a citizen of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi and an associate professor in the Department of Comparative Studies at the Ohio

State University: "The Potawatomi have never been in stasis; they have always interacted with their neighbors, changing both themselves and others as a result."[17] His words succinctly summarize the main argument put forward throughout the gallery.

Three artists from the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi are highlighted in the gallery: Jason Wesaw, Christine Marie Rapp-Morseau, and Netadi Frank Hamilton. The commissioned work by Jason Wesaw, titled *The Path* (fig. 5), is the highlight piece in our subsection on textiles. When we first approached Wesaw about this commission, he expressed interest in creating a piece that would simultaneously look at the historic relationship between the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi and the University of Notre Dame, highlight things the two communities have in common, and call for a brighter, more collaborative path forward. For this piece, Wesaw alludes to the form of the jingle dress, which is intimately connected with healing.[18] The jingles are made from earth that Wesaw harvested from the lakes on ancestral Potawatomi land that is now Notre Dame's campus. After firing these ceramic jingles, Wesaw dipped them in a gold luster. A golden dome dominates the bottom third of the textile, and the background is a light green. In this piece, Wesaw explores the deep and historic relationship between the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi and the University of Notre Dame in order to facilitate potentially difficult conversations that will ultimately lead to healing. Wesaw helped me to write a statement about the piece that we used in the museum magazine. It reads as follows:

> This visually striking work is rich with color and symbolism, drawing attention to the challenging connection and unique narrative shared amongst these two esteemed groups. His intention with *The Path* is to acknowledge the true depth of this shared history, embracing the individual and collective roles in it while encouraging a united and harmonious course forward for the University and Tribe.[19]

The university's version of the founding of the campus is frequently told. In this commission, we wanted to elevate Wesaw's voice to ensure the Pokagon Band's side of this story held a prominent place on campus for all to see.

The subsection on basketry highlights a work by Christine Marie Rapp-Morseau, another artist from the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi. Rapp-Morseau's basket, titled *Wisgak Gokbenagen (Black Ash Basket)* (fig. 6), is a beautiful example of this art form, which is

Fig. 6. Jason Wesaw (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi, b. 1974). *The Path*, 2023. Hand sewn and hand dyed linen, wool felt, polyester/metallic crepe, clay and temper harvested from land at the University of Notre Dame, glaze, gold lustre, polyester ribbon, and artificial sinew. Raclin Murphy Museum of Art, Lake Family Endowment for the Arts of the Americas, Africa and Oceania, 2023.014.

Fig. 5. Christine Marie Rapp-Morseau (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi, b. 1968). *Wisgak* Gokbenagen (Black Ash Basket), 2018. Black ash and sweetgrass; 7 ¼ × 8 ¼ × 8 $^{1}/_{8}$ in. (18.42 × 20.96 × 20.64 cm). Raclin Murphy Museum of Art, Humana Foundation Endowment, 2019.006. © Christine Marie Rapp-Morseau.

extremely important in the region.[20] Using the wood of black ash trees to make baskets is a centuries-old practice that has been passed down through the generations.[21] The trees appear in some creation stories, and the wood is prized for being strong yet flexible.[22] In her interview, Rapp-Morseau emphasized the amount of time and labor that go into creating these baskets. She described how a group first goes into the woods, usually in watery areas, to find the straightest tree possible. Once the tree is cut down, the bark is then peeled off and saved for baskets. After this, the log is pounded with the back of an axe or a mallet, which makes it easier to pull off strips of the wood. Those strips are then split down further and sorted based on what parts of the basket they will be used for. Next, all the hard imperfections are scraped off with a knife to make the strips smooth. Only then can the artist start making the basket. The subsection on baskets is meant to drive home the amount of labor and skill that goes into each of these works. Rapp-Morseau is committed to passing this art form on to the younger generation. She stated:

> It's important for our youth to remember what we were doing back in the past, you know, and to raise awareness that it's still around. . . . Just to teach our youth what we used to do back in the day and what our grandparents and great grandparents [did], you know. . . . Thank goodness we have the Head Start school on our property, because now maybe they're not thinking about, *Oh, you guys still live in teepees. Oh, you guys still wear moccasins or are you guys*, all this kind of nonsense that they still teach in schools. You know, there's a lot more to us than that. So culture-wise, we'd like to keep that going for our kids.[23]

Black ash has been suffering due to an invasive species of beetle called the black ash borer that has been killing millions of ash trees across eastern North America.[24] This makes it difficult for artists like Rapp-Morseau to find black ash trees in the area to keep this deeply important tradition alive. For these reasons, we seek to honor the art form in the gallery and to call visitors' attention to ongoing conservation efforts.

The final artist I will discuss in this subsection is Netadi Frank Hamilton, who lived from 1876–1939. Hamilton was the great-grandson of Chief Leopold Pokagon and Elizabeth Topinabee, and he served as the *Ankéntagét* (interpreter) for what is now the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi.[25] Our subsection dedicated to fashion and clothing features Hamilton's *Mizhatthwen* (regalia) (see

fig. 7) that he made and wore to the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago (a world fair celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus's landing in the Americas). Hamilton accompanied author Simon Pokagon to the exposition in order to hand out Pokagon's book, *The Red Man's Rebuke*, which was printed on birch bark and called out the injustices committed against Indigenous peoples while also reclaiming and reasserting Indigenous space and identity.[26] This *Mizhatthwen* was passed down from Netadi Frank Hamilton to his son, Paul Hamilton. Paul Hamilton played professional baseball for the St. Louis Browns as a pitcher for one year before stepping down due to an injury.[27] To more effectively tell Paul's story, we also included three of his baseballs in the display. Baseball was clearly important to the family, and the headdress displayed is constructed around a baseball cap with the brim cut off, a fact we

Fig. 7. North American Art Gallery display of Netadi Frank Hamilton's *Mizhatthwen*.

used to celebrate the intersectionality of Paul and Netadi's interests. Paul Hamilton's daughter left this *Mizhatthwen* to the museum. For this subsection, we included a video interview with Kyle Malott (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi), who is the great-great-grandson of Netadi Frank Hamilton and a Potawatomi language specialist and historian. Our records incorrectly stated that an unrecorded artist had made this *Mizhatthwen*. Malott informed us that Hamilton himself had made it, and we have updated our records and are planning to reprint this label to correct this misattribution.

To summarize the goals and conclude the discussion of the North American Art Gallery, we aimed to achieve the first goal—celebrating Indigenous art as inherently modern—by centering the subsections around contemporary artists and by showing how the historic works displayed were innovative and intersectional at the time of their creation. This approach demonstrates that Indigenous art has never been static. To accomplish our second goal—making the galleries more polyvocal spaces—we included a variety of artist statements and interviews throughout the gallery so that museum guests can hear many voices and can learn directly from the artists themselves. We also intend to have frequent in-person engagements, including artist talks and demonstrations, within the gallery. For example, at our opening weekend, organized by our education department, Christine Marie Rapp-Morseau led a basket-making demonstration directly across from the case displaying her artwork. In this way, the thousands of guests who attended our opening weekend were able to engage directly with one of the artists highlighted in the gallery. Multiple times, I observed people watch Rapp-Morseau work, turn to see her photograph prominently displayed next to her piece in the subsection on baskets, and excitedly exclaim, "That's her!" Artist David Martin (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi), who sits on our Indigenous Consultation Committee, also organized a number of dances and talks at our opening weekend. We are committed to continuing such engagements going forward. To reach our third goal—exploring the history, significance, and continuity of these different mediums—we created subsections dedicated to textiles, beadwork, quillwork, fashion and clothing, baskets, and ceramics. Each of these displays presents artwork from various time periods. Our grouping on ceramics, for example, includes both a Hohokam vessel from 600–900 CE and a work by Virgil Ortiz made

in 2004. The subsection label for this display centers on the Cochiti myth about the origins of pottery, emphasizing the thousands of years of continuous creation. Finally, for our fourth goal—to display and support local artists and communities—four of our eight highlighted artists are Potawatomi, three from the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi. Going forward, we intend to continue emphasizing works by local artists and prioritizing engagement with local communities.

Mesoamerican Art Gallery

The Mesoamerican Art Gallery (see fig. 8) takes a very different approach from the North American Art Gallery. The transition point from North American Art into Mesoamerican Art is a grouping of ceramics from the US Southwest, which are positioned next to the doorway leading to Mesoamerican Art. The label text invites visitors to look deeply at the iconography and motifs from the Southwest and to think about how they relate to the artworks in Mesoamerica. Of course, trade and interaction happened frequently throughout what is now the Southwestern region of the United States and Mexico from an early period, and we discuss these interactions.

Fig. 8. The Mesoamerican Art Gallery.

My primary area of specialty is ancient Mesoamerican cultures and artwork, and this is one of the flagship collections at the Raclin Murphy Museum of Art. In particular, the museum has excellent holdings in artwork from the Formative period (1800 BCE–200 CE). The vast majority of museum visitors may have learned about Maya and Aztec cultures in secondary school but are likely unfamiliar with the wide array of cultures that thrived throughout this region for millennia. As a university museum, we need to consider the various audiences who make use of these spaces. The gallery needs to be usable by undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff, and visiting researchers, but also K–12 students, the broader community, and descendant communities.

To accomplish the goal of serving as many diverse audiences as possible, I used a variety of display strategies and designed sixteen subsections, presenting 208 works of art. Previous installations of precontact art have demonstrated that a solely narrative organization is not usually the most successful in reaching the average museum visitor. This is because most people do not know enough about precontact cultures and need an introduction to these peoples and an entry point into the artwork from this area. In this gallery, I relied on chronology. The perimeter of the gallery includes nine subsections presented in a roughly chronological order. These subsections are introductions to different cultural groups including Olmec, Tlatilco, Zapotec, West Mexican, Chupícuaro, Maya, Teotihuacano, Aztec and Mixtec, and Veracruz peoples. The center of the gallery features seven subsections that are narrative groupings. These displays combine artwork from the cultures introduced around the periphery to emphasize broad themes throughout Mesoamerica. Narrative groupings include discussions of ritual feasting, writing, the ballgame, animals in mythology, music, and the feathered serpent. This organizational strategy is meant to facilitate various levels of conversation. For example, a museum guest visiting on their own can learn about the different specific cultural groups on the perimeter and then move to the center to learn about broad themes that connect them, or vice versa. On the other hand, an undergraduate art history class could have a detailed conversation about Olmec iconography, for example, while an elementary school class could be on the other side of the gallery at the same time discussing animals in mythology or the importance of different types of foods.

When entering the gallery, visitors are greeted by two large displays of figurines (see fig. 9). These two cases are built into the front of a large archway that occupies the center of the gallery. This archway has *talud-tablero* architectural elements on either side, paying homage to an iconic architectural style from this region. There are seventy-eight figurines in the two cases alone. This narrative grouping, titled "Peopling the Americas," is designed to introduce visitors to the wide array of peoples and cultures that thrived across this relatively small geographic area over thousands of years. The label reads as follows:

Until recently, it was taught that Christopher Columbus "discovered" the Americas. In these discovery stories, the land was a sparsely populated area, full of opportunity and waiting to be claimed. In reality, Mesoamerica and the Caribbean had been densely settled for over 3,000 years. Many people have heard of the Maya and Aztec, but not many have heard of the other cultural groups that thrived throughout the region. These figurines represent the diversity of peoples who lived robust lives on this land. They raised families, farmed, worshiped gods, recorded historic events, and traded goods. As you explore this gallery, think about these people and their lives—lives that were just as rich and nuanced as our own. The objects you see here might seem static, but centuries ago they were regularly used by these people. These objects, with their dynamic and rich life histories, allow us to celebrate the cultures and people who made and used them.

The figurine wall also serves another function. I wanted to make a grand entranceway to the gallery, and because the majority of the artworks in this collection area are relatively small in scale, doing so involved displaying a significant number of artworks at the same time, creating a monumental whole out of many small pieces. Thus far, visitors have responded very positively to the figurine wall and have been stopping to spend time with it, looking at each of the figures and picking out those that they find most compelling, which was the desired outcome. The snag with this display was how to effectively include the identification labels. Ultimately, we included a QR code on the subsection label, which directs guests to a checklist on our online collection platform, Marble.nd.edu. The checklist informs guests that the figurines are organized from top left to bottom right, and each entry has a thumbnail image, making it relatively straightforward to find the figurine in question. I have seen people

Fig. 9. View of the figurine wall at the entrance of the Mesoamerican Art Gallery.

interact with the QR code, and while more objective analysis and data are needed, from initial engagements it seems like the few people who have used the QR code have been able to find the information they were looking for relatively easily.

A discussion of one of the cultural subsections and two of the narrative subsections can provide additional context into the design intent behind these installations. Each subsection includes a subtopic panel that introduces either the culture or the primary thematic narrative of the display. These subtopic panels also discuss the descendants of these cultures whenever possible, ensuring that descendants who visit the museum and who may or may not speak the languages being discussed feel they are included in the narrative and are not experiencing the violence of erasure, as has happened historically with displays of this type. Simultaneously, this approach helps other guests understand that many of these cultures and languages are still very much present today. Many of the groupings include figurines, with the goal of introducing guests to the people of these cultural areas. This also allows guests to begin to

learn the unique styles of figurines made by different cultures. The majority of the cases include multiple groupings that facilitate deeper and more nuanced discussions of the artwork being presented.

Going clockwise around the gallery, the first case that museum guests encounter focuses on ancient Olmec artwork (see fig. 10). The subtopic panel introduces visitors to Olmec peoples and provides a quick discussion of both the mother culture model and the sister culture model.[28] Other important topics are also addressed in this subsection text, which reads as follows:

> Olmec culture (1500–400 BCE) has been referred to by some scholars as the "mother" culture due to its profound influence on the religion, aesthetics, and iconography of later Mesoamerican cultures. Other scholars argue that the Olmecs were one of several important cultures from this time period—an argument known as the "sister" culture model. The mother culture model is based on the fact that many Olmec gods served as foundational models for later deities worshiped throughout Mesoamerica for thousands of years, such as various rain deities and maize gods. The Olmec also developed the first writing system and formed the first known city in Mesoamerica, San Lorenzo, dating before 1500 BCE in what is now the state of Veracruz, near the Gulf of Mexico.
>
> The Olmec were not a homogenous group. No one knows what they called themselves or even if they saw themselves as a connected people. The term "Olmec" is based on the much later Aztec word for the region, Olman, meaning the "place of rubber." The time-depth here is crucial to consider when understanding Mesoamerica and the importance of the Olmec. The Olmec were at their height more than 2,300 years before the Aztec, meaning more time had elapsed between the life of an Olmec person and the life of an Aztec person than between Jesus and us today. Displayed here are several iconic examples of Olmec art, including their characteristic figurines with downturned mouths and flaring upper lips.

Within the case itself, a semicircle of figurines made of ceramic and jade greet the viewer. This display is designed to reference La Venta Offering 4, a cache of figurines found at the site of La Venta, located on the Gulf Coast of Mexico, where they were also arranged in a semicircle.[29] These figures allow us to discuss Olmec style, including the downturned mouths and flaring upper lips that give the figures a "despondent, fierce expression."[30] Above these figurines, mounted to the back of the case, is a grouping of artworks carved from jade and other green stones. The label text discusses the importance of jade in Olmec art, and

Fig. 10. Mesoamerican Art Gallery subsection on Olmec peoples.

subsequently the artwork of many later Mesoamerican cultures. The significance of jade extends down into Central America, and Olmec jade was traded with people in Costa Rica centuries later. On the left side of the case are examples of the flame eyebrow motif found throughout Olmec art.[31] The right side of the case includes several other iconic examples of Olmec art, including a *Yuguito*, a small stone item associated with the rubber ballgame that appears to have been an important component of the Early Formative version of the game.[32] Within this one case, various small groupings allow for multiple conversations about Olmec art and introduce museum guests to a variety of mediums and motifs from this important early culture.

An example of a narrative grouping within the gallery is the case dedicated to ritual feasting and drinking (see fig. 11). As in the approach used in the Olmec case, there are several different groupings within this display. The subtopic panel describes the importance of food and drink, both in ceremonial contexts and

Fig. 11. Mesoamerican Art Gallery subsection on ritual feasting.

everyday life. The left side of the case features a detailed Nayarit-style model house from West Mexico from 100 BCE–300 CE. The model shows three different apartments, each with figures inside performing different roles. This model house will be rotated periodically to show all the apartments. For the museum's opening, however, we chose to have the largest apartment facing outward toward the viewer. In this scene, four people sit on the floor, hands raised to their mouths, sharing a meal. A dog makes aggressive eye contact with one of the figures, tongue hanging from his mouth, a posture dog caretakers are all too familiar with. These scenes provide valuable insight into people's lives. They show the preparation of food, the sharing of meals, and people gathering.[33] What better way to start a discussion of ritual feasting?

The next grouping in this case demonstrates the importance of cacao in Mesoamerica. Cacao has been prepared and consumed by many cultures throughout Mesoamerica since the Early and Middle Formative periods.[34] The first vessel in this group is from the Classic Maya period and shows two monkeys carrying cacao pods. The Maya often depict monkeys as the "bringers" of cacao.[35] This is in part because monkeys would eat cacao seeds, and then travel through the rainforest and excrete them, thus helping cacao to spread. Next to this is another Classic period Maya vessel used to consume cacao. Maya people would use cacao to make a frothy and zesty beverage, which the wealthy would drink out of elaborately decorated cylinder vessels, such as the one on display, at ritual feasts. The central glyphs of this vessel read *u-jaay y-uk'ib'*, meaning "his drinking cup."[36] Stylized cacao beans surround these central glyphs, demonstrating that this vessel was used for cacao.

The final grouping in this case is dedicated to maize. Maize has been a crop of central importance in Mesoamerica since the Formative period.[37] As detailed in the Popul Vuh, a Maya origin story, the creator deities tried to create humans several times, all unsuccessfully. The attempt that finally worked was when these gods shaped humans out of maize, making humans, quite literally, the people of maize.[38] The first vessel in this grouping is an Olmec depiction of the maize god, which allows us to discuss how Olmec deities continue to have significant impact on later Mesoamerican deities, as well as the significance of maize from a very early period. Next to it is a figurine whistle from Classic period Veracruz showing a woman grinding maize with a mano and metate. Above this figurine we included a

miniature metate to discuss how corn was traditionally prepared. The final vessel is a Classic Maya vessel showing *waaj*, a tamale-like dish, which allowed us to discuss the different dishes prepared using maize and masa.[39] This subsection addresses several important foods throughout Mesoamerica, demonstrates how these foods are woven into mythology, and provides examples of how they are prepared and served. The case is intended to provide both museum guests and educators leading tours everything they would need in order to effectively discuss and understand this narrative.

The final narrative grouping I will discuss is dedicated to the feathered serpent and is located at the center of the gallery (see fig. 12). The goals of this grouping are to break the chronologic organization of the gallery and to celebrate a motif that has captured people's imaginations for thousands of years. The feathered serpent as a symbol connects earth and sky; it is the bridging of worlds. It first appeared during the Formative period and remains an important motif today.[40] The bronze sculpture *Quetzalcoatl* (2017) by David Ocelotl Garcia sits on an open-air pedestal. When speaking about *Quetzalcoatl*, Ocelotl Garcia said, "In this contemporary interpretation, I explore the sculptural symbolism as it pertains to Quetzalcoatl, pulling inspiration from a variety of tribal pictographs that include the Maya, Mexihca, and Mixteca."[41] The artist label includes a QR code that leads guests to an interview with Ocelotl Garcia. Paired with this sculpture are three ancient depictions of the feathered serpent from throughout Mesoamerica. On the label rail we included a reproduction of a photograph in Notre Dame's library collection taken during the excavation of the Temple of the Feathered Serpent at the site of Teotihuacan in the early 1900s. The introductory label to this grouping discusses how, as archaeological excavations took place throughout Mexico in the early 1900s, the nation-state began drawing on motifs from these precontact cultures in their contemporary national aesthetic. For example, motifs taken from the Temple of the Feathered Serpent at Teotihuacan were used on the twenty-peso note. This subsection, therefore, demonstrates the longevity of this important mythological figure across multiple periods of time: from thousands of years ago, to the early 1900s, to today.

I am committed to collecting and exhibiting contemporary artwork like *Quetzalcoatl* for several reasons. First, displaying contemporary works by descendant

Fig. 12. Mesoamerican Art Gallery subsection on the feathered serpent, with David Ocelotl Garcia's *Quetzalcoatl* at right.

artists does a lot of heavy lifting by helping museum guests who might be unfamiliar with these cultures to understand why they are so important and to see how they continue to have a profound impact on the identities, beliefs, and practices of many people today. I am committed to exhibiting contemporary artwork in the gallery going forward to create these meaningful discussions of cultural continuity. Second, although we translated texts found on artwork in the gallery whenever possible to allow those words to reach people today, the addition of more contemporary voices is necessary for our ongoing work of Indigenizing gallery spaces through a polyvocal approach.

The Mesoamerican Art Gallery accomplishes multiple goals. First, it introduces museum guests to many different cultures throughout the region while at the same time helping them understand the overarching chronology of said region. Second, it provides seven narrative groupings that help

people better understand how different cultures engaged with various themes, such as music, the ballgame, and the presence of animals in mythology, in similar yet unique ways. Third, by incorporating contemporary artworks and discussing descendant communities and languages in the label text, the gallery seeks to emphasize how these cultures continue to have a profound impact on the identities, beliefs, and practices of many people today. When I discuss my research, one of the most common questions I get is, *Where did the Maya go?* The answer is they did not go anywhere; there are still millions of people who speak Mayan languages living throughout Mesoamerica today. The gallery seeks to educate museum guests about these contemporary peoples to help undo the damage that erasure under colonialism causes.

Central American and South American Art Gallery

The final gallery within the Indigenous Art of the Americas suite is dedicated to Central American and South American Art (see fig. 13). This is the first time a museum at the University of Notre Dame has had a gallery dedicated to these cultural areas. Whereas the Mesoamerican Art Gallery relies on

Fig. 13. Entrance to the Central American and South American Art Gallery.

chronologic and narrative groupings, this gallery relies on geographic and narrative groupings. This is largely because the gallery displays artwork made by cultures that thrived over a much larger geographic expanse. This space covers several geographic regions, including Central America (Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panama), the Andes, and the Southern Cone. It also features several narrative subsections. The subsection dedicated to waterscapes discusses how cultures that thrived throughout the Caribbean and along the coasts of Columbia and Ecuador used their surrounding large bodies of water (i.e., the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean) to facilitate travel and trade. In this way, these bodies of water connected rather than divided communities. Another narrative subsection explores the form of the stirrup spout vessel produced by various Andean cultures over thousands of years. At the far end of the gallery, we take advantage of the sixteen-foot ceilings to display a variety of contemporary Andean textiles. This gallery includes six subsections and eighty-nine works of art.

Again, to provide a sense of the types of narratives presented in this gallery, I will describe one of the geographic subsections and one of the thematic subsections. The subsection dedicated to Central America includes three cases. The first case (see fig. 14) displays two figurines and three ceramic vessels to discuss the types of artworks common to this region. One of the figurines is a rattle in the form of an *usékar*, a ritual specialist with powerful magical abilities who is identifiable by the conical hat he wears.[42] *Usékars* are commonly depicted in artwork from this region. The piece has an extended label that reads:

> Identifiable by the conical hat, this is a representation of an *usékar*, one of the most commonly depicted classes of ritual specialists. These powerful individuals were believed to have descended from jaguars and possess magical abilities. According to creation myths, the creator god Sibö sent the *usékars* to protect people from animals and other threats. By entering a trance-like state, ritual specialists could transform into their jaguar forms in order to commune with ancestors and spirits. This figure is also a rattle. Music, and particularly rattles, played an important role in many of the rituals performed.

The next case in this subsection (see fig. 15) provides two narrative groupings. The first discusses the prominence of mace heads in Central American art. Warfare in this area took the form of raids by one community into surrounding

Fig. 14. Central American and South American Art Gallery subsection on Central America, case 1.

communities for a variety of reasons, such as the desire to claim additional territory or gain access to necessary resources.[43] It has been argued that another reason for these raids was more magical in nature: to stop black magic that was being cast on the community by a ritual specialist from a nearby community. As such, *usékars* would lead raids to put an end to the black magic and protect their people.[44]

This case also contains a grouping on the importance of different animals in mythology. The central figure is an opossum named *Bikili'* in the Bribris language—this same name is used for the original opossum spirit and for any opossum, who can then stand in for the original opossum spirit. This is because, to Bribris speakers, the proper name for animals is the name of the original animal's spirit.[45] The Bribris peoples believed that Bikili' was the first healer and the first intermediary between the creator god Sibö and humans.[46] In a different story, the opossum was a funeral singer, and in one version the creator god made Bikili' sing himself back to life after his death. Due to these various roles in mythology, Bikili' acts as interpreter for the people before the *usékars*.[47] The opossum

Fig. 15. Central American and South American Art Gallery subsection on Central America, case 2.

shown in this case is in the Pataky style from the Nicoya region of Nicaragua and dates to between 800 and 1250 CE. The grouping also includes representations of a crocodile and a stingray, both important animals which appear in other myths and are discussed in greater detail in the label text.

The final case in this subsection (see fig. 16) discusses the transition from jade to gold as the primary luxury good in the region. It includes a jade celt, or ceremonial

axe-head, from Mesoamerica; a large jade tube from Costa Rica; four gold pendants from Central America; and three gold nose ornaments from South America. Central America was an area of great exchange, having traded regularly with both Mesoamerica and South America. Up until 400–700 CE, jade was the most highly valued material, and Olmec carved jades traded from Mesoamerica in particular were highly prized possessions. Then, as trade with Mesoamerica began to slow, gold items from South America rose in prominence as the most sought-after goods.[48] This display, therefore, allows us to discuss changing cultural influences in this region over time and the trade networks that existed between Mesoamerica, Central America, and South America.

This subtopic aims to facilitate multiple conversations. The first case introduces audiences to artwork from this region and the

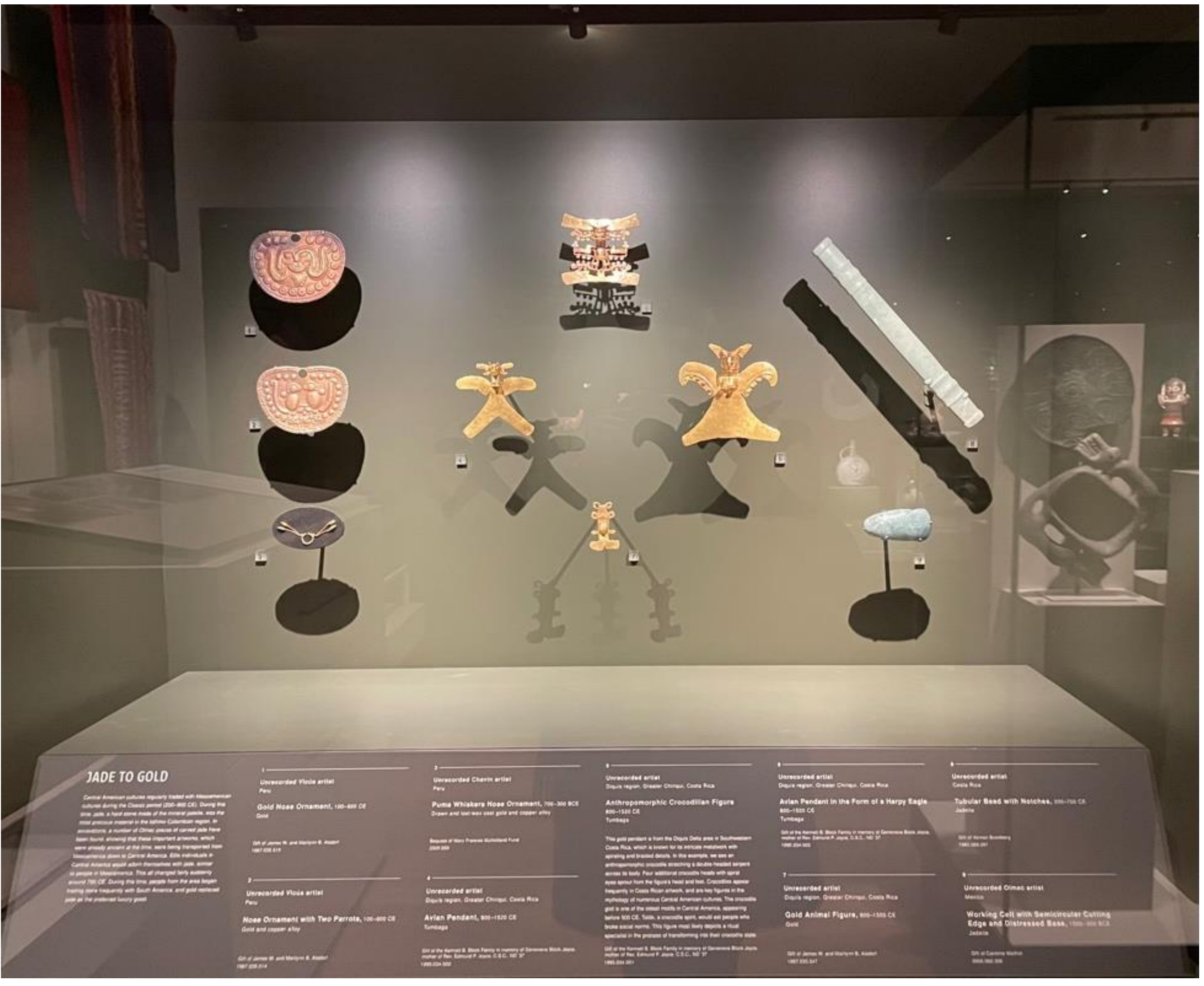

Fig. 16. Central American and South American Art Gallery subsection on Central America, Case 3.

role of ritual specialists in Central American beliefs and social hierarchy. The second case discusses combat in the region, which occurred for a variety of reasons. At the same time, this case shows various myths and origin stories and the roles that animals played within those myths. The third case describes the role of trade with other cultures over vast distances and the impact that trade had on the aesthetics of cultures inhabiting the Central American region. By telling these narratives, we aimed to center the mythologies, stories, and world views of people from this region and to allow visitors to think broadly about the interactions of these cultures with other peoples across the Americas.

An example of the narrative subsections in this gallery is our display on textiles (see fig. 17).[49] This display takes advantage of the full wall space afforded by the sixteen-foot-high ceilings and uses the Arakawa hanging system to suspend the textiles, which allows the weavings to float off the wall for a more dramatic presentation. The initial rotation includes seven contemporary textiles suspended on the wall. Two body forms on platforms in front of the wall display a poncho and an *ahuayo* (woman's mantle), showing guests how the textiles are worn. While displaying the textiles flat allows museum guests to see more of their iconography and patterns, the body forms serve to remind guests that these are worn and lived artworks. This display approach helps visitors understand how textiles are encountered in day-to-day life. A display-grade flat file cabinet sits in front of the textile wall between the two body forms. On top of this flat file appears the subtopic panel for this grouping, the labels, and photographs of artists weaving some of the textiles we have on display and similar textiles. While we do not currently have any video interviews to display in this grouping, we hope to interview a contemporary textile artist to feature in the future.

Each of the three drawers in the flat file contains two ancient textiles. The drawers allow these ancient textiles to be kept in total darkness for the majority of the time. The oldest textile on view is a Paracas fragment from 400–100 BCE. Visitors are encouraged by the label text to open the drawers, view the ancient textiles, and compare them to the contemporary textiles. In informal observations in the space, I have seen people become very excited that they are invited to open the drawers. This moment of discovery for them within the gallery creates a sense of intimacy between the viewer

Fig. 17. Central American and South American Art Gallery subsection on textiles.

and the work. A type of figure depicted on a textile fragment made by an unrecorded Chancay artist from 1000–1476 CE is clearly referenced by one of the contemporary textiles on display above, again showing that these ancient and historic cultures continue to have a profound impact on the identity and practices of people today.

This textile wall is an invaluable addition. There are several hundred contemporary Andean textiles in the museum's collection, the vast majority of which have never been on view. This wall allows us to feature them for the first time and have a sustainable rotation cycle.

While the Central American and South American Art Gallery is the smallest gallery in the Indigenous Art of the Americas suite, it addresses a wide array of cultures and topics. These galleries highlight cultures that are extremely important to understanding movement and interaction throughout the region, such as the peoples of Central America, the Andes, the Southern Cone, Ecuador, Colombia,

and the Caribbean. Our organizational strategy allows visitors both to gain a better understanding of the geography of the region and learn about particular topics through the narrative groupings.

Conclusion

In this discussion, I have laid out the theoretical tenets that guided the curatorial decisions behind the design of the Raclin Murphy Museum of Arts's Indigenous Art of the Americas galleries, discussed steps we took to uphold these tenets, and provided an overview of the galleries with detailed descriptions of several subsections to demonstrate the types of narratives they tell. The overarching goal of the installation was to engage in decolonizing practices and Indigenize the gallery spaces. To this end, we established an Indigenous Consultation Committee to ensure we incorporated Indigenous perspectives and expertise and to bring in new ideas as we continue to engage in these practices. The land acknowledgment of this new institution is a public commitment to continued reciprocal and ethical collaboration with Indigenous communities and artists, particularly local communities. The new galleries sought to place Indigenous voices and world views front and center, and this intent drove new commissions for the North American Art Gallery. Relying on a polyvocal approach, we made use of both the artist label format and video interviews to ensure that the most prominent voices in the gallery were Indigenous. As we engage this same approach in the Mesoamerican Art Gallery and the Central and South American Art Gallery, we look forward to conducting more interviews and acquiring new works that allow these spaces to become even more polyvocal in nature.

I initially wrote this article only a week and a half out from the opening of the new Raclin Murphy Museum of Art. A significant amount of labor went into this building and its galleries to get to this point. This is only the beginning of this work for us, not the end. While we did our best to center the galleries around Indigenizing principles, there are certainly places we have fallen short. I look forward to continued collaborations and conversations that will help us to continuously make the galleries more ethical and welcoming spaces for all people.

To conclude, one of the ways that museums can engage in decolonizing practices is to be more transparent in regards to the labor that goes into the galleries and exhibitions. A museum installation of this scale involves the dedication of many individuals, and while

curators often receive recognition for the part they played, I think it is important that everyone who contributed in making that vision a reality receive credit for all of their work. Too often, work within museums goes unacknowledged. Thank you to the members of our Indigenous Consultation Committee, Madalene Big Bear, Ashlee Bird, David Martin, and Katiebelle Thompson, for all of your insight thus far, which has been invaluable to me. Thank you also for your patience with me through the challenges of establishing and structuring a committee. Thank you to the Director of the Pokagon Band's Center of History and Culture, Nicole Holloway, for helping us find artists who were interested in joining this committee. Thank you to all of the artists and scholars we interviewed for your passion and for working with us on this project: Kyle Malott, David Ocelotl Garcia, Jamie Okuma, Virgil Ortiz, Christine Marie Rapp-Morseau, Dana Warrington, and Jason Wesaw. Thank you to Ashlee Bird and Erin Oliver for all of our engaging and collaborative working sessions to craft the museum's first land acknowledgment. Thank you to John Low for allowing us to use your quotation on our gallery wall. Thank you to the entire Raclin Murphy Museum of Art staff for everything you have done over the past few years to bring this new building, and the Indigenous Art of the Americas suite, to fruition. In particular, thank you to the administrative team: our director, Joseph Becherer, and our associate directors, Ann Knoll and Laurene Grunwald, for all of your support. Decolonizing work is extremely challenging, and the administrative team has been committed to engaging in these difficult conversations and processes. They have been strong advocates for this ongoing work. Thank you to Julie Boynton, Senior Director of Interior Architecture at the University of Notre Dame and the best project manager we could ask for. She kept this massive endeavor on track over the past few years. Thank you to my curatorial colleagues, including Cheryl Snay and David Acton, for offering me your advice and guidance, for all of the thought that went into your galleries, and for the upcoming exhibitions you have been designing. Thank you to all of the collections department staff for countless hours of conversations and discussion on gallery design and layout, for the handling, condition reporting, packing, transporting, and unpacking of over a thousand works of art, for responding to all of the crises as they arose, and for the successful tracking and installation of hundreds of labels,

keeping our database up to date with changes, and so much more. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for everything you have done. This includes our registrars, Victoria Perdomo, Rachel Geiogamah, and Brittany Hild; our art preparators, Ramiro Rodriguez and Kyle Thorne; and our art handlers, Matt Bean and Anders Ove. Thank you to our education team, Margaret Dosch, Bridget Hoyt, Sarah Martin, Rachel Mills, and Emily Normand, for making our opening weekend such a huge success. Thank you to our staff photographer, Michael Rippy, for photographing hundreds of works of art over the course of this project. Thank you to Angie Hubert, our videographer from the Research Department at the University of Notre Dame, for going on many trips with me to film the interviews with our featured artists. Thank you to my curatorial research assistant, Kendra Lyimo, for all of the research you undertook that allowed the textile wall to become the beautiful installation it is. Thank you to our fantastic conservators, Laura Kubick and Kathleen Kiefer, for caring for the artworks, stabilizing them, and helping us to honor the intent of the artists. Thank you to the ELY, Inc. mount-making team, including Bruce, John, Jason, Josh, Slim, Lisa, Thomas, and other team members I did not have the opportunity to work as closely with, for making the hundreds of stunning mounts and installing the majority of the artworks on view, thus turning our imagined presentation of the artwork into a reality. A huge thank-you to Bailey Whisler, our exhibition designer, for your passion and creativity. I am so appreciative of your design work and your willingness to collaborate with us as we solidified the design. The galleries are as beautiful as they are because of you. Thank you to our design team, Gallagher and Associates, including Sarah Thompson, Hannah Chiarella, and Taina Quiñones for everything you have done. From working on the design and keeping track of all the minute moving parts of the schedule, down to choosing fonts, you were involved in every step of this process and it has been wonderful getting to work with you. I thank you, also, for your patience with me as I constantly pushed for more time to ensure we were being as thoughtful and reflective as possible in our decision-making. Thank you to Darla Decker and Gretchen Pruett for proofreading all of the label texts. Thank you to the entire Click Netherfield team for designing and installing all of the fantastic cases. Thank you to the Kubik Maltbie team for fabricating all of the exhibition build-out, and in particular

to Turtle and Tanner for overseeing its installation.

[1] Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*, First Peoples: New Directions in Indigenous Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

[2] Brandie Macdonald, "Pausing, Reflection, and Action: Decolonizing Museum Practices," *Journal of Museum Education* 47, no. 1 (January 2, 2022): 8.

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