

ALL FOR ONE: NATION-MAKING AND THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE
AMERICAN INDIAN

A Thesis

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by

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ABSTRACT

In September 2004, the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington DC provided the nation with another opportunity to self-narrate on both sub-national and national levels. For many Native and non-Native peoples, the newest Smithsonian Institution represented not only a new method of museological practice based on self-governance and representation but also that Native America existed prior to European Contact, continues today and is worthy of being understood as both part and precursor of a larger collective identity of the nation. This occurred with the museum's successful Mitsitam Café whereby American cuisine was defined with a Native genesis. The landscape, as well, was scripted as begin original to the northeastern habitat of the United States, in contrast to the Beaux-Arts inspired landscapes of Europe which define the rest of the National Mall. A sensory engagement with both the Café and landscaped grounds, moreover, would separate this particular museal space- intended to be a Native place- from its neighbors. How the senses attend to an engagement with the museum is central to the planning behind the institution- as well as my analysis- whereby the sensorium is mediated both for public consumption and to meeting particular ideological ends.

At the same time that Native America is re-presented in our nation's capital, however, sub-national agendas are continually negotiated by the nation-state, whether aligned or not. Historically the museum may be conceived as an instrument of pedagogy and nationalist promulgation and the new Indian museum is no exception. Allowed to self-represent, the NMAI is subsequently re-scripted by a larger agenda- fashioned on an inherited Euro-American discourse- that ultimately privileges the nation and nation-making over subaltern demands. As the National Mall is poised to receive a new museum on the African American experience one also recognizes how

America's Lawn is rooted in spatial practices and narrative techniques of World Expositions in 19th century America and Europe, further complicating the institution. These and other myriad tensions have challenged the Native-inspired museum and this contested space, in the shadow of the nation's capitol, continues to be defined on shifting terms of national self-imagining. Designed to broadcast pan-tribal Native voices, the museum continues to harbor other historically inherited voices that destabilize the mission the institution aspires to achieve.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Bill Skinner was born and raised in Central Pennsylvania. He received a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Design from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. Previous to his graduate studies at Cornell University, Bill lived in Belize, Central America where he worked as a curator and designer at the Image Factory Art Foundation in Belize City.

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PREFACE

“In this city of monuments...where we depict the glory and the greatness of this land and those who distinguished themselves in our history...there was no statue or monument honoring the First Peoples, the native people of America. I could not believe that out of 400 statues and monuments there was not a single one to the American Indian. Here long after the end of the Indian Wars the First People of our land were still maligned and mistreated and like any other American my reaction was that something had to be done...This monument to the First Americans is long overdue. It will be a memorial to bring us all together. It will be a celebration of what we Americans working together can achieve.”¹

These were the words addressed to a gathered public on the National Mall by Senator Daniel Inouye during the opening ceremony of the National Museum of the American Indian in September 2004. 25,000 indigenous people gathered together on that day, many taking part in the *Native Nations Procession* which connected the first Smithsonian institution, the Castle, to the last one, the new Indian museum. The ceremony included speeches by Smithsonian secretary Lawrence Small, Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo (Quechua), Senators Inouye and Ben Nighthorse Campbell and the founding director of the National Museum of the American Indian, W. Richard West Jr. In addition, a week-long festival of dance performances and public programs drew 600,000 people to the nation’s capital. For many people, Native and non-Native alike, this was a testament that the American government was finally ready to acknowledge Native culture existed before European Contact, that it continues to survive and that it is worthy of telling *its own story* on the national stage. As one elderly man shared at the opening festivities:

“This is just a great day for all of us to have a museum put right here on the Mall in our country. I see all of our 65 million Indians that were killed. They are here. They are sitting on these buildings and they are witness to it.

¹ Welcome Home: The Grand Opening of the National Museum of the American Indian. Smithsonian Institution DVD, 2005. Unidentified woman discussing the Grand Opening of the NMAI Mall Museum

We supported Senator Inouye and Senator Nighthorse Campbell all through their leaderships throughout our meetings throughout the country with all of our tribes and putting our great museum up. We've been waiting for this museum to happen.”²



Figure 1: Founding NMAI Director, Rick West Jr. talking at the Opening Ceremony of the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC, 2004, from *Welcome Home: The Grand Opening of the National Museum of the American Indian* (Washington DC: NMAI, Smithsonian Institution, 2005).

The museum would examine models of self-governance that mirrored innovations in other national cultural museums in the late 20th century, such as the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Te Papa Tongarewa in New Zealand and the National Museum of Australia.³ The institution would also make its own

² Welcome Home DVD.

³ Mark Hirsch and Amy Pickworth, “The Native Universe and Museums in the Twenty-First Century: The Significance of the National Museum of the American Indian,” Washington DC: NMAI Editions, 2005.

museological contributions as well, particularly in planning and design of the building. Developed over the course of a decade and a half and at a cost of over \$200 million, the new institution would not only be an additive to the National Mall but also be place for Native Americans from the entire Western Hemisphere, it was premised, to call ‘home.’ In the words of one festival participant, “A hundred years from now my great granddaughter will be a part of something like this. We will still all be here. We will never fade. Never. And this [museum] is proof of that.”⁴ The building would acquire the ‘last remaining space on the National Mall’ - 4.25 acres- between the National Capitol and the Smithsonian’s National Air & Space Museum.⁵



Figure 2: View of the Mall Museum from northeast direction. Photo by author.

In addition, the eighteenth museum of the Smithsonian Institution would also expand the self-conception of collective American identity. It should not be forgotten

⁴ Welcome Home DVD.

⁵ Clearly this is not true considering the construction of NMAAHC. The hyperbolic statement is, I believe, a mechanism to create rarity for NMAI. It lends weight to their present site placement. It is also frequently noted in SI press releases, articles, etc. I heard this statement had to be negotiated with the new African-American museum and was eventually erased from NMAI’s institutional literature).

that historically the museum, as an institution, has been an instrument of and extension to the nation-state apparatus and the new Indian museum is no exception to this rule. This new institution, too, is an exercise in national pedagogy and promulgation. The remarks made earlier by Senator Inouye are relevant whereby he discusses ‘First People,’ ‘First American’ and ‘American’ separately but also collectively as he describes the making of a museum, and by default the *re-making* of the American nation. This particular ‘wavering’ between sub-national and national interests as seen in the National Museum of the American Indian is the focus of my interest and the argument of my paper. How does Native America remain sovereign yet remain under the aegis of the American nation-state? In what ways are Native sensibilities reflected in the Mall Museum but at the same time transformed for a broader public? How does the nation-state allow the museum to self-represent while simultaneously including it within a larger Smithsonian, and therefore national, fold?

These questions and others guide my paper over the course of two chapters; broadly speaking the first chapter addresses the site and architecture of the Mall Museum while the second examines the museum’s *Mitsitam Café*. In the former, I am interested in how the new institution conceived an ambitious agenda to represent indigenous peoples of Western Hemisphere through the planning and design of the Mall Museum. In this example, self-realization for a constituency was conceptualized to begin with the process behind the structure, not subsequently with the product itself. I also scrutinize other national cultural museums, in Paris for instance, before returning to the National Mall and analyzing the aspirations behind another national museum that the Smithsonian is planning to complete in 2015. How *two* American minority ethnic cultures achieve their own respective museums on the National Mall within 11 years is significant. Being roughly mid-way between these two projects,

one completed 5 years ago the other six years out, frames the conclusion to this chapter.

The subsequent chapter addresses the extremely successful Mitsitam Café. The placement of increasingly sophisticated dining options in museums has been a growing trend in recent years. Partly predicated on enhanced dining service and attracting visitors, museum restaurants have in some circumstances started to engage with and expand upon the mission of their institution through cuisine. The Mitsitam Café is one such example. How the Café constitutes Native foods as agents of memory and continued authenticity but also positions them in relation to a ‘truly American’ cuisine testifies to the overlapping nature of Native and American identities and forms the conclusion of that chapter.

Interestingly, both of these topics have generally been praised by journalistic and scholarly communities and this, perhaps, partly explains why they have been generally overlooked. Instead, much debate and criticism has centered on the curatorial and display techniques of the three permanent exhibitions that opened along with the museum in September 2004. A variety of issues and critiques relating to self-representation were raised since the museum’s inception.⁶ Important on a discursive level, at times these critiques are less relevant to my argument or are already evident in the topic itself and, thus, absent from my analysis. Suffice it to say transparency and contextualization, or the lack thereof, have played crucial roles in public understanding and reception of these permanent galleries. That battle still rages. Expanding the definition of the ‘permanent exhibition’ to include the built and

⁶ These curatorial critiques include: the inability to capitalize on the strength of its material culture through its exhibitions; whitewashing the dark truth of colonization; privileging a plural and postmodern system of knowledge over a comprehensive meta-narrative approach; and incorporating a variety of curatorial perspectives often dissonantly. My understanding of the contentious convergence between self-representation and public expectation that occurred at NMAI was informed by a Fall 2008 term paper where I addressed the difficult relationship behind curatorial and display techniques that unfolded after the museum’s opening.

culinary environments,⁷ one sees similar and different ‘museum frictions’ that make the contemporary national cultural museums in general-and the NMAI Mall Museum in particular- as contested sites continually under negotiation. Compounded by a placement on the National Mall, the museum is another example in the re-writing of the American nation in the early 21st century. While this is the ‘latest edition’ it is surely a unique one so let us now turn to the most recent ‘brawl on the Mall’ and get a sense what was constructed and construed on that corner-space of the great American Lawn.

⁷ The building, after all, cost 80% of the museum budget (\$200 million) and the café is one of the most popular dining venues on the Mall.

CHAPTER 1
MUSEAL AMBIVALENCE AND THE ALTERED LANDSCAPE OF THE
NATIONAL MALL

Introduction

On the night of October 27, 2005 two Muslim teenagers, allegedly escaping French police in the Parisian suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois, sought refuge in a power substation and were electrocuted. Riots ensued; first beginning in that poor eastern banlieue and subsequently spreading to other suburbs in the city before migrating throughout the country over the course of the next three weeks. Jacques Chirac, then prime minister, declared a national emergency that lasted three months. Largely fomented by economically and socially disenfranchised minority youth, the riots were a reaction to the xenophobia and classism that many felt was unaddressed and whitewashed in contemporary France. Seven months later, in June of 2006, the 232 million euro *Musee d' Quai Branly* opened to celebrate national holdings of art from Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas. Designed by the celebrated French architect Jean Nouvel, the museum institution was an opportunity to address minority politics, French identity, and the significance art and architecture can have in the valuation of people. The opportunity, however, was missed. The presentation of objects in the collection was both anonymous and ahistorical. When some contextualization did occur it lacked the mention of slavery, colonialism or collecting.¹ The architecture fared little better. On entering the Quai Branly the visitor winds his way along a path that resembles a serpent, before entering an exhibition space that is darkly lit with earth-toned walls, leather-covered rock-like formations and, just in case the point was missed, jungle transparencies covering the windows. Nouvel claims he wanted to represent a museum, “free of all western forms...” and further elaborates,

“Its architecture must challenge our current Western creative expressions. Away, then, with the structures of mechanical systems, with curtain walls, with emergency staircases, parapets, false ceilings, projectors, pedestals, showcases. If their functions must be retained, they must disappear from our

¹ Agnes Blasselle and Anna F. Guarneri, *The Opening of the Musee du Quai Branly: Valuing/Displaying the “Other” in Post-Colonial France*, (Humanity in Action Program, June 28, 2006), 5.

view and our consciousness, vanish before the sacred objects so we may enter into communion with them.”²

At a time of much needed French national debate the Quai Branly, was still rooted in a French conception of what it imagined the ‘other’ to be. It would seem, as some suggested, that in the *City of Light* one could still find Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.

This French example highlights the role that nationalism and sub-nationalism play in the ideation and construction of recent national cultural museums. As a case study on this topic I will examine the National Museum of the American Indian located in Washington DC. How Native America imagines itself- both to its own constituency as well as a broader audience - took physical shape through the planning, design and construction of the Mall Museum at the end of the last century and the beginning of this one. This was the last available site on the National Mall and also the first opportunity for Native Americans to create a ‘home’ that would address their particular concerns. At the same time, how the United States imagines Native America and itself in the broader context of telling the national story would have the opportunity to be updated with the museum. The production of culture, after all, is not one-sided. The museum would be incorporated into the Smithsonian fold, adding to but also changing its sibling institutions that frame the Mall lawn. The National Museum of the American Indian would effect and be affected by a location on the symbolically charged National Mall, a place that narrates the country for a constituency it represents. How the sub-national and national imaginaries are narrated vis-à-vis architectural representation on this privileged space is the fundamental aim of this chapter.

² Jean Novel, “Quai Branly Museum Paris, France 1996-2006: Presence-Absence or Selective Dematerialisation,” <http://www.jeannouvel.fr/english/preloader.html>.

I begin with a brief history of the Museum of the American Indian in New York City, the precursor institution to NMAI, and the collector George Gustav Heye whose holdings are the fundamental basis of both institutions. Subsequently, I address Native presence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when Native America was represented by Euro-Americans in International Expositions, before turning to the absence of Native American designed architectural forms and some of the innovative ways this has been mitigated and reversed later in the late 20th century. Design process is then addressed through *The Way of the People*, the architectural programming document for the NMAI Mall Museum. How this represents a new example, if not a new paradigm, by which new purpose-built cultural museums take physical form and represent a broad constituency is then examined. This practice is also responsible, however, for a number of shortcomings and contradictions in the planning and construction of the Mall Museum facility; these are scrutinized as well. A discussion of the NMAI Mall Museum is very much a product of its location. To this end, I situate the museum within the larger National Mall context and look at how these Smithsonian institutions that face the Mall are influenced by turn-of-the-century Expositions. How architecture and spatial relations narrated the nation, a permanent outcome of those temporary World's Fairs, is still with us today and the national promulgation that recently occurred with NMAI is about to happen again. This will occur in a few years with the National Museum of African American History and Culture to be constructed on the National Mall and forms the conclusion of my exploration.

Museal Background

While France was busy representing Africa in Paris, on the other side of the Atlantic the United States had recently completed its own national cultural museum to the American Indian. While the NMAI opened on that warm autumnal equinox in 2004, its official genesis began 15 years earlier. On May 8th 1989, Secretary Robert Adams signed the 'Memorandum of Understanding' between the Museum of the American Indian- Heye Foundation and the Smithsonian.



Figure 3: Smithsonian Secretary Adams signs the 'Memorandum of Understanding' with the Museum of the American Indian- Heye Foundation on May 8, 1989, from *Smithsonian Runner: A Newsletter for Native Americans From the Smithsonian Institution* (Washington DC: Smithsonian no. 90-1 January-February 1990), pp. 1.

On November 28th of that year George Bush would sign Public Law 101-185 officially establishing the merger. This legislation, introduced by Senator Daniel Inouye and House Representative Ben Nighthorse Campbell, also called for the establishment of a

NMAI as three distinct facilities: The George Gustav Heye Center in lower Manhattan (1994); the Cultural Resource Center in Suitland, Maryland (1998); and the Mall Museum (2004). In addition, NMAI also considers a ‘fourth museum’ to exist, premised on educational outreach programs that would engage a spatially diverse Native constituency, through its Cultural Resource Center. The CRC, considered by many Native Americans to be the ‘heart and soul’ of NMAI, is understood as the ‘home’ of the collection and includes an archival collection, library, curatorial and educational offices, and spaces where objects may be used for ceremonial purposes. It is also noteworthy that Public Law 101-185, in addition to forming NMAI, also stipulated the Native American Graves Repatriation Act which initiated the inventory and deaccessioning processes of 18,000 human remains and funerary objects still within the Smithsonian collection.



Figure 4: George Heye and company ‘in the field’- Hawikku, New Mexico, 1919. From *Spirit of a Native Place: Building the National Museum of the American Indian* (Washington DC: NMAI, Smithsonian Institution and the National Geographic Society, 2004), pp. 95.

The NMAI collection which includes over a million objects is primarily based on a single collection, the Museum of the American Indian in New York City, and a single collector, Mr. George Gustav Heye. Beginning in 1897 when he picked up a single Navajo hide shirt, Heye would amass one of the largest collections of Native American objects from North, Central and South America over the next half century.³ Described as a ‘collector of collectors,’ Heye would found the Museum of the American Indian in 1916, opening to the public in 1922 at the Audubon Terrace complex at 155th Street and Broadway in Manhattan along with a storage and research facility in the Bronx.



Figure 5: Museum of the American Indian- Heye Foundation, 1930. From *Spirit of a Native Place: The Building of the National Museum of the American Indian*, pp. 111.

Despite the financially insecure times of the Depression and then World War II, Heye continued to collect- sometimes at the expense of fellow collectors- until his death in 1957. The MAI, now without its guiding light, would struggle. In the 1970s, partly

³ The Heye collection consists of over 800,000 objects.

influenced by the growing agency of the Red Power movement the board of Trustees would ultimately reject a liaison with the Museum of Natural History- rightfully uneasy with the thought of Indians being displayed as natural history. Talks with the Smithsonian would begin in 1980 and in 1989 MAI would finally merge with that Institution- partly predicated on contractual terms that stipulated the NMAI/MAI would retain a museum component in New York City, and that the collection would have its own identity within the larger Smithsonian Institution.⁴



Figure 6: Museum of the American Indian- Heye Foundation, New York City, 1947. From *Spirit of a Native Place: Building the National Museum of the American Indian*, pp. 61.

⁴ Ira Jacknis, "A New Thing: The NMAI in Historical and Institutional Perspective," *American Indian Quarterly*, ed. Amy Lonetree vol. 30, nos. 3 & 4, (Summer/Fall 2006).

Native American Architecture(s)

While the founding of the National Museum of the American Indian is a recent event, Native Americans' problematic relationship with not just the museum as a pedagogical and ideological institution but an architectural setting is rather established. The rise of World's Fairs in American cities in the latter decades of the 19th century - one may think of 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, 1893 Columbian Expo in Chicago, or the Trans-Mississippi Expo of 1898 in Omaha, Nebraska- exhibited Native Americans and their arts and architecture through their own Anglo eyes. As the Western Frontier became increasingly 'tamed,' when it was thought that the American Indian would 'vanish' through assimilationist governmental policies, the desire to re-present the American Indian to a public audience through temporary Expos would develop into a desire to collect, classify and exhibit the objects of the American Indian but this time permanently. The architecture of Native Americans would become increasingly marginalized as objects were displayed in museums that were inspired on classical European and not Native forms thereby decontextualizing Native American objects one step further. This is problematic for obvious reasons but perhaps more interestingly as the NMAI began research on Native American architectural history, particularly contemporary examples of Native American architectures, a lacuna existed between the understanding of traditional architectural knowledge and its loss over time. In some cases, the revival of traditional forms only occurred through tribal archaeology and anthropology, as was the case with Mashantucket Pequot Museum in Ledyard, Connecticut. The tribe was nearly wiped out in 1637 by colonial troops from Massachusetts and Connecticut, and then saw its reservation dwindle from 3000 acres to only 213 by the mid-nineteenth century. In the 1970s, 50 Pequot members encouraged the resettlement of ancestral lands which was further encouraged in 1983 when the federal government recognized

their tribal status. In 1982, the tribe formed the *Mashantucket Pequot Ethnohistory Project* which would combine archeological excavation, oral history and archival research in order to reclaim tribal history and identity.⁵ Two years later, the tribe would begin planning a museum but it would not be until August of 1998 that the institution-at a cost of \$200 million funded by the tribe's *Foxwoods Casino*- would open to the public.

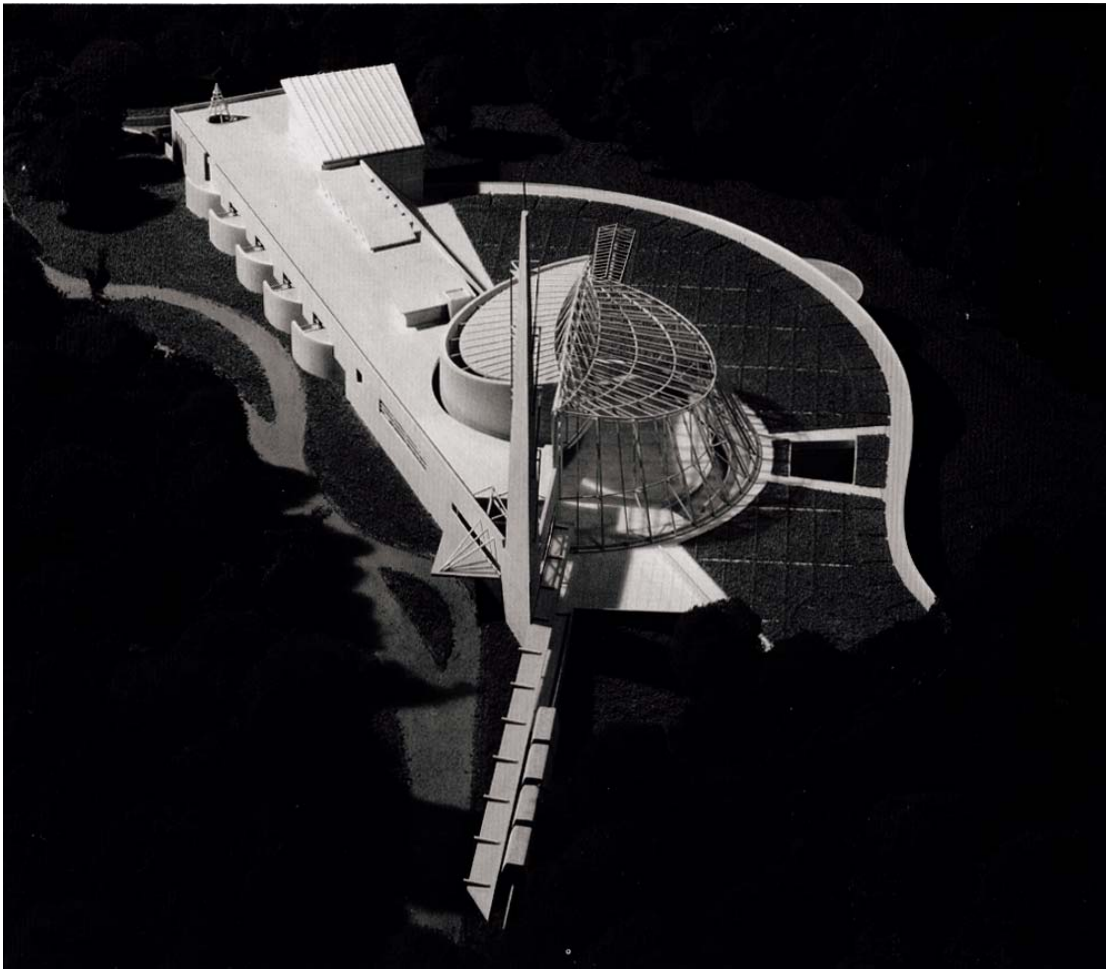


Figure 7: Mashantucket Pequot Museum (model) in Ledyard, CT. From *Contemporary Native American Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 216.

⁵ David Hurst Thompson, *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, archaeology, and the battle for Native American Identity* (New York: Basic Books Press, 2000), 263.

While the content of the museum recounts Pequot history and culture from the late Ice Age to the present, as well as those of other tribes, the museum's form, roughly the shape of the letter *D*, does not refer to Pequot architectural tradition of which little is known. Instead, the museum retains its Pequot identity because the museum program was established and controlled by them, and thus may be understood as Pequot architecture, no matter how it relates to other late-20th century architectures.⁶

By focusing on design process over historical precedence (or lack thereof) contemporary Native American architecture has emerged as being open to Native interpretation and abstraction of concepts such as directional symbolism and circularity. Architectural historian Carol Krinsky has applied the term “paraphrases” which allow traditional forms to be influenced by modern materials and contemporary sensibilities.⁷ With the NMAI in particular, this elasticity was expanded infinitely so long as it retained a modicum of Native connection. As the NMAI Executive Handbook points out, “NMAI is conceptually and ideologically a new kind of institution; its creation is in a process of user intensive self-definition.”⁸ In this case, as with the Mashantucket Pequot Museum, Native American agency and self-definition trumps architectural precedence when the need arises.

That need, too, would appear to arise. One legacy of the Heye Collection is simply the breadth of its collection. While not encyclopedic, the collection represents almost all the tribes of the United States, most from Canada and a smaller number from Mexico, Central and South America. A large constituency indeed, and from the beginning it was envisioned that Native American voices would be present and integral to the design process. For the NMAI the priority and process was two-fold;

⁶ Carol Krinsky, *Contemporary Native American Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), Chapter 13.

⁷ Krinsky, Chapter 8.

⁸ Board of Trustees Handbook I, *Introduction and Executive Summary*, National Museum of the American Indian, 5.

first it would include hiring Native Americans- although not exclusively- to be involved in the design of the Museum's building and exhibitions. The second priority was to include the voices of Native Americans in the planning process of the architectural program itself. This occurred in a series of intensive consultations primarily- but not exclusively again- with Native people representing various regional and urban communities in addition to groups representing museum-related interests and professions. The resulting text, called *The Way of the People* would become the operative planning document for the Mall Museum. The curation of the design process between these various constituencies, the recording and translating of the "streams of consciousness" as they were called, was orchestrated by the architectural firm Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates and would initially be published in November 1991 with further revisions in two subsequent editions. From these consultations four broad commonalities were given form: the first was a Native American understanding of cosmology; the second was that the museum should have a handcrafted aspect in the architectural detailing thereby creating a human-size scale to the massive building; the third was that it should be welcoming to Native and non-Native peoples; and the fourth is that the museum should respond to and have respect for its environment.⁹

The conceptual design team would include the prominent Canadian and Blackfoot architect Douglas Cardinal in collaboration with the Philadelphia architectural firm of Geddes Brecher Qualls Cunningham (GBQC) and architect JohnPaul Jones (Cherokee/Choctow) as design consultant. In 1989, Cardinal had recently designed the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec, which highlights the first permanent exhibition of Native Culture in the museum's Great

⁹ Molly MacKean, *The Design Development of the National Museum of the American Indian* Smithsonian Institution Architectural History and Historic Preservation, 15.

Hall. He was awarded the Canada Council Molson Prize for the Arts in 1992 recognized for “outstanding lifetime contributions to the cultural and intellectual life of Canada.”¹⁰ Selecting Cardinal, then director of the NMAI Rick West Jr. said, “We are particularly thrilled with this architectural design team. We have extraordinary competent firms and individuals making up a team that matches the hemispheric mission of the National Museum of the American Indian.”¹¹ The museum would appear to be in good hands.

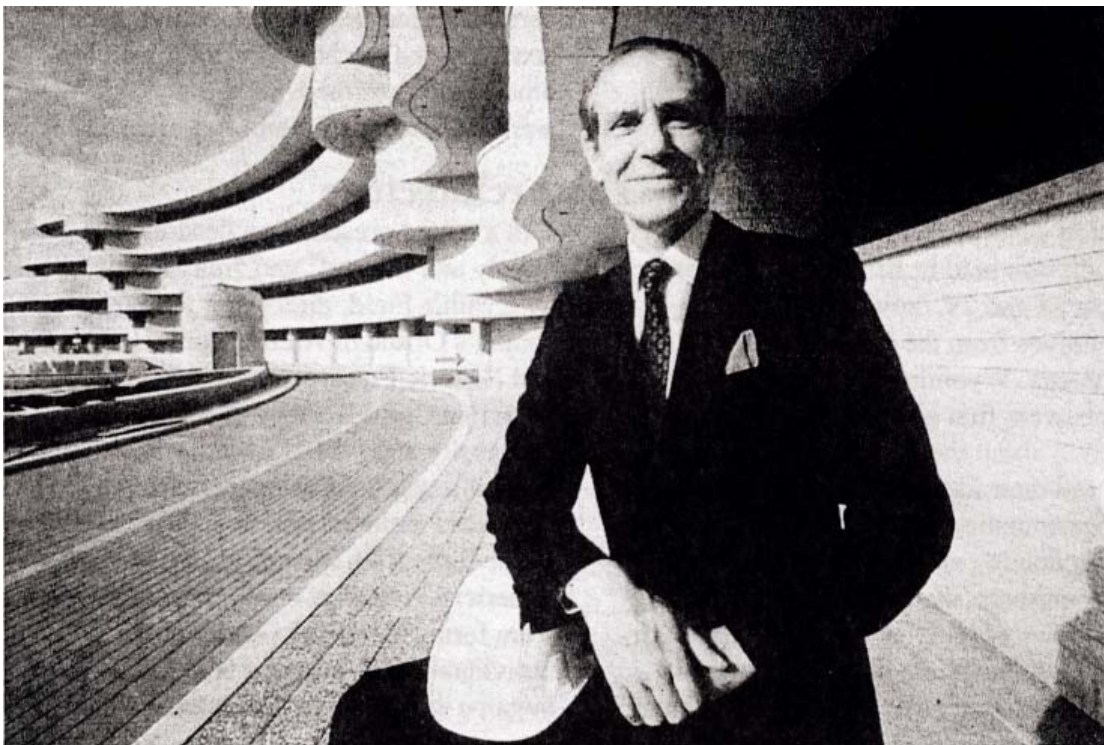


Figure 8: Douglas Cardinal standing in front of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. From *Smithsonian Runner: A Newsletter for Native Americans From the Smithsonian Institution* (Washington DC: Smithsonian, no. 93-3 May- June 1993), pp 1.

While a consensus-building approach of these consultations have occurred in earlier Native American architectural projects on a tribal level, the scale and scope of

¹⁰ Dan Agent, “Architect selected for museum site on National Mall,” *Smithsonian Runner*, May-June 1993,1.

¹¹ Agent, 1.

The Way of the People set it apart and also made it problematic. To begin, Native American ‘architecture’ is a relatively recent construction. Craig Howe, in his dissertation *Tribal Architecture in the Native American New World*, makes useful distinctions between tribal architectures and pan-tribal architecture- the former being plural diverse and diachronic, the latter being singular, homogenous and synchronic. Howe states,

“There was no ‘Indian’ architecture. The architectures produced within the multitude of [Native] nations collectively mislabeled ‘Indian’ by Euro-Americans were culturally adaptive. It accommodated the emerging and varied needs of peoples, their mythic representations of their changing historical milieu, and was planned constructed, used, and maintained in accordance with their particular tribal aesthetics... Each tribe is unique, and each has its own architectural legacy.”¹²

The loss in translating tribal architectures into a singular monolithic pan-tribal one is also evident when one realizes not only is authorship erased but change over time in architectural representation is as well. Both the tribal narrator and his tribal narrative through architectural form-giving are, in other words, endangered when placed under a totalizing pan-tribal rubric. This inherent concern is addressed in *The Way of the People*. As Cardinal himself notes, “‘Indian people- from north, south, east and west- are absolutely different people. And the problem is that society looks at Indian people as one homogenous people and they are as different as Chinese and English.’”¹³ As one document from the Smithsonian’s Office of Architectural History and Historic Preservation points out, “The challenge was to find *any common elements between these hundreds of groups* so that the design of the Mall museum could be relevant to all of them without bleeding into the stereotypes that the NMAI sought to dispel.”¹⁴ [emphasis mine] Later, the same document notes that Cardinal incorporated a variety

¹² Craig Howe, “Architectural Tribalism in the Native American New World” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1995), 19.

¹³ MacKean, 15.

¹⁴ MacKean, 15.

of symbolic elements within the building so it would not exclude anyone and be welcome to all different Indian cultures.¹⁵

In addition, *The Way of the People* was also problematic in how the architect envisioned his role in the project. Douglas Cardinal had many of the visual features of the Mall museum in place before not only seeing *The Way of the People* but even before he was selected as the candidate for the Mall Museum in 1993. According to one writer, when Cardinal did see *The Way of the People* he dismissed it as “an Anglo interpretation of Indian needs.”¹⁶ Over the course of February 1995, he conducted two sessions, one called *Vision Session* the other *Imaging Session*, in Washington DC with a selected group of Native American elders. The architectural models that followed from these two sessions is how he “sketched it as a spirit” and conceded that the final form of the building was very close to the visual features that he had originally developed for the project.¹⁷ The vision of Cardinal was at odds with the consensus-building of *The Way of the People* for the next four years. In 1999 he was fired. The contracts of both Cardinal and GBQC were terminated by the Smithsonian because of an increasingly acrimonious relationship between the two firms. The friction between Cardinal’s more vision-inspired design processes as opposed to a participatory model envisioned by *The Way of the People* was noted by Michael Kihn, principal at GBQC, “Douglas felt that we impinged on his role as a designer. He was adamant about dictating the design to people who drew it up and translated it into documents. We don’t work well with an autocratic style; we tend to be collaborative. When it came time to develop the project beyond the design phase, we ran into some real differences.”¹⁸ As one NMAI staff member shared, “with Cardinal as architect

¹⁵ MacKean, 16.

¹⁶ Michael Cannell, “Cardinal Rules,” *Architecture* 89 (2000): 3.

¹⁷ Judith Ostrowitz, “Concourse and Periphery: Planning the National Museum of the American Indian,” *Museum Anthropology* 25(2002):24.

¹⁸ Cannell, 5.

on the Mall museum project, well, others had difficulty being heard.”¹⁹ Subsequent to the falling out, a number of individuals remained with the team including JohnPaul Jones, Ramona Sakiestewa and Donna House along with the addition of the architectural firm Polshek Partnerships, who had just completed the NMAI Cultural Resource Center as well as the Mashantucket Pequot Museum. While Cardinal was credited with the conceptual design of the project differences in opinion remain irreconciled. It would appear that control of ‘the Way’ in *The Way of the People* was a critical misunderstanding between the different parties involved in the project.

In fact, the duality of an authorial versus participatory voice can be further questioned. How participatory, in the end, was the *Way of the People*? Or, perhaps better stated, how *even* was that participation? While the planning consultation processes represented a certain limit to the number of representational voices it appears that those voices were not heard equally, or for very long. Gloria Cranmer Webster (Kwak’wakawakw) an anthropologist who attended the meeting in Vancouver in May of 1993, which included representatives from Washington State, British Columbia and Alaska, noted that with the consultations, “There was good discussion, as I remember, but we never heard from NMAI again.”²⁰

Moreover, while some voices were expendable others were not. In 1994, the Mashantucket Pequot donated \$10 million to the NMAI, the largest single donation in Smithsonian history at that time.²¹ There has been suggestion the donation correlated to a certain amount of tribal clout in the conceptualization of the Mall museum.²² The uneasy relationship between gambling and Native American museal architecture, the

¹⁹ Personal Interview with Duane Blue Spruce, Facilities Coordinator, National Museum of the American Indian, March 13, 2009.

²⁰ Judith Ostrowitz, “Concourse and Periphery’ in Perspective: Well Past Planning,” *American Indian Quarterly* (2005), 417.

²¹ Later, the Mohegan and Oneida Tribes each also donated \$10 million to the new NMAI Mall Museum.

²² Based on a discussion with Jolene Rickard.

former often the means for the latter, is an interesting one. The Mashantucket Pequot discussed earlier is a germane example. The museum was initially located in the basement of *Foxwoods Casino*, the successor to the bingo hall that was built by the Pequot in 1986. Initially the museum was imagined as a 20 x 20-foot log cabin, then later as a reconstructed village. With the success of gambling, the tribe was able to expand its vision for the museum and hoped the institution would become a sign of “cultural self-invention” –the notion an architectural idea could become a marker of cultural identity over time.²³ That particular ‘cultural self-invention,’ physically embodied by the museum, is in conflict with an institution of gambling, one that profit at the expense of another. The museum would need to emerge architecturally and spatial at a remove in order to displace the source of its funding. The requirements, both physical and symbolic, are noted by the design firm Polshek Partnership.

According to the firm, the primary considerations were:

*“the tribal mandate to create a powerful three-dimensional image that will forever present, validate and celebrate the history of the Mashantucket Pequot nation; the necessity to create a structure that will respect the ecological and archeological value of the site; the tribe’s historic dependence on both inland agricultural and aquatic zones; and the plan of the original Mystic Fort, site of the 1637 massacre, as a symbol of the rebirth of the Mashantucket Pequot nation.”*²⁴

One of the most potent symbols for the tribe is the museum tower. The 185-foot stone and glass tower was originally intended as a platform to view the adjacent swamps where the Pequot fled during the Mystic Fort Massacre in addition to allowing one to broadly survey the landscape. However, the museum tower also acts a visual marker viewable from most areas of the reservation and draws attention to the institution the tribe wishes to be associated with as well as be disassociated from: Foxwoods Resort Casino. Designed by New England Design Associates, the coral and teal

²³ Krinsky, 211.

²⁴ Polshek Partnership, “Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center,” Polshek Partnership Architects, <http://www.polshek.com/main.htm>.

entertainment complex dominates the landscape by its sheer size, 4.7 million square feet. Its offerings, moreover, are of elephantine proportions: six casinos, the world's largest bingo hall, over 1,400 guest rooms and suites in three hotels and 40,000 daily guests. With the completion of the *MGM Grand at Foxwoods*, opened in May 2008 at the cost of \$700 million, the complex gained 2 million square feet of hotel, entertainment, restaurants and gaming making Foxwoods the largest casino in the world.²⁵



Figure 9: Foxwoods Resort Casino in Ledyard, Connecticut. From *Casino and Museum: Representing Mashantucket Pequot Identity* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), pp. 64.

Located only a few thousand feet apart, the two institutions are incongruous siblings and testament to an uneasy symbiotic relationship: the former needed for its sources of

²⁵ Foxwoods Resorts Casino, "About Foxwoods: The Original High Stakes Bingo Hall," Foxwoods Resort Casino, <http://www.foxwoods.com/AboutFoxwoods.aspx>.

capital, the latter for its source of Native identity. Architecturally, this distinction is often made clear whereby many casinos are intentionally made to not “look Indian” although they are located in reservations and employ as well as generate revenue for Indian communities.²⁶ The disavowal of gambling and the production of cultural identity are evident with the Mashantucket Pequot and it stands to question how this tension may have unfolded with NMAI. Even with a multi-million dollar donation the Pequot were given no visible presence at the Mall museum; today evidence of their contribution is still missing. Yet their contribution may have allowed their voice to be heard over others in *The Way of the People*, further implicating a document that seems as interested in mollification as it is in collaboration.

‘Carved by Wind and Water’

In addition to the dialectics of tribal/ pan-tribal architectures, consensus-building or vision-inspired design processes and the ambivalence of capitalism in identity formation a further palimpsest is evident with the idea of ‘timelessness.’ In the Smithsonian publication *Spirit of a Native Place: Building of the National Museum of the American Indian* an entire chapter focuses on principles that guided the physical shaping of the Mall Museum including directional symbolism, nature, and circularity.²⁷ But the notion that the museum is timeless, “Carved by Wind and Water” as the chapter title notes is problematic to Native cultures who wish to be seen as contemporary and living, not relegated to a historicizing past. From the beginning, the architects had a three dimensional spatial constraint that was informed by Mall regulated height and setback limitations. Subsequently though, they “imagined it as a chunk of rock, and carved into it, as wind and water would do that had a very natural

²⁶ Krinsky, 223.

²⁷ Duane Blue Spruce, ed. *Spirit of a Native Place: Building the National Museum of the American Indian*. (DC: NMAI, Smithsonian Institution and the National Geographic Society, 2004), Chapter 2.

quality to it.”²⁸ This is evident in the kasota limestone that surfaces the building. Beginning at the base, the large roughback-finished stone is evident in the quilt-pattern texture near the foundation and is followed by smoother split-face stone on the main body of the building along with finer tapestry-finish stone for detail areas.



Figure 10: Antelope Canyon, LeChee Navajo Lands of northern Arizona. This photograph begins the chapter *Carved by Wind and Water*. From *Spirit of a Native Place: Building the National Museum of the American Indian*, pp. 66.

One NMAI project executive suggested that the fanning façade punctuated by rows of glass windows resembled ribbons of quartz winding between sedimentary layers.²⁹

²⁸ Blue Spruce, 71.

²⁹ MacKean, 18.

And these layers are old- really old. The limestone rock quarried in Minnesota is 350 million years old. During a consultation session in Vancouver, one elder Inuit woman remarked, “You designers, we’re going to be watching you. And we want some of us in that building”- a sentiment that was observed at other consultations.³⁰ But what part of the NMAI building refers to this concern, one that is partly constructed on the notion that Native American cultures are contemporary? 350 million years ago was the Paleozoic period, long before humans. When Douglas Cardinal noted that his challenge was to “carve away that stone enough for a powerful Indian icon to emerge...,” what icon, exactly, does he speak of?³¹



Figure 11: Roughback stonework at the foundation of the museum building, north facade. Photo by Author.

And how is that icon representative of everyone? It has been noted that self-representation- while important- is not always free from an ideology of a dominant

³⁰ Ostrowitz, 417.

³¹ MacKean, 18.

group. In some cases, the ideology is so entrenched within minority populations that representations even when self-produced will not necessarily differ from representations of the ‘other’ by the dominant group.³² It would seem that while the trope of Native American timelessness continues, the control of it has changed.

Moreover, even if one acknowledges that the building ‘emerges from the earth’ rather than is simply placed upon it then how does one reconcile what emerges is reminiscent of the American Southwest and not the Northeast? Why disregard local conditions? The landscape design at the Mall Museum, for example, is sensitive to the surrounding natural environment and incorporates fauna from the Washington DC region through its treatment of the building grounds.³³ The Smithsonian Office of Design & Construction, moreover, conducted a ‘native site analysis’ that looked at both the local environmental and Native cultural connections of the building site during its research phase of the project.³⁴ Yet even as this occurred, the original Native inhabitants of the local region, the Piscataways and Algonquins are only nominally represented in the building; this resulted, moreover, in a textual rather than architectural manner as the museum’s rotunda and café are named in the Piscataway language. How has an architectural intervention reminiscent of New Mexico in the middle of Washington DC been a result of the process, *The Way of the People*, and the architect?

When Cardinal designed the Canadian Museum of Civilization, for instance, he looked to nature as a guide and inspiration. The architect states, “Instead of viewing the museum as a sculptural problem, instead of identifying all the historical

³² Allison Arieff, “A Different Sort of (P)Reservation: Some Thoughts on the National Museum of the American Indian,” *Museum Anthropology* 19 (1995): 81.

³³ The four ecological zones include hardwood forests, wetlands, croplands, and meadow that are spatially correspond to the cardinal directions.

³⁴ The ‘native site analysis’ included the following categories: prevailing wind direction by month; solar/ lunar connections; cosmic connections; natural habitat; migrating patterns; and local Native American cultural patterns.

forms and making them the vocabulary for my solutions, I prefer to take a walk in nature, observe how nature has solved its problems, and let it be an inspiration to me to solve mine.”³⁵ The CMC mimics the natural environment in this regard; it sits upon multi-layered bedrock that was eroded by the glacial movement over the millennia. The architectural form of the museum with striated bands that reference geological layers and a cascading water feature that seems to have eroded a space between the two buildings is a more convincing environmental analogy than the Mall Museum.³⁶



Figure 12: The Canadian Museum of Civilization waterfall symbolizes erosion by glacial melt. From *The Canadian Museum of Civilization* (Gatineau, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1998) pp. 21.

³⁵ Canadian Museum of Civilization, “Written in Stone: An Architectural Tour of the Canadian Museum of Civilization,” <http://www.civilization.ca/cmcc/exhibitions/cmcc/architecture/tour15e.shtml>

³⁶ Although some have charged that giving the commission of a national cultural museum (representative of all Canadian ethnicities) to a First Peoples architect of then relatively minor stature an ‘apologist statement’ - one critic even called the CMC ‘prairie gopher baroque.’

Yet Cardinal was equally guided by natural symbolism in his conception for the National Mall and it is clearly evident his analogical thinking remains centered on geological forms and their change over time as discussed earlier. The Mall Museum, too, is a metonym not solely for nature but for pre-Columbian civilization as well. The Pueblo Bonito complex at Chaco Canyon, for example, pre-dated American urbanization by almost a millennium and was the world's largest apartment building until it was surpassed by the Spanish Flats building in New York City in 1882. In addition to being ancient, the museum demonstrates that certain cultures such as Pueblo Bonito were based on sedentary life, further dismissing the notion that Native Americans were uniform in their settlement patterns.³⁷

However, mindful of the respective benefits of referencing indigenous Southwest appears to come at the expense of local references. In one recent Mall Museum publication by the Smithsonian a chapter begins with the title *Honoring our Hosts* adjacent to a photograph from the 1880s of the Hopi village of Walpi, Arizona.³⁸ This is followed later in the chapter by another late 19th century photograph of cliff dwellings at *Canyon de Chelly* along with the landscape of *Chaco Canyon* in New Mexico. Despite a chapter later that addresses the local Piscataway tribe, the publication illustrates a local condition that is sacrificed for larger ideological demands; this is embodied in an architecture placed under the homogenizing effects of *The Way of the People* and compounded by Cardinal's nature-based inspiration. But the museum, too, aligns itself with a conception of the American West that displaces a host tribe it purports to represent. The Mall Museum

³⁷ Gary Hausladen, ed., *Western Places, American Myths: How We Think About the West*, Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2003.

³⁸ Duane Blue Spruce [et.al] eds., *The Land Has Memory: Indigenous Knowledge, Native Landscape, and the National Museum of the American Indian*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), chapter 2.

is indeed west of the National Capitol but how far west is it really, and why? How does imagining Native America result in a correlation with the American Southwest? How, too, has the wilderness of the Southwest been construed to represent a larger sense of national identity?



Figure 13: View of the Hopi village of Walpi, Arizona, ca. 1880. This image begins the chapter titled 'Honoring Our Hosts.' From *The Land Has Memory: Indigenous Knowledge, Native Landscapes, and the National Museum of the American Indian* (Washington DC: Smithsonian, 2008), pp. 10.

Altering the National Lawn

I have discussed aspects of the planning and design of Native American museal architecture and I now broaden my scope and turn to the National Mall. The Mall as we know it today is largely a result of the McMillan Plan of 1901-02, eponymously named for the senator who proposed it. Informed by the comprehensive urban planning of the *City Beautiful* movement, the McMillan Plan was also inspired by the Chicago's Columbian Exposition which occurred less than a decade before in 1893. The Exposition's grand French Baroque vistas, monumental Beaux-Arts style architecture and formal gardens would not only resonate with L'Enfant's original vision but also sympathize with the nation's progressive ideals of cultural and moral refinement it sought to inculcate.

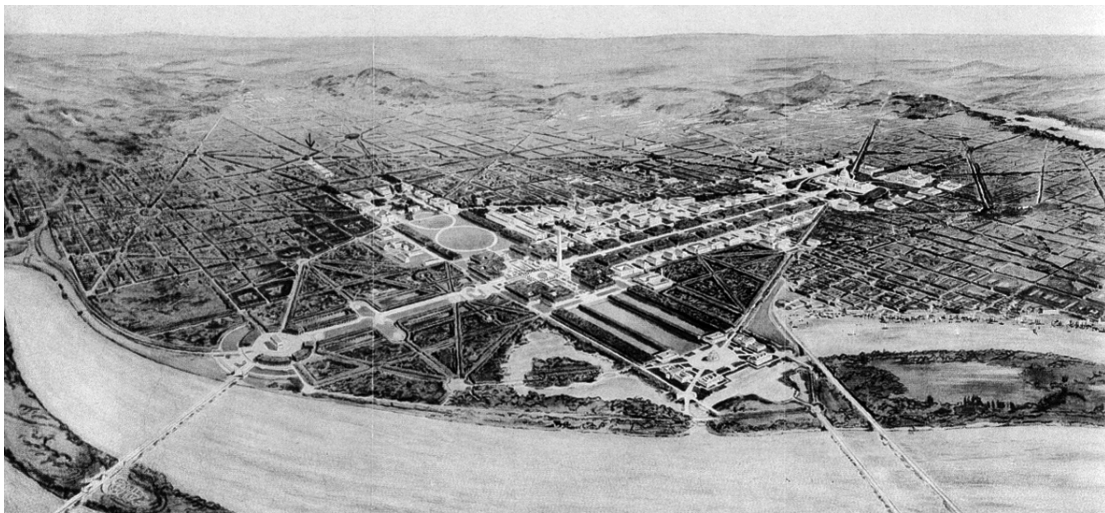


Figure 14: Senate Park Commission, McMillan Plan 1901-1902, for Washington DC Mall. Notice how the Mall was envisioned to expand along both east-west *and* north-south axes. From *The Mall in Washington, 1791-1991* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art; New Haven : Distributed by Yale University Press, 2002), page 210.

Gone were numerous Victorian era buildings (some from the Smithsonian itself) to be replaced by the famous axial green that would extend past the Washington Monument

and eventually culminate with the Lincoln Memorial in 1922. The McMillan Plan was implemented over time under the aegis of the Commission of Fine Arts, established by Congress in 1910, and this regulatory building climate continues today with additional advice from other federal and local agencies.³⁹ The unifying Beaux-Arts inspired landscape and architectural vision formalized by the McMillan Plan helped elevate the Mall as a site of national significance that remains with us today.

Another continued legacy that the World's Fair model had on the National Mall is through the promotion of an 'expositionary space' for the American nation to 'tell its story to the world.' The Smithsonian Institution would continually develop over the course of the 20th century with the construction of different national museums. In this nature, the National Mall functions as an 'exhibitionary place' (i.e. museum-sites) but also as an 'expositionary space,' whereby meaning is created in the liminal and discursive relationships between institutions.

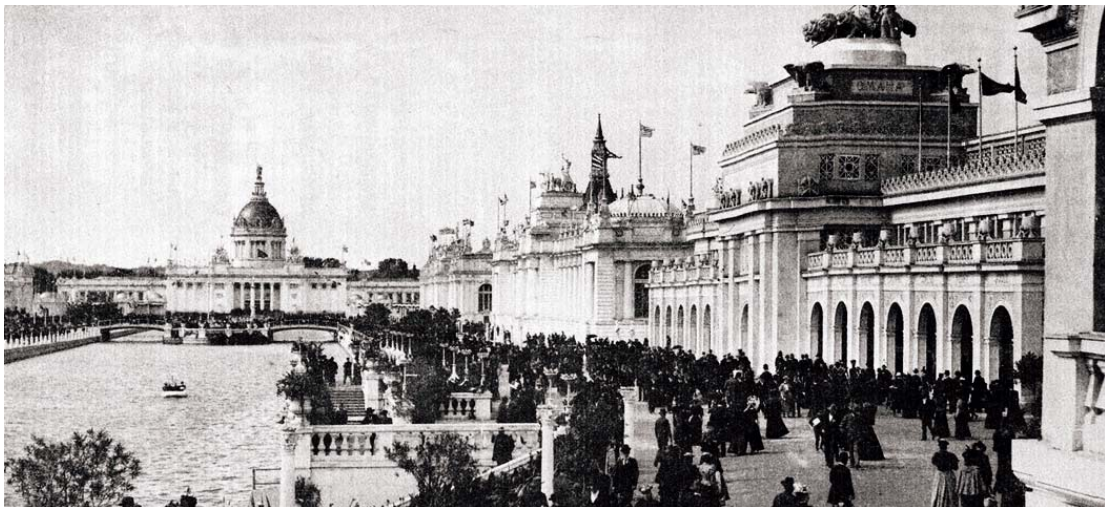


Figure 15: View of the *Grand Court* at the Trans-Mississippi International Exposition in Omaha Nebraska 1898. From *The Face of Courage: The Indian Photographs of Frank A. Rinehart* (Fort Collins, CO: Old Army Press, 1972), pp. 3.

³⁹ Richard Longstreth, ed. *The Mall in Washington, 1791-1991*. (Washington, D.C. : National Gallery of Art ; New Haven : Distributed by Yale University Press, 2002).

This notion is not new. At the *Trans-Mississippi International Exposition* of 1889 in Omaha, Nebraska, for example, an *Indian Congress* was included in an Exposition that highlighted the symbolic closing of the American West. Consisting of 500 Native Americans from 35 tribes, the Indian Congress allowed Americans to witness indigeneity in action (through food preparation, sham battles, religious ceremonies, and housing styles) over the course of two months.



Figure 16: Indian Congress, 1898. Note the juxtaposition between the Wichita Grass House (Wichita) and the surrounding buildings. From *Beyond the Reach of Time and Change: Native American Reflections on the Frank A. Rinehart Photograph Collection* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 2004), pp. 157.

The role of photography, moreover, as an agent for creating, documenting and disseminating this particular relationship was equally important. Frank A. Rinehart,

an Omahan, was selected as the official photographer for the Exposition and in addition to photographing the local, state and national buildings he also documented the Indian Congress. The introduction of his eponomously published book, *Rinehart's Indians*, states

*“The camera of Mr. Rinehart Official Photographer of the Exposition, was ever busy recording scenes and securing types of these interesting people, who with their savage finery are rapidly passing away. In a remarkably short time education and civilization will stamp out the feathers, beads, paint, the sign language, the dancing and the Indian of the past will live in but memory and pictures.”*⁴⁰

Including Indians of prominent social position, the publication is interspersed with writing that aligns its subject with either the civilizing process of the American government or the erasure of a culture as a result of westward expansion. In other instances, the objective of Rinehart is to place the Indian in a civilizing continuum that acknowledges a present and future trajectory of Indian life from an Anglo perspective. An example of this cultural proselytizing is an image of Geronimo, the most powerful and recognizable figure within *Rinehart's Indians*. Dressed in a button-down shirt, tie and collared coat- Anglo attire in other words- Geronimo dually represented the taming of the West by the American government and also its loss. Beneath his image Rinehart writes, “Geronimo (Guiyatle). Apache. Greatest Indian war chief. Nominally a prisoner of war together with the rest of his band at Fort Sill, O.T. [Oklahoma Territory]” Instead of depicting him in indigenous attire with a simulated landscape background that would incorporate a lower horizon line lending a hagiographic touch to his subject- which Rinehart utilizes in other images- Geronimo is represented as being reformed and a reformer. As he states, “I am an old man...and I want to see my people learn the ways of the whites. I want to see them raise corn and cattle and live in houses and I believe that the president and the big men at Washington will help

⁴⁰ Frank A. Rinehart *Rinehart's Indians* (Omaha, NE: Frank A. Rinehart, 1899), introduction.

my people if they will try to help themselves.”⁴¹ Staring passively into the camera the aging and incarcerated Geronimo is transformed from a defiant and resistant fighter into a governmental spokesman for Indian affairs broadcasting the message that the solution to the ‘Indian problem’ was either assimilation or annihilation.

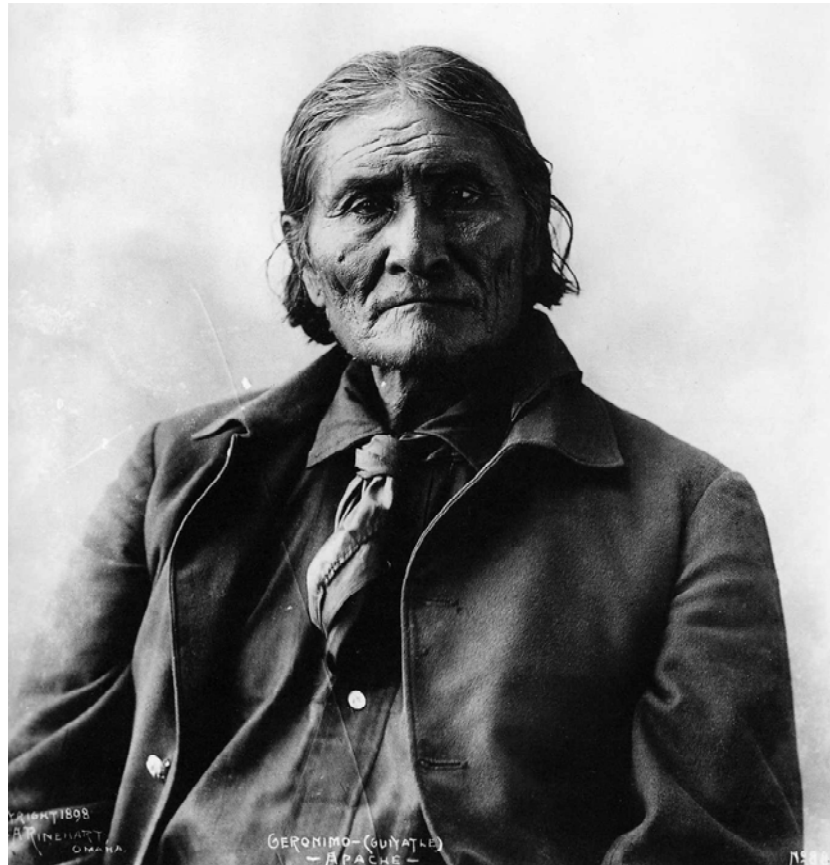


Figure 17: Geronimo as photographed by Frank Rinehart at the Trans-Mississippi Exposition. From *Beyond the Reach of Time and Change: Native American Reflections on the Frank A. Rinehart Photograph Collection*.

The role of architectural photography, too, would further imbricate and embody American development and be visual evidence of the nation’s rationale for expansion and the arch of progress that guided its moral compass. The incorporation

⁴¹ Robert Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.), 118.

of Indian architecture into the Exposition not only created indigeneity for Anglo observation but also a yardstick for measuring ‘progress,’ the positive value assigned to change. Exhibited to an ambivalent public, one that was relieved the West was finally ‘tamed’ but also nostalgic by the loss of the ‘noble savage’ through assimilationist policies, the Indian Congress also functioned as a spatial discourse. With architectures of the ‘primitive’ and ‘modern’ juxtaposed against one another, conclusions about the progress of man and Anglo superiority could be constructed and construed vis-à-vis the built environment. This occurred between American architectures as well.



Figure 18: Photographs by Rinehart of Nebraska’s Sod House and state delegation building. From *Trans Mississippi & International Exposition*. Omaha Public Library (www.omahapubliclibrary.org/transmiss).

In the *Bluff’s Tract* section of the Trans-Mississippi Exposition, for instance, the states delegations were housed and included the handsome staff and plaster constructed *Nebraska* building, complete with life-size statues of all the state’s governors and a 14 square foot fountain in the center of the main floor.⁴² Next to this impressive host, and

⁴² Omaha Public Library, “Nebraska Building,” <http://www.omahapubliclibrary.org/transmiss/buildings/nebraska.html>.

in stark contrast, is the Sod House. Juxtaposing the traditional with the modern, the Sod House represents the hardships of early settler life and memorializes its existence while *Nebraska* proffers a future exhilaratingly more advanced and distant from its nascent beginning. Both examples, however, are testaments to how relational space has narrative qualities. At expositions, such as the Trans-Mississippi, this was at times an overt declaration and at other times a subtle insinuation.⁴³

Today, the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum and the NMAI Mall Museum are yet another example of narration and spatial liminality. The Air & Space Museum, completed during the bicentennial year of 1976, holds the world's largest collection of air and spacecraft artifacts. Its collection historically commemorates the national development of aviation and spaceflight and its mission is to "educate and inspire the nation."⁴⁴ While the two institutions appear disparate their relational space vis-à-vis the national imaginary is real. Separated by Fourth Street, it is here that the nation is writ large. If the nation-state is conceived as being both 'historical' and 'new' then these two museums, some two hundred feet apart, collapse this continuum. The construction of nation-states as Benedict Anderson asserts "always loom out of an immemorial past, and still, more importantly, glide into a limitless future."⁴⁵ With this idea the 'limitless future' of the Air & Space museum would have to wait 29 years for an 'immemorial past,' for a museum that is 'carved by wind and water,' a museum that manifests not so much 'timelessness' but 'time without duration': The National Museum of the American Indian. At the foot of the National Capitol, the primordial mists of time -completed just five years ago- meets the voice of William Shatner,

⁴³ Rydell, Chapter 4.

⁴⁴ Smithsonian Institution, "Mission Statement," National Air & Space Museum, http://www.nasm.si.edu/events/pressroom/presskits/museumkit/overview_nasm.cfm.

⁴⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1991), 12.

“Space...the final frontier!” The imagined community of our nation is finally complete.

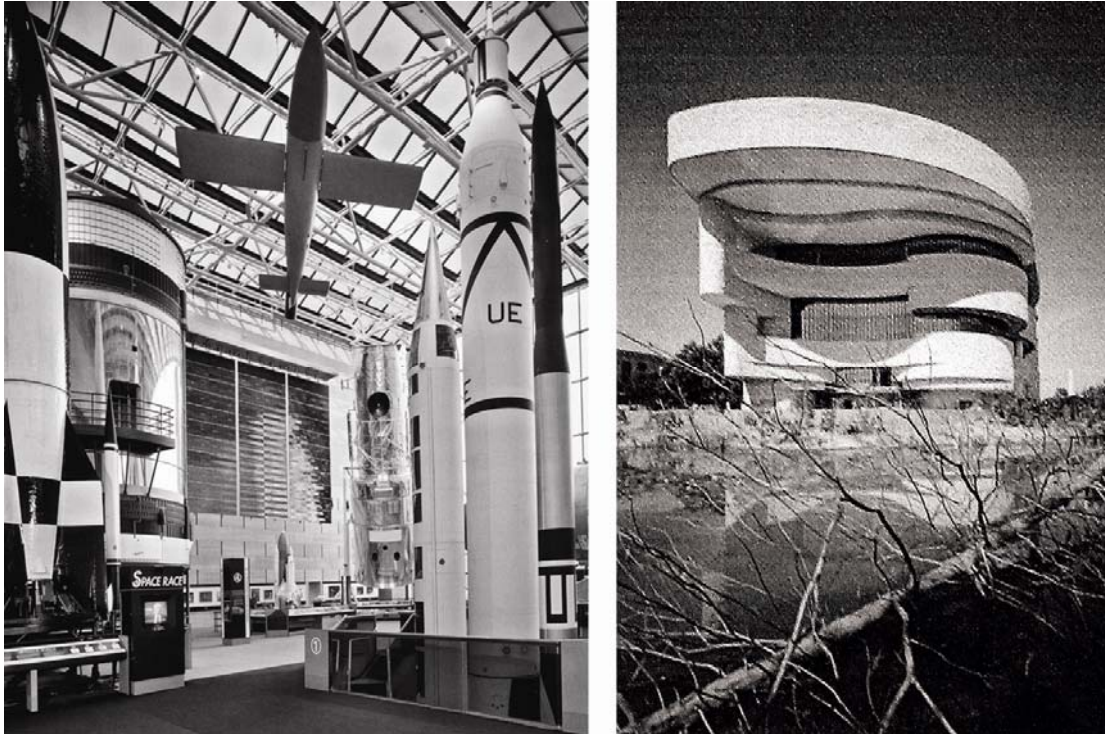


Figure 19: Interior gallery of the Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum, and the east façade of the NMAI Mall museum. From (left) *A Guide to Smithsonian Architecture* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Books, 2009), pp. 109 and “A Different Sort of (P)Reservation: Some Thoughts on the National Museum of the American Indian.” *Museum Anthropology* 19 (1995), pp. 18.

Or is it? The ways a nation is narrated, what Homi Bhaba terms an ‘impossible unity,’ accounts for its efficacy, paradoxical as this may seem.⁴⁶ This narration is an ambivalent one- it splinters, dismantles and resists as much as it produces, guides and unifies. Evidence of this occurred in the planning of the Mall Museum, an example that highlights the creation and maintenance of sub-national and national identities in recent history but also their modification. This example,

⁴⁶ Homi Bhaba, *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990), Introduction.

however, is not singular one and the wavering between the sub-national and national seen with the NMAI continues with a new institution being conceptualized on the National Mall: the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Signed into legislation by President Bush in 2003, the institution was conceptualized in the 1980s and brought to congressional legislation in 1988 by Representative John Lewis of Georgia.⁴⁷ From an initial four sites the southwest corner of 14th Street and Constitution Avenue was selected by the Smithsonian Board of Regents as being ideal.⁴⁸ The newest Smithsonian Institution, located on five acres directly west of the National Museum of American History, will tentatively begin construction in 2012 and be completed by 2015 at a cost of \$500 million, equally split between Congress and private sources.

Less than a month ago, on April 14, 2009, a press conference at the Smithsonian Castle announced that from the six competition finalists including the works of Norman Foster, Renfro, Diller & Scofidio among others, the celebrated architect David Adjaye would be principal designer along with the Freelon Group, Davis Brody Bond and SmithGroup as project cohorts. Adjaye, a British citizen of Tanzanian descent, is known for his work on prominent arts and cultural buildings in Europe as well as United States since the formation of Adjaye Associates in 2000.⁴⁹ Other members of the design team come with impressive qualifications as well: The Freelon Group is noted for museum architecture relating to African and African-American topics; Davis Brody Bond has received numerous accolades with its museum planning and design work including the Studio Museum in Harlem and the

⁴⁷ Jacqueline Trescott, "Mall Site is Chosen for Black History Museum," *The Washington Post*, January 31, 2006.

⁴⁸ From the four sites initially chosen two were on the National Mall and two were off of it.

⁴⁹ David Adjaye, "David Adjaye Biography and Key Data," Adjaye & Associates <http://www.adjaye.com>. His works in Europe include Riverton Place in East London and the Nobel Peace Centre in Oslo; in the US the Museum of Contemporary Art/ Denver.

Birmingham Civil Rights Institute; and SmithGroup, an international architectural and engineering firm, most recently collaborated with the Smithsonian Institution on the National Museum of the American Indian.⁵⁰



Figure 20: Rendering of the future National Museum of African American History and Culture. From *Smithsonian Institution: National Museum of African American History and Culture* (Freelon Group, <http://freelon.com/>).

Like NMAI, the NMAAHC would not be without its problems. There were some disagreements on the building site location. Both the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission had reservations about the building site, its location on a flood plain, lack of parking, traffic congestion and a potential target for terrorism were all mentioned.⁵¹ Others questioning not so much the legitimacy of an African American presence on the National Mall but rather if there were room at all. Judy Scott Feldmam, director of the *National Coalition to Save Our Mall*, notes, “It [NMAAHC] is a lost opportunity. It has so many limitations. It is not going to allow for a signature building. It will be another Smithsonian building in the

⁵⁰ Smithsonian Institution, “Team Profile: Freelon Adjaye Bond/SmithGroup,” National Museum of African American History and Culture, 1-5.

⁵¹ Trescott, 2.

controlled architectural style that is dominated by great monuments.”⁵² The coalition sponsored a National Mall *Third Century Initiative*, begun in 2004, in order to “promote short-term and comprehensive long-term planning for the Mall’s continued vitality as a great landscape symbol of our country’s founding ideals and a stage for our evolving democracy.”⁵³ According to the Coalition, for the National Mall to be preserved it must be expanded on its north-south axis. The benefits would be three-fold; it would allow for a new site for the Supreme Court; it would allow for further consideration of the bevy of memorials and museums currently considered by Congress; and the enclosure and expansion of Maryland Avenue would protect the rail lines from terrorist attacks and be the physical compliment to Pennsylvania Avenue in addition to being the axial road connecting the Capitol to the new Supreme Court.⁵⁴ As the East-West axis of the Mall becomes increasingly congested, a north-south axial development is suggested by the Coalition and it uses history as a guide. In 1901 the Army Corps of Engineers created East and West Potomac Park, as well as land for the Lincoln Memorial and the Tidal Basin under the McMillan Plan. Now in the 21st century, the Coalition promotes a continuation of the McMillan Plan through this proposal. This new axis could, in the end, physically embody the three governmental branches spatially while simultaneously alleviating development pressure that would otherwise make the Mall a victim of its own success.⁵⁵

⁵² Trescott, 2.

⁵³ National Coalition to Save Our Mall, “National Mall Third Century Initiative,” <http://www.themallconservancy.org/>

⁵⁴ Arthur Cotton Moore, “A New National Mall for the 21st Century,” *Washingtonian*, July 2006, 60.

⁵⁵ Moore, 63.



Figure 21: *Third Century Initiative* plan to expand the National Mall through its north-south axis. From “A New National Mall of the 21st Century.” (*Washingtonian*, July 2006), pp. 61.

As intriguing and ambitious as this plan appears, however, it overlooks the sanctifying effect the Mall continues to possess. The National Mall, after all, is imagined as a legitimizing agent for institutions that call it home and those who wish to do so. Despite a Congressional moratorium in 2003 the NMAAHC continued to advocate for a building site on the Mall. Richard Parsons, a member of the museum advisory committee, opined, “To have relegated this museum to another site when people are looking to it to answer everything from the need for an apology for slavery to reparations, would have been the ultimate dismissal.”⁵⁶ The director of the new museum, Lonnie G. Bunch, adds, “as we moved through this process, one thing was central to our thinking: we continue to be guided by our respect for this wonderfully

⁵⁶ Randy Kennedy, “Architects Chosen for Black History Museum,” *The New York Times*, April 14, 2009, 2.

important site.”⁵⁷ The Regents executive committee based their site selection for the new museum on the beauty, and iconic placement of a National Mall site but also interestingly on the site’s ‘cleanliness,’ the fact that no permanent structure has ever been built.⁵⁸ What does it mean when a national museum desires to be situated on the hallowed grounds of the National Mall, located at the nexus of privilege and authority but also on a site that has, so to speak, no ‘site memory?’ The position on the National Mall certainly validates both parties; the United States is able to re-write its national history and incorporate identities that have been historically marginalized in an act of institutional largesse; on the other hand, the NMAAHC sees a Mall placement as an initial act of visibility and voice to an experience that has been ignored or silenced in the past. In this regard, the location is mutually beneficial. The land at 14th and Constitution Streets, however, is free from past interventions. As architectural historian Reynar Banham reminds us, “The history of any piece of architecture is bound up with the history of the parcel of ground on which it stands... the prime reason why any building is designed is to alter the use of some particular parcel of land, in order to render it a better environment for some human activity”⁵⁹ This is relevant as it considers the foundation of a building, its genesis, not as self-referential but intertwined with the history, or narrative, of the land previous to its existence. This ‘intertwined narrative’ may be accumulative in physical layers in an archeological sense, but it can also be psychic. At times, to remember ‘place’ is also to remember its alterations over time. In some instances the memory of site is laden with multiple meanings, not all of them congruent. Pierre Nora’s *les lieux de memorie* or ‘memory site’ is relevant whereby a tension exists between our experience of the

⁵⁷ Kennedy, 3.

⁵⁸ Trescott, 1.

⁵⁹ Mary Banham [et.al.] eds., *A Critic Writes: Essays by Reynar Banham* (Berkeley: University of CA Press, 1996), 163-64.

past, or memory, and the organization of it through history.⁶⁰ That ‘tension’ has tremendous agency; the placement of a building on a site with a relevant memory can nuance and advance meaning for all parties involved, when done sensitively. However, *memory site* can also be obfuscatory when irrelevant to a particular project.⁶¹ This duality, and its recognition, is the case with the NMAAHC. When describing and praising the building site as ‘clean’ it allows for the creation of meaning and its interpretation *to begin* with its own institutional hands. Absolved from past meanings, the NMAAHC may narrate its own stories- premised on their own terms and complexity- on a land *tabula rasa*. While it weaves the narration of the African-American experience into a larger national discourse, the NMAAHC is equally eager to be unburdened by the ground it seeks to disturb; the former leans toward investment and incorporation while the latter is positioned as original (the source or cause from which something arises) and sovereign. The National Mall, laden with collective memory, is tempered by a building site unencumbered by such memory. Here will be a museum of history located on a site without one.

The landscape, as well, is another opportunity. The Washington Monument looms directly across 15th Street from the future museum. How will the architectural team address this space? In what ways could a dialogue occur between the building and the landscape beyond? I imagine the small knoll the Monument sits upon as participating in this discussion. On the ground level one would be unable to see beyond the grassy mound that supports the Monument. It would only be from the upper stories of the museum that one could see beyond the foreground. At this

⁶⁰ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*.” *Representations* (no.26, Spring 1989).

⁶¹ With the National Museum of the American Indian, for example, in the late 19th century the building site was the location of the high-class brothel of Mary Ann Hall. How does this relate to the narration of Native America?

vantage point the monolithic Monument would bifurcate the panorama that unfolds beyond; in less than 90 degrees one will witness the Jefferson Memorial, the Monument and the Lincoln Memorial all architecturally framed by the newest National Museum. Utilizing architecture toward contemporary ends, the NMAAHC may allow its guest to re-visit and re-inscribe two memorials with deep associations to both national and African-American histories through the architectonic sequence of rising up, or lifting. By moving vertically through the building, so to speak, one would be able to move longitudinally through the panoramic view afforded by such movement. When David Adjaye talked about accepting the commission he mentioned that the canopy and porch-like setting of the museum would be a place for people, “to come as a respite, to come and view, to learn.”⁶² I suggest the ‘respite’ he speaks of is engendered through a building site unsaddled with memory discussed earlier and is augmented by a vista rich in historical association. The ability to look without, “to come and view, to learn” in his words, however, require a certain observational stance, one that affords and necessitates reflection and absorption. How this new contribution will ‘listen’ and ‘speak’ not only to its audience but to the highly mediated cultural landscape that is the National Mall remains open. But equally engaging is to ask how this new institution will be nationalized once it becomes a member of the National Mall. On whose terms will this occur?

Conclusion

The construction of two national cultural museums, in less than a decade, on the shrinking acreage of the National Mall speaks to the contemporary re-conceptualization of our collective national memory. For Native and African-Americans, the constituencies represented, this is an opportunity to share a history and

⁶² Kennedy, 2.

culture on the National stage that often been ignored or silenced on their own terms, itself not a minor undertaking. Meanwhile, however, these institutions are also part of a larger re-scripting of national identity and those ideological requirements privilege the nation and nation-building in ways not altogether aligned with sub-national interests. While self-representation- itself a recent addition to museology- is crucial to these institutions it should not be forgotten that outside representation of these museums and their constituencies continues by the nation-state. Millions of dollars would not have been contributed by the federal government otherwise. One may also ask how critical these two institutions can be of the government when they contain the word ‘national’ in their title. In other words, how critical are museums of the government when they are dependent on federal largesse? When there is ambiguity and tension in historical and contemporary relations between Native-America and the American government, for example, how is that ‘museal friction’ negotiated? And at whose expense?



Figure 22: View of the National Mall looking northwest from the NMAI building. Photo by Author.

This landscape of the National Mall is a changing one. The ‘National Lawn’ is laden with meaning embodied in architectural projects over time; constructed, demolished, altered and abandoned the built environment has been central to nation-building and continues to be so. With the completion of one national museum and the conceptualization of another nearby a great opportunity arises. As one participant at the NMAI’s *First Americans Festival* celebrations shared, “I really like where it’s placed, with the Capitol right there. It seems ironic but important. They are our country and I think it’s time that people realized that.”⁶³ But with that opportunity is also a responsibility and the NMAI Mall museum despite its ambitious agenda envisioned in *The Way of the People* has had ambivalent results. May the construction of the new National Museum of African American History and Culture build on past museal experiences, whether from Paris or down the block, and construct an institution more worthy of the subject it represents. As recent history tells us, those pillars will need to support more than simply the structure itself.

⁶³ Welcome Home: The Grand Opening of the National Museum of the American Indian. Smithsonian Institution DVD, 2005. Unidentified woman discussing the Grand Opening of the NMAI Mall Museum.

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CHAPTER 2

THE ROOTS OF AMERICA: CUISINE AND HISTORY AT THE MITSITAM CAFÉ

Introduction

On September 21, 2004 the National Museum of the American Indian, finally, after 15 years of negotiations, found a home on the National Mall. The museum was lauded for incorporating new museological practices, along with praise for a stimulating Native-inspired and designed museum building and a sensitive treatment of the original wetland environment. The Mitsitam Café, furthermore, would promote Native foodways in a stimulating architectural environment to museum visitors; one premised on a gustatory engagement with Native cuisine. In this essay, I examine how the Mitsitam Café relates to the senses, and how a greater sensory rapport could be inculcated. I begin by first situating the Mitsitam Café in the context of destination dining at museums. A shift in the last quarter century, from museum cafeterias to museum restaurants, has corresponded to a change in perception from eating as an amenity to eating as an enhancement of a larger museum experience. Subsequently, I address the Mitsitam Café's architectural program and its correlation to the NMAI publication, *Food of the Americas*, before highlighting a sensory investigation of the Café based on movement. In the following section I focus on food and memory, and the ways that conceptualizing the former as a process based on enskillment, instead of as a product, allows the retrieval and continuation of the latter to occur through sensory engagement. I then move to the issue of 'authenticity' in Native cuisine, and how, through a more nuanced reading of authenticity versus accuracy, one is able to understand the role, and importance, of sensory experience. In the next section I look at the challenges of aligning history with a culinary sensorium, how our senses can and cannot be historically situated. I examine the ways the Mitsitam Café represents history and the senses and proffer other possibilities that may expand the dialogue and correlation between the two. I conclude the essay by addressing how food and the senses are political, and how they have been massaged by the NMAI to meet particular

institutional ends. At the same time that the NMAI attempted to legitimize its Native cuisine as the basis for a national culinary identity, the Mitsitam Café has overlooked other, more conflicting stories as it dissembles to a larger public audience.

Destination Dining

To better understand the Mitsitam Café I begin with a contextualization between food service and museums. By the early twentieth century, the notion of providing an alimentary service to museum patrons existed in tearooms in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Detroit Institutes of the Arts; later in 1941, the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. began to offer a cafeteria, or lunch spot, to visitors. However, the notion museums could provide more than just a stop, and quick bite, for a fatigued museum-goer would not gain credence until the 1970s. As Carol A. King wrote in the June 1975 issue of *Museum News*, “Many directors regarded their restaurant facilities solely as a service for visitors and staff, and...some may even consider it a necessary evil...[before changing tone].. A well-mechanized, well-operated food service can be a profitable venture and a continuing source of funds for operations.”⁶⁴ Enhancing the dining experience, and, therefore, the overall museum experience as well has been central to the change of perception that museums have been eager to capitalize upon, often financially so. In the mid-1990s restaurants began to incorporate renowned architects, designer and chefs in a quest for institutional enhancement; *Sette* at MoMA, for instance, has Italian chef Gianfranco Sorrentino oversee all food service operations at the museum in his quest to provide

⁶⁴ Susan Breitkopf, “Check Please! Museums and Destination Dining,” *Museum News* 86 (September/October 2007): 38.

“traditional, contemporary Italian cuisine.”⁶⁵ As David Swinghamer, co-owner of the Union Square Hospitality Group, notes, “We think the cafés should stand on their own and be another reason people should come to the museum...[further adding] We can make it so good that others will want to come if they don’t have time to go to the galleries.”⁶⁶ Boasting aside, Mr. Swinghamer highlights the issue that museum restaurants are destinations not simply under the aegis of the museum but in their own right. At the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, for instance, the director Rachel Blackburn Cozad expresses similar sentiments, “It’s an important amenity, but really serves to draw people in who might not have a reason to come here.”⁶⁷ With offerings that include tempura-watermelon salads and fresh figs with foie gras butter and mascarpone cheese, these institutions are keenly aware of the benefits museum restaurants may possess. They may increase attendance for the museum and offer activities, other than visual art appreciation; for the restaurants themselves, associations with distinguished institutions often with remarkable collections and stunning architectural settings support a sophisticated culinary experience and higher menu prices.

While museum restaurants are naturally located within their respective institutions, the management of these restaurants is often not. According to the *2003 Museum Financial Information*, 68 percent of museum contract out their food service, recognizing that museum staff are often unknowledgeable in the complex food and beverage industry.⁶⁸ Sodexo, which provides food service for 25 restaurants

⁶⁵ “AND THEME TIE-INS TO PAINTER EXHIBITS: NY’s Museum of Modern Art introduces seasonal menus,” Allbusiness.com <http://www.allbusiness.com/retail-trade/eating-drinking-places/4169624-1.html>.

⁶⁶ Breitkopf, 38.

⁶⁷ Breitkopf, 38.

⁶⁸ Breitkopf, 39.

nationally, and Wolfgang Puck, which operates 10 museum restaurants, provide alternatives to museums disinterested- or unable- in providing in-house services or utilizing local food service management companies. Brand recognition has been central to destination restaurants, as well as their location, and has been more successful for some restaurants than others. *Palettes*, at the Denver Museum, for instance, has struggled until a new wing was opened in 2006, which offset the time- and attendance downturn- between exhibitions. Location, too, would be problematic as the Denver Museum is isolated downtown, surrounded by Civic Center Park, a bastion of homeless people and numerous parking lots. As Arthur Manask, CEO of Mansk and Associates, a foodservice consultation service for cultural institutions, admits in regard to museum restaurants, “They’re really an anomaly. I think you’ll see more branding where museums reach out to local regional and national restaurant operators to bring cachet, brand, recognition, and earned income to their institution... You need the traffic, visibility and access. How many can do that? Not that many.”⁶⁹

However, some museums have been able to successfully connect the dining experience within a larger museum context. At the Kemper Museum in Kansas City, the café displays 115 paintings from its collection and offers cooking, music and dance classes all in an effort to advance its mission. Some museums, moreover, are themed in a way that accentuates the identity of the museum instead of merely being an expensive and often anomalous addition. The Café Sabarsky, at the Neue Gallerie in New York City allows the museum visitor to experience the intellectual and artistic mood of *fin-de siècle* Vienna in its diner. As Tamara Mann, author of *Curating the Café*, shares,

“While nestled in a lush green booth beneath a Josef Hoffman chandelier, visitors can peer out on Fifth Avenue while savoring a slice of flaky apple strudel or the exquisite sachertorte, a classic Viennese dark chocolate cake with apricot confiture. Adorned with a grand piano, Adolph furniture,

⁶⁹ Breitkopf, 40.

impeccably designed silverware and even a newspaper rack with wooden dowels bearing papers such as the Kurier from Austria and the FAZ from Germany, the café transports diners to the turn-of-the-century Vienna.”⁷⁰

Other institutions also incorporate the dining experience as an extension of their mission in interesting ways. At the COSI Science Center in Columbus, Ohio kids can learn about science in a fun and gustatory manner at the *Atomic Café*. With ice cream pellets flash frozen to 40 degrees below zero, to cotton candy where woven sugar is heated to 400 degrees, the mission of the institution is illustrated and experienced through culinary treats that coalesce science and fun. In other cases, such as at the Monterey Bay Aquarium’s *Portola Café*, food can highlight larger environmental issues, such as over-fishing and corporate-style fish farming that degrades the planet.⁷¹ Unlike the *Modern*, MoMA’s posh restaurant, these institutions are able to dovetail cuisine and often a sensory experience within a larger institutional mission.

This phenomenon, too, is international. Barcelona’s Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya includes the highly popular restaurant *Oleum*, which includes seasonal Mediterranean cuisine and breathtaking views of the city skyline through the Plaça d’Espanya’s Venetian towers on the Montjuic Hill. At the Centre Pompidou in Paris, museum visitors may dine at *Georges*, the 6th floor eatery by restaurateur Thierry Costes, while absorbing views of the city. As Ford Bell, president of the American Association of Museums, notes, “Museums of all types and sizes are always exploring ways to provide a dynamic and fulfilling visitor experience to visitors of varying interests. One element is providing unique dining experiences.”⁷²

While museums are applauding the incorporation of restaurants to ‘enhance the visitor experience’ they also codify this experience below the main *raison d’ entrée* of

⁷⁰ Tamara Mann, “Curating the Café,” *Museum News* 86 (September/October 2007): 45.

⁷¹ Mann, 45.

⁷² Farhad Heydari, “Best Museum Restaurants,” *Forbes Traveler.com* January 16, 2008.

those institutions: the gallery experience. While many museums do not see their dining services as income generators (often only contributing small returns) and are more concerned with visitor education and enhancement, they are also quick to point out that dining is not their focus. As Stefanie Stark writes in *Artful dining is in at museum restaurants*, “while the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York just opened a café in response to frequent visitor requests at the Cloisters..., administrators are careful not to put too much emphasis on its food service. ‘At the Met, we regard a café as an amenity, a place for visitors to rest and refresh...not a destination,’ explains spokesman Harold Holzer.”⁷³ Rachel Cozad also reinforces this sentiment when she describes the *Café Sebastienne* at the Kemper Museum, “the Museum always comes first. The collection, the exhibitions and the programs are central. [The restaurant] is an amenity. It’s under the umbrella of the museum. It’s not operating in its own realm.”⁷⁴

How may this be another example of the continued visual bias in museums? Are not museums, as educational and experiential institutions, in some ways responsible for engaging other sensory modalities? Instead, it would seem that ‘visitor experience’ is still evoked more as an amenity than for its educational and sensory potential. How does the Mitsitam Café situate its dining experience vis-à-vis the destination dining trend? How important is the relationship between the Café and the mission of the NMAI institution? And what kind of relationships are there between the Café, and other aspects of the museum, such as the exhibitions and architecture?

⁷³ Stephanie Berry Stark, “Artful dining is in at museum restaurants,” *USA Today*. Travel News, June 25, 2002.

⁷⁴ Breitkopf, 39.

Mitsitam Cafe ⁷⁵

The Mitsitam Native Foods Café is located on the ground floor of the NMAI's Mall Museum. The 6,000 sq. ft, 365-seat dining space, incorporates granite and wood materials and soars two stories while overlooking cascading water and boulderscapes on the northwest corner of the museum. The café also includes a 6,500 sq. ft servery, further supported by a 4,500 sq. ft basement kitchen which processes product deliveries, provides support for the servery stations, and includes coolers, freezers, and dry storage. The Mitsitam Café serves between one to two thousand people daily, with an average staff size of sixty.

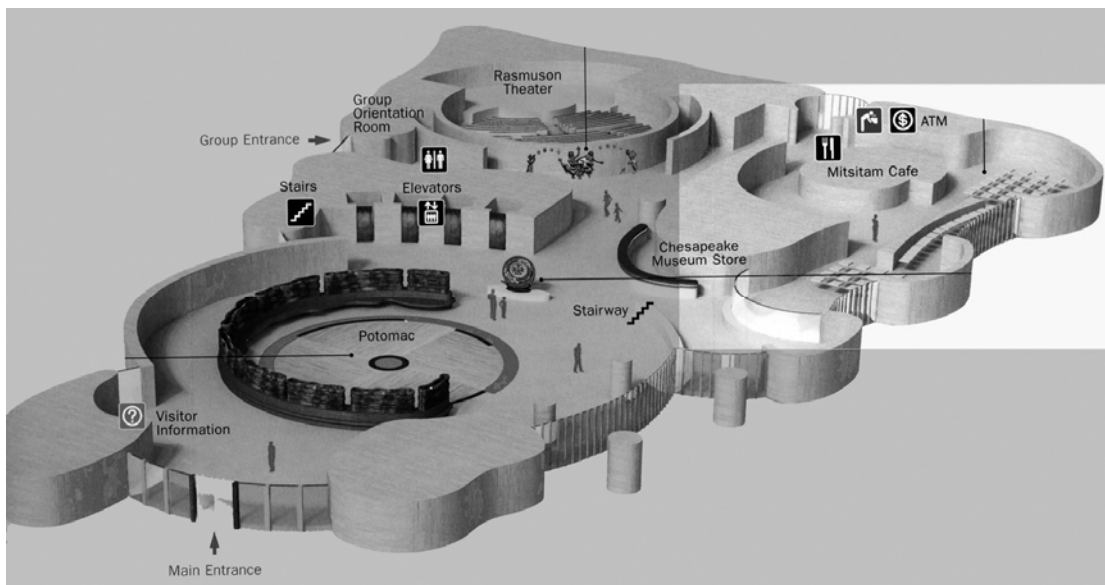


Figure 23: Floor plan of Mall Museum with the Mitsitam Cafe highlighted. From *National Museum of the American Indian- General Information and Floor Plan* (Washington DC: Smithsonian, 2009).

The café menu was designed by husband-and wife- team Fernando and Marlene Divina, of Portland, Oregon based *Fiddleheads* restaurant. Including traditionally prepared dishes, the Café also includes conventional dishes with Native

⁷⁵ Mitsitam means “let’s eat” in the Piscataway and Delaware languages.

ingredients, such as chili-dusted French fries. The menu organization was inspired by the hemispheric approach of the NMAI and was divided into five geographical regions of the Western Hemisphere: Northern Woodlands, South America, Northwest Coast, Meso-America, and the Great Plains. When extensively researching the menu, Richard Hetzler, the executive chef at Mitsitam, explains, “We decided to use ingredients indigenous to various regions and combine flavors. The menu continues to evolve and we learn about what might have been ‘authentic’ and which ingredients work well together.”⁷⁶ Much of the food, such as wild salmon and seafood, is organically grown and sourced by Native Americans. The Intertribal Bison Cooperative, for instance, provides the Mitsitam Café with buffalo flown in twice a week, and according to their mission statement, “is committed to reestablishing buffalo herds on Indian lands in a manner that promotes cultural enhancement, spiritual revitalization, ecological restoration, and economic development.”⁷⁷

In addition to the menu design, the Divinas also produced the 220-page Smithsonian publication, *Foods of the Americas: Native Recipes and Traditions*, in conjunction with the Mall museum inauguration in 2004. Divided into nine chapters, *Foods of the Americas* includes Native recipes interspersed with inviting food photography, historical images of Native food preparation, Native culinary objects from the NMAI collection, and essays that highlight, as the subtitle notes, Native traditions today. Including a forward by Richard West Jr., the director of the NMAI, *Foods of the Americas* also provides a Native food source listing at the conclusion, where one may contact suppliers for Native grown food stuffs, such as Sonoran mesquite flour and wild boar.

⁷⁶ “Mitsitam Native Foods Café at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.,” Allbusiness.com <http://www.allbusiness.com/print/6246187-1-22eeq.html>.

⁷⁷ Intertribal Bison Cooperative, “Who We Are,” Intertribal Bison Cooperative, <http://www.itcbison.com/about.php>.

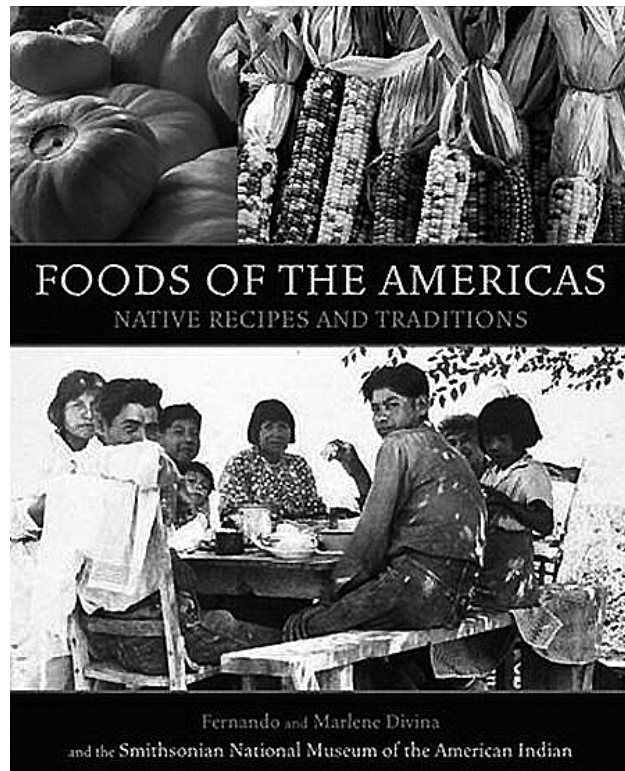


Figure 24: Cover of *Foods of the Americas*. From *Foods of the Americas: Native Recipes and Traditions* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press and NMAI, 2004).

The menu, too, would also influence the architectural program of the Café; the menu design team would include Duane Blue Spruce (Laguna and San Juan Pueblo), the facilities planning coordinator at NMAI. The relationship between the menu and the architecture is, perhaps, best witnessed through the five separate regional cuisines and how they are spatially distinct in the Café. The process of examining the Mitsitam through walking is equally germane to an understanding of the dining experience. During my recent visit to the Mitsitam Café this was among my first observations. While the museum entrance is on the eastern side of the building, the restaurant is on the Northwest corner which requires a ‘journey’ for the diner; upon entering the building one must either curve left or right around the large open central-domed

Potomac room before passing the Chesapeake Museum store on one's right, and then the circular Rasmuson Theater subsequently on one's left. The Mitsitam Café is located, after shadowing the curving interior wall, finally on one's left. At the entrance to the Café, a vitrine includes two copies of *Foods of the Americas*, one closed to highlight the cover, the other open to a photographic spread of venison with juniper and wild huckleberry sauce. The cookery is complimented with two Native culinary objects and a sign- in case the point was missed- that notes the award winning book is available in the gift shop for \$39.95.

Upon entering the café, *South America* is the first regional station on the left where one may order such items as tamales, Peruvian potato salad and quinoa salad. Immediately following *South America* is *Northern Woodlands* which includes brine-roasted turkey, maple and molasses baked beans, and ash-roasted corn on the cob. On the left, located opposite *South America* and *Northern Woodlands*, are the *Great Plains*, *Meso-American* and *Northwest Coast* stations.



Figure 25: 'South America' region at the Mitsitam Cafe. Photo by Author.

At the first of these one can find buffalo chili, dried buffalo and corn stew, and, continuing with the theme, buffalo brisket sandwiches ; at the second, tortillas, enchiladas and burritos; and, finally, at the *Northwest Coast*, the signature cedar-planked juniper salmon which is prepared ‘live’ using dual gas and wood-fueled (hickory, cherry and mesquite) fire pit. This is the highlight and dramatic feature of the Café in addition to a reference to the traditional center for Native ceremonies and cooking demonstrations. As Larry Ponzi, the regional director of Restaurants Associates, Washington DC which manages the Mitsitam, states, “Our goal from the beginning was to make Mitsitam an educational experience so it would be an extension of the museum, not something separate. We set out to provide native cuisine that would mirror the mission of the museum. We do this by serving selected products and also by demonstrating in full view how they’re prepared.”⁷⁸ In fact, all servery stations are designed to present the preparation of Native foods. It would seem that the Mitsitam Café is as concerned with process as with product.

Does this example point to the notion of cooking as a sensory action (process) over mere culinary outcome (product)? And if so, is this then a way to bring the senses, and sensory awareness, back into focus? In her essay *Tight Spaces and Salsa-stained Aprons: Bodies at Work in American Restaurants*, Karla Erickson posits that the restaurant is a stage for service where employees and patrons interact kinesthetically. As Erickson explains, “I use ‘dance of service’ to describe the rhythm, energy and enticement produced by the repetitive and spontaneous use of bodies in service work.”⁷⁹ These second-to-second negotiations, between service workers and patrons, affect the demeanor and ambience of the environment in a

⁷⁸ “Mitsitam Native Foods Café at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.,” Allbusiness.com

⁷⁹ Karla Erickson, “Tight Spaces and Salsa-Stained Aprons: Bodies at Work in American Restaurants,” in *The Restaurants Book: Ethnographies of Where We Eat*, ed. David Beriss and David Sutton (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2007), 17.

liminal, and important way. Erickson divides the restaurant into ‘frontstage’ and ‘backstage,’ thereby delineating a separation between staged service for an audience, the customer, from workspace. Describing the latter Erickson notes, “The behind-the-scenes of the restaurant is constructed precisely to hide the evidence of workers’ labor. Customers are meant to see as little of the work that goes into their meal as possible, and the division allows for this. As much as this space is intended to confine servers’ behavior, it also protects them, providing a space not of rest, but relief, where they can be themselves and where their work is acknowledged and visible.”⁸⁰

If bodily behavior, in relation to service, can be defined to particular spaces then how is Mitsitam Café situated vis-à-vis frontstage and backstage? This is problematic, as the Café partly mirrors this model and partly transgresses it. The Café has a partially open backstage; certain food preparation is done in their basement kitchen away from the public eye.



Figure 26: Servery station at the Mitsitam Cafe. Photo by Author.

⁸⁰ Erickson, 20.

However, the more performative aspect of cooking is done openly at the serverly stations. It would appear the Mitsitam straddles three 'stage of service' zones simultaneously: the basement kitchen is a true backstage, the serverly is a hybrid combining the preparation of the backstage with the public performance of the frontstage, and the ordering and dining areas being true frontstages. While this taxonomy allows one to understand space, and its separation in terms of a kinesthesia, it does not fully explain how cooking, instead of serving, relates to the senses and also to memory.

Food and Memory

Understanding food as a process, instead of as a symbolic identity, and how this *skill* or embodied sensory knowledge can be approached in the context of production and consumption is raised by David Sutton in his article *Cooking Skill, the Senses and Memory*. Sutton notes that while anthropology and the social sciences talk about cultural homogenization and de-skilling (as they relate to production and consumption) in global consumer capitalism, cooking is overlooked. Sutton states, "there has been relatively little research on consumption as not simply a creative, but a skilled process, involving judgment and the reasoned uses of the senses. Memory is also a key concept to be considered, as it connects the senses to skilled, embodied practices through the habits...that require apprenticeship and repetition, and through the comparisons necessary to judge the successful dish."⁸¹ 'Cooking as skill,' furthermore, is an alternative approach that blurs a traditional production/consumption binary as it recognizes cooking as something that is both produced and consumed,

⁸¹ David Sutton, "Cooking Skill, the Senses, and Memory: The Fate of Practical Knowledge," in *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosdon and Ruth B. Phillips (Oxford: Berg, 2006): 88.

nearly simultaneously, and that consuming (as in taste) is inherently part of the production. In regard to memory and the senses, Sutton feels,

“In some cases a specific sensory domain may be elaborated to the detriment of other domains, and in other cases the study of one domain may by necessity lead into others, the phenomenon of synesthesia that characterizes many aspects of non-hierarchies sensory perception that has not undergone the discipline of modernity...this focus on intersensory connections is a potential facilitator of memory, that the cultural elaboration of taste and smell, and their interconnections, can lead food, for example, to be more memorable.”⁸²

It would seem that though a process of enskillment or enculturation, where acquisition turns from a conscious act to a habitual one, there will then be a connection to the past. One may, in some ways, need to forget in order to remember. For as Sutton points out, while enculturation is the ‘education of attention’ (in this case recognizing specific smells, tastes, and sights while cooking) it is, “not only an education of *attention*, but of *memory*, a training of the total person into practices that make certain things and events in the environment memorable.”⁸³

The notion of ‘cooking as skill’ would appear to expand and build upon the ideas of Erickson’s performance and process-oriented focus. Both are centered on ritualized behavior and sensory embodiment; the former, however, elaborates on the idea of memory as an integral, if overlooked, inclusion in cooking as a process. In the forward to *Foods of the Americas*, Richard West Jr., founding director of the NMAI, correlates food sustenance on cultural as well as gastronomic levels. He writes,

“In Foods of the Americas you will get a taste of the Native world and a sampling of Indian life and culture- for much can be known of a people by what they eat, how they prepare their meals, and what attitudes they bring to the table. A community’s food traditions are often a crucial element of that group’s identity....It is no surprise to find important foods not only in a community’s diet, but its stories and histories as well. Throughout the

⁸² Sutton, 90.

⁸³ Sutton, 92.

indigenous world, food sources and traditions have strong spiritual connotations.”⁸⁴

At the Mitsitam Café the memory and preservation of Native foodways, premised on bodily re-enactment, is evinced in the servery design whereby diners have the opportunity to witness the preparation of Native dishes. *Food in the Americas*, too, corroborates the notion that cooking for Native peoples is an exercise in memory activation and retrieval whereby particular traditions are preserved during the process of cooking, in addition to the process of hunting, growing and their respective relationships to material culture.



Figure 27: “Catawba man and boy hunting with a blowgun, 1922. South Carolina” from Chapter 5 of *Foods of the Americas*.

In Chapter 5 *Game Birds & Fowl*, for example, the authors explain,

“In the arctic region, a young Inupiaq boy coming of age as a hunter has traditionally been expected to master the art of imitating the calls of ducks,

⁸⁴ Richard West Jr., “Forward: Native Taste,” in *Foods of the Americas*, ed. Fernando and Marlene Divina (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press and Smithsonian NMAI, 2004): xi.

geese, gulls, and auks, as well as the less common guillemots, kittiwakes, puffins, and razorbills. If the young hunter cannot call the birds with his voice, he makes whistles of wood, clay, antler, or bone to summon prey by imitating a courtship or distress call. Carved whistles and weapons are often adorned with an animal motif to please the hunted animal's spirit so it will return to earth and repopulate."⁸⁵

In this context, cooking as a skill starts not with a list of ingredients, but, rather, further back in the culinary process providing a context and meaning to food-sources.

But *Food and the Americas* makes other claims as well. The publication highlights the contributions of Native foods to the identity of American cuisine. In the introduction the authors' state, "The goal of this collection of recipes, essays, and images is to provide a sense of the diverse landscapes, the basic flavors, and the strong, vital cultures that have together produced a *truly indigenous American cuisine*."⁸⁶ [emphasis mine] The authors further elaborate, "While the precious metals and other spoils of the Conquest bolstered a sagging European economy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the foods of the Americas have endured as the true New World legacy."⁸⁷ Instead of assigning the creation of American cuisine to the arrival of Europeans- perpetuating the notion that America existed only with the European consciousness of it- *Food in the Americas* places cuisine and civilization in an older, Native-based context. The idea, too, that Native foodways and indigeneity were instrumental on a global level- 'new world legacy'- is also promulgated. As the Divinas note, "Most people don't pay close attention to the origins of the foods they enjoy today. Many foods commonly found on our shelves are credited to European or Asian origin- *Irish* potatoes, *Italian* tomatoes, and *Thai* chilies. But all these foods

⁸⁵ Fernando and Marlene Divina, "Chapter Five: Game Birds & Fowl," in *Foods of the Americas*, ed. Fernando and Marlene Divina (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press and Smithsonian NMAI, 2004): 103.

⁸⁶ Divina, xiii.

⁸⁷ Divina, xiv.

originated here in the Americas... After 1492, America's native foods transformed most of the world's cuisines."⁸⁸

At the same time that *Food of the Americas* revises the history of American cuisine to include its own contributions, however, it also situates Native foods as evolving, contemporary and, ultimately, unified. As the authors point out, "By the time Europeans arrived, some of the Western Hemisphere's vast cache of raw materials had already undergone sophisticated hybridization and was incorporated into Native cuisines... American cuisines continue to evolve, yet certain dishes are prepared or served today in the same fashion as they were thousands of years ago."⁸⁹ This speaks partly about the Native evolution of food, but it also implicitly highlights the historical claims the evolution engenders. Moreover, this evolution continues right up to the present. The authors wonder what capacity technology (through distribution and preservation) could have on Native foodstuffs in the future, particularly with local and heirloom products that are seeing resurgence in demand. The authors, and one may suspect their publishers, are keen to place *Foods of the Americas* within a larger trend of organic, seasonal, local, cuisine that is both healthy and morally vetted. In her article *Mitsitam Café, Truly All-American*, Eve Zibart notes, "The cafeteria at the National Museum of the American Indian on the Mall makes it clear that cafeteria food doesn't have to be bland and boring. It also points out, albeit subtly, how healthful the American diets were before the European arrived to lard it over them."⁹⁰ The reader, and diner, is reminded continually that these contemporary trends in healthy eating were never lost in Native culture- simply overlooked, or forgotten.

The reader is also reminded that while there was diversity of local ingredients in Native America, there were also shared preparation techniques and cooking

⁸⁸ Divina, xiv.

⁸⁹ Divina, xiv.

⁹⁰ Eve Zibart, "Mitsitam Café, Truly All-American," in *washingtonpost.com*, October 21, 2005.

methods. As the authors conclude, “This cookbook is intended to celebrate the original foods of the Americas; the recipes are designed to perpetuate a truly American tradition.”⁹¹ Although there are differences to Native cuisines, it is opined that their differences are secondary to a larger, singular tradition. As we have seen earlier, a connection exists between sensorial engagement, food and memory. This leads one to ask how ‘difference’ in Native cuisine is usurped in order to maintain and construct Native traditions. It would seem that memory, in its relationship to Native foods, is thought of as a collective tradition while difference, although inherent and recognized, is also suppressed. But while tradition is communal, memory can be personal as well as collective, and the two may not always align. What are some of the tensions this fissure may engender? How could memory, as explored through cooking, be understood through a larger political and ideological framework but also simultaneously dismantle it?

Authenticity

How ‘authentic’ is the Mitsitam Café in the representation of its Native foodways? In her article *But is it Authentic? Culinary Travel and the Search for the “Genuine Article”* Lisa Heldke makes a claim for ‘authenticity’ over ‘accuracy’ in cookery. According to Heldke, Euro-American culinary travelers who taste the exotic food of the Other, “begin with the recognition that one is in the presence of a flavor that has never before been encountered, and ends with an ‘understanding’ that this flavor stands as an authentic marker of the ‘true nature’ of the ethnic Other- and, therefore, the thing that separates one most fully from the other.”⁹² This line correlates the ‘genuine article’ with ‘just the way they would do it.’ However, this is

⁹¹ Divina, vx.

⁹² Lisa Heldke, “But is it Authentic? Culinary Travel in Search for the ‘Genuine Article’” in *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, ed. Carolyn Korsmeyer (Oxford: Berg, 2005): 387.

problematic as what is often thought of as ‘authentic’ is really just new. Moreover, this definition does not account for how ‘insiders’ experience the cuisine, which may not reflect what they consider traditional, or significant or genuine. In addition, this model of authenticity, one that disallows a cuisine to change and evolve under natural circumstances, is paradoxically a way of destroying the authenticity of a dish one is trying to achieve. How does one then construct a notion of ‘authentic’ cuisine? For Heldke, authenticity first must be thought of not only from the preparation perspective but from a tasting one as well. In other words, authenticity has as much to do with *experiencing* as it does with *preparing*. As Heldke explains, “Just as it would be inaccurate, in describing a work of cuisine, to ignore the contributions of the dish itself (and the cooks who made it), so too would it be inaccurate to ignore the contributions of the eater, who come to this experience with a history and set of expectations of her own.”⁹³ Here we see that ‘exchange,’ between the eater and the dish, is the important marker of authenticity. Heldke further adds,

*“authenticity, conceived along these lines, differs from the view I’m rejecting in that it rejects the notion that properties of a dish inhere in the dish, independent of any perceivers, and instead conceives of taste or flavor as a property of the experiential work of cuisine. Authenticity is thus a property of the particular work of the cuisine that is ‘happening’- a work that may involve cross-cultural elements, for instance.”*⁹⁴

If one is to view authenticity in this light, whereby it is defined as a transaction between the dish and the eater, the Mitsitam Café is better understood. As discussed earlier, the Café is centered on Native foods and their preparation techniques- bringing the ‘backstage’ to the ‘frontstage’ in Erickson’s terms. Doing so allows the audience or diner to experience the process of cooking as an enskilled activity, one that is premised on kinesthesia and memory activation/ retrieval. This transparency, allowing the eater to be privy to the cooking process, also (thinking about exchange)

⁹³ Heldke, 398.

⁹⁴ Heldke, 390.

authenticates the dish. Sizzling sounds, the lapping flames of a fire, the exhalation of smoke and the perfunctory movements of the chef all are constructed to create an atmosphere to be understood by the audience, or eater. This is how Native cuisine is understood vis-à-vis the culinary traveler, and is no less ‘authentic’ because as Heldke illustrates, “this concept of authenticity begins with the understanding that *all* works of cuisine involve transactions between dish (cook) and eater- and call us to *attend* to the particular kinds of transactions represented in a cross-cultural experience.”⁹⁵

This is particular relevant as Native dishes, and ultimately all cuisine, is a dynamic and evolving process where new ingredients, preparation techniques and audience contexts are continually shifting. Stasis in the culinary field is the exception not the rule. But this is exactly the quagmire that occurs if one thinks of the dish and its inhering qualities as frozen. This view is even evident in *Food of the Americas* as the authors’ state, “the recipes included in this cookbook represent modern cultures of the Americas- they do not attempt to describe the ethnobotany of American civilization *nor do they reproduce authentic* tribal specialties.”⁹⁶ [emphasis mine] However, they continually weave culinary hybridization and incorporation into their narrative of Native culinary history as it evolved before and after European colonization. This contradiction implies for something to be authentically ‘Native’ it must include particular ingredients and preparation techniques, for sure, but also that authenticity is more importantly a ‘culinary outcome’ as opposed to a ‘culinary exchange.’ Understandably, the Native cuisine at the Mitsitam Café has been modified to meet non-Native palettes, but does this by its very nature make it less ‘authentic?’ Granted it is important to be able to assess a dish (through its creator and cultural context) as a contributing element to the work of cuisine. Quality is still part

⁹⁵ Heldke, 390.

⁹⁶ Divina, xv.

of the equation. But it would be fallacious to suggest that the work of cuisine stops there. Instead, if one incorporates specific ingredients and carefully observed preparation techniques and the ideation of Native foods in relation to culinary travelers as a marker of innovation and not a misconstrued aberration, then is not equally authentic? Fry bread was developed as a staple by Native peoples on reservations in the 20th century partly because of government rations and lack of game for hunting. Yet today that is considered a quintessential ‘Native’ food, despite its partial non-Native genesis. This would imply that the further one is able to historicize cuisine, and therefore co-opt its narration as Native, the greater is its possible claim to authenticity even if it fails to meet its own criteria. It seems paradoxical that the Divinas are willing to contextualize- and authenticate- Native foodways in the construction of an American cuisine identity, yet are unable or unwilling to offer a similar treatment of outside influences on Native foodways, such as fry bread at the Mitsitam Café. What gives? Is it thought that if one expands the definition of authenticity in regard to Native cuisine, one minimizes and dilutes the foundational base of the cuisine itself? Is this, in other words, spreading Native cuisine too thin? Or instead, is it a reluctance to define authenticity on different terms? In place of defining ‘authenticity’ as entirely conforming to fact, one may define it as being true to a spirit or personality of a time or place. The late scholar, Michael Camille, a medievalist at the University of Chicago has noted while an experience may be historical inaccurate this is not to occlude the possibility of it being authentic.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Chicago Public Radio, “Simulated Worlds,” *This American Life*, http://www.thisamericanlife.org/Radio_Episode.aspx?episode=38. This is how the medieval scholar Michael Camille defines authenticity when he visits Medieval Times, a medieval-themed entertainment park in suburban Chicago. In the 2004 Chicago Public Radio broadcast *This American Life* where Camille discusses with the host Ira Glass the historical accuracies and inaccuracies of the entertainment park but ultimately defines the experience as ‘authentic.’ In Camille’s view the experience is authentic because it was capable of espousing the feeling of the medieval ages- a time of hybridity- that is inculcated within the re-presentation at the park. In this example mood- over complete factual accuracy- is given centrality.

The Senses and History

How do we historicize the senses? How do the senses and history relate to the Mitsitam Café? In historian Mark Smith's article *Producing Sense, Consuming Sense, Making Sense: Perils and Prospects for Sensory History*, he states, "In a rush to see, hear, smell, touch and taste the past, some practitioners have hop-scotched careful engagement with the conceptual and empirical insights of related work. The result is often an under-theorized field of inquiry, more empirically fleshed out, than intellectually considered."⁹⁸ For Smith the crux of the problem is the "failure to distinguish between sensory production (something that can, at least theoretically, be replicated in the present) and sensory consumption (something that is hostage to the context in which it is produced)."⁹⁹ Aside from the difficult hurdle of viewing the senses through appropriate historical and cultural contexts (as the senses would have been experienced and interpreted), there is a further difficulty when understanding and writing about the senses through written documents. We may, for example, listen to early jazz recording using our own senses as aids in deepening our understanding. However, in addition to the pitfalls of applying a contemporary sensorium to a past sensory experience one also has to address how writing is unable to truly replicate the embodiment of the particular sense itself (in this case, sound). It would seem that to historicize the senses would be to disembody them and writing is subsequently a step further away. However, Smith replies that one is unable to experience a sense from the past, through writing or otherwise, but that writing is able to allow the reader to understand what the senses were *like* in the past. In his words, "Through careful and considered engagement with printed evidence, we can grasp what particular sensory

⁹⁸ Mark Smith, "Producing Sense, Consuming Sense, Making Sense: Perils and Prospects for Sensory History," in *Journal of Social History* 40 issue 4 (Summer 2007): 848.

⁹⁹ Smith, 848.

events or stimuli meant to particular individuals and groups in particular contexts.”¹⁰⁰ Such reformulations would debunk the notion that vision and to a lesser extent the oral and aural senses were the only criteria upon which history was constructed and interpreted; instead, the incorporation of all the senses, including the proximate ones, that could give a greater and deeper understanding of history. At times, too, examining history through other senses instead of ‘higher’ senses may provide cues that at first blush seem irrational or chaotic. In other words, the privileging system itself, and not just what is being privileged, is often flawed.

How are history and the senses evoked at the Mitsitam Cafe? We have seen that the senses have been incorporated into the Café when we conceptualize that cooking is as much a skill as it is a product. We have also seen that the Native foods may be understood as ‘authentic,’ if one thinks about cuisine and its authenticity as an experience based on exchange. But can history as experienced through our embodied senses come alive? And are there not dangers, as Smith points out, when one views the senses in history through the senses of today? At the Mitsitam, do historical means serve contemporary ends?

In the Spring 2008 edition of the National Museum of the American Indian Magazine is a quarter-page advertisement for the Café. The advert shows fire-roasted salmon above a healthy flame and cindered wood slowly cooking, and is placed next to a detail of Native thrush and the Museum’s logo. Underneath, it says, “Mitsitam Native Foods Café: brings history to your plate.”¹⁰¹ Does the Mitsitam really live up to its claim? The Café and its menu promote the awareness that Native foods are inherent in many aspects of American cuisine. This is explained in *Foods of the Americas*, mentioned earlier, and also in Donna Gabaccia’s article *Colonial Creoles*:

¹⁰⁰ Smith, 849.

¹⁰¹ *National Museum of the American Indian Magazine*, Spring 2008, 32.

The Formation of Tastes in Early America. She notes that while previously European colonizers had culturally distinct cuisines, they became enmeshed with Native foodways upon arrival to the New World. Gabbacia states, “As eaters deeply familiar with the natural environment, Native Americans enjoyed tremendous advantages in the culinary exchanges of the colonial period: centuries of adaptation to a variety of natural environments in North America had already shaped their foodways.

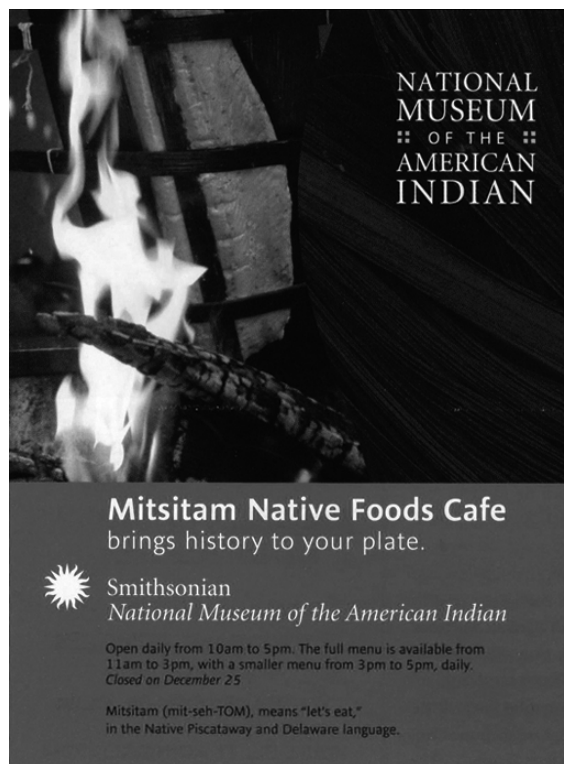


Figure 28: Advertisement for the Mitsitam Cafe. From *National Museum of the American Indian Magazine*, (Washington DC: NMAI, Spring 2008), 32.

If any group involved in the Columbian exchanges might have held firm to tradition, it was Native Americans, with their vast knowledge of their own land and climate.”¹⁰²

¹⁰² Donna Gabaccia, “Colonial Creoles: The Formation of Tastes in Early America,” in *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, ed. Carolyn Korsmeyer (Oxford: Berg, 2005): 79.

Simultaneous though, French, American, Spanish and African foods and preparation techniques also entered the scene, both adapting it and adapting to it. In the colonial era, Gabbacia adds, “with the possible exception of the ubiquitous popularity of corn and beans in all regions and among all groups, the only American eating habits of the colonial era were regional ones. At the same time, no group’s foodways survived the era completely unchanged. ...The only way to become an American, at least as an eater, was to eat creole- the multi-ethnic cuisine of a particular region.”¹⁰³ This is not to imply that cultural, economic or social differences were eliminated. Instead, as Gabbacia reflects, “at least in the world of eating and food, region more than ethnicity defined American identities at the end of the colonial era, and pleasure more than pain marked the interactions between the participants in the colonial food exchanges.”¹⁰⁴

The notion that American cuisine was a historically regional one is well maintained in the menu and architectural program of the Café. However, the Café and *Food of the Americas* seems more interested in establishing the foundation of American cuisine as Native, than they are in establishing a sense of historical continuity- more so in the Café than in the book. In addition, there is a divide between sensory engagement and education at the Mitsitam, reifying an artificial construct as mutually exclusive. I noticed that while I was able to see food preparation techniques and hear the attendant sounds I was unable to smell anything in the Café. In fact, this was intentional. The Mitsitam has a special hood system which allows staff to burn live fuels. The exhaust, instead of being sent through sidewalk grates as with other Mall buildings, is blown up five stories through the top of the building.¹⁰⁵ Smoke is an understandable circumstantial issue; however, other

¹⁰³ Gabaccia, 84.

¹⁰⁴ Gabaccia, 85.

¹⁰⁵ “Mitsitam Native Foods Café at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.,” Allbusiness.com

interventions with scent could have been included to compensate for the absence. It appears that the Café is less interested with the olfactory sense than with visual or gustatory ones. In addition, sound is another missed opportunity at the Café. A great effort is made at the Mitsitam to create a Native-inspired experience, incorporating design research on Native color palettes and materials, and the large panel windows in the dining area of the Café allow generous views of the waterscape directly outside. Yet while one is able to see cascading waters meant to evoke the salmon-spawning rivers of the Native Northwest, one is not able to hear them. As I sat down with my double order, fire-roasted, cedar-planked salmon, I noticed a small plastic placard at my table describing Native beliefs and the relationship to salmon in a fun factoid. If I had the opportunity to look outside while eating and was able to faintly hear the sound of water rushing, my ‘authentic’ experience would have been enhanced.



Figure 29: Dining area of the Mitsitam Cafe overlooking the riverine environment outside. Photo by Author.

Even if the sound of water rushing was an artificial one, it would have aided my personal quest to engage my senses on a synesthetic level. The authentic is, after all, as much premised on what something *is like* as what something *is*.

A Politics of the Senses

A deeper sense of history, too, is missing from the Mitsitam Café. Perhaps, this is expected as the Café's mission is nominally interested in education and primarily focused on food consumption. But I also wonder if other exhibition-related opportunities could have been incorporated into the Café experience. I could imagine a number of exhibitions that deal directly with Native foodways in a scholarly context and subsequently be experienced and authenticated afterward in the Mitsitam Café. Or I could envision curated exhibitions that actively incorporate a sensory modality, such as smell, that is then later incorporated into the Café. This might be a way to transgress spatial distance conceptually. With the advanced and aggressive frontier of sensory engagement and consumer marketing, perhaps it is time for museums to transcend their visual-centricism in order to create more holistic educational environments. This is especially the case with the NMAI since its mission is, "dedicated to the preservation, study, and exhibition of the life, languages, literature, history, and arts of Native Americans... [and] to protect and foster their cultures by reaffirming traditions and beliefs."¹⁰⁶ While other institutions may have difficulty bridging a gap between their mission and the role of their museum restaurant this is not the case at the NMAI. Thinking about the relationship between food and landscape could also be incorporated into curatorial decisions. On the south side of

¹⁰⁶ NMAI, "About the National Museum of the American Indian," NMAI <http://www.nmai.si.edu/subpage.cfm?subpage=about>.

the Mall Museum is a ‘cropland’ area with several varieties of Native corn along with beans, squash and tobacco. Perhaps there is also a way for visitors to actively engage the senses through this medium- instead of passively gazing at cascading waterfalls while munching lunch.

Moreover, the senses need to also be thought of not as neutral modalities of perception, but mediated ones. If we accept and move beyond the notion that Native foodways were foundational to the development of American cuisine, then how have Native Americans negotiated their foodways and continue to do so, politically? How have Native foodstuffs developed when Native people were placed on reservations, often at a remove from their familiar geographies of food cultivation? Where are other culinary lacunae?



Figure 30: The *cropland* area during spring. Photo by Author.

In Andrew Warnes’ book *Savage Barbecue: Race, Culture, and the Invention of America’s First Food*, he addresses the racist connotations of this particular food form and how it has been elided in a larger discourse of food and politics. He states,

“from the era of conquest onward, barbecue arose less from native cooking practices than from a European gaze that wanted to associate those practices with preexisting ideas of savagery and innocence. I argue that barbacoa or barbicu or barbikew or barbeque, however it has been spelled, not only referred to the smoked foods of American Indians, but also enacted the Europeans’ deep desire to see those foods as barbarous- as a result of a primitive kind of cookery, savage and base, akin to that which their own distant ancestors long ago performed.”¹⁰⁷

To introduce culinary influence is significant, but how long will it be for the NMAI to address barbeque? How were Native foods anglicized (i.e. decontextualized of their Native roots) and reconstituted in the national consciousness following American independence? In what other ways were Native foods politicized? And why is NMAI reticent to tell these stories? As Fabio Parasecoli notes in *Bite Me: Food in Popular Culture*, “emphasis on food as a social and cultural practice often constitutes a very effective antidote to the damage suffered by traditional identities, or, better, to the painful disclosure of the fundamentally cultural and historical character of any identity. Various political instances often carefully conceal the constructed nature of these elements, employing food-related issues as weapons to implement their attempt at cultural hegemony in a given society.”¹⁰⁸ In an effort to validate their cuisine as healthy, regional, slow, and organic and a precursor and influencer of our shared American identity, the NMAI has flattened a foodscape that is more nuanced and problematic- partly for reasons of self-preservation. Yet how it navigates this terrain is a missed –and critical- opportunity that could further the discourse on food and

¹⁰⁷ Andrew Warnes, “Introduction,” in *Savage Barbeque: Race, Culture, and the Invention of America’s First Food*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008): 3-4.

¹⁰⁸ Fabio Parasecoli, “Tourism and Taste: Exploring Identities,” in *Bite Me: Food in Popular Culture* (Oxford: Berg, 2008): 143.

politics as it relates to the NMAI's mission. The Museum conveniently forgets when it may profit to remember.

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CHAPTER 3
LANDSCAPE AND THE SENSES

Introduction

“The measure of the Mall Museum will be the success with which it communicates, with Native voice, Indian stories, values and culture to millions of individual visitors through a multisensory experience that reaches people, not only through visual media, but through smells, sounds, touch, and for some, taste as well.”¹⁰⁹

Outside the National Museum of the American Indian is a small circle that creates the sound of nature. Water cascades from the northwest corner of the museum before it meanders and skirts the north perimeter of the building finally draining into a circular filter. This sound is one of the first one hears before entering the museum, unassuming as it is. In its own way though it introduces another sensory modality to the museal experience, one premised on sound as much as sight, and prefigures the interior museum experience with a treatment of its own.



Figure 31: Small water feature at the entrance to the museum. Photo by Author.

¹⁰⁹ Smithsonian Institution, Office of Design and Construction, *The Way of the People*, volume 1, page 12.

The landscape, not insignificantly, sets the stage for the incorporation of other sensory modalities within the institution itself. The museum grounds, moreover, are a mediated one. How the Mall Museum has placed significant emphasis on its landscape design and the role of nature correlates to how Native Americans self-imagine. It also, however, highlights the broader national public imagination of Native America as well. The relationship between nature and Native Americans has been alloyed over the last five hundred years and historically has had as much to do with European self-criticism as with understanding the complex relationship Native Americans had with the land, and continue to do so. The relationship between the built and natural environment, in addition, is promulgated at the NMAI but ultimately fails to deliver, especially when compared to another indigenous museal space, Head-Smashed-In Interpretative Centre in Alberta, Canada, which engages the natural environment more sensitively. The landscape, like the Café and architecture, is a narrative agent in the continual reconstruction of American identity. However, in the scripting of the land as a Native place, incohesion remains and splinters a unification that NMAI aspires to achieve on the National Lawn.

Landscape

The NMAI landscape is much different from the larger surroundings of the National Mall. To better understand this Native-inspired landscape in 2008 the Smithsonian Institution published *The Land Has Memory: Indigenous Knowledge, Native Landscapes, and the National Museum of the American Indian*.¹¹⁰ The edited volume highlights the planning and construction of the museum's grounds that occurred in conjunction with the building through the writings of a variety of Native Americans who were involved in the project. The essays would be as current NMAI

¹¹⁰ Co-published with the University of North Carolina.

director Kevin Gover (Pawnee/ Comanche) notes, “an atlas to the hearts and minds of a number of contemporary Native people as they construct and deconstruct ideas about their personal relationships to the physical world and to the lands that sustained their ancestors for generations before them.”¹¹¹ These relationships, too, would be premised as being fundamentally different from the Beaux-Arts inspired formal landscape of the National Mall. The Mall Museum would reflect a natural environment- before European Contact- of the Washington DC region, divided into four areas: wetlands, croplands, hardwood forest and meadow.

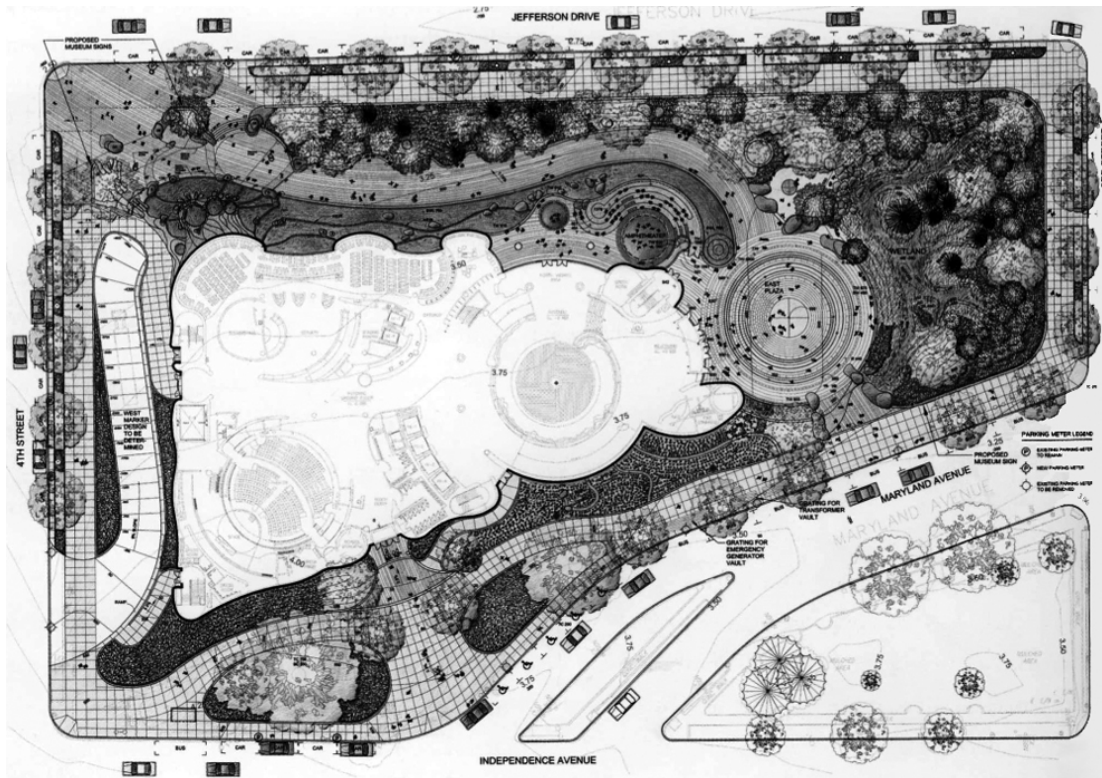


Figure 32: Site plan of the museum’s landscape design. From *Spirit of a Native Place: Building of the National Museum of the American Indian*, pp. 70.

¹¹¹ Duane Blue Spruce [et.al] eds., *The Land Has Memory: Indigenous Knowledge, Native Landscape, and the National Museum of the American Indian*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), Forward, xv.

Moreover, it would also include ‘grandfather rocks’ as cardinal orientation markers; these large boulders, often called ‘anchors’ of the museum site, were chosen for their cultural relevance, geographic diversity and variety.¹¹² In addition to these markers, the museum grounds are comprised of 27,000 trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants and 40 large boulders on the four-acre site.

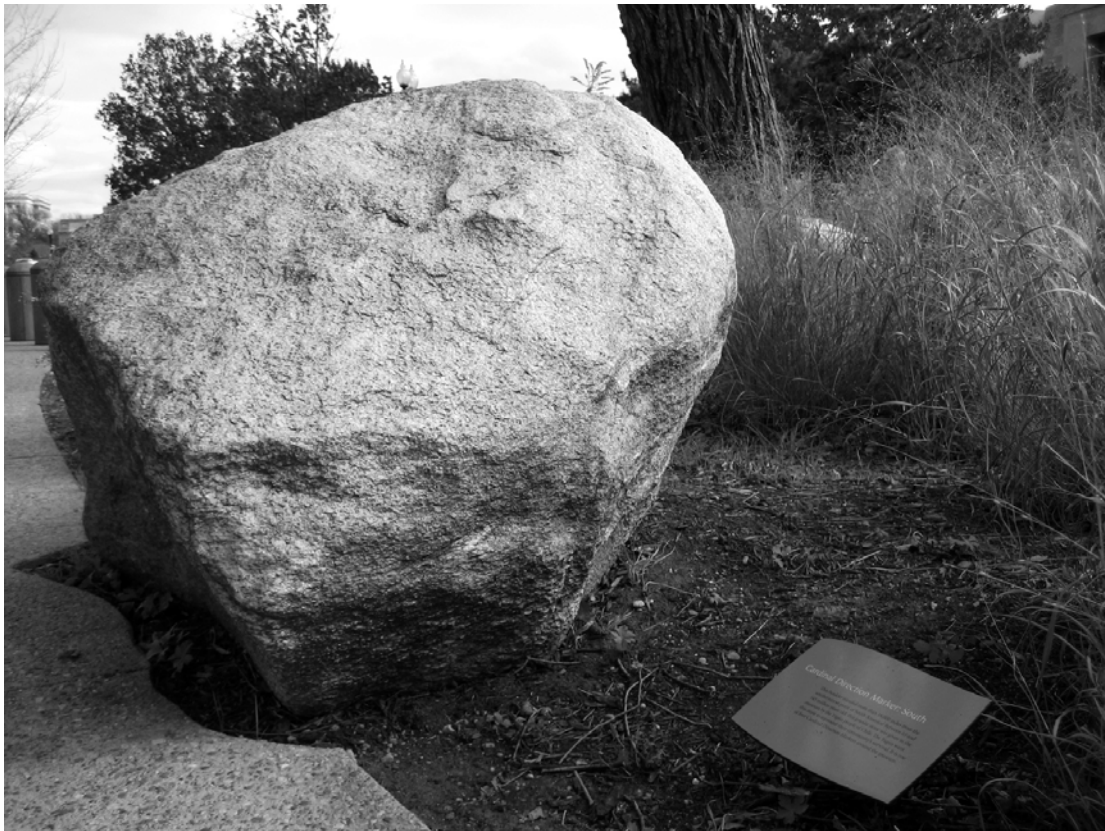


Figure 33: The southern Cardinal Directional Marker. Photo by Author.

The landscape, furthermore, would offer a sensory experience for visitors to the museum.

“Entering the museum grounds, visitors immediately encounter the indigenous plants and voices that existed here 400 years ago. The sounds of the city soon fade,

¹¹² The northern marker is from the Northwest Territories, Canada and is about 4 billion years old; the eastern marker is from the Monocacy Valley in Maryland and is 544 million years old; the southern marker is from Isla Naravino, Tierra del Fuego, Chile and is 65-145 million years old; and the western marker is from Hawai’i’s Volcanoes National Park, Hawai’i and is 300-400 years old respectively.

replaced by the cacophony of nature: water crashing onto boulders and flowing along the forest's edge; ducks and birds nesting among the wetlands reeds; and the rustling of tall grasses in the meadow."¹¹³

An outdoor theater, where performances and ceremonies may occur, is further enhanced by the curvilinear walkways made of American Mist granite that invite interaction through haptic and kinesthetic experiences; the former grounding one to a particular geo-spatial position, the latter inculcated through bodily movement through space.

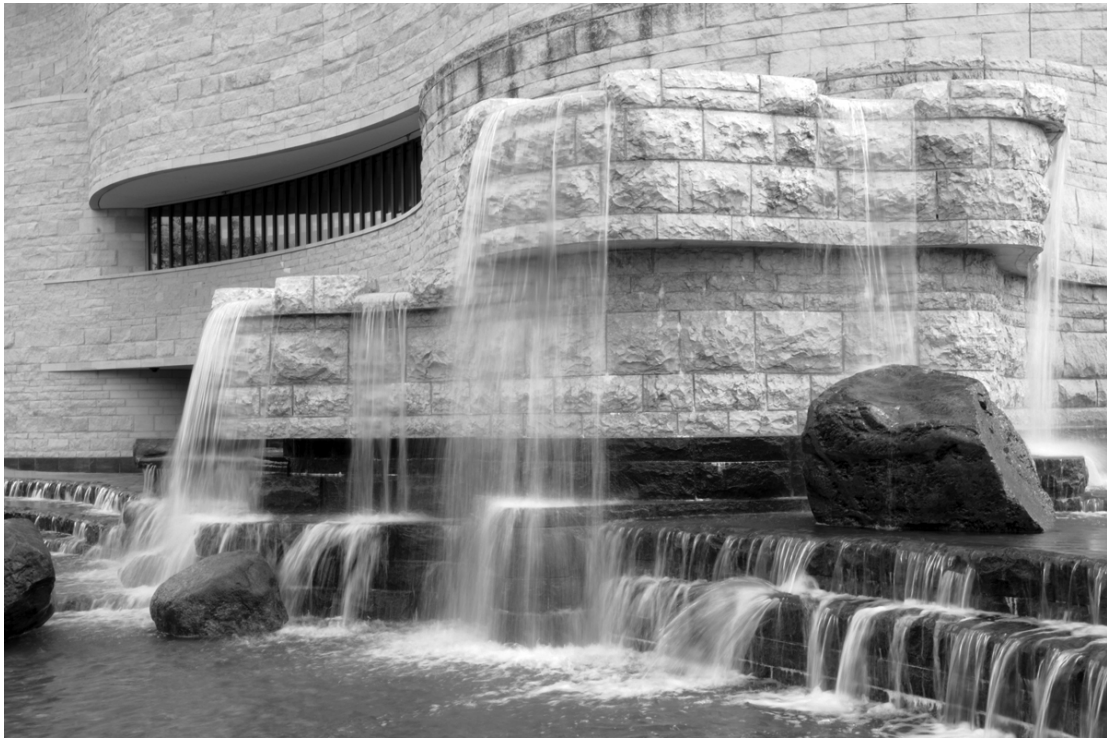


Figure 34: Waterfall on the northwest corner of the museum building. Photo by Author.

Seasons, too, would influence the design and visitor experience. Eschewing not only the formality of the National Mall but also its tendency to use annular plants and

¹¹³ Blue Spruce, 82.

cultivars, the museum landscape would be cognizant of seasonal change through its horticulture. “The site on which the National Museum of the American Indian is built was designed to reflect a return to the natural world, offering a respite from the otherwise groomed and sculpted National Mall” wrote the landscape architect Marsha Lea.¹¹⁴ Colors, textures and sounds would reflect the shift in the cycles of nature and be representative at various times of the year,

“Spring celebrates the rebirth and renewal with the profusion of ephemerals, or wildflowers, in the upland forest...By midsummer, water lilies will open in the light of late morning and close as the sun travels across the sky...Come autumn, the sumac turns bright red-orange, and the little bluestem turns golden in color... the cold season provides the museum setting with an opportunity to rest and replenish itself.”¹¹⁵

Seasonal change manifests itself in visual, auditory, haptic and atmospheric variance that primes the visitor’s sensorium for a pre-engagement with the museal space through this landscaped site.



Figure 35: Water concourse that lines the perimeter of the north side of the museum. Photo by Author.

¹¹⁴ Blue Spruce, 124.

¹¹⁵ Blue Spruce, 124-39.

The sensorium, in fact, is more engaged outside the building than within it. Examples abound. Upon entering the building, the large rotunda has a small prism window on its southern wall created to remind the visitor of the location and circulation of the sun.

“From ancient times, indigenous people have recognized connection between the celestial world and the cycles of the earth, erecting structures that refer to seasonal solstices and equinoxes and using the moon as a guide for planting and for performing rituals. The sophisticated knowledge of the heavens and how things happen in the universe was something we wanted to make evident in the design of the museum and its landscape”

writes JohnPaul Jones, NMAI project architect.¹¹⁶ Yet where the landscape succeeds in this regard, the architecture is muted. The small window rarely offers what it purports to chronicle. In fact, the windows at NMAI in addition to being non-operable are often screened, thereby denying any connection with the outside world.



Figure 36: Prism Window on the south side of the building and screened windows on the western side of the museum. Photos by Author.

¹¹⁶ Blue Spruce, 4.

Other sensory opportunities are more ambivalent. On the third and fourth floors of the museum are the exhibit halls *Windows on Collections* that showcase Native material culture behind glass display cabinets. Below are pull-out drawers that also contain a variety of objects and can be physically accessed by a curious visitor.



Figure 37: *Windows on Collections* display with pull-out drawers. Photo by Author.

This is a reference to the cabinet of curiosities, the historical predecessor of the museum and a playful nod to the past. More importantly though these drawers allows the visitor to be actively involved with the collection through bodily movement. Adjacent to the cabinets and drawers are digital interfaces that allow one to further engage with the collection on view. Yet the virtual simulation distracts one from the real thing. The museum, moreover, re-presents this collection through the same sensory modality (vision) that the museum attempts to upend by orienting its museum on Native epistemology. As noted sensory scholar Constance Classen has written that untouchability of collections, whereby objects are preserved for future view over

interaction with them in the present, may have as much to do with the maintaining curatorial expertise as it does with the demands of conservation.¹¹⁷

But where conservation and perhaps curatorial expertise are less central concerns, such as with the Mitsitam Café, the disconnect remains. As discussed earlier, the sensory role that the waterscape on the North side of the building relates to the Café is only visual. The glass window separates the Café from the landscape and splinters a potential mingling of the senses, or synaesthesia. While the correlation between food and the land that procures it is continually opined, in *Foods of the Americas* and in *The Land Has Memory* for example, the Café and cropland area are spatially opposite: the former being to the north of the building, the latter to the south. Not only are the senses fragmented, smell is disassociated from cooking and exterior sound and atmosphere from dining but also food production is segregated from its consumption. Yet, a liminal engagement with the sensorium seems to have its fullest potential with the Café, despite its resultant shortcomings. In other areas of the museum the senses are not so much engaged as assaulted. In the permanent exhibitions, for instance, sound is incorporated into the experience through a combination of oral narration and music. Yet, the Native ‘voices’ one hears while meandering through the permanent exhibitions result in a cacophony of competing sounds. Furthermore, new technologies in exhibition design such as LCD interactive displays encourage active visitor participation (point and touch) but overlook other potential sensory engagements that these tools may provide. The Café, offering its guests an opportunity to sample a variety of Native cuisines neglects the rich opportunity to experience the senses in concert- here as nowhere else in the

¹¹⁷ Elizabeth Edwards [et.al.] eds, *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture*, (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2006), 216.

museum.¹¹⁸ With a researched menu, expansive dining facility and a mission eager to acknowledge the canon of senses, the outcome is only partially realized. The soup, so to speak, has been watered down.

Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump

The creation of the landscaped grounds at the Mall Museum embodies not only corporeal experience, however, but the cultural construction of the natural environment. “As creating this space in the most culturally defined way we could, we are allowing the landscape, designed to *look* natural, to *become* natural once again” opined Kevin Gover.¹¹⁹ In this example, the design of the land on an empty site of the National Mall testifies to a project that is as much a mental endeavor as a physical one. Yet the mediation of nature, the way the environment is an agent of cultural maintenance and production, is also evident in the ways existing natural landscapes- not just fabricated ones- fill specific expectations and desires placed upon them. At Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump in Canada, for instance, one witnesses an alignment between Native museal space and the scripting of the cultural landscape. A physical testament to the prehistoric Native Plains people who practiced the art of driving buffalo over precipices at the eastern edge of the Porcupine Hills in western Alberta for over five millennia, the site was given protective status in 1969 and later declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1981.¹²⁰ Combining an intimate understanding of bison behavior and local topography, Head-Smashed-In is the best preserved and largest complex of the more than 100 prehistoric bison jumps known to exist in Canada and the United States.

¹¹⁸ An exception to this is the interactive media entryway in the permanent exhibit *Our Lives* is an engaging installation that integrates the sense of vision with that of kinesthesia.

¹¹⁹ Blue Spruce, xv.

¹²⁰ Head Smashed In Buffalo Jump Information Guide (Fort Macleod, Alberta: Head Smashed In), 7.



Figure 38: *A Buffalo Rift* by A.J. Miller. From *Places in Time: Exploring Native North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 54-55.

It is also well attended. To narrate the historical practice in 1985, construction began on a 9.8 million dollar subterranean interpretative centre located adjacent to the jump site. Carved into the southeast facing slope of the cliff, the 3,000 square meter building was sited in an area of least archeological impact, and be visually unobtrusive while also offering the best access to the cliff-top. Integrating the architecture and landscape was central to the concerns of UNESCO, and eventually led to a buried form concept. As one architectural critic noted, “Its self-effacing nature emphasizes the quietness and raw unspoiled beauty of the land, and respects the cultural and spiritual significance of a site made all the more meaningful by being clearly visible as far as 75 kilometers.¹²¹ While only 20 percent of the building is visible from the exterior- grooved sandstone colored concrete - it cascades over the course of seven floors from the cliff-top to bottom, where the Centre entrance is located. “To give the impression the building was created by erosion, its exterior closely resembles the surrounding rock outcrops in color and texture” notes the *HSIBJ information*

¹²¹ Barry Johns, “Head Smashed In Interpretive Centre,” *Canadian Architect* 33 (1988), 24.

Guide.¹²² The parking lot is also site planned in an effort to be less noticeable. Located south of the Centre entrance the parking lot is cut along existing natural contours which make the parking area long and narrow, almost invisible in form, like the architecture. This absence heightens the *Upper Trail* experience according to the same critic, “the upper level walk to the cliff edge all the more dramatic; it’s a challenging hike when the wind is howling, the vistas are spectacular, and from this vantage point the building is virtually invisible. The effect is a feeling of precariousness, for, aside from the continuous handrail to hold you at the edge, there’s no sense of protection.”¹²³



Figure 39: Head-Smashed-In Interpretive Centre. From *Canadian Architect* (Toronto: Canadian Architect, 1988), pp. 27.

Sensory Shortcomings

At both institutions, Head-Smashed-In and NMAI, nature is seminal to the consciousness of museal space. The role of nature in Native cosmologies, after all, whereby the human and natural world are aligned in a non-hierarchical manner that

¹²² Information Guide, 7. Interesting to note that two of eight pages of the info guide are devoted to the Interpretive Centre’s architecture.

¹²³ Barry Johns, 24.

contrasts a Judeo-Christian notion of man superior to nature, is evident in both museal interpretations. However, with HSI the natural environment is framed by a museum that privileges the landscape and indigenous agency through history while simultaneously diminishing its own architectural intervention within that space. Here, architecture does not obfuscate nature. The architectural program, for instance, mimics both the topography of the earth and the macabre choreography of the buffalo jump as one begins at the top level before descending through its seven floors of gallery space. The visitor experience itself, moreover, begins not with the exhibitions but rather atop the cliff, offering superb views and significant first impressions before one subsequently continues within the Interpretative Centre. With HSI the land is deliberately made legible for public consumption through an architectonic framing that self-deprecates to the larger natural environment; rather than encumbering nature the Interpretative Centre is its educational enhancement. HSI successfully integrates the built and natural environments in a way that acknowledges Native epistemologies and worldviews while also testifying to the potential of museums that engage the sensorium. Corporeality, museal space and landscape labor in concert with one another on the grassy windswept piedmont of Southern Alberta.



Figure 40: View of Head-Smashed-In from the Upper Trail. From *Head Smashed in Buffalo Jump* (Webshots Travel, 2009).

NMAI, in contrast, offers a view of nature that is designed to speak for and be representative of a far larger constituency of Native peoples and is why it is less successful, and perhaps less achievable. A Native understanding of the land is continually mentioned and promulgated throughout the NMAI landscape though textual makers. Yet, the dialogue between the built and natural environment-interestingly engaged with at HSI- is absent or ignored by the Mall Museum. Conceived to embody a multi-national population, like the museum itself, the landscape also fails to integrate a last impression of what these fragmented natural areas have on a sensorium when the narration of the landscape supersedes the experiencing of it. Continually instructed to view the NMAI landscape as a Native space, the impression is short lived. This may have been better served by an acknowledgement that a discursive space between the building and its surrounding

natural landscape is as promising an angle as their separate individual treatment. With Head-Smashed-In the museal architectonics outlines an understanding of nature through Native consciousness, enhances visitor understanding but without a didactic edge; one is able to infer through a sensorium augmented by education how a Native worldview may be constituted. At NMAI, however, personal reflection and the effort required for its achievement is already complete. The NMAI landscape is a Native place less through observation and intuition, potentially inculcated by the museum, rather relying on received wisdoms with tenuous results.

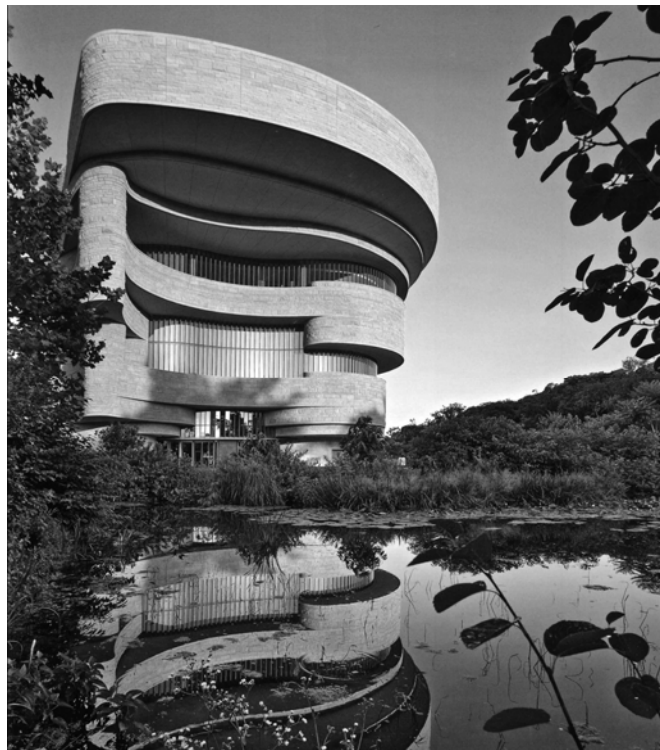


Figure 41: The Mall Museum and wetlands landscape. From *A Guide to Smithsonian Architecture* Washington DC: Smithsonian Books, 2009), cover.

And, perhaps, the anxiety of outside representation is to be expected. One remembers that with European Contact Native Americans were organized and

classified and over time the two strongest images that resulted were the ‘noble’ and ‘ignoble’ savage. The ennobling sentiment that characterized the former was a European nostalgia for an earlier, simpler time. This became the virtuous native, free from the corrupting agency of Old World influence.¹²⁴ The land, too, in addition to its inhabitants, would also be narrated by Europeans and later Anglo-Americans. This discourse fashioned Native America through its own perspective. As Hispanist scholar Richard Kagan notes,

*“Rather than ‘see’ America, Europe ‘invented’ it, forcing the continent through a mental and visual screen that created an America that Europeans wanted to see: a continent fashioned in their own image yet a land, given its geographical remove and early designation as the “Indies,” that was fantastical, marvelous, paradisiacal, and exotic.”*¹²⁵

The agenda that aspires to inscribe the southwest corner of the National Mall, in the shadow of the National Capitol, as a indigenous place remains haunted by a Euro-American discourse that Native agency is ultimately unable to dispel. In an attempt to address sub-national unification on the national stage the institution undermines the nuances in its own self-narration that it rightly deserves. It never achieves the sum of its parts. The museum ambitiously attempts to unify a plurality of architectures into a single building with unsuccessful results. The senses, also implicated, serve larger ideological agendas in Native America’s own self-imagining with mixed results. The Mitsitam Café engages and spatializes the palate at the same time that it aligns Native cuisine as the precursor to and embodiment of American culinary identity. Yet, while it attempts to be aligned with slow, regional, healthy and organic cuisine- as much a moral judgment as a historical legacy- it elides particular culinary narratives outside that standard.

¹²⁴ Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*, (Norton: New York, 1999).

¹²⁵ Richard Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493-1793* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 73.

The museum grounds, furthermore, feebly negotiate the senses. The landscape preempts the sensorium for an engagement within the museum yet unfulfills its potential to address the liminal space between the built and natural environments. More importantly, though, an indigenous worldview of the natural environment is less evinced through corporeality than promulgated by an authorial voice- albeit indigenous- whereby self-discovery and intuition is replaced by a more pedestrian, and perhaps more cautious, understanding of Native American identity. At the heart of the nation's capital is a museum that aspires to represent the American Indian on its own terms, through its own voices. This aspiration, however, also conceals a voice of its own unmaking. That voice narrates the museum as distant in time and space based on a Euro-American discourse that positioned America as being an innocent, idyllic, mythical and earthly paradise. The site intended to represent the Native America of today and publicly open for the past five years also carries the nation's self-imagining from the last five hundred- one that portrays and perpetuates America as the Garden of Eden.

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