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Acts of Visual Sovereignty: Photographic Representations of Cultural Objects

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Like anthropology's historical practice of photographing Native peoples, making images of cultural objects is rooted in the desire to capture and classify something before it vanishes. These photographic practices can be beneficial, as material cultural objects will eventually require restoration or, as the lifespan of the production materials wears away, may even disappear completely. Furthermore, unfortunately, a tribe may no longer hold cultural and sacred objects in cases where they have been auctioned to the highest bidders. In some circumstances, however, cultural objects are not being maintained by the tribe, but are being cared for by individual families or held in storage. In these cases, tribes have an opportunity to use photographs of the objects as works of art themselves that, in sharing and preserving the objects, sustain and extend community knowledge about them.[1]

Although social scientists examine the importance of material culture and collect, display, and trade objects readily, the representation of cultural objects does not receive much attention in the research literature. This article focuses on the representation of Native cultural objects as its own contemporary artistic practice, specifically via still photography. We posit that, as a lens-based artistic practice that connects

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philosophical and emotional dimensions of representational images of cultural objects, while also facilitating continued knowledge preservation and knowledge production within indigenous communities, this practice can complement the needs of museums that archive and preserve pieces of historical and contemporary material culture.

In her 2001 book *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology, and Museums*, Elizabeth Edwards points out that photographs of cultural objects have drawn little interest or analysis compared with the politics and poetics of museum practice or ethnography more generally, particularly at the stage of the social biography of these objects when they are identified as "museum specimens," including those held in private collections.[2] Like Edwards, we have concerns about how these objects are recorded for posterity and dissemination and how those images function as a performative, representational craft. It is common for museums and other collectors to be concerned with the date an object was made, its materials, and the cultural group attributed to a piece. However, as Amy Lonetree (Ho-Chunk) points out, collaboration with tribal community members reveals "this information does not begin to convey the true significance of the objects. . . . the objects are important because they belong to living Native peoples who maintain deep and ongoing connections to the pieces . . . in the presence of objects from the past, we are privileged to stand as witnesses to living entities that remain intimately and inextricably tied to their descendant communities." [3]

In "Blood Memory and the Arts: Indigenous Genealogies and Imagined Truths," Nancy Marie Mithlo examines how memory, as embodied in two individuals, could help us understand their experiences as artists—in essence, how their personal indigeneity and ancestral memories might engage in the reciprocities among audience, subject, and maker.[4] Following Mithlo, we explore how, as art forms themselves, representations of cultural objects might also more effectively engage a situated dialogue between object, audience, and representational artistic practice—by presenting varied and interconnected ways of understanding the history, significance, and/or uses of any one particular object in a way that not only excites people and ensures the object's long-term survival, but also honors its connection to an ancient people that still live today. This article, then, will delve into the ways Native peoples share knowledge through multiple media, including photography, and how photographs can be a form of "visual sovereignty" by utilizing the framework of new museology. We discuss the empowerment of visual sovereignty in tribal colleges and also through the example of the photographic work of Patrice Hall-Walters.

Knowledge Construction and Continuation through Multiple Literacies

Although not recognized as such by colonial Europe, literary practices embedded in the material culture of Native peoples have existed in North America since time immemorial. Throughout colonial history, Native peoples struggled to be able to represent themselves in all forms of text, and the struggle continues contemporarily. Narratives in the forms of story, song, painting, weaving, and dance, among others, contain fluid components within a framework that provides for the archiving and

passing of knowledge between generations. Additionally, objects created for everyday and ceremonial use incorporate visual markers to relay information. The narratives intertwine with the objects: both the knowledge of creating and the adornment of cultural objects serve as focus points for stories intended to continue and generate cultural knowledge. Today, Native peoples continue to assert their oral and visual histories by incorporating modern technologies such as photography, film, and video in addition to orthographic literacy into their practices. When we understand that these practices—whether in visual, aural, orthographic, or aromatic form, or in combinations of forms—are texts read and understood with a competent level of literacy, we can begin to realize the great richness of Native cultural history.[5]

These forms, and the act of reclaiming them, are integral to the Native project of decolonization. Natives engage in survivance by acting as present Native peoples, renewing lifeways, resisting the destruction of knowledges, and continuing their cultures.[6] Communities carve space to create representations and also to fight against appropriated and romanticized imagery that misrepresents Native communities. This decolonizing project of representation, a project of "artist, writers, poets, filmmakers and others . . . attempt[ing] to express and Indigenous spirit, experience, or world view"—the act of bringing the typically marginalized or silenced voices to the forefront of political and social dialogue—is essential to the continued practice of sovereignty by Native nations.[7]

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Maori) writes about such reframing projects, both in research and in action, whereby Native peoples should change the way problems in communities are understood and addressed. We add that this can also include the practice of reinterpreting visual representations produced by outsiders, allowing for Native artists to become decision-makers about new visual works. Seminole/Diné artist and scholar Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie frames this practice as *visual sovereignty*, defined as "a particular type of consciousness rooted in confidence which is exhibited as a strength in cultural and visual presence."[8] Tsinhnahjinnie also explains, "visual sovereignty does not ask permission to exist, but . . . require[s] responsibility to continue"; artists participating in visual sovereignty "must not limit oneself to specific areas, as responsibility should always include innovative and peripheral vision . . . including *different approaches*."[9] Thus, acts of visual sovereignty can be understood as Native communities or individuals creating space for both self-definition and determination via visual modes (photography and film, for example).

Cultural Object Photography as Contemporary Artistic Practice

Patrice Hall-Walters, the artist and exemplar who inspired this paper, is a self-taught photographer who has been creating unique representations of Plateau objects for more than ten years. Although she started in the business of portrait photography more than thirty years ago, the beautiful basketry, beadwork, and weavings created by her friends and family often draw Hall-Walters to experiment with still-life photography. She finds the process of making representations of these objects to be a way of staying personally connected to her family and community history. As an enrolled

member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, she is in a unique position to understand that many of these historic works are packed away where no one can see and appreciate them and are slowly deteriorating, even when stored under the most careful conditions of a museum's collections vault. In developing her unique vision of Columbia Plateau arts, Hall-Walters's still-life images allow one to view their richness through an indigenous photographic lens. Each of the objects Hall-Walters photographs has its own social biography situated in time and place. Representing them through photographic methods carries with it some responsibility to make images that preserve the integrity of the story the objects carry.

The photographic practice of Hall-Walters affirms visual sovereignty because she reinterprets the way institutions typically represent objects in photographs for the purposes of archiving, insuring, and digital display. Hall-Walters's work represents the process by which she brings objects of her tribe's material culture out of storage and into the mainstream by creating new works of art. She approaches the process of photographing Native objects as an art form, and as such, works to bring forth the beauty of the objects in a form that can be reproduced and shared among wider audiences than its original, physical form. As photographic representations, her efforts not only develop a new path in the social biography of each object that is easily accessible, but may also play an important role in archiving.

Hall-Walters's images are, as Dean Reader puts it, an example of "ways in which Indian artists have taken semiotically and ideologically loaded texts and re-signed them, re-coded them so instead of signifying American culture, they signify American Indian culture. In both cases, native artists take the accouterments of dominance and recast them as texts of indigenous semiotics."[10] For example, James Clifford discusses Ruth Kirk's *Tradition and Change on the Northwest Coast: The Makah, Nuu-chah-nulth, Southern Kwakiutl, and Nuxalk*, in which elder Alice Paul reads popular images taken by Edward Curtis, and points out that although in many of his photographs Curtis depicts Native craftsperson Virginia Tom (Alice's mother) wearing exquisite bark clothing, the text never identifies Virginia Tom by name as he does some of his other human subjects.[11]

In representing material cultural objects, the contexts in play are multiple. Not only are the objects themselves created during a particular point in history in response to a set of social circumstances, but in addition, whether the objects are cultural patrimony "purchased" from a tribal member, or produced for sale because the maker realized that there was a value placed on a typically mundane object, museums and other agencies create photographic representations of the objects under another set of ideological practices. Realizing that images are not necessarily grounded in the context of the subject, but rather that of the photographer, photographers Barry Goldstein and Jon Wagner, among others, acknowledge the importance of contextual ground in regard to research as well.[12] Hall-Walters responds to these historic depictions by approaching the process with a Native perspective and the intention to create new and respectful artistic renditions, leaving prescribed methods of recording collections to institutions.

Making Images

This paper also draws from Henrietta Lidchi and Tsinhnahjinnie's understanding of *visual currencies* in the works of John Tagg, Andrzej Sekula, and Arjun Appadurai, which identify material artifacts of a culture to be both productive of, and influenced by, history and social circumstance.[13] As a distinct art form themselves, photographic representations of cultural objects can also be explored in this way, particularly as an artistic and educational medium. Social scientists such as Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, Jon H. Rieger, Karl G. Heider, and Marcus Banks write about the various elements that together comprise an image. Most of these elements are decided by the image-maker, rather than the subject.[14] When preparing to create a visual record of an object, in addition to choosing the frame of view and angle, image-makers first decide whether to record moving, still, color, or black-and-white images, among other choices, and later whether to crop out certain elements. Some argue that to ensure consistent sampling for research, images should be recorded from a fixed location with fixed parameters, such as those images museums typically create for object identification systems, while others argue that image-makers need to move through the scene that is being recorded, capturing what is happening from varied locations and points of view.

These arguments focus on situations in which the researcher is studying people interacting with one another and the photographer (or videographer) wishes simply to record the scene and interact with it as little as possible, rather than those specific situations in which an image-maker is posing people. None of these academic conversations allows for asserting oneself as photographic subject, but instead assume the power lies entirely with the image-maker. Analyzing an example of ethnographic photographs taken to show how the people depicted lived, Elizabeth Edwards describes early-American government photographer John Karl Hillers' posed narrative images as "redolent with the tensions between scientific and aesthetic discourses" because of the practice of precise posing.[15] Although Hall-Walters's images might also exemplify these tensions, she creates images that capture the objects' intricacies. To render these details is imperative in order to preserve the meanings of their inspirational contexts.

Jolene Rickard urges readers of historic images (especially Native readers) to move beyond the anthropological, geographic, and ethnocentric intent to create more empowering interpretations and to understand photographs as a constructed space.[16] For Rickard, to practice decolonization and assert sovereignty in reading images requires opening one's mind to "see the compression of multiple realities" of subject, photographer, and viewer.[17] Likewise, Lippard recognizes that of the three people involved in looking at a photograph—the viewer, the photographer, and the subject—both viewer and subject are objects of the photographer's inquiry.[18] Tsinhnahjinnie recalls how this process developed in herself: as her "analytical eye matured," she "became suspicious of the awkward, self-appointed 'expert' narrative."[19] These tensions similarly drive artists who practice visual sovereignty and can be observed in their work. Interestingly, these affirmations of sovereignty in photographic texts are in substantially less demand than other Native visual art media that are considered more traditional.[20]

In the literature, however, we could not identify any similar discussions about the recording of Native cultural objects such as basketry, beadwork, and weavings, although historically, social scientists in general note the importance of material culture and collect, display, and trade these items frequently. Seemingly no debate has taken place about the images used to record them for posterity and dissemination, or their function as a representational craft.[21] Nor has the conversation pushed forward to explore how new artistic practices might emerge from enacting visual sovereignty and new museology frameworks. In broaching this topic, we hope to spark conversation about the representation of Native objects through images.[22] As it is the right of Native nations for self-determination, practices in visual sovereignty contribute to reinforcement of sovereignty efforts of these communities. Responsibility of the preservation of cultural objects should not rely on those disconnected from these objects, but rather to the collective individuals who hold the most value and meaning to these cultural objects. Moreover, the preservation and display of these cultural objects should be through the lens of the creators.

New Museology

Museums are slowly warming to the idea of visual sovereignty and realizing that they have an opportunity to provide spaces for Native empowerment, in part brought on by the development of "new museology." In the early 1980s, a group of museum professionals dissatisfied with the established museum practice of the time organized the First International Workshop on Ecomuseums and the New Museology.[23] The result of the workshop was the formation of "an association of museum workers called the International Movement for New Museology (MINOM)," who developed and finessed the philosophy and ideals of a new paradigm of museology to include a range of interpretations.[24] Its proponents purposefully do not wish to establish strict rules or models to shape the paradigm, so the features of new museology can vary among practitioners.[25] Notably, some consider new museology to be an orientation that is both methodological and theoretical, one that asserts the "idea of the museum as an educational tool in the service of social development." [26] This entails shifting away from the traditional object-centered emphasis to a community-based, people-centered emphasis.[27]

In other words, exhibitions at traditional museums would often showcase only artifacts or other objects in vitrines devoid of the original context in which they were originally present.[28] In contrast, new museology-inspired museum exhibitions are ones that offer "the population an active role in shaping and participating in" that exhibit.[29] Instead of a curator choosing objects to display, the community (often the community whose cultural objects are being displayed) is integrally involved in choosing objects or other elements to display, how they will be displayed, and what information will be provided. A "new" museum is a place of empowering marginalized populations by showcasing and strengthening their identity as a community and instilling confidence in the population to move upward.[30] Ultimately, the early proponents' objectives for new museology were for "new" museums to be places that present a global view of reality, provide an avenue for the positive development of an individual and community, and maintain integral relationships with the local community. A "new" museum

"recognizes the importance of culture in the development of self-identity and its role in helping a community adjust to rapid change."[31]

Visual Sovereignty Empowerment in Tribal Spaces

Tribal museums controlled by each respective community are ideal places for visual sovereignty to manifest within indigenous communities via photographic representation. Efforts to create Native-owned and -operated museums are not new, but have occurred since the late 1800s, when families would often open museums that contained family heirlooms.[32] The contemporary movement in developing tribal museums began in the 1970s, when the Economic Development Administration provided federally recognized tribes with resources to develop reservation infrastructure that would provide jobs and promote economic development for tribal members. Because tribal museums were initially used to enhance tourism, the movement to construct new museology-inspired institutions in tribal communities advanced their efforts toward greater visual sovereignty. In 2003, the National Congress of American Indians reported that there were approximately 236 tribal museums in the United States.[33] Continuation of cultural knowledge and opportunities to produce photographic representations rely upon the ability to endorse and maintain tribal museums and cultural centers. Although the incentives and momentum for tribal museums are evident, tribal museums have often faced failure due to lack of financing and staff professional training.

Avenues that encourage the advancement of tribal museums include higher education certificates and tribal college and university programs, which place Native epistemologies at the heart of the curriculum and create opportunities for tribal members to be intimately involved in the process of preserving, documenting, and interpreting cultural objects. Although some of our tribal museums and tertiary schools are criticized as structurally replicating colonial ideologies, it is undeniable that there are practices that indigenize these institutions. For example, within both tribally controlled and mainstream museums, integrating programs that support the artistic practice of representing cultural objects would further counteract colonial ideologies. Many of the thirty-two fully accredited tribal colleges and universities collaborate with museums.[34] Some have taken the steps necessary to meet the growing needs of tribal museums and cultural centers to develop professional staff and help communities incorporate tribally appropriate methods of preserving their history.

In particular, Northwest Indian College (NWIC) created a museum studies program that strengthened cultural preservation for many of the northwest Native communities.[35] In the northwestern United States, at least thirteen tribal museums were operating, increasing the demand for proficient staff. Responding to community needs, NWIC created courses that specifically address the tribal museum in collaboration with Burke Museum and the University of Washington Museology Program, training and providing skilled tribal members to work in their museums and helping them to display their cultural objects and arts.[36]

Using a methodical approach, NWIC was intent on building a community-based, people-centered program. In essence, NWIC strove to give power to historically

marginalized communities by asking, instead of imposing, what could help the tribes in their cultural object preservation. So that tribal voices were imperative to the development of these courses, not the voices of NWIC or external entities, NWIC researched the communities' needs and how it might best support the surrounding tribes' cultural arts preservation by means of a survey. From these interactions, NWIC created courses that cover topics unique to tribal museums, including decision-making on the display of sacred objects and cataloguing museum collections using the tribe's language or English.[37]

In addition to providing a museum program, NWIC has been a place for artists to further their skills. Throughout the past decade they have held a "Weavers Teaching Weavers" conference hosted by various tribal nations in the northwest.[38] In addition to allowing weavers to share and pass down their knowledge, the conference also gives time and space for Native community members to restore, preserve, and display their art. Native peoples in the northwest are not only interested in displaying their historical cultural objects, but also in creating new art to preserve for future generations.

NWIC is not the only tribal college engaging in collaborations with tribal museums to preserve collections through the perspectives of the people. Among other tribal college and university collaborations with tribal museums occurring across Native nations within the United States, in 2013 Diné College reopened a museum with Navajo cultural objects that also gave young artists an opportunity to display their work as a part of the preservation and changing traditions of the Navajo Nation.[39] Now a venue that supports rotating displays developed and maintained by the Diné College museum studies program, both exhibiting Navajo concepts and values and interpreting them for patrons, this museum format is ideal. As an institution fully operated by the tribe, the museum acts as an exemplar to Native communities translating, exhibiting, and recounting their own cultures.[40]

Six students from Tohono O'odham College and the Tohono O'odham Nation's museum also recently collaborated in mounting a basket exhibit. In allowing students to curate for the museum, the tribe demonstrated a willingness to share its cultural objects and display them to the public. Additionally, the curatorial experiences of conducting the research and the process of creating the display pass down to students the traditional importance of basketry. These students were enabled to "brainstorm on a theme, select the baskets, plan placement of the art, create labels, position display risers, clean the vitrines (the glass cases), center the artwork on pedestals, and lower vitrines into place."[41] These visual sovereignty practices demonstrate how tribal nations continually take ownership of tribal representation and actively pursue preserving their history and cultures from their own perspective.

Hall-Walters's Indigenous Lens: A Visual Sovereignty Example

In 1998, Patrice Hall-Walters was already thinking about producing photographic images for people to see beadwork in an interesting, non-typical way, when the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation put out a call for artists to create an installation project for the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute Museum.

Hall-Walters rented a pinpoint fiber-optic light, borrowed a 4x5 camera, purchased some film, and borrowed some beadwork, and then, attempting to recreate what she saw in her mind's eye, spent an intense twenty-four hours photographing the works. As part of the studio business she shares with her spouse, Hall-Walters has a color darkroom and was able to process the film and make prints immediately. She reports that the process was instantly gratifying. Now one-inch butterfly wings from the borrowed beaded bag were enlarged to thirty inches, exposing the details of the individual glass beads (fig. 1). Today, a 400-square-foot collage of Hall-Walters's beadwork prints is permanently displayed near the museum entrance.

With the commission received from the museum installation, Hall-Walters and her husband purchased their own fiber-optic light unit and camera in hopes of continuing the work. Conversations with bead experts allowed Hall-Walters to learn about the objects she photographs, watching for the clues to the object's age and state of repair. She feels that "Glass is an interesting science, and I kind of find new glass beads, without the flaws and bubbles, less beautiful than the old beads . . . the colors, the reflections are more vibrant, I think, in the older beads."[42] Many of the beadworks photographed by Hall-Walters were between 100 and 150 years old. As they age, old beads begin to deteriorate, turning into dust from the inside out, or simply shatter, as

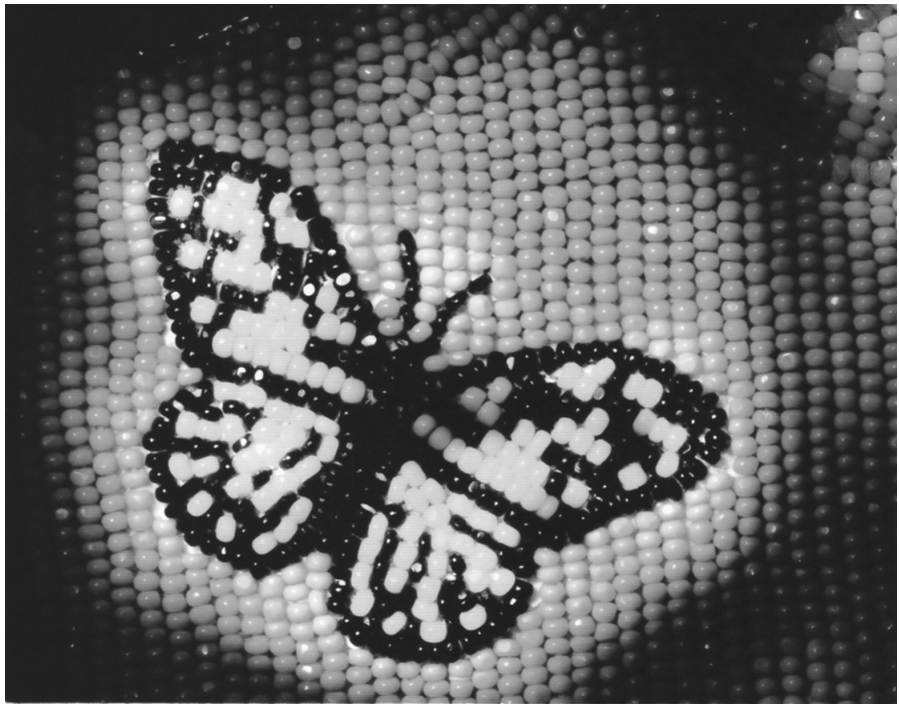

Figure 1: *Patrice Hall-Walters,* "Nature's Helper" *(1998). Photograph of beadwork detail on a small, white buckskin hip pouch (private collection). Actual detail size is approximately 2 x 3 inches. As Walters observed, "A beautiful piece depicting nature so intricately."*

evidenced by the "Wild Rose" image in figure 2. This rose is from a beaded belt-bag with obvious signs of age. Like all of her beadwork images, this photograph represents a very small detail within a larger piece, cropping the view between two and four inches in each direction. Because she photographed the artifacts in a dark room, only the elements "painted" with her fiber-optic light are exposed, allowing the viewer to focus on the position and colors of individual beads. The intensity of the fiber-optic light does emphasize the cool color tones as occurs with traditional museum representations, but the smaller, detail-specific frame of view creates an intimacy that museum representations lack. As an element of material culture, Hall-Walters's images work to preserve these precious pieces before they disappear entirely while creating new pieces of art for dissemination to a wider audience.

In a similar vein, in the early 2000s Hall-Walters began to photograph historic baskets as well. Many of Hall-Walters's grandmother's baskets had been sold long ago, and she hoped to create images to remember those remaining: four small baskets that years before her grandmother had given to her daughter, Hall-Walters's mother. At first, photographing the baskets was different than the beadworks project she completed for the museum. Hall-Walters wanted to decorate her home and share the photographs with family. At the same time, she wanted her images to be shared with

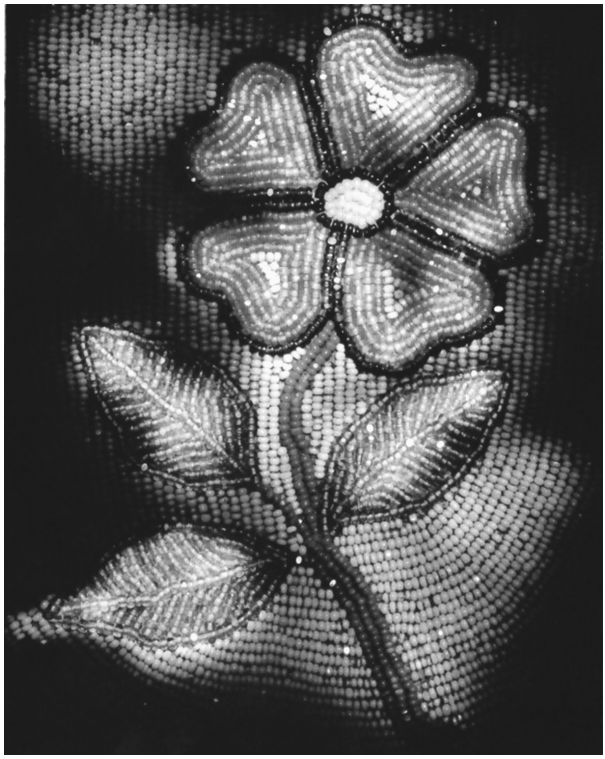

Figure 2: *Patrice Hall-Walters,* "Wild Rose" *(1998). Photograph of beadwork from a private coallection.*

others, within and without the tribe. In all the images that she creates, Hall-Walters hopes to "give these items the respect they deserve."[43] She writes

> If it's 200 years old, or 2 years old, the skill and artistry the maker put into it deserves the viewer's admiration whether the viewer is seeing it in person or in a photograph. Even the baskets that have patches and mends were so they couldn't be thrown out, they still had a purpose, so it was repaired and continued its life of usefulness.[44]

By sharing the images Hall-Walters hopes to educate people about her culture, as she herself had learned a great deal while in pursuit of her artistic goals. According to Hall-Walters, during the process of photographing baskets she drew on her cousin's expertise as the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute's expert. Although initially frustrated that she was not permitted to manipulate the baskets herself, during the tedious process of waiting as he handled the tribal museum's baskets with cotton gloves, placed them, and turned them for her, Hall-Walters quickly learned that as they worked he would readily share his valuable knowledge about the individual baskets' materials, estimated ages, markings, and purposes.

Additionally, in regard to her photographs of baskets from private collections, Hall-Walters feels she was able to return a service to the families for allowing her to make images of their treasured pieces:

> It was nice to be able to supply the owners with nice photographs of their pieces . . . they are very valuable and worth it to me to ensure they could identify them if they needed to for any reason. I loved seeing the reactions when they saw the photographs of their precious pieces. I made sure I photographed them right away so I didn't have them in my possession, some just a few hours . . . the responsibility was great.[45]

The photographic images reveal the care that was put into composing the representations of the baskets (see fig. 3). Hall-Walters' aesthetic differs from that of museum images of objects in their collections. Lit at an angle, the baskets are placed in front of a textured, buckskin-colored background. The brown tones, matching those of the baskets, lends warmth to the images unseen in museum representations, enhanced by directional lighting without the use of fill lights. Typically, the basket is centered, often juxtaposed with other baskets. In the few museum images that do portray several objects together, the baskets that are not the main subject of the photograph are photographed in sharp focus using full depth-of-field. In the example in figure 3, Hall-Walters fills the right half of the image with the main subject of the photograph and includes three other baskets in the blurred (soft focus) background. While similar to the museum photos, here the field of view is restricted by the play of light and shadow as well as the use of a macro-focus lens, enhancing the details of each particular weaving. Her next project? Arrowheads.

Figure 3: *Patrice Hall-Walters (2009). Photograph of a basket from a private collection.*

Discussion and Conclusion

Historic context lends many aspects to the life of these objects. The images that museums create do not represent these aspects, nor can their story be entirely understood through generic images alone.[46] In our e-mail discussion, Hall-Walters specifically pointed out that each subject matter she photographs is unique and challenges her to think about the best way to convey the character and design.[47] This is particularly true, we think, for Native objects, which have a different type of social meaning than works of Western art. Beaded pieces, and even woven baskets in some Native cultures, were typically created for oneself or a family member to wear or use in ceremonies of both social and spiritual importance. At other times, the piece was an everyday carrying basket. In some instances, tribal peoples arrange with museums to "feed" objects held in collections or to provide other offerings, including ceremonies for the "end of life" of particular objects, which testify to the great value and respect the objects' cultural life holds for communities. As such, they cannot all be represented in a solely uniform way. Sometimes handed down through generations, a piece carried great meaning beyond the aesthetic, but nonetheless the aesthetic shows how much time and care went into its creation—as well as tells a story. This is also true of the pieces that Hall-Walters will photograph in the future.

Social scientists typically view the story of how objects were created as the important thing to preserve, such as the date of construction, to what group to attribute

the object, and what material was used. Instead, Hall-Walters also sees the objects themselves as important. As a piece of material culture, while the process of making an object is important, the disappearance of that object matters as well. This is particularly the case in contemporary society. As specialization has become a way of life, fewer and fewer Native people have the knowledge, time, or resources to continue creating these objects that are so imbued with social meaning. Together with using her own artistic representation as a mode of education, one of Hall-Walters's goals with her work is to preserve the objects and the beauty of their art through photographic representation. Her work places a Native perspective behind the lens of the camera, between the viewer and the object. As the third person involved with the experience, she focuses viewers on detail and meaning lost in the anthropologic tradition of museum archival images.[48]

The archive Hall-Walters is creating is meant to be seen—in fact, patrons of McDonalds in Pendleton, Oregon, can view a series of her basket images displayed on the walls—and to bring an appreciation to the documentation of transitory objects. What will occur when these transitory objects no longer exist or are in such as state of disrepair as to make the original design and techniques of construction unrecognizable? Museums should constantly consider what will happen to the knowledge of artifacts as they begin deteriorating. The full-frame archival images museums so often use in object identifier systems offer little to those looking for detailed clues about the coils or weaving stitches used during construction. Yet ultimately, at some point in time, these may be the only remaining record documenting the object's existence.

Amy Lonetree has recently written in *Decolonizing Museums* that there is opportunity to expand community-collaborative documentation and exhibition as museums consider what will happen to the knowledge of artifacts as they deteriorate. Although Native nations are already informing exhibit development in some tribal cultural centers and national museums—including input from tribal members on display design and content, as well as at times contextual and interactive video and digital imaging—a space is also needed for Native artists to contribute to lasting representations of cultural objects. The expansion of coursework and encouragement of Native artists to participate in reimagining the representation of their tribes' cultural objects can lead to further expansion of the practice of visual sovereignty through self-representation and reframing visual narratives.

Since new museology facilitates an opportunity for community participation, it creates space to mediate relationships between communities and artists to negotiate and situate themselves in the modern era. As tribes place themselves within the world, our cultures evolve and respond to the communities and cultures around us. Often, tribes need to figure out how to appropriate newly introduced technologies that, in turn, contribute to the advancement of the visual sovereignty within our communities. Whether tribes appropriate technology and methods from video, film, or fashion, tribes are indigenizing these avenues. This can be seen in media ranging from films that give insight into the resilient and humorous lifestyle many tribal people live, such as *Smoke Signals*, to Swinomish/Tulalip photographer Matika Wilbur's Project 562, a modern-day Native response to Edward Curtis's documentation of Native peoples in the early-twentieth century.[49] To include these indigenizing practices and develop

artists in a collaborative paradigm encompassing visual sovereignty and new museology in our tribal museums is imperative to sustain and continue our cultures and cultural knowledge.

Although the objects that Hall-Walters photographs will eventually need to be repaired, reworked, or retired to be allowed to disintegrate completely, the represented images produced by her photographic lens give new life to her subjects. Inspired by the originals, these representations are artworks in and of themselves, and display forever the beauty and power of Native creativity and visual literacy.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. Photography of sacred objects is often problematic because many American Indian communities have rules guiding proper behavior with sacred objects and often post signs within the communities that state visitors should refrain from taking photographs. Therefore, the possibility of photographing objects would have to be determined by the tribe. See Miranda Belarde-Lewis, "No Photography Allowed: Problematic Photographs of Sacred Objects," *Museum Anthropology* 36, no. 2 (2013): 104.

2. Edwards is alluding to the phenomenon of cultural objects that are no longer being used as originally intended, but rather as display items. Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).

3. Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), xiv–xv.

4. Nancy Marie Mithlo, "Blood Memory and the Arts: Indigenous Genealogies and Imagined Truths," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 35, no. 4 (2011): 103–18.

5. In the practice of many Native nations, the scent and smoke or brews of particular plants signal the beginning of an important message or action. These aromatic cues convey a known meaning for the people in their presence.

6. We use the term *survivance* here to refer to the active continuance of Native lifeways. A somewhat imprecise term, survivance has developed as an alternate way to conceptualize the practices of Native peoples in resistance to genocidal histories beyond a positionality of victimization. See Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Post-Indian Warriors of Survivance* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 191; also Vizenor's *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 239; and Vizenor's *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 396.

7. Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*, 151.

8. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 153–54; Henrietta Lidchi and Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie, "Introduction," in *Visual Currencies: Reflections on Native Photography*, ed. Lidchi and Tsinhnahjinne (Edinburgh: National Museum of Scotland, 2009), xxiii; see also Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie, "When Is a Photograph Worth a Thousand Words?" in *Native Nations: Journeys in American Photography*, ed. Jane Alison (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1998), 41–56, also in *Photography's Other Histories*, ed. Chistopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 40–54.

9. Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie, "Dragonfly's Home," in *Visual Currencies: Reflections on Native Photography*, 10, 11; emphasis added.

10. Dean Reader, "Indigenous Semiotics and Shared Modernity," in *Visualities: Perspectives on Contemporary American Indian Film and Art*, ed. Denise K. Cummings (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011), 159.

11. James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 129; Ruth Kirk, *Tradition and Change on the Northwest Coast: The Makah, Nuu-chah-nulth, Southern Kwakiutl, and Nuxalk* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988).

12. Barry M. Goldstein, "All Photos Lie: Images as Data," in *Visual Research Methods: Image, Society, and Representation*, ed. Gregory C. Stanczak (Newbury Park: Sage, 2007), 61–81; Jon Wagner, *Images of Information* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1979); and Wagner, "Observing Culture and Social Life: Documentary Photography, Fieldwork, and Social Research" in *Visual Research Methods: Image, Society, and Representation*, ed. Gregory C. Stanczak (Newbury Park: Sage, 2007), 376.

13. John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988); Andrzej Sekula, "The Traffic in Photographs," in *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works, 1973–1983*, ed. Andrzej Sekula (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984); *The Social Life of Things*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge: University Press, 1986); and Lidchi and Tsinhnahjinnie, "Introduction," xii.

14. Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, "On the Use of the Camera in Anthropology," *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication* 4, no. 2 (1977): 78–80 (partial reprint of "For God's Sake, Margaret: A Conversation with Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead," ed. Stewart Brand, *CoEvolution Quarterly* (Summer 1976): 32–44, available as a web page at http://oikos.org/forgod.htm; Jon H. Rieger, "Photographing Social Change," in *Visual Sociology* 11, no. 1 (1996): 5–49, doi: 10.1080/14725869608583755; Karl G. Heider, *Ethnographic Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), 161; Marcus Banks, "Visual Anthropology: Image, Object, and Interpretation," in *Image-Based Research: A Sourcebook For Qualitative* Researchers, ed. Jon Prosser (London: Falmer, 1998), 9–23.

15. Elizabeth Edwards, "The Resonance of Anthropology," in *Native Nations: Journeys in American Photography*, ed. Jane Alison (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1998), 192.

16. Jolene Rickard, "Cew Ete Haw I Tih: The Bird that Carries Language Back to Another," in *Partial Recall: Photographs of Native North America*, ed. Lucy R. Lippard (New York: The New Press, 1992), 105–12; Jolene Rickard, "The Occupation of Indigenous Space as 'Photograph,'" in *Native Nations: Journeys in American Photography*, ed. Jane Alison (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1998), 57–74.

17. Rickard, "Cew Ete Haw I Tih," 71.

18. Lucy R. Lippard, "Introduction," in *Partial Recall: Photographs of Native North America*, 13–46.

19. Tsinhnahjinnie, "When Is a Photograph Worth a Thousand Words?" in *Native Nations*, 41–56. There are, of course, examples of indigenous peoples who asserted themselves while interacting with photographers, such as the story behind Lee Marmon's "White Man's Moccasins" and the people photographed in the later years of Edward Curtis's career. But in general, early photographs are complex in their interweaving discourses of power, research, and aesthetic.

20. Veronica Passalacqua, "Finding Sovereignty through Relocation: Considering Photographic Consumption," in *Visual Currencies*, 19–36.

21. This article focuses only on photographic representations of objects. Lucy R. Lippard's *Partial Recall* discusses how Jolene Rickard reclaims images. Rickard retells the photograph's story by making an object the dominating subject of a photograph instead of the people it depicts.

22. Questions regarding the significance of viewing photographic representations of objects, as opposed to experiencing the actual objects directly, or when an object is held by a museum or other

collector that "replaces" the actual object with a photograph but does not repatriate the actual object, are beyond the scope of this paper.

23. Pierre Mayrand, "The New Museology Proclaimed," *Museum International* 37, no. 4 (1985): 200–01, doi: 10.1111/j.1755-5825.1985.tb00993.x.

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25. Susan Applegate Krouse, "Anthropology and the New Museology," *Reviews in Anthropology* 35, no. 2 (2006): 169–82, doi: 10.1080/00938150600698336.

26. Ibid., 170; Lainie Schultz, "Collaborative Museology and the Visitor," *Museum Anthropology* 34, no. 1 (2011): 1–12, doi: 10.1111/j.1548-1379.2010.01103.x; Magdalena Mieri, Judith Freidenberg, Kathleen Tracey, and Yixin Qiu, "Latino Community Identity and Development: The Case of a Community Museum in Langley Park, Maryland," *Journal of Latino-Latin American Studies* 2, no. 2 (2006): 63.

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28. Peter Vergo, *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books, Ltd., 1989).

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31. Mieri, et al., "Latino Community Identity," 6.

32. George H. Abrams, "Tribal Museums in America" (2003), The American Association for State and Local History, www.atalm.org/sites/default/files/tribal_museums_in_america.pdf.

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36. Nancy Joseph, "Tribal Museum Program Launches with UW Involvement," *Perspectives*, University of Washington College of Arts and Sciences newsletter, May 1, 2010.

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41. Martha S. Lee, "A Woven History: Teaching and Appreciating Art at Tohono O'odham Community College," *Tribal College: Journal of American Indian Higher Education*, August 12, 2013, www.tribalcollegejournal.org/archives/27466.

42. Patrice Hall-Walters, e-mail message to first author, May 22, 2009.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Rickard, "Cew Ete Haw I Tih."

47. Patrice Hall-Walters, e-mail message to first author, May 22, 2009.

48. For a discussion of third-person experience, see Lippard, "Introduction," *Partial Recall*.

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