**Revolving Sequential: Concepts of Time in the Art of Carl Beam
(1943-2005)**

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis offers an interpretation of the notions of time in the art of Carl Beam, many of whose artworks attack the assumption that Western science is the single most useful way of describing reality. Five of Beam's timeframes are discussed: dream time, scientific time, personal time, political time and a concept I call disjuncture. Twelve works of art that illustrate these timeframes are analyzed with reference to interviews with the artist, interviews with individuals having intimate knowledge of the artist's work, writings by authors mentioned by the artist, and additional works by aboriginal and non-aboriginal scholars. The first two chapters locate Beam's work within Native Canadian history and world view and personal biography.

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Introduction

In 2010 I came upon one of Carl Beam's ceramic bowls at a major retrospective of his work at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa.¹ At first glance the bowl's painted decoration seemed reminiscent of pueblo designs from the southwestern United States; the dark brown and rust border was outlined with pairs of curved parallel lines that broke into zigzags on the opposite side. I was startled to see an image of Anne Frank framed by what looked like an ancient Anasazi design. [PLATE 1] I wondered what connection could possibly exist between the young woman who died in a Nazi concentration camp in 1945 and the Anasazi culture that flourished in the 13th century.

Carl Beam (1943-2005) created meaning by juxtaposing symbols of events from different eras. In this example, he connected the decimation of Jews during WWII with that of the pueblo peoples during the Spanish invasion of the Americas in the 15th and 16th centuries, and by extension, the decimation of Native North Americans by Europeans since then. It is this ability to create meaning by collapsing time that makes Beam's work so compelling.

Carl Beam was an internationally recognized artist of mixed American and Anishinaabe descent who mastered a wide variety of media including water colour, acrylic, etching and ceramics. He is best known for his works in photo-emulsion.²

¹ The exhibition, *Carl Beam: The Poetics of Being*, was presented by the National Gallery of Canada from October 22, 2010 to January 16, 2011 and toured to Vancouver, Winnipeg, New York and Thunder Bay.

² Photo emulsion is a printing process in which an image on a transparency is placed on a screen treated with a chemical solution. When light is applied, the image burns into the screen and creates a stencil.

His mixed media work on Plexiglas, *The North American Iceberg*, 1985 [PLATE 2] was the first work by a Native artist in six decades to be purchased by the National Gallery of Canada for its contemporary collection.³ This historic event led to works by other contemporary Native artists being purchased by the National Gallery and also to solo exhibitions of Norval Morriseau (2006) and Daphne Odjig (2007). Beam received the highest awards for artistic excellence in Canada including the Governor-General's Award for Media and Visual Arts in 2005.

In this thesis I argue that Beam employed scientific time as a metaphor for Western knowledge and its over-reliance on science for understanding reality. He resented the arrogant intrusion of science's linear and analytical approach into his life and proposed that Western and Native world views be combined to complement each other. I use the term "Native" to refer to Beam's ethnic identity, the term he himself used. I use the word "Anishinaabe" (alternately Ojibway) to refer to his specific Native cultural identity.

Literature Review

Literature regarding Beam's ideas of time is not extensive. It consists principally of comments made in catalogue essays and journal articles. Authors tend to focus on his iconography, juxtapositions and technique, but some also refer to time. For example, in the catalogue for the 1984 solo exhibition *Altered Egos*, curator Elizabeth McLuhan

³ The previous purchase was from the exhibit, *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern*, which took place in 1927.

identified many elements related to time in Beam's early work.⁴ These include his symbols for time as a continuum (rather than being broken into pre-historic and historic time), his references to a false (or romantic) past, and the actual Native past (experienced rather than imagined). She even described one work as having been artificially aged by the artist driving over it with a car – Beam's ironic illustration of the fakery involved in portraying Native people as living in the past. McLuhan's sensitive, detailed essay laid the groundwork for untangling the intellectual puzzles that Beam created -- puzzles and symbols that he continued to expand on over the next two decades. Her catalogue essay is referred to in almost every article on Beam.

Another essay often referenced by scholars was written by T.M. Collins prior to Beam's first solo exhibition that took place in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 1982. Collins conducted a wide-ranging interview with Beam for *ARTlines Magazine* entitled "Carl Beam: No More Walden".⁵ In their discussion, Beam contrasts Native traditional teachings with Western teachings, describing the former as being geared toward self-sufficiency and confidence rather than being analytical. He also refers to the importance of dealing with the present, which he does but which other native artists tended not to do at the time because of pressure from galleries to avoid controversial social and political issues. As Beam says, "the real Indian attitude on this is to get involved."⁶ Beam praises mainstream American artists Robert Rauschenberg and

⁴ Elizabeth McLuhan, *Altered Egos: The Multimedia Work of Carl Beam* (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay National Exhibition Centre and Centre for Indian Art, 1984).

⁵ T.M. Collins, "Carl Beam: No More Walden," *Artlines* (Jan. 1982): 6-9.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

Andy Warhol for “not ducking” the present and tapping into “the prevalent group gestalt”.⁷

Diana Nemiroff, recently retired Director of the Carleton University Art Gallery and former Curator of Contemporary Art at the National Gallery of Canada, was responsible for the National Gallery’s purchase (mentioned earlier) of Beam’s iconic work, *The North American Iceberg*, for the contemporary art collection of the National Gallery in 1986. (See Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of this work.) The curatorial essay she wrote to support this purchase described the visionary power of Beam’s unexpected juxtapositions “from past and present, near and far” and their ability to collapse space and time.⁸ Nemiroff, like McLuhan, identified Beam’s ability to combine events and elements from vastly different time periods and cultures to create time as fluid and to reveal new insights.

In 1992, Nemiroff collaborated with Ojibway artist/curator Robert Houle and art historian Charlotte Townsend-Gault to co-curate *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada*, a major exhibition of contemporary Native art that coincided with the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Columbus in “the New World”.⁹ In her catalogue essay, Nemiroff comments on time in Beam’s works, describing his photographs as “vehicles of memory and time” and his collages as combining “events

⁷ Ibid., 8.

⁸ Diana Nemiroff, Curatorial File, National Gallery of Canada.

⁹ Diana Nemiroff, Robert Houle and Charlotte Townsend-Gault, curators. *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada*. The show, which ran from September 25 to November 22, 1992, featured four of Beam’s artworks: *Burying the Ruler*, 1992, *Membrane*, 1992, *Columbus Chronicle*, 1992 and *Time Dissolve*, 1992. The exhibition also included 49 works by the following 17 Canadian and American Native artists: Rebecca Belmore, Dempsey Bob, Robert Davidson, Jimmie Durham, Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, Kay WalkingStick, Dorothy Grant, Hachivi Edgar Heap of Birds, Faye HeavyShield, Alex Janvier, Zacharias Kunuk, James Lavadour, Truman Lowe, James Luna, Teresa Marshall and Alanis Obomsawin.

widely separated in time and space in order to produce an obviously mediated, subjective reality".¹⁰ His intensely autobiographical works remind her of petroglyphs that "short-circuit linear modes of communication...[and]...circumvent the domination of the scientific world view".¹¹ She refers to Beam as "a symbolic and emblematic time traveler" whose art is "a plea for a new paradigm, a re-evaluation of the historical relations of native and non-native peoples, a rethinking of our mutual time and place".¹²

Townsend-Gault, in her essay, addresses one of the key differences between non-Native and Native approaches to history: Western European history is a written account of "progress" based on the concept that history moves along a straight line and humans become increasingly more "civilized", while Native history is an oral account of events since mythical times (not necessarily in chronological order) which includes Columbus' arrival, the subsequent loss of land to Europeans, the shuffling of Native people onto reserves, and the attendant outlawing of their language and culture. Townsend-Gault challenges the reader when discussing the importance of honouring cultural difference, that is, different ways of knowing and different meanings. She states:

In the end, cultural difference is expressed not by attempting to find common ground, common words, common symbols across cultures. It is finally dignified by protecting all sides from zealous over-simplification, by

¹⁰ Diana Nemiroff and Robert Houle and Charlotte Townsend-Gault, eds. *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992), 107.

¹¹ Diana Nemiroff and Robert Houle and Charlotte Townsend-Gault, eds. *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992), 108.

¹² *Ibid.*, 112.

acknowledging a final untranslatability of certain concepts and subtleties from one culture to another...[an] untranslatable difference.¹³

Robert Houle's catalogue essay on the spiritual wisdom of ancient Native elders adds an important point that is key to decoding the many seeming incongruities between Beam's images.¹⁴ Houle reminds the reader of the timeless Native tradition of storytelling and dream telling. This oral tradition, with its "lack of a linear chronology", its "interchangeability of perception" and "rhythmical patterns of thought" helps us to interpret Beam's collages. Houle, like Beam, refers to a "shamanic past", yet another time dimension.

Another major exhibition took place in 1992 at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, Quebec. *Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives* was co-organized by Native curators Gerald McMaster and Lee-Ann Martin and featured works by eighteen mostly Canadian contemporary Native artists.¹⁵ The curatorial essay accompanying Beam's triptych, *Burying the Ruler*, 1991, highlights his obsession with Western scientific thought and its focus on power over both nature and Aboriginal peoples. McMaster and Martin also draw attention to Beam's "universal message about the environment and the relationship between man, nature and the passage of time."¹⁶

¹³ Ibid., 100-101.

¹⁴ Ibid., 44.

¹⁵ Featured artists were: Kenny Baird, Carl Beam, Lance Belanger, Bob Boyer, Joane Cardinal-Schubert, Domingo Cisneros, Joe David, Jim Logan, George Longfish, Mike MacDonald, Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, Edward Poitras, Jane Ash Poitras, Rick Rivet, Eric Robertson, Luke Simon, Lucy Tasseor and Nick Sikkuark.

¹⁶ Gerald McMaster and Lee-Ann Martin, *Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1992), 119.

In their book, *Native North American Art*, authors Ruth Phillips and Janet Berlo identify the “veils, scratches and drips” Beam employs “to signify the erosion of time and memory”.¹⁷ Theirs is an excellent text for understanding the historical background of contemporary Native art, the different cultural concepts developed by Native peoples, and the origins of some of the symbols in historical and contemporary Native art.

The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art, by Allan J. Ryan, provides unique insights into Beam’s notions of time.¹⁸ Ryan combines analysis of 159 works of art with interviews with fifteen artists, including Beam. The book includes Beam’s comments on sacred time, time-lapse photography, time control and the tendency of anthropologists and museums to freeze Native cultures in past time. Ryan also wrote the letter to support Carl Beam’s nomination for a Governor-General’s Award for Visual Arts in 2005, emphasizing his ability to bridge Western and Native cultures.¹⁹ He quotes Beam as saying, “I ask viewers to play the participatory game of dreaming ourselves as each other” and refers to Beam’s desire to engage viewers in a dialogue on the lack of recognition of indigenous knowledge and the absence of spirituality in contemporary society.

Art historian Joan Murray, curator of the exhibition, *The Whale of our Being* mounted at the McLaughlin Gallery in 2000, characterizes Carl Beam as an artist who

¹⁷ Janet Berlo and Ruth Phillips, *Native North American Art* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1998), 232.

¹⁸ Allan J. Ryan, *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999).

¹⁹ The letter was subsequently adapted for inclusion in the awards publication when Beam was chosen as one of the recipients. The resultant essay can be found at: <http://www.canadacouncil.ca/visualarts/>

always searched for the larger message.²⁰ She describes his paintings as provocations that strip away the clichés and rhetoric of contemporary life, and refers to his increasing complexity, saying: "...he addresses the continuity of time and throws the net of his theme as widely as possible."²¹ She also points out that Beam "engages visually with the notion of time in James Joyce",²² comparing Beam's metaphoric time collages to the stream of conscious thought process in Joyce.

In a 1993 article, freelance writer John K. Grande contributed additional insights into Beam's idea of time. In "Carl Beam: Dissolving Time",²³ Grande documents Beam's thoughts on how Europeans' concepts of time directly affected their attitude of superiority toward Native people. In an interview with Grande, Beam explained the notion of 'time distancing', a tendency originating with ethnology and anthropology to describe indigenous peoples as primitive and their cultures as existing only in the past.

To date, the most in-depth investigation into the art of Carl Beam is found in *Carl Beam: The Poetics of Being*, the catalogue for the 2010 retrospective of Beam's work at the National Gallery.²⁴ Essays by Mohawk artist/curator Greg Hill, Audain Curator of Contemporary Art at the National Gallery, Plains Cree artist/curator Gerald McMaster, independent curator, Virginia Eichhorn, Anishinaabe museum workers Crystal Migwans and Alan Corbiere and Ann Beam, wife of Carl Beam, offer numerous valuable insights into Beam's life and work. Hill's essay highlights Beam's integration

²⁰ Joan Murray, *The Whale of Our Being* (Oshawa: McLaughlin Art Gallery, 2000), 9.

²¹ Ibid., 9.

²² Ibid., 2.

²³ John K. Grande, "Carl Beam: Dissolving Time," *Canadian Forum* (June 1993), 22.

²⁴ Greg A. Hill et al., *Carl Beam: The Poetics of Being* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada),

of memory and experience with official history, assisting the viewer to comprehend the artist's choice of images as well as his technique of partially obscuring them. Hill's reflections on the similarities and differences between the works of Beam, Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns and Andy Warhol as well as the connections he makes with the writings of Martin Heidegger, led me to investigate the works of these other individuals. As well, Ann Beam's narrative chronology of Beam's life provided important details regarding the timing of his travels and exhibitions.

The literature on Beam traces his career trajectory from that of being a Native artist "of eloquent anger"²⁵, battling Western linear thinking and struggling against critics' tendency to pigeon-hole him as a Native artist, to that of a contemporary artist whose works are characterized as intellectually sophisticated. These descriptions reflect a shift in both the artist and his environment. Murray acknowledges this shift in her catalogue essay for *The Whale of our Being* exhibition, by including details of Beam's progress from Anishnaabe artist to world artist.²⁶ She delineates the development of his concepts and iconography to the point when he found the ultimate symbol of a spiritual void in the world after September 11, 2001 -- a gigantic whale. In addition, by connecting Beam's artwork with Warhol's repetitive photographs and the stream-of-consciousness writing of James Joyce, Murray places it firmly in the mainstream.

The 2010 documentary film, *Aakideh: the Art and Legacy of Carl Beam*, by Paul Eichhorn and Robert Waldeck, presents the personal side of Beam's art and life. In the

²⁵ McLuhan, *Altered Egos*, 5.

²⁶ Murray, *Whale of Our Being*, 1-9.

film, his wife Ann recalls their mutual explorations into history and science and his fearless effort to “set things straight”. Beam’s daughter Anong relates stories of his childhood, his connections with a bear (his spirit animal), his nickname Aakideh, or Brave Heart, and his talent for writing and playing music on his guitar. She also speaks of the profound and lasting effects of his time in residential school. In an interview, Allan J. Ryan emphasizes Beam’s role as a seeker of knowledge with a strong sense of responsibility for personal and political events.

Research and Methodology

The primary focus of this thesis consists of twelve works that illustrate several of Beam’s notions of time. They were selected from collections at the National Gallery of Canada, the Royal Ontario Museum and private collections.

Analyses of these works benefitted immensely from five interviews I conducted between November 2011 and February 2012 with individuals who are either related to Beam or knew him. Beam’s wife Ann and daughter Anong spoke about change in the concepts of time on the reserve during Beam’s lifetime, the importance of the loss of language and Beam’s use of koans to develop his concepts. Crystal Migwans, a cousin of Beam’s and former director of the Ojibway Cultural Centre in M’Chigeeng, Manitoulin Island, and currently a graduate student in Art History at Carleton University, addressed the emotional impact of seemingly arbitrary changes in regulations by the Canadian government and the on-going struggle to revitalize Anishinaabe culture. Diana Nemiroff focused on Beam’s use of time as a motif and his central role in overcoming institutional barriers to new contemporary Aboriginal art,

and curator Elizabeth McLuhan emphasized Beam's divergence from Norval Morrisseau's Woodlands style and his capacity for irony and political discourse.

Interpretation of Beam's images and poetic texts is further supported by artist interviews by author T.M. Collins (1982), Trent University Radio (1990), curator, Shelagh Young (1992), and Professor Allan J. Ryan (1991/1999) of Carleton University. Additional secondary sources include texts by Native and non-Native art critics and curators, historians, philosophers and theorists.

Studies under the direction of Professors Ruth Phillips and Allan J. Ryan regarding the history, culture, cosmology and art of the First People of the Great Lakes area were major sources of information in Chapters 1 and 2. Additional details on traditional and contemporary Anishinaabe world view are drawn from the writings of Anishinaabe novelist and theorist Gerald Vizenor and his interpreter, Kim Blaeser.

In his artwork, Beam references Native time, Western scientific time and a concept I refer to as disjuncture. Faced with the opaqueness of his works of art, I developed my interpretations of them by investigating the theories of three individuals that he referenced in interviews -- Albert Einstein, whose experiments with time revolutionized science; German philosopher Martin Heidegger, whose 1927 treatise *Being and Time* examines in part the meaning of time for humans; and French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, whose writings include a critique of Western science's pursuit of progress, and an affirmation of narrative knowledge. Taken together, these form a major component of my analysis of Beam's work.

Beam's direct quote from Heidegger on ethnologists in the painting, *E=MC²*, 1982, [PLATE 3] led me to Dutch anthropologist Johannes Fabian, whose theory of time distancing set out in his 1983 book, *Time and the Other*, further supported my interpretation of time in Beam's oeuvre. In discussing concepts of time in contemporary Western art, I reference art historian Pamela M. Lee whose term 'chronophobia' describes the obsession with time she found in the work of mainstream artists of the 1960's and 1970's, when Beam would have been attending art school.

Concepts of Native time and history in this thesis are based primarily on writings by three indigenous authors: Deborah Doxtator, Donald Fixico and Linda Tuhiwai Smith. Doxtator's 2001 essay, "Inclusive and Exclusive Perceptions of difference: Native and Euro-Based Concepts of time, History and Change" clarified several Native concepts for me, particularly the idea of history as an additive process.²⁷ Fixico's discussion of cyclical time in oral history in his book *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World*, clarified this concept for me, as did his description of narrative knowledge as experiential. His reflections on the importance of place and community were especially useful for interpreting the works *Time Dissolve*, 1992 [PLATE 4] and *Auto-biographical Errata*, 1997. [PLATE 5] Linda Tuhiwai Smith's immensely popular book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, elucidated several cultural and ideological aspects of time. She addresses the Western fascination with how non-Westerners organize their daily lives, how their languages may employ the same word

²⁷ Deborah Doxtator and Carolyn Podruchny and Germaine Warkentin, *Decentring the Renaissance: Canada and Europe in Multidisciplinary Perspective, 1500-1700* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 39.

for space and time, and how their cultures often do not distinguish “between work, leisure, education and religion.”²⁸ She also lists eleven interconnected ideas around which Euro-American history is constructed, such as its method of charting the progress of human development through time and its belief that history as a discipline is innocent. She adds that, while academics claim that society has moved on to a post-colonial period, many indigenous peoples still believe such claims are premature as they continue to deal with the impact of colonialism.²⁹

Chapter Breakdown

Chapters One and Two present a context for the analysis of the artworks in Chapter Three. Chapter One begins with background information on Native North American world views with a brief description of the cosmological belief system of the Great Lakes peoples, of which the Anishinaabec are a part. The next section briefly summarizes the history of Native peoples in Canada, concluding with the growth of contemporary Native art in Canada and the struggle for its recognition.

Chapter Two offers a short biography of Beam and touches on several artists whose influence is evident in his art. The latter part of the chapter addresses the artist’s growing interest in science and current events.

Chapter Three begins with a description of Beam’s style followed by the analysis of twelve of Beam’s works that deal with notions of time, relating them to theories by Einstein, Heidegger, Lyotard, Fixico and Tuhiwai Smith.

²⁸ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: St. Martin’s, 1999), 53.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

The Conclusion summarizes some of the key points of my thesis. It also provides four possible avenues for future research and investigation into Beam's oeuvre.

Chapter 1 – Native Canadian World View and History

Carl Beam sought to engage the viewer in a dialogue about Native history and culture, Western science, current events and the power of imagination. He chose images from ancient Egyptian, European, Canadian and Native American cultures and juxtaposed these with others from science, Christianity and Native spirituality.

For the viewer to understand his references and connections, it helps to be familiar with some of the key elements of Native world views, the history of Native people in Canada and the United States and the history of contemporary Native art in Canada. The following contextual summary is based on my understanding of accounts by both Native and non-Native scholars.

Indigenous traditions across North America differ from each other; however, it is still possible to speak of a shared world view. Native North American world views are generally based on experiential knowledge of the physical and spiritual world and have been passed down orally by elders through storytelling, with changes included as events unfold. This narrative knowledge tends to emphasize qualitative rather than quantitative elements and subjective rather than objective characteristics; it also addresses moral and spiritual questions. Seminole-Creek scholar Donald L. Fixico, in discussing narrative time and storytelling, comments: “The past becomes the present and when common patterns are a part of the experience told about, they are lessons for the future. ‘When’ something happened is not as

important as 'why' and 'how' something happened."³⁰ He refers to Native author, Vine Deloria, Jr.'s book, *God is Red* (1974), saying Deloria "pointed out that Native Americans identified with place rather than time, unlike white men."³¹ For example, Native knowledge of a land mass develops from actually living on the land for centuries, rather than studying a map of that land.³²

Spiritual knowledge originates from dreams, visions and intuitions. It is based on the belief that everything on earth contains energy. Human beings are considered to be only one of the creatures of the earth rather than superior to any part of it. Beam certainly subscribed to this belief.³³

The Anishnaabe creation story begins with a turtle. North America is referred to as Turtle Island because of the belief that the earth was created on the back of a turtle. Certain animals such as bears, eagles, ravens and buffalo are considered to have spiritual attributes. The eagle, for example, is a symbol of higher being whereas the raven is a trickster figure. The bear is a symbol of courage. A vision often involves a transforming experience of interaction with such an animal. When the vision connects a person to a specific animal, that animal becomes their personal spirit animal. For

³⁰ Donald L. Fixico, *The American Indian Mind in a Linear world: American Indian Studies and Traditional Knowledge* (London: Routledge), 25.

³¹ Ibid., 107.

³² Marlene Brant Castellano, "Updating Aboriginal Traditions of Knowledge," Dei et al., *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Context: Multiple Readings of Our Worlds* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 27.

³³ Diana Nemiroff quotes Beam in *Land, Spirit, Power* as saying: "The Indian viewpoint is that [the world] was made for its own sake; man has to live in accordance with that structure. One system believes that you are a part of everything, and one says that you are *on top* of everything, and everything is there for your use – everything else is *lower*. The hierarchy is already set up. You are it, man! The world is yours! You just have to go out there and harvest everything! The sheep and cows and all the good wine, the cigarettes, the real estate – all the prime waterfront footage – it's all yours. The trees and water – if you want to dump all your chemicals in there you can just go ahead. Who else would lay claim to all of that, other than man, anyway?" p. 83.

Beam, that animal was the bear. As Phillips and Berlo wrote, Native Americans would isolate themselves and fast “to provoke the pity of other-than-human-beings and to induce them to confer blessings of power.”³⁴

One symbol that is central to many Native cultures is the circle. It is an overarching metaphor for the unity of community and includes the social and natural environment. The circle also encompasses difference. The Plains Indian Medicine Wheel, for instance, now widely adopted by many First Nations, is considered the circle of life that contains all experience, everything in the biosphere – animal, vegetable, mineral, human, spirit – in the past, the present and the future. [PLATE 6] An equal-armed cross is the central balance point between the four cardinal directions, and the four sections suggest the four stages of life: child, youth, adult and elder. The four sections contain the sacred colours: most commonly, black, red, yellow and white.³⁵ In the words of Lakota Holy Man, Lame Deer: “all of us are part of the circle that has no beginning and no end.”³⁶ As a metaphor for life, the circle contrasts sharply with the Western, Christian concept of a straight line stretching from birth to death followed by Heaven or Hell.

According to Fixico, the difference between linear and circular thinking is at the root of historic misunderstandings between Native peoples and Euro-American people: “Their philosophies, ideologies, logic and world views proved distinctively different due to the separate evolution of the human mind”.³⁷

³⁴ Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 25.

³⁵ Brant Castellano, “Updating Aboriginal Traditions”, 30.

³⁶ Fixico, *American Indian Mind*, 121.

Native accounts of the past also differ extensively from mainstream accounts told from a colonialist viewpoint. Cherokee artist and political activist Jimmie Durham gives his wry version of mainstream American history:

The Master Narrative of the United States proclaims that there were no Indians here, just wilderness. Then that the Indians were savages in need of the U.S. Then that the Indians all died, unfortunately. Then, that the Indians still alive are (a) basically happy with the situation and (b) not the 'real' Indians. Then, most importantly, that that is the complete story.³⁸

With minimal modification, Durham might well have been summarizing Beam's view of Canadian history as well.

Mohawk scholar Deborah Doxtator described the Aboriginal concept of history as one without periods: "History is an additive process, building upon what has gone before in a kind of consciously constructed continuity... nothing is lost or taken away: all is incorporated within the next addition, and differences actually function not to separate but to unify groups... continuity without separating gaps is central to this view of history."³⁹

By the time Carl Beam was born in 1943, Native North Americans had experienced almost five hundred years of European colonization, during which time they had been decimated by disease, poverty and starvation, most of their land had been confiscated, and the system of removing children from their families to attend residential school had destroyed their language, culture and communities. Even their way of thinking had been altered. As Professor Dipesh Chakrabarty of the University of Chicago comments:

³⁷ Ibid., 45.

³⁸ Quoted by Charlotte Townsend-Gault in *Land, Spirit, Power*, 87, from Durham, "A Central Margin," 166.

³⁹ Doxtator, Podruchny, Warkentin, *Decentring the Renaissance*, 39.

Concepts such as citizenship, the state, civil society, public sphere, human rights, equality before the law, the individual, distinctions between public and private, the idea of the subject, democracy, popular sovereignty, social justice, scientific rationality, and so on all bear the burden of European thought and history...These concepts entail an unavoidable -- and in a sense indispensable -- universal and secular vision of the human. The European colonizer of the 19C both preached this Enlightenment humanism at the colonized and at the same time denied it in practice.⁴⁰

The period from 1920 to 1950 was a particularly repressive one for Native people living in Canada. The Indian Act of 1876 was still in effect, which meant, for example, that they were strictly prohibited from leaving the reserve without obtaining a pass from an Indian Agent. From 1876 to 1951 potlatches and powwows were outlawed. Then, suddenly, the Act was amended in 1951 to allow ceremonies and to permit status Indians (those recorded as Indian by the Indian Register of the Government of Canada) to attend universities. As Anishnaabe graduate student, Crystal Migwans, observed, “[it was as if the authorities] suddenly said, “Oops, nix all that [prohibition], it’s OK. Go ahead and have a powwow... All this influence [was] left to stew there. You can’t just nix all that.”⁴¹

The 1960’s brought radical change with the civil rights movement in the United States inspiring activism in “Indian Country”, epitomized by the American Indian Movement. Fixico mentions the importance of three books that came to prominence at this time: Vine Deloria Jr.’s *Custer Died For Your Sins: an Indian Manifesto*, 1968; N. Scott Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn*, 1968 and Dee Brown’s *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, 1971. Presenting recent and historic events from a Native

⁴⁰ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 2000), 4.

⁴¹ In conversation with Crystal Migwans, Nov. 24, 2011.

perspective, these books shocked many mainstream readers and motivated both Native and non-Native people to take action.

Improvements were slow to come, however. For example, Beam watched as the Oka crisis in 1990 developed out of yet another instance of white settlers stealing Native land, this time for the expansion of a golf course.⁴² The subsequent *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report* (1996) made many recommendations, few of which were acted upon. Although Prime Minister Stephen Harper did apologize to Canada's First Peoples in 2008 for the abuses of residential schools, and the government instituted a Truth and Reconciliation Process, living conditions and opportunities for many First Nations still remain distinctly below those of other Canadian citizens. Contemporary Native artists like Carl Beam appear like beacons of light when contrasted with the darkness and hopelessness exemplified by the Attawapiskat First Nations community in Northern Ontario and other remote Native reserves.⁴³

Beam's emergence as a force in contemporary Canadian art was part of a broader pattern of emerging contemporary Native artists. Until the late 1960's, very few artists identified themselves as Native since mainstream institutions tended to classify their work as either ethnographic or craft. Artists Rita Letendre (Abenaki) and Robert Markle (Mohawk) for instance, adapted by not disclosing their Native identity when the National Gallery purchased their work in the 1970's.

⁴² Harry Swain, *Oka: A Political Crisis and Its Legacy* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2010), 65-71.

⁴³ *The Ottawa Citizen*, December 31, 2011, p. A3.

Expo 67, the popular World's Fair and celebration of Canada's centennial in Montreal in 1967, began the process of bringing contemporary Native art to the attention of the mainstream public. The distinctive, teepee-shaped Indians of Canada Pavilion featured work by ten Native artists including Norval Morrisseau (1932-2007) and Alex Janvier (b. 1935).⁴⁴ Many visitors had never seen contemporary Native work before and the pavilion was one of the most popular during the ten month world's fair. Subsequently, Native artists actively organized to move their art away from being marginalized as ethnographic and toward being exhibited in mainstream galleries.

One of the earliest centres of Native artistic learning opened in 1970 in K'san, near Hazelton, B.C. Traditional Northwest Coast artists and carvers who had worked at museums in Victoria and Vancouver shared their skills with new Nisga'a, Haida and Kwakwaka-wakw artists. Subsequently, Bill Reid (1920-1998), one of the most respected contemporary Haida artists, became the first aboriginal person in Canada to have a solo exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1974.⁴⁵

In Winnipeg in 1971, Daphne Odjig (b. 1919) opened the first gallery to sell Native art exclusively. Odjig was one of several self-taught Native artists. As a young woman she had felt compelled to change her name to Fisher, and lived as a white artist until 1964. In 1973 she and fellow Native artists Alex Janvier, Norval Morrisseau, Jackson Beardy, Ed Cobiness, Carl Ray and Joseph Sanchez (a Pueblo who lived in Canada in the 1970's) formed Professional Native Indian Artists Incorporated, commonly known as

⁴⁴ Anne Whitelaw and Brian Foss and Sandra Paikowsky, *The Visual Arts in Canada: The Twentieth Century* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2010), 367.

⁴⁵ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Bill Reid: A Retrospective Exhibition* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1974).

The Native Group of Seven.⁴⁶ Morrisseau's paintings, based on Anishnaabe petroglyphs and sacred birch bark scrolls, inspired a new, non-European visual language that became known as the Woodlands art style.⁴⁷ [PLATE 7]

In 1972, the Winnipeg Art Gallery's exhibition, *Treaty Numbers 23, 287, 1171* set a new standard: it included only contemporary Native art, and referred to the three contributing artists by name: Jackson Beardy (1944-1984), Alex Janvier and Daphne Odjig. In the catalogue, however, curator Jacqueline Fry approached the works with a formal analysis instead of discussing the historical issues addressed by the artists.

The 1980's saw the emergence of Native artists who were graduates of university fine arts programs. Exhibitions of their works gradually moved from municipal to provincial galleries. After years of resistance, the Art Gallery of Ontario opened its first exhibit of Native art in 1984, entitled *Norval Morrisseau and The Emergence of the Image Makers*. Co-curator Elizabeth McLuhan described Morrisseau as the creator of a new school of painting that

bridged two cultures, [with] a style that could communicate the essence of Ojibwa values and perceptions to contemporary Native and non-Native viewers alike.... [It employed] the perennial issues of survival and death, of continuity and adaptation in a harsh environment ...[as] a powerful allegory for the contemporary forces of a white-controlled Indian destiny.⁴⁸

Of particular relevance to this thesis, in Thunder Bay, Ontario, in 1984, McLuhan also curated a solo exhibition of works by Carl Beam entitled *Altered Egos: The Multi-*

⁴⁶ Whitelaw, Foss, Paikowsky, *Visual Arts in Canada*, 376.

⁴⁷ Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 229.

⁴⁸ Elizabeth McLuhan and Tom Hill, *Norval Morrisseau and the Emergence of the Image Makers* (Toronto: Methuen, 1984), 28.

Media Work of Carl Beam. Two years later, after amending its collection policy,⁴⁹ the National Gallery purchased Beam's *The North American Iceberg*, 1985, referred to previously.

By 1989, a substantial number of contemporary Native artists in Canada were producing artworks that represented their views of history and identity. For example, the Vancouver Art Gallery's exhibition *Beyond History* featured Carl Beam, Bob Boyer, Joane Cardinal-Schubert, Robert Houle, Mike MacDonald, Ron Noganosh, Jane Ash Poitras, Edward Poitras, Pierre Sioui and the Mexican ex-patriot artist Domingo Cisneros. Cardinal-Schubert called them "The Art Tribe". As Allan J. Ryan writes in his book, *The Trickster Shift*, they "constituted a loose alliance of socially active, politically aware, and professionally trained individuals of roughly the same age, who had over the last fifteen to twenty years, exhibited with one another, written about one another, lectured on one another and curated exhibitions for one another."⁵⁰ Another important development at this time was the emergence of professionally trained Native curators. Bob Boyer, Lee-Ann Martin, Robert Houle and Gerald McMaster added their extensive knowledge of Native epistemology, history and iconography to numerous exhibitions and catalogue essays.

The 1992 Columbus Quincentenary was a major catalyst in the development of contemporary Aboriginal artistic practice. It was at once "an expression of grief for the immensity of loss and suffering of the last 500 years, and a celebration of

⁴⁹ Conversation with Diana Nemiroff, January 12, 2012.

⁵⁰ Allan J. Ryan, *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* (Vancouver: UBC Press), xi.

creativity that continued through the darkest moments”.⁵¹ Across North America exhibitions of Native art portrayed the arrival of Columbus not as the discovery of a new world, but the beginning of the cultural, economic and physical destruction of Native American peoples through invasion, disease and missionary zeal. As noted earlier, two major Canadian exhibits, *Land Spirit Power* at the National Gallery and *Indigena* at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, presented compelling messages that permanently altered the public’s impression of Columbus and his impact on North America. It seemed that Native artists had finally established their territory in the art world.

More recently, two Native artists represented Canada at the prestigious Venice Biennale: Edward Poitras in 1995 and Rebecca Belmore in 2005. Several Native artists have also received the highest recognition for artists in Canada: Joane Cardinal-Schubert (1942-2009), Daphne Odjig, Carl Beam and Norval Morrisseau were all inducted into the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, and Edward Poitras, Alanis Obomsawin and Carl Beam have all received the Governor-General’s Award for Media and Visual Arts. Moreover, the National Gallery mounted solo exhibitions by Morrisseau (2006), Odjig (2009) and Beam (2010). A retrospective of Alex Janvier’s work is planned at the National Gallery for 2013.

⁵¹ Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 237.

Chapter 2 – Biography

Carl Beam was born in 1943 in West Bay (now called M'Chigeeng), Manitoulin Island, Ontario. His mother, Barbara Migwans was Ojibway and his father, Edward Cooper, was an American who fought in World War II and died in a German prisoner of war camp. Beam was raised by his mother and grandfather, Dominic Migwans, Chief of the West Bay band. Chief Migwans was "a man of power",⁵² whom everyone considered a grandfather;⁵³ however, he died when Beam was young. Beam's daughter Anong recalls, "The whole early part of his [Beam's] life was pretty stressful. He didn't really talk a whole lot about it." It was during this time that he was introduced to Chinese culture by an aunt who was married to a Chinese man. According to Anong, this was the beginning of Beam's interest in other cultures; he eventually accumulated a large collection of Chinese and Japanese ceramics.⁵⁴

Anong also remembers discussing time with her father. He described witnessing the change from one method of telling time to another. When he was a child, the adults would ask, "What angle is the sun at?", but by the time he returned from residential school, the question had become, "How is it on the clock?" His observation of this shift from conceiving time as experiential to time as something abstract and mechanical is evidence of Beam's sensitivity to subtle changes that took place around him.

⁵² Conversation with Ann Beam, January 9, 2012.

⁵³ Conversation with Crystal Migwans, November 24, 2011.

⁵⁴ Conversation with Anong Migwans Beam, January 9, 2012.

At age ten, Beam was sent to Garnier residential school in Spanish, Ontario, 130 kilometers from M'Chigeeng. There, students were not permitted to speak Ojibway, forced to practice Christianity and trained to think according to Jesuit principles.⁵⁵ Beam left school after grade nine, picked tobacco for a while and worked in construction in Toronto. He married and had five children, and completed high school by correspondence. In 1971 he moved his family to British Columbia and, with financial aid from the federal government, studied at the Kootenay School of Art under painter Frances Hatfield and ceramicist Walter Dexter who was a student of the renowned British potter Bernard Leach. Beam went on to obtain his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the University of Victoria. His teachers included Roland Bremner, John Dobreiner and Mowry Baden who were part of a growing reactionary movement against abstract expressionism and its insistence on eliminating narrative and figuration in art.⁵⁶

It was at the University of Victoria that Beam embarked on printmaking. A fellow student, Manon Elder, remembered how he broke the rules to produce his inventive printing techniques.⁵⁷ He shared with her his technique of rolling ink, which had the effect of transforming the emphasis in his etchings from line to light. She added that this method made it possible to shortcut the printing process, thereby “erasing time”.

⁵⁵ Conversation with Ann Beam.

⁵⁶ Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 2002), 1128.

⁵⁷ Conversation with Victoria artist Manon Elder, February 8, 2012.

During his studies at the University of Victoria Beam was introduced to the work of several artists who would influence him both artistically and philosophically. Years later, in a wide-ranging interview on Trent University Radio, Beam discussed some of these influential individuals. He said he was attracted to Picasso's Cubism because of its capacity to alter a viewer's perception. He admired its "multiple viewpoint," adding that "a lot of people don't understand that you can look at things from more than one point of view and not be threatened."⁵⁸ He also attacked Renaissance single point perspective for being "an optical illusion",⁵⁹ preferring Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), an artist who was unwilling to "play that game".⁶⁰ Beam praised Duchamp's conceptual approach to art for existing "independently on its own", rather than being restricted to canvas. To him, Duchamp could "see things existing mythically".⁶¹

Beam also admired German performance artist, Joseph Beuys (1921-1986), who produced provocative performance "actions" that challenged traditional art forms. Beuys considered himself as both shaman and everyman, and, in one famous piece, *I Like America and America Likes Me*, 1974, clothed in a felt blanket and holding a long crook, he interacted with a live coyote for a week in the Rene Block Gallery in New York. [PLATE 8] His metaphorical sculptures and theatrical presentations were

⁵⁸ Shelagh Young, *On Flat Earth: The Columbus Project, Phase I* (Peterborough: Peterborough Art Gallery, 1989), 20.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

layered with mythological and personal themes. His central theme in much of his work was art for change.⁶²

While at the University of Victoria, Beam would no doubt have studied the American printmaker and painter Jasper Johns (b. 1930), whose cool encaustic works include images from everyday life such as stenciled numbers and letters, handprints, targets and the American flag. Two of his works, (*Green Target*, 1955 [PLATE 9] and *Land's End*, 1963 [PLATE 10]), are notable for hiding and disclosing their subjects, something that may have caught Beam's attention when he was searching for a method to portray his idea of time as "fading in and out."⁶³

The American Abstract Expressionist artist, Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008), was also an important influence on Beam.⁶⁴ There are many similarities between his work and Beam's, in style, technique and motifs. For example, Rauschenberg's "Combines" of the 1950's are assemblages of photographs and found objects integrated with energetic brushwork. Three works that contain noticeable similarities are: *Bicycle*, 1963 [PLATE 11] with its barometer, helicopter and eagle; *Ace*, 1962 [PLATE 12] with its stenciled capital letters and energetic brushwork, and *Hot Shot*, 1983 [PLATE 13] with images of space exploration.

Actively involved in anti-war and human rights activities, Rauschenberg closely followed developments in the U.S. space program and founded E.A.T. (Experiments in

⁶² Information gathered from the website of the Guggenheim Museum: http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/show-full/bio/?artist_name=Joseph%20Beuys&page=1&f=Name&cr=1. (Accessed Feb. 28 2012).

⁶³ Grande, "Dissolving Time", 22.

⁶⁴ Conversation with Diana Nemiroff, January 10, 2012.

Art and Technology) which involved artists and scientists working on joint projects. Rauschenberg claimed to live in the moment, or what he termed “the continuous present”.⁶⁵ Expression of his interest in time can be seen in *Third Time Painting*, 1962 [PLATE 14] and in *Reservoir*, 1961. [PLATE 15] In the latter, he incorporated two working clocks, one that he set at the time he began the painting, and the other set at the time he stopped. He added two wheels to complete the concept of motion, as well as “a thin layer of white pigment and drips of dark paint as records of the artist’s activity”.⁶⁶ An additional connection between Rauschenberg and Beam occurred when, later in his career, Rauschenberg revealed his Aboriginal heritage as part Cherokee.⁶⁷

Like Beam, Rauschenberg had a strong interest in other cultures. In 1984 he began a seven year, eleven country art project called the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI).⁶⁸ Beam may well have been inspired by this enormous project and would have been able to watch its progress through various countries, including Chile, where Rauschenberg came up against dictator Augusto Pinochet’s repressive regime.

After receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Victoria in 1974, Beam continued in graduate studies at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. Unfortunately, the Art History faculty there seemed too committed to the European canon. When they refused his proposal to write a

⁶⁵ Robert S. Mattison, *Robert Rauschenberg: Breaking Boundaries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 84.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 84

⁶⁷ Andrew Forge, *Rauschenberg* (New York: World Publishing, 1979), 79.

⁶⁸ Mattison, *Robert Rauschenberg*, 221.

thesis on contemporary Native American artist Fritz Scholder (1937-2005), Beam left and moved back to Ontario. He became a full-time artist in 1978, attending a National Native Artists conference on Manitoulin Island where he met fellow Ojibway artists Don Ense and John Laford as well as Bill Reid, Alex Janvier and Daphne Odjig. The experience made him realize that his concept of art was radically different from other Woodland artists; where theirs was communal and mythological, his was subjective and political.

By 1979, his first marriage had been annulled and he had married Ann Weatherby, a professional artist from New York State who was working as a medical illustrator at the University of Toronto.⁶⁹ The Beams soon moved to the American southwest where they lived for three years, with regular trips to Manitoulin.

In New Mexico they immersed themselves in the ancient Anasazi and Mimbres cultures. Under the instruction of renowned Santa Clara potter Rose Montoya, they learned where to find their own clay and pigments. Thereafter, they created hand built bowls which astonished viewers with their combination of Anasazi graphic designs and contemporary imagery, such as the 1981 assassination of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, military tanks and helicopters, and Einstein's well-known equation, $E=MC^2$. Their bowls were subsequently featured in an exhibition at the University of New Mexico's Maxwell Museum in 1982.

By 1983, Carl and Ann Beam had returned to Canada, settling first in Peterborough, Ontario and then moving permanently to Manitoulin. Carl Beam's

⁶⁹ Ann Beam's profession as a medical illustrator may have inspired Beam to include similar images in his art work as discussed in Chapter 3.

first Canadian solo exhibition took place in 1984 at the Thunder Bay National Exhibition Centre and Centre for Indian Art. Curated by Elizabeth McLuhan, the multi-media exhibit, *Altered Egos*, revealed Beam's diverse interests in ancient Egypt, science and space exploration and Native North American spiritual practices.

Throughout the 1980's Beam continued to expand his vision in preparation for the Columbus Quincentenary in 1992. His daughter Anong described his "huge reference library" which included works by his favourite authors Martin Heidegger, Stephen Hawking, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett and Bernard Leach, as well as *The Rig Veda*, a collection of ancient sacred Sanskrit poetry, Jean-François Lyotard's *Post Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1984 (discussed in Chapter 3), books on Einstein and Rembrandt, and a Sanskrit dictionary.⁷⁰ Considering his eclectic interests, it is not surprising that he became fascinated with differences between the "seemingly incompatible" Aboriginal and European knowledge systems. While he came to value both systems, he took particular exception to the manner in which Europeans denigrated Aboriginal knowledge and their persistent attempts to erase it. Time became a vehicle for his attack on Western scientists' insistence that their secular approach to the world produced the only real knowledge.

During the Columbus Quincentenary, works by Beam were included in several major Canadian exhibitions. In Peterborough, as Artist in Residence at Artspace Gallery, he created a large body of work called *The Columbus Project*. This included *Voyage*, 1988, a 530 cm. white plywood sculpture of Columbus' boat, the *Santa Maria*.

⁷⁰ Conversation with Anong Migwans Beam, January 9, 2012.

His large triptych, *Burying the Ruler*, 1991, [PLATE 16] was part of the Canadian Museum of Civilization's exhibition, *Indigena*, and four of his works were featured in The National Gallery's *Land Spirit Power*. Works by Beam in this latter exhibition included: *Burying the Ruler*, 1992 [PLATE 17]; *Time Dissolve*, 1992 [PLATE 18] and *Columbus Chronicles*, 1992 [PLATE 19].

After the events of September 11, 2001, Beam searched for an image that would represent the emptiness he felt. He chose the whale. As curator Joan Murray wrote in the catalogue to the exhibition, *The Whale of our Being*, the whale "becomes the means to contain experience and discuss the world we live in",⁷¹ a metaphor for both the earth and humanity.

At this mature stage in his life, as an artist and as a human being, Beam declared "I am the world. I am part of the world. I am an equal part to any part of the world."⁷² Inducted into the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in 2000, he received the Governor-General's Award for Visual and Media Arts in March, 2005, and died a few months later of complications arising from diabetes.

⁷¹ Murray, *The Whale of Our Being*, 3.

⁷² Ibid., 38.

Chapter 3 – Revolving Sequential: Concepts of Time in the Art of Carl Beam

This chapter is composed of two sections. In the first section I address Beam's principal notions of time and describe his style. This is followed in the second section by an analysis of twelve of his works with additional theoretical commentary to elucidate his meaning.

Time was clearly something Beam reflected upon. Several works have the word 'time' in the title,⁷³ and he discussed time in most of his interviews. He also read books by Martin Heidegger, Stephen Hawking, James Joyce and Samuel Beckett in which time is a central theme.⁷⁴ And time became a vehicle, a "way in" for his attack on Western science.

I have identified five timeframes in Beam's work: 1) dream time, 2) scientific time, 3) autobiographical time, 4) political time and 5) disjuncture. I consider cyclical time to encompass all of these except for scientific time. Cyclical time (or Native time) relates to natural cycles (such as the seasons). In comparison to Western chronological concepts, it is circular rather than linear, experiential rather than abstract, mythical and spiritual rather than literal and secular.

1. **Dream time** is an integral part of traditional Native world view. Dreams such as those experienced in vision quests are considered important sources of personal

⁷³ For example: *Ain't It Funny How Time Slips Away*, 1978; *Dying in Time*, 1978; *Time Warp*, 1984 and *Time Dissolve*, 1992.

⁷⁴ Conversation with Anong Migwans Beam.

insight into the relationship between the metaphysical and physical world and are often the inspiration for paintings and dances.⁷⁵

2. **Scientific time** is one of the fundamental elements of Western science's method of breaking down the world into quantifiable segments and arranging them in hierarchical taxonomies and charts. An example of scientific time is clock time or industrial time which was originally invented by scientists for the purpose of scheduling trains. Greenwich Mean Time was adopted by the United Kingdom in 1880 and gradually expanded to the rest of the world.⁷⁶ Days and nights were divided into hourly segments for factory workers' shifts. Schools also followed clock time, with hourly interruptions to change class.

3. **Autobiographical or narrative time** refers to Beam's own personal experience of time during his life.

4. In **political time**, Beam sets out a cross-cultural and multi-chronic meditation on leadership and political change.

5. **Disjuncture**, the final timeframe, concerns overwhelming events that have engulfed human beings over the course of human history, such as the arrival of Christopher Columbus in "the New World", and the Holocaust. Beam uses them as metaphors and markers to comment on cataclysmic events that have occurred in Native history.

⁷⁵ This description is based on Berlo and Phillips, Chapter 1, "Cosmology", and Fixico, Chapter 1.

⁷⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenwich_Mean_Time (Accessed July 29, 2012).

The collage style of Beam's artworks creates "little puzzles, interesting little games".⁷⁷ To solve the puzzle or play the game, the viewer must discover the connections between the images. For example, in *Time Dissolve*, 1992, [PLATE 18] Beam juxtaposes an image of Lakota Sioux Chief Sitting Bull with one of President John F. Kennedy in order to signal the equality of status between the Native leader and the national one. As he said,

I use a collage working method as a way of interpreting the world...which is not a stationary viewpoint...the artist has a unique chance to say something in the collage format... it is actually like a dream time that exists in your mind...it gives you events that happened in time as monuments of real time...⁷⁸

Many of Beam's works are mixed media pieces composed with ink, water colour, acrylic, photographic images and found objects. His stream of consciousness technique reflects his thought process, which he relates to film technique, as it moves smoothly back and forth from past to present and back to past.⁷⁹ As noted earlier, he found the single point perspective of European, Renaissance style art too limiting; its illusionism had been created elsewhere and in an earlier time, and seemed insufficient to reflect the realities of the contemporary world.⁸⁰ Beam admired American abstract expressionist Barnett Newman⁸¹ who said, "we are freeing ourselves of the

⁷⁷ Ryan, *The Trickster Shift*, 151.

⁷⁸ Shelagh Young, "The Columbus Project Phase I," (Peterborough: Artspace, 1989), 13.

⁷⁹ Shelagh Young, "The Columbus Project Phase III," *Sub Rosa* Vol. 1, Winter (Peterborough: Artspace, 1992): 6.

⁸⁰ Conversation with Allan Ryan, July 12, 2012.

⁸¹ Young, "Columbus Project Phase I," 20.

impediments of [European] memory, association, nostalgia, legend myth or what have you, that have been the devices of Western European painting..."⁸²

Beam was a skilled painter, however he did not want viewers distracted by fine brushwork, saying,

Art at this point has to be appropriated...I refuse to draw and paint...because I don't want everybody to say, "Look how clever his hand is, can he ever draw...That's been a real stumbling block to people's goals for centuries...the message of the artwork is...addressed to anybody who wants to use a brain, who thinks, who has a heart. Hopefully, they'll get some resonance from Carl Beam artwork."⁸³

Beam emphasized flatness; his paintings exhibit no horizon line, frequently combining photographic images, energetic brushwork, an occasional diagonal slash and the artist's own handprint for emphasis. However, the chosen images are very often partially or completely obscured by a translucent wash of colour, or drips and splatters of paint or bleach. As Berlo and Phillips state in *Native North American Art*, "The drips, scratches and washes that partially overlay and obliterate his images signify the erosions of time and memory."⁸⁴ As figures in the paintings peer through these veils, so the viewer too strains to see the figures through the barriers created by the artist, barriers of time but also of culture and ideology.

In contrast to Beam's visual obstructions, his texts frequently communicate directly with the viewer. He often inscribed them across the surface of his paintings employing a paintbrush in the manner of Chinese artists. These texts are poetic but

⁸² Quoted by Robert Houle in *Land, Spirit, Power* from John P. O'Neill, ed. *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews* (New York: Knopf, 1990), 46.

⁸³ Murray, *The Whale of Our Being*, 38.

⁸⁴ Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 232.

informal, with occasional cross-outs and grammatical and spelling errors. According to Ann Beam, they were unplanned, spontaneous commentaries. They often refer to time -- the time of day or season or the distant “primordial” past; or they reflect on time itself, as in *The North American Iceberg*, [PLATE 2] where the phrase “revolving sequential” appears in large print, the two words brilliantly capturing the two contrasting world views: cyclical and segmented.

In an effort to communicate his complex ideas, Beam used certain motifs repeatedly, such as pyramids, Native chiefs, images of space exploration, bison and human skulls, whose meaning sometimes changed over time. By means of this visual vocabulary he investigated a wide variety of subjects, from Native creation stories and ancient Egypt to interplanetary travel. His most ubiquitous motifs are parallel horizontal lines, and numbers and letters that suggest an “interpretive framework”⁸⁵ of calibration and measurements typical of Western scientific knowledge systems. The letter ‘A’ appears in many works, for instance, referencing our “alphabet society” – his ironic comment on the belief that everything worth knowing can be expressed with the letters of the Roman alphabet. His use of seemingly arbitrary numbers was his way of commenting on the incompleteness, in his view, of Western scientific knowledge.

Images of heroic nineteenth century Native leaders are another important element in Beam’s visual vocabulary, especially Sioux holy man, Sitting Bull, who led his people in a successful attack against U.S. General George Armstrong Custer in the

⁸⁵ Richard Rhodes, *Carl Beam: The Columbus Boat* (Toronto: The Power Plant), 41.

Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876; and Apache leader, Geronimo, who fought the Mexican and U.S. governments for several decades as they encroached on more and more tribal land. As Beam noted, "My guides have been the wise men of tradition who interpret reality and get hold of meaningful things. They created their own methodologies, certain medicines, certain states of consciousness. They survived by interpreting reality."⁸⁶

Images of traffic lights, electric power meters, clocks and time-lapse photography are some of Beam's favoured symbols of time control. They illustrate the artist's delight in creating syncretic combinations of time as he invites the viewer to join him in his escape from the linearity of past, present and future time. For him, creating art was a kind of freedom from the shackles of time. While many of his contemporaries (Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, for example) were obsessed with speed and the loss of time and indeed, felt threatened by it, Beam seemed to escape from time. He accomplished this by inventing novel ways of making his own time.

To develop his artistic constructs that nevertheless contained a unifying idea, Beam often employed koans, or thought processes developed by Buddhist monks to attain original ideas through the avoidance of linear or rational thinking. By engaging in these illogical thought processes, he gained original insights into the questions that concerned him.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Elizabeth McLuhan, "Fragments: Portrait of an Artist in Time," *The Native Perspective* No. 3 (1978), 49.

⁸⁷ Conversation with Ann Beam.

Analysis of works

In the following pages, with reference to the designated timeframes, I offer an analysis of these twelve works by Beam:

1. **Dream time** - *Time Warp*, 1984 [PLATE 20];
2. **Scientific time** - $E=MC^2$, 1982, [PLATE 3] *The North American Iceberg*, 1985 [PLATE 2] and *Burying the Ruler*, 1992 [PLATE 17];
3. **Personal or auto-biographical time** - *Time Dissolve*, 1992 [PLATE 4], *Auto-biographical Errata*, 1997 [PLATE 5] and *Burying the Ruler*, 1991 [PLATE 25];
4. **Political time** - *Time Dissolve* 1991 [PLATE 18] and *Ain't it Funny How Time Slips By*, 1978 [PLATE 24];
5. **Disjuncture** - *Columbus Chronicles*, 1992 [PLATE 19], *Still Waiting for Godot*, 2001 [PLATE 26] and *Big Dissolve*, 2001 [PLATE 17].

1. Dream time

My analysis begins with *Time Warp*, 1984, the work that inspired this thesis and forms a lyrical introduction to Beam's unique approach to time. [PLATE 20] He created this immense acrylic painting on canvas, measuring three by twelve metres, for the Festival of Sharing on Manitoulin Island in 1984. The term "time warp" was coined by Albert Einstein to describe a bend or rupture in light as it travels through space. According to Einstein, time warp also allowed for movement between eras (this aspect features prominently in science fiction novels). Since Beam studied

Einstein's theories, the artist's fondness for portraying time as fading in and out could have, in part, been inspired by Einstein.

Time Warp is painted mainly in deep red and brown hues with secondary areas of yellow, white and blue. Thin washes and thicker paint create shapes that appear alternately closer and farther away, creating a palimpsest effect. Images shift from past to present and back again, drips evoke erasure and splatters add movement. Across these images, Beam inscribed a poetic text that invites the viewer into his dream time.

Reading the imagery from left to right, we see a horse, then a group of Native farmers, the artist's handprints with some numbers and blocks of colour, and finally a wedding party. Along the top, we see a frieze of bears. Superimposed on the three Native figures to the left, is the first of four handwritten texts, entitled LOGOS, meaning 'divine word' or 'discourse'.

The text reads:

again in 84 the dreams persisted and late in the vacant
afternoon of my mind I could hear the hollow voices.
at that point time was suspended, I was caught in the void
of absolute clarity; not mine, but belonging to the it of a priori
primordial.
'they' stood in a narrow crack of infinity and I could see one
pair of eyes,
how to describe them to myself, who forgot to feel these things
the light changed and I was in a yellow zone and the faint
images became clearer: Movement. A voice said nothing I could
understand, then looking harder now I could see a procession.
The voice said
'You see me now, and I see you, also.'
This made no sense to me, so I moved to the pink area making
no sound at all.....

To the left of centre is the second text under the letters R.H. (possibly for Right Hand – Beam poking fun at science?), a row of handprints (possibly a symbol of potency and creativity),⁸⁸ a sequence of numbers (2 through 8), and squares of yellow, red, green and blue, that reinforce the physical presence of the artist. The mysterious words continue in a dream-like fashion:

so it went in the Sunday
morning and a death of sorts occurred and if not
Known or felt is testament to the real death....

The text in the centre of the painting is entitled Poem for the Bastards Number 2.

Still dream-like, this verse foregrounds Beam's conversation with a bear:

Interview with the bear went very well. I was surprised to find out that he was very fond of singing.... 'the blueberrys in the sun on the hillside shining blueish....'
He said also, very clearly, in his new song:
'I am old, I do not remember who made me, and as I grow older my spring and summer your turn to fall....this is not all.....
I call no man chief, I have only one chief.
You will see him soon and you will come and you will have no voice.'
(I thought he was getting rather weird)
CONTINUE INTERVIEW
He then made himself as large as the sky
And sang what he called his 'power song'.
'What you do to me you do to yourself, no one listening, no one listening'
A white mist surrounded all at this point so I left for the yellow zone....

To the right is another of Beam's iconic images, a group of painted figures adapted from an archival photograph known as the 'Prairie Wedding'. A smiling Native woman is marrying a white man. Beside them, the final text reads:

⁸⁸ Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 77.

TIME WARP

sometime earlier in the afternoon the water things were
 appeased...
 Then a voice sounded close to my left ear saying "that I may
 hear the purple sun set"...
 Inner dialogue now racing...
 What meaning all the shifts, if unable to act in the
 present....what meaning if all there is, is the new
 incomprehension,
 and the junction of
 an
 X
 is nothing anyways
 except the momentary
 passing of two forces
 a warp occurred, so being nowhere, I said
 don't worry, let them have it all, it really
 does not mean a real thing, it passes
 over all heads, thus mute observers look.
 FEARFUL, COW-LIKE INCOMPREHENSION LOOKING
 FOR A GOOD PARTY to occur.....

On the far right, next to a vertical red and white bar resembling a land survey
 post, Beam has written: Carl Beam 84 still Lives.

Time Warp introduces viewers to Beam's dream time in which the artist creates
 separate "monuments in time" to refer to specific developments in Native history. The
 translucent drawing of the horse and its skeleton, similar to those in natural science
 textbooks, is overlaid with vertical drips of blood-red paint. The horse suggests a time
 when Native people (the Plains Cree, for example) depended on horses for hunting
 and transportation. Its skeleton and the vertical red drips suggest the death of
 equestrian hunting as a way of life. The artist could be parodying the scientific
 practice of labeling by adding the letters "H" for horse and "F" for flank, much as he
 does in the centre of the painting with the letters "R.H.", mentioned above.

To the right of the horse, three Native figures gaze out at the viewer. The archival photograph from the early 20th century, upon which this painted image is based, is known as the 'Graveside Figures' and is one that Beam employed several times. According to Diana Nemiroff, the three 'Graveside Figures' are Native people who were forced to become farmers in the 19th century. A cross marking a grave is partially visible in the foreground. Dressed in second-hand European-style clothing, these subsistence farmers lived on poor land assigned to them by the colonial government. To Nemiroff, it signified the change from "noble savage" to subsistence farmers, a sign of the success of assimilationist policies.⁸⁹ Curator Elizabeth McLuhan adds that in the 1960's Native farmers were known to some as "Uncle Tomahawks", a disparaging term, because of their willingness to become farmers; Beam, however, considered them "benign and beatific in their persecution"⁹⁰

To the right of this group is the wedding party. Four figures pose with an officer of the North West Mounted Police who is marrying a Native woman. For Beam, this wedding between Native and European was a symptom of the dispersion that led to more Native people leaving their home territories.⁹¹

'Poem for the Bastards Number 2' was Beam's original title for this mural.⁹² One might assume that the "Bastards" were the European colonizers. However, Diana Nemiroff suggests that they were most likely the National Gallery of Canada.⁹³ As

⁸⁹ Diana Nemiroff, Curatorial Files, NGC, (1985).

⁹⁰ McLuhan, *Altered Egos*, 11.

⁹¹ Hill et al, *The Poetics of Being*, 22.

⁹² Greg Hill, Curatorial Files, NGC (2007).

⁹³ Personal conversation with Diana Nemiroff, February 28, 2010.

mentioned earlier, when Beam painted *Time Warp* in 1984, the Gallery had not purchased any works by self-identified Native artists since 1927.

In the poem, the artist interviews a bear, a symbol of spiritual power. Beam knew the physical and spiritual power of bears from personal experience.⁹⁴ The bear was his spirit animal. The appearance and disappearance of the bears along the top of the painting could signify the power, through time, of oral traditions and Native spiritual ceremonies which survived more than a hundred years of prohibition by being performed in secret.

Native oral tradition was described by Saulteaux artist and curator Robert Houle as having a “lack of linear chronology”, and an “interchangeability of perception and rhythmical patterns of thought”.⁹⁵ Similar rhythmical patterns of thought are discernable in Beam’s poems. They are also expressed in *Time Warp* in the undulating pattern of the blood-red paint splatters, a few of which resemble musical notes. These splatters create rhythmical waves across the mural, connecting the visual images together. The effect is a weaving together of the various elements of Beam’s personal creative timescape, suggesting an echo of the bear’s power song.⁹⁶

I propose that *Time Warp* may, in fact, *be* a dream song. This idea is based on writings by three scholars of Native culture. According to Frances Densmore, dream

⁹⁴ *Aakideh: The Art and Legacy of Carl Beam*. A film by Paul Eichhorn and Robert Waldeck.

⁹⁵ Nemiroff, Houle, Townsend-Gault, *Land, Spirit, Power*, 44.

⁹⁶ In the film *Aakideh* Beam’s daughter Anong recalls Beam filling their home with his own guitar compositions, using them to “engage the abstract thinking level”. Music informed his artwork as well. For example, his solo retrospective at the National Gallery featured portraits of musicians he admired, including Robert Johnson, Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash and John Lennon. One of these works, *Turtles*, 2003, also includes a photograph of American ethnomusicologist Frances Densmore (c. 1925) recording one of hundreds of Native songs for the Smithsonian Institute in Washington.

songs communicate directly with the supernatural.⁹⁷ In addition, Anishinaabe scholar and writer, Gerald Vizenor describes Native dream songs as ‘moments of enlightenment’.⁹⁸ And finally, Vizenor scholar Kim Blaeser describes dream songs as “stemming from a moment of intense personal awareness which may have come during a dream or visionary experience”.⁹⁹ Each of these qualities could be applied to *Time Warp*.

In his last poem, Beam refers to “an X...the momentary passing of two forces”. While the X might also refer to the mark that some Native leaders employed to sign the treaties that resulted in Natives giving up their lands and being placed on reserves, (Beam references this with his inclusion of the survey post) it could also have a broader interpretation. A third possibility is that the X refers to the meeting between Native North Americans and Europeans in general, although it is doubtful that Beam would have described that meeting as a simple “momentary passing”. The disjuncture that the artist finds most disturbing at the time of painting *Time Warp*, however, is what he calls “the new incomprehension”, his frustration with people who do not pay attention to events in the present, who do not act but are merely “mute observers”.

To conclude, *Time Warp* draws the viewer’s attention to important markers in Native history such as the suppression of spiritual practices, assimilation, dispersion of Native people, and the dispossession of land. At the same time, it offers an alternative to the claustrophobic effect of Western science’s segmented time. By

⁹⁷ Kimberley M. Blaeser, *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 115.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

conflating primordial time, present time, musical time and spiritual time in his images and text, Beam invites the viewer to escape the limitations of scientific time by providing a more inclusive and expansive time, one that is constantly shifting to reveal the infinite capacity of the artist's imagination.

2. Scientific time

Beam's interrogation of Western time led him to Albert Einstein whose discoveries had proven existing theories of time wrong. Einstein's experiments showed that time, rather than being an absolute, actually varies according to context; it changes according to the location of the observer.¹⁰⁰ This discovery that shattered previous scientific notions of time may have given Beam hope that other dominant European interpretations of science and history might also be challenged.

In 1982, two years before painting *Time Warp*, Beam created *E=MC², 1982* [PLATE 3] a work that references his early investigations of Western science. This watercolour enshrines an image of Einstein in a rectangular box set inside a combination triangle/pyramid. His most famous equation, $E=MC^2$, is stenciled in large letters above his profile, while a row of squares in the form of another equation appears below. Four empty squares equal four empty squares. To the right, the artist scrawled the mathematical signs for addition, multiplication and a zero. To the left, in cursive writing, he inscribed a paragraph of thirteen lines from German philosopher

¹⁰⁰ This description is taken from the NASA website: http://science.nasa.gov/science-news/science-at-nasa/2011/04may_epic/, (accessed 13:54, 2012/07/15).

Martin Heidegger's 1927 work, *Being and Time*, including the page number from the 1962 English translation.¹⁰¹

Beam has given Einstein and his famous equation about energy, mass and velocity a place of honour but has undercut this with his own ironic equations, one that equals zero and another made of empty boxes. The artist seems to suggest that, even though Einstein is highly revered in the West, his theories mean nothing to Beam at this time. A few years later, however, Beam seemed to view Einstein very differently, using such terms as "relative" as a metaphor for an opening up of possibilities.

Einstein's theories had an enormous impact on science and its concept of time. Following his discoveries, the laws of physics had to be rewritten. Time was now dependent on context. For Beam, the implications of Einstein's discoveries meant that not only was time changeable, but science, the ultimate expression of Western superiority, the ultimate truth of the imperial world view that he would have been force fed at school, was proven to be permeable. Instead of a symbol of irrelevant equations and empty numbers, Einstein became a symbol of revolution, of possibilities.

Heidegger's words, however, may have resonated profoundly with the artist because of Beam's experience as a Native person. In the excerpt from *Being and Time*, Heidegger critiques the beliefs of ethnologists, specifically their tendency to have preconceived notions about so-called "primitive peoples" instead of the objectivity

¹⁰¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Trans. MacQuarrie and Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962), 76.

they claimed. Beam had read Heidegger's book, in which the philosopher investigates the qualities that differentiate human beings from things or objects. One of the differences he identifies is the human capacity to care. In the book, the name of his caring human being is Dasein.

Heidegger writes on page 76, "...ethnology operates with definite preliminary conceptions and interpretations of human Dasein in general, even in first 'receiving' its material, and in sifting it and working it up."

Beam's inscription quotes the subsequent paragraph (*italics are Heidegger's*):

Moreover, even primitive Dasein has possibilities of a Being which is not of the everyday kind, and it has a specific everydayness *of its own*. To orient the analysis of Dasein towards the 'life of primitive peoples' can have positive significance as a method because 'primitive phenomena' are often less concealed and less complicated by extensive self-interpretation on the part of the Dasein in question. Primitive Dasein often speaks to us more directly in terms of a primordial absorption in 'phenomena' (taken in a pre-phenomenological sense). A way of conceiving things which seems, perhaps, rather clumsy and crude from our standpoint, can be positively helpful in bringing out the ontological structures of phenomena in a genuine way.¹⁰²

In the first quote, Heidegger accuses ethnologists of approaching their subjects with "definite preliminary conceptions and interpretations". In the paragraph quoted by Beam, the philosopher goes on to discuss 'primitive peoples', suggesting that their straightforward way of conceiving things is less complicated and more genuine than the complexity of the European one. Heidegger seems concerned that any preconceptions held by ethnologists could lead them to consider their subjects and their cultures as inferior and backward. The term for this essentializing approach is

¹⁰² Ibid., 76.

“time distancing”, a subject discussed by Dutch anthropologist Johann Fabian in his 1983 book, *Time and the Other*.¹⁰³

Fabian criticized ethnologists and fellow anthropologists for assuming a position of superiority in relation to their subjects, and for describing their cultures as existing in the past, as if they were dead. He equated time with power in capitalist societies and demanded that anthropologists change: instead of considering the same societies at different stages of development, they should approach them “as different societies facing each other at the same time.”¹⁰⁴

Beam addressed this same issue in one of his most powerful statements regarding time. In a 1993 interview with John K. Grande, he said:

Time distancing is the model used to displace native people from contemporary reality by making us into museum pieces. It’s at the crux of a lot of problems. If Indian people can be made to inhabit an inauthentic time, to seem to not belong to the present and be living outside our time, then it’s easy to believe we have no real title to our land in the present reality. I know that I live in the same time as anybody else, that I’m not something left over from the Stone Age.¹⁰⁵

The four images of bare-breasted Native women wearing elaborate traditional necklaces and arm bands that appear in Beam’s monumental mixed-media work on Plexiglas, *The North American Iceberg*, 1985 [PLATE 2] (discussed earlier) illustrate the idea of time distancing.¹⁰⁶ These negative, stereotypical images contrast with three compelling portraits of Beam, an actual contemporary Native person. Beam

¹⁰³ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

¹⁰⁴ Fabian, 155.

¹⁰⁵ Grande, 21.

¹⁰⁶ The archival images of Native subsistence farmers from *Time Warp* also reflect this idea.

invites the viewer to note the familiar, dated images of Native people that often appeared in the media, and contrast them with a real Native person (the artist), living in the present.¹⁰⁷

Another example of time distancing can be seen in *C*, 1991 [PLATE 21]. The mixed-media work on paper was one of many pieces in Beam's *The Columbus Boat* exhibition, mounted at Toronto's Power Plant Gallery during the Columbus Quincentenary in 1992. The upper section of *C* features a large photo of the 19th century American anthropologist Frank Hamilton Cushing (thus the title), standing behind two Native men. Dressed in ceremonial regalia, the Native men are seated to either side of the Euro-American man whose full length figure appears in elegant nineteenth century attire. While placed in front, the Natives have nevertheless been put in a subordinate position and thus made to look inferior, as if they are prized cultural specimens from the past. A network of lines and numbers drawn across the image symbolizes the stifling Western science that Beam disdains.

Time distancing can be seen in numerous other works including *In the Yellow Memories of the Past*, 1978, [PLATE 22] where the artist juxtaposes a stereotypical image of Indian warriors on horseback with a Polaroid photograph of a contemporary Native father and son fishing.

While Beam was steeped in Anishinaabe culture, his intellectual investigations during the years leading up to the Columbus Quincentenary led from Heidegger and Einstein to other European authors such as Stephen Hawking, James Joyce and Samuel

¹⁰⁷ Although, the comparison of these contemporary images to a police mug shot can also be considered negative and stereotypical.

Beckett. This in turn brought a deepened understanding of the Western viewpoint, and the realization that he himself was also steeped in Western ways of thinking. This may be what Beam was trying to convey when he placed himself in the centre of a clock in one of his *Burying the Ruler* works. [Plate 17] Beam created this series between 1989 and 1992. These ironic videos, prints and paintings all reference the various meanings of the word 'ruler', with its connotations of sovereign, measuring tool and teacher's instrument for punishing students. They frequently feature a photograph of the artist standing shirtless, in jeans and sandals, wearing his distinctive leather Stetson hat and holding a ruler in his hand. The photograph was taken by Ann Beam in the New Mexico desert. This particular version of *Burying the Ruler* appeared in the exhibition *Land Spirit Power*. It is a large photo emulsion piece with the full-length figure of the artist wrapped in white light in the centre, breaking through the blackness of the background. Around his image are the four cardinal numbers of a clock: 12, 3, 6, and 9. The four sacred colours are inscribed above Beam's head and traditional Anishnaabe designs -- the zigzag symbol for lightning or spirit power, two small thunderbirds, and a Native equal-armed cross -- are secreted among the lines, drips and scratches of the border. The clock numbers are partially hidden in the same manner as the Anishinaabe motifs. I believe that this mysterious work suggests the overwhelming, almost totalizing obstacles faced by the contemporary Native artist who nevertheless overcomes the 'rulers' and rules that surround him. It may also convey Beam's view that neither his mind nor his works are limited to Native or Western concepts of time or culture but include both and more. For Beam, unlike

Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg, time is not limited to the present, but includes events from primordial time, the recent past, and even clock time. These other temporal references contribute to Beam's expanded, multi-dimensional sense of time.

During his preparations for the Columbus Quincentenary, Beam was introduced to the writings of French philosopher, Jean-François Lyotard whose writings on postmodern art, Western scientific knowledge and narrative knowledge "simplified things" for Beam.¹⁰⁸

Lyotard's statements about art resonated strongly with Beam. For example, in *Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*, 1979, the author states:

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable. A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to determining judgments, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done*.¹⁰⁹

Although this passage does not dwell on temporal questions, it is worth examining here because it relates so immediately to what I believe Beam sought to convey in his art. For instance, Beam did not seek to console the viewer with familiar elements like beauty, horizon lines, the illusionism of single point perspective or even

¹⁰⁸ Young, "Phase III", 2.

¹⁰⁹ Jean-François Lyotard, "The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge," *Theory and History of Literature*, v. 10 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 81.

fine brushwork. His collages present “the unrepresentable” both in style and subject matter. He gives the viewer a phalanx of images that, if not exactly unfamiliar, are combined with others in unfamiliar juxtapositions in order to present “unrepresentable” reflections of the past and present. Nor does he depend on the “consensus of taste” of European-based art but, like some other North American contemporary artists, (Newman, Rauschenberg and Johns included) he creates his own visual vocabulary, his own “rules” to communicate his meaning.

Another topic that preoccupied both Lyotard and Beam was the dominance of science as *the* method for describing reality. Lyotard critiqued science as a discourse based on the ideology of progress. To him, science had veered away from its original intent of progress for all of mankind and had instead become mired in benefitting only the powerful. He cites the atrocities of Auschwitz as an example of where science has taken humanity. Lyotard’s commentary would have appealed to Beam as a Native person because one of the characteristics of the scientific method that Lyotard objected to was its segmentation of time into periods and dates. He discussed its tendency to address the “new” and to forget the past, to reset the clock to zero, to begin afresh instead of “working through” past mistakes and learning from them. Instead, he affirmed narrative or experiential knowledge and storytelling which involve repetition and the creation of a “set of pragmatic rules that constitutes the social bond”.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 21.

3. Personal Time

From the beginning of his artistic career Beam emphasized the auto-biographical, or personal experience of time in his work.¹¹¹ Lyotard's writing on the narrative mode would have affirmed this for him. In an interview with curator Shelagh Young, Beam described the narrative mode as encompassing

an [account] of a person being raised by the family, comforted as they grew up...[knowledge] gained from just being born, and being cared for and being in the group – the real knowledge of caring, listening, talking, story telling...that might fall within the narrative mode.¹¹²

One work that reflects this concept of the narrative or experiential mode is *Time Dissolve* 1992. [PLATE 4] It features in the upper quarter of the canvas a Renaissance portrayal of the Lamentation of Christ under which Beam places a cascade of black and white photographic images of his extended family and school mates, circling some of them in red and identifying them by name. In his desire to represent the narrative mode, Beam seems to forget his past aversion to Renaissance art and to recognize the care, knowledge and time he has received from those close to him. As well, his title *Time Dissolve*, could suggest that, despite the differences in age of those portrayed, because they are all family and friends, these differences dissolve over time. Each of the photographic images refers to a particular time in the life of the artist, such as his time at residential school, visits with uncles and aunts and holidays in a trailer. He does not reference the years. Instead, the photographs represent

¹¹¹ Additional works include: *Self-Portrait in my Christian Dior Bathing Suit*, 1980, *Meltdown*, 1984 and *Auto-biographical Note*, 1984 in the *Altered Egos* catalogue.

¹¹² Young, Phase III, 2.

“monuments in time”¹¹³ while they also provide evidence of the contemporaneity of his life as a Native person. He tells the viewer that his youth was similar to that of the average North American. This may be Beam’s way of “impart[ing] a stronger sense of the unrepresentable” (Lyotard’s phrase) and of bridging the gap of understanding between himself as a Native person and Euro-American viewers.

In a later, more complex work, *Auto-biographical Errata*, 1997 [PLATE 5], Beam exposes what he viewed as the superficiality of science’s numbers, letters and graphs by combining them with images of narrative knowledge in the form of ancient Native myth and maternal loving care. It features an enormous turtle, “on whose back the world was created in Ojibwa legend, a spirit medium”.¹¹⁴ Above the turtle is a photographic image also seen in *Time Dissolve* and other works, of Beam playing cowboy at age five standing beside his mother who holds his baby sister Joanie. Between this family portrait and the turtle, a hand written text reflects his early struggle to assert his individuality (the dots and brackets are Beam’s):

autobiographical errata – my mother and my baby sister Joanie, around 1949 or 1948.....when I was young I liked the idea of (or possibility of) unique, individual action without too much recourse to the group, contrary to what I was indoctrinated into, there did not seem much possibility of this, however, given the phobia for conformity in its worst forms, state, original sin, etc... I remember those times and I sense that the times seemed very yellow, like a haze was over everything.....

¹¹³ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁴ Nemiroff, National Gallery of Canada curatorial files.

Penciled columns containing thin washes of orange and pink partially obscure both images and text while a graph line that traces the ups and downs of Beam's life from 1943 to 1990 moves across the photograph of mother and children. The work is framed on the sides by vertical silver lines and exquisitely drawn microscopic numbers and circles. As with the farmers in *Time Warp*, mother and son peer out at the viewer, straining to see through the ubiquitous veil of coloured washes, lines and numbers, while the viewer is required to do the same.

Auto-biographical Errata echoes a 1991 interview with curator Shelagh Young (mentioned previously) in which Beam proposed to "graph out the correlation between image, word and thought".¹¹⁵ Here, the image of Beam's caring mother helps the viewer comprehend Lyotard's notion of narrative knowledge, which itself echoes Heidegger's caring figure of Dasein. In an earlier work, the etching *Self-Portrait as John Wayne, Probably*, 1990, [PLATE 23] from *The Columbus Suite* exhibition, Beam featured an image of himself as a five year old cowboy which he extracted from the original family photograph discussed above.¹¹⁶

In a related story recounted in *The Trickster Shift*, Allan J. Ryan quotes Beam talking about himself at five years of age: "People may say, 'He knows now that he didn't know who he was when he was five years old.' But at that time you didn't see any positive images of Indians doing anything. I didn't want to be the guy getting

¹¹⁵ Young, Phase III, 6.

¹¹⁶ The self-portrait includes four small images set out below the larger one of Beam as a young cowboy: from left to right, 1) necroman (a bison/man, Beam's symbol of transformation through death), 2) a portrait of Beam taken in 1990, 3) a spirit dancer from the southwest, 4) a group of friends from residential school. These images enrich this self-portrait by adding spiritual and social elements; they also create a triple self-portrait of the artist at three different times in his life.

shot off the horse, dragged through the fucking mud. You had to choose one or the other".¹¹⁷

In *Auto-biographical Errata*, however, he includes both his mother and baby sister. These additions could suggest that when he was younger he might have struggled to be an independent individual, but at this time in his life he acknowledges the importance of family, affirming Lyotard's "narrative mode" or social bond.

As mentioned previously, Lyotard was one of many writers that Beam referenced in interviews. While Joyce and Beckett addressed the impact of time on everyday life, Heidegger concluded that we can only understand time in relation to death. Beam's meditations on personal time and mortality, however, took him in a different direction. In *Ain't It Funny How Time Slips Away*, 1978, [PLATE 24] an ironic work quoting Willie Nelson's famous blues song from the 1960's, Beam positions a full length version of himself as necroman (part man, part buffalo skull), next to a column of four images including an archival photograph of Native people in traditional dress, a buffalo and two images of himself, one of which is of his own skull. A similar sense of mortality seeps into several subsequent works as a kind of ironic memento mori anticipating his imminent death, reinforced by short textual references such as, "the artist flying still" in *Iceberg*, "Carl Beam still lives" above his signature in *Time Warp* and "we...were not completely done yet" in *Meltdown*, 1984. In addition, his wife Ann

¹¹⁷ Ryan, 41.

recalled him warning her that he only expected to live another five years after they met.¹¹⁸ In actuality, he lived another twenty-five years.

Beam's references to mortality contain an additional critique of Western science, specifically with regard to anthropology. In the nineteenth century, anthropologists and ethnologists referred to Native North Americans as a dying race and collected their objects to preserve them in museums the same way that bees, birds and butterflies became artifacts in natural history museums. Beam is being ironic as he repeatedly points out to Euro-American viewers that he is not dying, but "flying still" and that he "is not completely done yet". He reinforces this irony in the text of *Burying the Ruler*, 1991 [PLATE 25] where he inscribed: "the wonder of it is that we are not dead yet and this must be some kind of miracle...or in this case...after all these many years the marvel is that...I still am (see be)". He thus celebrates his feat of outliving science's expectations both by his own presence and in the ability of his art to outlive his own death.

4. Political Time

Beam's concept of history, like that of most Native histories, was more inclusive than mainstream history. It included images from both mainstream and Native history. Like Lyotard, Beam considered dates and periodization to be Eurocentric and irrelevant. Instead of a linear series of dates, he (like Deborah Doxtator¹¹⁹ and Donald Fixico¹²⁰) envisioned the accumulation of events over time.

¹¹⁸ *Aakideh: The Art and Legacy of Carl Beam*.

¹¹⁹ Doxtator, Podruchny, Warkentin, *Decentring the Renaissance*, 39.

¹²⁰ Fixico, *American Indian Mind*, 22.

He described Native history at a conference on the West Coast, quoted by Shelagh

Young:

it gives you events that happened in time as monuments in real time...For a Native person, if you raised a (totem) pole... it's an event itself...it means something to the community. They don't remember it as: this pole was erected in 1979. They have no idea when it was raised but they can all remember why it was raised.¹²¹

Major political and historical events took place during Beam's lifetime, among them, the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981, the Vietnam war of 1955-1975, the assassinations of American President John F. Kennedy in 1963 and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King in 1968, the Oka crisis in 1990 and more recently, the attacks of September 11, 2001. Beam studied these events and images of them became signifiers of time in his art. He also witnessed the human rights marches in the U.S. in the 1960's and other progressive events in Canada, such as amendments to the Indian Act in 1951, the Native right to citizenship in 1960 and the inclusion of the rights of Native, Inuit and Metis peoples in the Constitution of Canada in 1982.

Reflecting on these events, Beam said:

If you have your own face next to a rocket, if you have your own face next to the Sadat assassination, this to me, implies that one...has to have personal responsibility for world events. You have to respond personally. Everybody eventually has to learn how to respond or to filter what's happening through their own senses.¹²²

I referred previously to the images of time distancing in *The North American Iceberg*, 1985 (PLATE 2). This important work is also concerned with a specific event

¹²¹ Young, *Phase I*, 6.

¹²² McLuhan, *Altered Egos*, 5.

in time which concerned the politics of Canadian art and contemporary Native art in particular. Beam painted *Iceberg* following the 1985 exhibition, *The European Iceberg* at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), which featured contemporary Italian and German artists, then little known among the general public.¹²³ The exhibition enraged Beam who accused both the AGO and the National Gallery of Canada of being obsessed with European art at the expense of Canadian artists. He went so far as to challenge the National Gallery to purchase *Iceberg*, not as Native art but as contemporary art. Diana Nemiroff, curator of contemporary art at the National Gallery at the time, was quoted later as saying, “Carl had a sense of humour, but he also had the sharp, critical sense that there was another iceberg buried that we weren’t paying attention to, and it involved battles, conquest, [and] uneasy cohabitation”.¹²⁴ Clearly, Beam was determined to bring the “unpresentable” battles, conquest, and uneasy cohabitation to the attention of the Canadian public. The dark red brush strokes and drips that animate *The North American Iceberg* remind the viewer of the blood of Native history. His three self-portraits as mug shots, the Native people forced to become subsistence farmers, and the freeze frame photos of eagles and elk symbolize the oppression he observed during his lifetime. They reflect the destructive consequences of a colonial and political mindset. His enlarged text at the bottom, “REVOLVING SEQUENTIAL”, implies that these disastrous consequences are repeated again and again.

¹²³ Beam criticized the AGO for including a work by German conceptual artist, Lothar Baumgarten, in which the names of Aboriginal nations were painted on the ceiling of a rotunda. Beam viewed this as cultural appropriation by a European artist in a gallery that, up to that time, had refused to exhibit works by Aboriginal artists.

¹²⁴ Nemiroff, National Gallery of Canada curatorial files.

A later work, also containing political implications, *Time Dissolve*, 1992 (different from a work of the same name mentioned earlier) [PLATE 18] is dominated by a large image of a painting of the Crucifixion by Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506), an Italian Renaissance painter. Along the top and forming a partial frame for the work, Beam positioned images of Einstein, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Sitting Bull, Kennedy and Nelson Mandela. Three large bees, Beam's symbols of patterned behaviour and scientific collection and display, appear under the Mantegna along with some seemingly arbitrary numbers. On the left side and along the bottom of the work the artist includes numerous small drawings and photographs of birds, another crucifix, a fetus, three missionaries with Native men in headdresses, a grid, elk, Chief Wolf Robe and a raven.

This work was featured in *Land Spirit Power* in 1992 and again in the retrospective, *Carl Beam: The Poetics of Being* in 2010, both at the National Gallery of Canada. Beam may have chosen Mantegna's crucifixion because it was painted during Columbus' lifetime. It could also represent the spread of Christianity throughout North and South America with the concomitant suppression of indigenous belief systems. The row of leaders along the top (none of whom is Canadian) would appear to be examples of great men who changed the world. The artist may be suggesting that they accomplished this by thinking in new, (non-linear) ways that made change possible (such as the theory of relativity, an end to slavery and the fight for civil rights). Streams of bleach obscure the Crucifixion and the bees, suggesting Beam's

disdain for the violence of the Crucifixion and the old, patterned thinking represented by the bees.

The title *Time Dissolve* is also intriguing. To dissolve implies that something disappears. This may contain a positive message. Beam could be suggesting that time dissolves divisions and barriers that separate. He could also be expressing his hope that old, divisive patterns of thinking will dissolve if linear thinking also dissolves and is replaced by more creative thinkers such as Mandela and Einstein.

Beam's inclusion of Einstein as one of the heroes reveals how his views had changed since 1982. In $E=MC^2$, 1982, Einstein's image was accompanied by two worthless equations, whereas by 1992 he had become one of Beam's heroes who is subsequently featured in several more of his paintings and prints.

5. Disjuncture

In the late 1980's, as Beam considered the enormous implications of Columbus' arrival in 1492, he was drawn to other major events whose impact changed the direction of world history. He employed symbols of these events to call attention to similar life-changing occurrences in Native history. These primary referents included the crucifixion of Christ, the dominating influence of the Renaissance, Columbus' arrival in the Americas, Einstein's discovery of the theory of relativity, and the bombing of Hiroshima. Einstein's theoretical term 'disjuncture', which relates to objects travelling fast enough to bend light, seems a suitably emblematic word to describe these overwhelming events.

Columbus Chronicles, 1992, [PLATE 19] one of Beam's mixed-media meditations on disjuncture, was exhibited in both *Land, Spirit, Power* and *Carl Beam: The Poetics of Being* in 2010. The top third of the work consists of an image of the devastated city of Hiroshima. The word HIROSHIMA is stenciled in upper case white letters at the top, underlining the impossibility of recognizing the obliterated city. The artist degraded an aerial photograph of Hiroshima by applying a flood of bleach that streams from the top to the bottom of the work. Beneath and to the left, is an image of Columbus in a familiar posthumous portrait dressed in his distinctive hat and fur-trimmed cloak, his hand upon his chest. On the far right is the Southern Cheyenne Chief Wolf Robe in traditional dress.¹²⁵ Between these two large figures is the image of an 1899 American five dollar bill that featured an image of Chief Running Antelope, "the only American banknote to include an image of a Native American".¹²⁶ Underneath are four large bees and a traffic light. The title of the work in stenciled brown letters is inscribed across three of the bees. The colours, as in other works of *The Columbus Project*, are monochromatic: extremely thin washes of grey, pink, brown and black, with a row of four small patches of sacred colours above the image of Wolf Robe.

Beam's title for the work is ironic. The Collins dictionary defines a chronicle as "a record or register of events in chronological order".¹²⁷ In the painting, events are emblematic and the order is definitely not chronological. Beam has once again

¹²⁵ Hill et al., *The Poetics of Being*, 24

¹²⁶ Ibid., Note 45, p. 33.

¹²⁷ <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/chronicle>. (Accessed March 15, 2012).

constructed his own order of events and juxtaposed them in a manner that engages the viewer. It is one of his most pessimistic works.

Beam equates the arrival of Columbus with the devastation caused by the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945. As Nemiroff states, the effect of the expansionist and religious initiative introduced by Columbus' arrival was, for Native Americans, "no less than that of Hiroshima and the destruction of everything they [the Japanese] knew".¹²⁸ The five dollar bill is a reflection of the price Native North Americans paid: "the economic exploitation of new territories".¹²⁹

Beam thus expresses two major concepts that exist in his mind as part of Native history. Hiroshima is a metaphor for both the final threat posed by science and the genocide that took place in the years after Columbus' arrival in the Americas. Nothing escapes the obliteration of his streams of bleach.¹³⁰

The painting echoes the words of Maori researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith in her 1999 book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*:

...colonialism brought complete disorder to colonized peoples, disconnecting them from their histories, their landscapes, their languages, their social relations and their own ways of thinking, feeling and interacting with the world. It was a process of systematic fragmentation which can still be seen in the disciplinary carve-up of the indigenous world: bones, mummies and skulls to the museums, art work to private collectors, languages to linguistics, 'customs' to anthropologists, beliefs and behaviours to psychologists...

¹²⁸ Nemiroff, National Gallery of Canada curatorial files.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ This concept can also be related to the theme of *Anne Frank (1929-1945)*, 1987, mentioned at the beginning of this thesis.

Fragmentation is not a phenomenon of postmodernism as many might claim. For indigenous people, fragmentation has been the consequence of imperialism.¹³¹

From his focus on the destruction of the Holocaust, Hiroshima and Native peoples, Beam began to reflect on the destruction of the natural world. He chose a whale as a symbol of nature. He described the gigantic whale in the 2002 exhibition, *The Whale of our Being*, as “a global image containing all experience.”¹³² As such, it could be understood as relating to “primordial” time in the *Time Warp* poem and the ancient turtle of creation in *Auto-biographical Errata*.

In *Still Waiting for Godot*, 2001 [PLATE 26], painted soon after the events of September 11, 2001 for the 2002 exhibition, *The Whale of our Being* at the McLaughlin Art Gallery in Oshawa, Beam juxtaposes images of the whale with Samuel Beckett and a poster of Osama Bin Laden, the FBI’s “MOST WANTED FUGITIVE” and “THE FACE OF EVIL”. The word SUMMA is stenciled in the top left corner of the work. Pale grey and pink washes form a consistent veil, except for the Bin Laden poster which is a clearer image. Violent scratches as well as a series of parallel lines can be seen on the image of the whale. In this work, Beam addresses a disjuncture of the present instead of the past. His image of Beckett, author of the play, *Waiting for Godot*, (in which two men wait for someone called Godot who never does appear) symbolizes the spiritual emptiness Beam feels has become part of the disjunctive present. By including the Bin Laden poster

¹³¹ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 28.

¹³² Murray, *The Whale of Our Being*, 3.

and the phrase “FACE OF EVIL”, I believe Beam points to a simplistic approach (bad versus good) that was applied to the events of September 11.

The final piece in this analysis is *Big Dissolve*, 2001, [PLATE 27] also created for *The Whale of our Being* exhibition. It is a large work, measuring 213.5 by 335.5 cm., with a single gigantic whale floating paradoxically at the top of the painting drenched in thin washes of acrylic that cascade from the top to the bottom of the painting. Below the whale the artist has placed a row of numbers, three colour patches and a short hand-written inscription: “the big dissolve: the little pieces and the little pixels all worked in a weird harmony, leaving only a memory of an incomplete poetry...Carl Beam 2002.”

I conclude with this work because it seems to complete two circles in Beam’s thinking. The first relates to cyclical concepts in the dream time of *Time Warp* and his interview with the bear. In the power song, the bears says, “what you do to me you do to yourself.” I believe this phrase connects with Beam’s statement almost twenty years later, when he explained his idea of the whale to Joan Murray: “*The Whale of our Being* includes whatever has happened to the whale, which in some kind of way happens to everything else.”¹³³ Bear and whale both signify that, in Beam’s cyclical view of time, whatever we do to nature, nature will do to us.

The second circle begins with the 1982 article on Beam by T.M. Collins entitled “No More Walden” in which the artist described himself as “one man fragments...there

¹³³ Ibid., 3.

are all the little pieces...[the] puzzle will eventually come together.”¹³⁴ And later, in *Big Dissolve*, 2001, the pieces and pixels (of time, of nature) “all worked [together] in a weird harmony” for Beam. It could also be Beam’s acknowledgement of the digital age which was emerging in 2002.

Conclusion

Beam investigated the concept of time, something that often evoked anxiety and fear in other artists, and played with it. His works reveal the vulnerability of Eurocentric, linear thought. His meditations on dream time, scientific time, personal time, political time and disjuncture expand our notions of time. Instead of considering the past as irrelevant and the present as most important, his juxtapositions of different times and events interact with each other in the mind of the viewer to produce new meanings and new insights into time’s possibilities. His practice of using koans to create complex visual metaphors makes his paintings particularly challenging to the viewer. In addition, he repeats certain images in new combinations as his knowledge and experience of the world expands. His grounding in narrative knowledge and cyclical time enables him to make logical leaps back and forth in time and sustain his ability to express his concepts as metaphors. His belief that we are currently living in the dark ages, and his hope that in the future we will move into a more spiritual age, is also part of his vision.¹³⁵ He saw himself as an agent of change

¹³⁴ Collins, “No More Walden,” 7.

¹³⁵ Young, *Phase I*, 20.

and his desire for viewers to acknowledge Native history and to value Native cultural and spiritual elements is illustrated throughout his oeuvre.

During my research into Carl Beam's artworks, several topics presented themselves for future study. For example, rewarding research could be done on the work of subsequent contemporary native artists whose work has been inspired by Beam. Alternatively, a comparison could be made between the treatment of time in Beam's work and that of Norval Morrisseau. Productive too would be an analysis of the spiritual elements in Beam's work. However, to me the most satisfying project would be a study of Beam's numerous inscriptions or texts, many of which I find speak directly to the viewer.

PLATES

PLATE No. 1 *Anne Frank (1929-1945)*

Plate No. 2 *The North American Iceberg*, 1985

Plate No. 3 $E=MC^2$, 1982

Plate No. 4 *Time Dissolve*, 1992

Plate No. 5 *Auto-biographical Errata*, 1997

Plate No. 6 Medicine Wheel

Plate No. 8 Joseph Beuys. *I Like America and America Likes Me*, 1974

Plate No. 9 Jasper Johns. *Green Target*, 1955

Plate No. 10 Jasper Johns. *Land's End*, 1963

Plate No. 11 Robert Rauschenberg. *Bicycle*, 1963

Plate No. 12 Robert Rauschenberg. *Ace*, 1962

Plate No. 13 Robert Rauschenberg. *Hot Shot*, 1983

Plate No. 14 Robert Rauschenberg, *Third Time Painting*, 1962

Plate No. 15 Robert Rauschenberg. *Reservoir*, 1961

Plate No. 16 *Burying the Ruler*, 1991

Plate No. 17 *Burying the Ruler*, 1992

Plate No. 18 *Time Dissolve*, 1992

Plate No. 19 *Columbus Chronicles*, 1992

Plate No. 20 *Time Warp*, 1984 (right and left sides)

Plate No. 21 C, 1991

Plate No. 22 *In the Yellow Memories of the Past*, 1978

Plate No. 23 *Self-Portrait as John Wayne, Probably, 1990*

Plate No. 24 *Ain't It Funny How Time Slips Away*, 1978

Plate No. 25 *Burying the Ruler*, 1991

Plate No. 26 *Still Waiting for Godot*, 2001

Plate No. 27 *Big Dissolve*, 2001

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