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***Art of this Land* and the Exhibition of Aboriginal Art
at the National Gallery of Canada**

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by

Jessica Hines B.F.A.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
In Canadian Art History

Carleton University

OTTAWA, Ontario

August 20, 2004

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Abstract

In June of 2003, the National Gallery of Canada officially opened a reinstallation of its permanent exhibition of Canadian art. This project, entitled *Art of this Land*, incorporates for the first time works by Aboriginal artists as equal contributors to Canadian art history. This thesis contextualizes and analyses the new installation by providing a detailed history of the Gallery's inclusion of Aboriginal art in its installations and exhibitions from 1927 onwards and by employing the method of reading museum exhibitions developed by Mieke Bal to explore the reinstallation in terms of its strategies, messages and motivations. It is argued that the history of the display of Aboriginal art at the National Gallery of Canada preceding *Art of this Land* can be divided into three consecutive phases and that *Art of this Land* offers a new approach to the exhibition of Aboriginal art and signals the beginning of a fourth phase.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people without whose help this project would not have been possible. I extend my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Ruth Phillips, whose interest, encouragement and positive attitude made this entire process enjoyable. My utmost appreciation goes to the staff of the National Gallery of Canada, especially Cyndie Campbell, Greg Hill, Denise Leclerc, and Anne Newlands who shared their valuable time and resources with me on innumerable occasions. Finally I would like to thank my friends and family who were very supportive and understanding of my dedication to this endeavour.

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I. Preface

I've always thought of museums as odd and fascinating institutions. They are a testament to a particular culture's perception of itself and the world around it. This perception, however, is ever-changing. What I find most intriguing is the continual process of renewal in which museums must be engaged in order to maintain relevance to the society(ies) they represent.

When I began my graduate studies several such renewal projects were underway in Ontario and were already creating quite a buzz among members of the arts and heritage community. Three of these projects entailed developing displays about Aboriginal peoples. These were the *First Peoples Hall* at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, *Meeting Ground*, a reinstallation of the R. Samuel McLaughlin gallery in the Canadian wing of the Art Gallery of Ontario, and *Art of this Land* a reinstallation of the Canadian galleries of the National Gallery of Canada. These three projects seemed to signal a major new trend in museums. My interest in these projects led me to request a practicum at the National Gallery with Greg Hill, one of the curators for *Art of this Land*, so that I could study one of these occurrences firsthand. My placement primarily consisted of writing text for the extended labels for some of the Aboriginal art entering the Gallery. This enabled me to be a witness to and a participant in a historic transformation of the Gallery. It also enriched my awareness of the project's contributors, records and procedures.

Even though I realized that *Art of this Land* would not have had time to generate much critical response, I decided to analyze the project as it was still evolving and as people were still engrossed in its formation. This permitted me to capture the details of a

significant moment in time of the Gallery's history and an understanding of the relevance it held at the time of its undertaking. It is hoped that this thesis will contribute to the history of Aboriginal representation in Canadian galleries and will help future writers take the analysis further by identifying the different approaches used to display Aboriginal art at the National Gallery of Canada between 1927 and 2003 and positioning them in a contextual timeline.

II. Introduction

On June 22, 2003, *Art of this Land*, a reinstallation of the Canadian galleries at the National Gallery of Canada (NGC), was officially opened. This was the first time the grand narrative of these galleries had been completely rewritten since they were first installed in 1988. Up to this point Canada's art and history were presented in its national art museum's Canadian galleries as being primarily settler and Euro-Canadian.¹ Thus, the installation had no Native art and art depicting Aboriginal peoples was not included in the narrative past the 1950s (which were primarily represented by a gallery devoted to the Group of Seven). This implied that Native peoples had completely disappeared from the Canadian landscape by this period. *Art of this Land* alters this narrative by integrating Aboriginal art throughout the entire installation. The strategy used to position the Aboriginal works in this re-installation has the potential to influence public perception of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians and their art, as well as institutional practices elsewhere.

Changes to museums' grand narratives do not happen without precedent. This thesis provides both a detailed analysis of *Art of this Land* and an account of the history of Aboriginal representation at the NGC. It examines all traceable installations and exhibitions, mounted in whole or in part under the NGC's name between 1927 and 2003, to have displayed objects made by First Nations and/or Métis peoples as art or craft. Inuit art is not considered because it has been primarily placed in separate installations and exhibitions by the NGC and treated with a different set of approaches, the exploration of which goes beyond the limits of this paper. As a result the terms "Aboriginal" and

¹ Inuit artists have been continuously represented in the NGC's Inuit art gallery and First Nations artists have appeared regularly in its contemporary galleries.

“Native” are used throughout this text to refer solely to the First Nations and the Métis. It is recognized that each of these groups has its own distinct history, culture and motivations.

A total of sixteen shows are considered in detail. However, shows which included Aboriginal objects presented as artefacts, such as *The Death of General Wolfe* in 1992 (an exhibition which featured Native artefacts from West’s personal collection used as references for his paintings), or which presented only the work of Aboriginal artists from outside of Canada, such as *Crossings* in 1998, have been omitted to narrow the focus of this thesis. Those exhibitions and installations which are known, but for which there is little to no documentation are mentioned but not covered in great detail.

The examination of this aspect of the NGC’s history reveals a pattern of historical development in which a set of distinct strategies are visible. I argue that the history of Aboriginal representation at the NGC can be divided into three sequential overlapping phases. In the first of these Aboriginal art enters the Gallery through the development and clarification of a national narrative of Canadian art. This leads to the second phase in which Aboriginal art is positioned as “other” in two ways: It is presented both as “other” to ‘Art’ (and thus placed in displays of so-called “lesser” arts) and as “other” to Euro-Canadian art in general. The approach taken in the third phase is an exclusive focus on contemporary Aboriginal art, which redefines the role and relationship contemporary Aboriginal art has with Euro-Canadian art. I argue that the strategy employed in *Art of this Land* is new and different from those of the three preceding phases. In *Art of this Land* the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples is based on the metaphor of the Two-Row Wampum belt. But in the installation the interpretation of this

image as one of parallelism and separation is modified by making visible a series of historical “bridges” between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and their arts. By comparing past NGC installations and exhibitions that have included Aboriginal art with *Art of this Land*, I hope to contribute to a better understanding of the installation’s approaches, intentions and themes.

Literature Review

Despite the growing number of academic articles being written affirming the need to recognize Canadian Aboriginal objects as art and the need to include it in galleries, very little has been written on the history of its inclusion and almost nothing has been written on the history of Aboriginal representation at the NGC in earlier exhibitions, Canada’s primary institution of Canadian art. One recent and important exception is Lynda Jessup’s essay “Hard Inclusion,” which serves as an introduction to her edited volume On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery.² In this text Jessup touches on the major events that have helped publicize and further the need to include Native art in Canadian galleries, such as the National Native Artist’s symposia which started in 1978 and continued into the 80s, the formation of The Society for Canadian Artists of Native Ancestry (SCANA), and the controversy surrounding the Glenbow Museum’s 1988 exhibition *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada’s First Peoples*. These occurrences provide the broad context for the social and political issues surrounding the entry of Aboriginal art into the Gallery and I, therefore, reference them in this thesis.

² Lynda Jessup and Shannon Bagg eds., On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2002).

Gerald McMaster's text in the same book, "Our (Inter) Related History,"³ argues for the presentation of Native and Canadian art history as interrelated. The model he provides for this is a double helix DNA molecule. He offers this metaphor as an alternative to the Two-Row Wampum, which, in his view, cannot account for the interconnectedness between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. However, as demonstrated by *Art of this Land*, further interpretation of the Two-Row Wampum reaffirms that it is a viable model. Neither Jessup nor McMaster, however, addresses the history of Aboriginal representation at the NGC in any detail, and they only list three NGC shows that included Aboriginal art: the 1927 *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern*; the 1938 exhibition, *A Century of Canadian Art*, held at London's Tate Gallery and; *Land, Spirit, Power* from 1992.

The most extensive and recent history of the NGC written to date, Douglas Ord's *The National Gallery of Canada: Ideas Art Architecture*,⁴ expands the list slightly. He discusses the *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art* (1967), the 1969 exhibition *Masterpieces of Indian and Eskimo Art from Canada* and also makes reference to *Cross-Cultural Views* in connection to the purchase of Carl Beam's *The North American Iceberg* in 1986. Although Ord addresses the lack of inclusion of Native art at the National Gallery a full exploration of this is beyond the scope of his text. The majority of the installations and exhibitions that have included Native art not only remain unexamined, but key details of the shows that have been considered are missing. A contemporary Aboriginal piece by Norval Morrisseau, was, for example, included in

³ Gerald McMaster, "Our (Inter) Related History" in *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery*, eds. Lynda Jessup and Shannon Bagg (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2002) 3-16.

⁴ Douglas Ord, *The National Gallery of Canada: Ideas Art Architecture* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art although Ord states that no contemporary Aboriginal art was displayed at the NGC until 1986.⁵

Diana Nemiroff runs through a brief history of the relationship between Aboriginal art and the NGC in her article, "Modernism, Nationalism, and Beyond,"⁶ which was written as the opening essay for the exhibition catalogue Land, Sprit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada. She performs an in-depth exploration of the *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern* and *Masterpieces of Indian and Eskimo Art from Canada* and compares these exhibitions to the *Indian Art of the United States* exhibition of 1941, mounted by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. She then turns her focus to the 80s and cites the "favourable conjuncture of circumstances" which led to the "belated recognition now being given contemporary Native art"⁷ and the surge of Native art exhibitions across North America. In her analysis, the new recognition that occurred in the 1980s resulted primarily from the work of post-modern theorists and Aboriginal lobbying groups. She also briefly touches upon her own attempt to keep the discussion alive through her own earlier curatorial projects, *Cross Cultural Views*, *Strengthening the Spirit*, and *Land, Spirit, Power*. In short Nemiroff's article provides an initial framework of the history of Aboriginal representation at the NGC by covering the major points on which this thesis will build.

Leslie Dawn's PhD thesis; How Canada stole the idea of Native art: the Group of Seven and images of the Indian in the 1920's⁸ adds other chapters to the history of

⁵ Ord, National, 242.

⁶ Diana Nemiroff, "Modernism, Nationalism, and Beyond" in Land, Sprit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992) 16-41.

⁷ Nemiroff, "Modernism," 19.

⁸ A thesis: Leslie Dawn, How Canada stole the idea of Native art: the group of Seven and images of the Indian in the 1920's, PhD thesis, Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2003.

Canadian exhibitions of Native art. Dawn reconstructs and discusses the *Exposition d'art Canadien* at the Jeu de Paume in Paris in 1927, a project of which he argues has been, until recently, purposefully excluded from the Canadian historical narrative.⁹

An understanding of the NGC's exhibition and collection policies and its exclusion of Aboriginal art from permanent exhibition during the period discussed by Nemiroff and Jessup is provided by Jean Blodgett's Report on Indian and Inuit art at the National Gallery of Canada.¹⁰ One of the most pungent points made by Blodgett was that, by 1983, "the National Gallery [had] never originated a major exhibition of Native art on its own."¹¹ Blodgett also included an appendix of NGC exhibitions which listed, in addition to many of the exhibitions already mentioned, the *First National Fine Crafts Exhibition* of 1957, the *Canadian Fine Crafts 1966-67/Artisanat canadien 1966-67* exhibition, and the *Installation of Northwest Coast Indian works* from 1970.

As demonstrated by the discussion of the aforementioned works, pieces of the history of the exhibition of Aboriginal art at the NGC have been brought to light, but they have yet to be examined comprehensively and the impression of the overall non-representation of Aboriginal art at the Gallery remains. The same exhibitions are repeatedly analyzed and drawn into the spotlight while others remain relatively unknown. Thanks to the accumulated research of these scholars the details of this absent narrative can be pieced together and amplified (fleshed out) through further research into a range of primary and secondary sources.

⁹ Dawn, *How Canada stole*, 102.

¹⁰ Jean Blodgett, Report on Indian and Inuit art at the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1983).

¹¹ Blodgett, Report, 38.

Theoretical Approach

A series of texts contributed to the formation of my arguments and aided me in my investigation of the sixteen NGC shows discussed in this thesis; these works provided me with a theoretical toolkit for the examination and deconstruction of museum installations and exhibitions.

Mieke Bal's book, Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis,¹² has been an invaluable resource for this thesis. Bal argues that every visual and physical element of an installation contributes to the creation of the dialogue which occurs between the museum installation and the visitor and that one can "read" this dialogue and use it to perform a critical analysis of the display. She explains that:

A museum installation is a discourse, and an exhibition is an utterance within that discourse. The utterance consists neither of words nor images alone, nor of the frame nor frame-up of the installation, but of the productive tension between images, caption (words), and installation (sequence, height, light, combinations).¹³

I use Bal's approach to analyze the narrative structure of *Art of this Land*, to conduct a reading of three of the installation's galleries and to identify the differences between it and earlier NGC exhibitions.

A second important source for my methodology was Michael Baxandall's "Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of the Visual Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects."¹⁴ In this essay Baxandall investigates the role label-text plays in creating a relationship between the object on display and the viewer. Svetlana Alper's "The

¹² Mieke Bal, Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis (New York: Routledge, 1996).

¹³ Mieke Bal, "The Talking Museum," in Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), 128.

¹⁴ Michael Baxandall, "Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of the Visual Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects" in Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian, 1991) 33-41.

Museum as a Way of Seeing”¹⁵ and Carol Duncan’s Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums,¹⁶ both of which explore how different modes of placing an object on display affect the ways viewers understand the objects, have also contributed to my understanding. Sharon MacDonald and Roger Silverstone’s “Rewriting the Museum’s Fictions: Taxonomies, Stories and Readers,”¹⁷ was influential in my comprehension of how exhibitions contribute to and have the power to alter the public’s understanding of the institution which created it.

Outline and Methodology

In Chapter 1, I review all NGC installations and exhibitions known to have included Aboriginal art prior to *Art of this Land*. The fifteen shows discussed are organized into periods based on the series of strategic approaches used between 1927 and 1999 to position the Native objects in the Gallery. I open the chapter with a discussion of the terms “craft,” “artefact” and, “art” as historically applied to Aboriginal objects. I then turn to exhibitions that included Aboriginal art as part of a nationalist narrative. In this context the Aboriginal objects were used to demonstrate that Canada’s art history had a past outside of Europe and were presented as a source for authentically Canadian motifs that could be used by modern Canadian artists. The exhibitions in this section are the *Exposition d’art Canadien* at the Jeu de Paume in Paris (1927), the *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern* (1927), *A Century of Canadian Art* (1938), and *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art* (1967). The second section begins by defining

¹⁵ Svetlana Alpers, “The Museum as a way of Seeing,” in Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian, 1991) 25-33.

¹⁶ Carol Duncan, Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums (London: Routledge, 1995).

¹⁷ Sharon MacDonald and Roger Silverstone, “Rewriting the Museum’s Fictions: Taxonomies, Stories and Readers” in Representing the Nation: A Reader, Histories Heritage and Museums, eds. David Bowsell and Jessica Evans (London and New York: Routledge, 1999) 421-427.

the construction of the “other” in a Canadian art historical context. It examines the motivations for displaying Aboriginal art as “other” in relation to other “others” of Canadian art in *The Arts of French Canada, 1613-1870* (1947), *The First National Fine Crafts Exhibition* (1957), the *Canadian Fine Crafts* exhibition (1967), *Masterpieces of Indian and Eskimo Art from Canada* (1969), the *Installation of Northwest Coast Indian Works* (1971) and, *The Comfortable Arts: Traditional Spinning and Weaving in Canada* (1981). The third section delves into the reasons behind a shift in interest from historical to contemporary Aboriginal works and explores the shows that followed: *Cross Cultural Views* (1987), the *Canadian Biennial of Contemporary Art* (1989), *Strengthening the Spirit* (1992), *Land, Spirit, Power* (1992), and the installations of Aboriginal art in Gallery B204 between 1995 and 1999. The installation *Canadiana: New Perspectives* (1997) is also considered, but not in great detail.

In Chapter 2 I present my argument that the relationship between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and their art, as displayed in *Art of this Land*, reflects the metaphor of a Two-Row Wampum belt. This chapter gives an account of the history of the *Art of this Land* project as well as the constraints within which it was conceived. The narrative structures of three *Art of this Land* galleries are then analyzed in detail using Bal’s theories for reading the museum. The three galleries considered are the *Telariolin-Zacharie Vincent* Gallery (Gallery A102a), the *Early Twentieth-Century Modernism & Pacific Northwest-Coast Aboriginal Peoples* Gallery (Gallery A107) and, *Engaging Memory, the 1960s and 1970s* gallery (Gallery A113). The messages, motivations and strategies presented in each of these galleries are brought into relief through comparison with several past NGC installations and exhibitions that have included Native art

discussed in the previous chapter. These close analyses demonstrate how both the relationship between Native and non-Native peoples living in the lands now known as Canada and their art can be positioned through the use of a new interpretation of the metaphor of a Two-Row Wampum belt, one in which the parallel paths are bridged by episodes of interaction.

III. An Historical Narrative of Aboriginal Representation at the NGC

Aboriginal objects are displayed in almost every gallery of *Art of this Land*. On a fundamental level the inclusion of these objects, many of which were previously categorized as craft or artefact, repositions them as works of art and increases their cultural significance. James Clifford calls the Western mode of attributing value to an object the “art-culture system”.¹⁸ In this system items such as the Native works in *Art of this Land* have the capacity to occupy more than one slot and may be moved from one category to another depending on their imagined authenticity and artistic achievement. In the hierarchy of the “art-culture system” art retains the most value. As Richard Fung also writes, “an art gallery carries more ‘symbolic capital’ than an ethnographic museum. Thus to recognize historical Aboriginal pieces as art serves to legitimize their worth.”¹⁹ The object and its location (both physical and categorical) are interconnected; how and where an object is positioned determines how it will be perceived. Over the past twenty years scholars have been working to deconstruct the hierarchy between both art and craft and object and location in an attempt to facilitate the movement of an object from one category to another.

The art-craft debate was a particular concern for feminists for the aesthetic objects associated with women or what was considered the woman’s realm were also viewed as craft, and thus as inferior. Griselda Pollock and Rozsika Parker’s statement of this issue is therefore relevant to the classification of Aboriginal art:

¹⁸ James Clifford, “On Collecting Art and Culture,” in Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures, eds. Russell Ferguson et al. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1990), 141.

¹⁹ Richard Fung, “Questioning History, Questioning Art,” in On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery, eds. Lynda Jessup and Shannon Bagg (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2002), 39. On ‘symbolic capital’ see Robert S. Nelson, “Appropriation,” in Critical Terms for Art History, eds. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 123.

What distinguishes art from craft in the hierarchy is not so much different methods, practices and objects but also where these things are made, often in the home, and for whom they are made, often for the family. The fine arts are a public, professional activity. What women make, which is usually defined as 'craft,' could in fact be defined as 'domestic art.' The conditions of production and audience for this kind of art are different from those of the art made in a studio and art school, for the market and gallery. It is out of these different conditions that the hierarchical division between art and craft has been constructed; it has nothing to do with the inherent qualities of the object nor the gender of the maker.²⁰

Craft was (and often still is) distinguished from art based on its functionality, the materials used to produce it, the audience it was made for, its place of production, and the presumed intellect of its creator. Like women's art, Aboriginal art was labelled as craft or "primitive" art within the hierarchy of art forms since it did not conform to the norms of art produced by white Western males.

Historically, however, most Aboriginal objects had been primarily collected as ethnographic artefacts. The ethnographic museum "create[d] the illusion of adequate representation of a world by first cutting objects out of specific contexts (whether cultural, historical, or intersubjective) and making them "stand for" abstract wholes."²¹ Objects in this context were gathered as types and were, therefore not selected on the basis of appearance and uniqueness, as would be done in the art gallery, but based on purpose and commonality.²² Artefacts were admired based on their ability to represent what was (or is) thought to be typical of a culture and were therefore thought to retain less aesthetic value than art or craft.

Each time that an object changes location (be it from a shop to a private collector, from a museum to a gallery, or from an archaeological dig to a museum) the

²⁰ Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology (London: Pandora Press, 1981), 70.

²¹ Clifford, "On Collecting," 144.

²² Clifford, "On Collecting," 152.

understanding of that object can change. As stated by Ruth Phillips and Christopher Steiner: "At each point in its movement through space and time, an object has the potential to shift from one category to another."²³ The Native works that have entered the Gallery as part of *Art of this Land* can be recognized as art on the same level as the non-Native items in large part because of previous efforts to include Aboriginal pieces in the Canadian historical narrative. Between 1927 and 1999 fifteen shows orchestrated under the NGC's name included Native objects and contributed to the understanding of Aboriginal art and its place in the art gallery. This historical period can be divided into the following three sequential phases: The Formation of a Nationalist Narrative, Positioning Aboriginal Art as "Other", and Contemporary Aboriginal Art Takes the Stage.

The Formation of a Nationalist Narrative

The first few times that Aboriginal art appeared in NGC exhibitions, it was included as a demonstration of something uniquely Canadian. All of these exhibitions helped to define a new concept of a Canadian art historical narrative that, like the country, was no longer dependant on Britain. Aboriginal art served to illustrate that Canada had not only a longstanding art history, but also specific and distinctive historical motifs which modern artists could draw upon. Making use of Aboriginal art in this manner was thought to be perfectly acceptable since, at the time, it was presumed that Aboriginal peoples had abandoned their traditions and were dying off and that they, therefore, had no need for or interest in their own art. However, as observed by Eva

²³ Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner, "Art, Authenticity, and the Baggage of Cultural Encounter," in Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Post-colonial Worlds, eds. Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner (California: University of California Press, 1999), 15.

Mackey, this strategy for creating nationhood “appropriate[s] the cultural symbols and points of view of marginalized populations without creating genuine respect and equality.”²⁴

The promotion of Aboriginal objects to the category of art at the NGC, was part of a wider pattern in Western art associated with the universalistic principals of modernist primitivism. Originally proposed by nineteenth-century anthropologists and then taken up in the art milieu,²⁵ the theory of universalism proposes that art speaks a language common to all peoples; that all successful art is able to transmit to the viewer the emotions of the one who created the artwork.²⁶ However, as pointed out by Sally Price this understanding is unidirectional:

While Primitive societies... can nurture the production of certifiable artistic Masterpieces, and while the sheer aesthetic power of Primitive Masterpieces penetrates linguistic and cultural boundaries to reach sensitive art lovers of the West, the members of these societies (including the most artistically endowed among them) are themselves handicapped (whether by education or generic heritage is not specified) to participate in supracultural aesthetic experiences.²⁷

Universalism thus privileges Western society because it is the only one to benefit from the discovery of the universal emotions transmitted by non-Western art.

One of the earliest exhibitions to display Aboriginal creations as art through the theory of universalism, was organized by London’s Burlington Fine Arts Club in 1920. *Objects of Indigenous American Art*²⁸ provided a doorway for Aboriginal art into the

²⁴ Eva Mackey, “Death by Landscape: Race, Nature, and Gender in Canadian Nationalist Mythology,” *Canadian Women’s Studies*, 20, no. 2 (2000): 125.

²⁵ Price Sally, “The Universality Principle” in *Primitive Art in Civilized Places* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 33.

²⁶ Carol Podeworny, “First Nations Art and the Canadian Mainstream,” *C Magazine*, Fall 1991, 27.

²⁷ Price, “Universality”, 35.

²⁸ Douglas Cole, *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts* (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985), 284.

Western art world. In the mid-1920s the Denver Art museum became the first museum to display Aboriginal productions as art.²⁹

The NGC's first inclusion of Aboriginal art occurred at an exhibition it organized in 1927 at the *Exposition d'art Canadien* of the Jeu de Paume in Paris. Eric Brown, the director of the NGC from 1912-1939, who was still basking in the huge success of the exhibition of Canadian art in the *Canadian Section of Fine Arts of the British Empire Exhibition* (shown at Wembley and then toured to venues in England from May 1925 to February 1927), decided to try to orchestrate a repeat performance in France. Although his first request to set up an exhibition at the Musée du Jeu de Paume, a branch of the Luxembourg Museum, was turned down, he persisted and in May of 1926, Brown finally received approval from Paul Leon, Le Directeur des Beaux-Arts, to have an exhibition at the Jeu de Paume from April 10 to May 10, 1927.³⁰

Once Brown confirmed the venue he sent out official statements proclaiming that this exhibition was being mounted "at the request of the French Government."³¹ Leslie Dawn suggests that this was done to give "credence to the belief that the quality of Canadian art displayed at Wembley had been recognized at the centre of modernism, and was being sought out."³² Even if the exhibition itself had not been requested by French authorities, certain inclusions to the show were. On February 23, 1927 Brown sent a letter to W. H. Collins, the director of the Victoria Memorial Museum [later The National Museum of Man (NMM)] stating that:

²⁹ Cole, *Captured Heritage*, 284.

³⁰ Information in a letter to Eric Brown, from Paul Leon, Le Directeur des Beaux-Arts, Palais Royal, France, 2 May 1926, NGC Archives.

³¹ Information in a letter from Eric Brown, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 26 February, 1927, NGC Archives.

³² A thesis: Leslie Dawn, *How Canada stole the idea of Native art: the group of Seven and images of the Indian in the 1920's*, PhD thesis, University of British Columbia, 2003, 75.

The French Ministry of Fine Arts particularly requests that a small group of Canadian West Coast Indian sculpture be included in this exhibition and that the Trustees of the National Gallery request your permission to allow Mr. Barbeau and myself to make a selection from the material possessed by the museum. From six to eight pieces are desired.³³

Dawn argues that this very unusual request may have been orchestrated by the artist Clarence Gagnon who was Brown's "politically astute and well connected point man who was then a resident in Paris"³⁴ and his friend Marius Barbeau, a prominent anthropologist working for the NMM, both of whom had personal interests in Aboriginal art. For Gagnon such an inclusion would compliment his own work which was to be part of the exhibition and for Barbeau this addition would help him fulfill his desire to have Aboriginal objects recognized as art.³⁵

In the end eleven Aboriginal pieces were selected for the exhibition. These were: a Haida mask, two "Tsimshyan" masks, four miniature Haida totem poles (three of wood and one of argillite), and four Haida carvings made of argillite.³⁶ The non-Aboriginal items included in the show consisted primarily of a retrospective of J. Wilson Morrice's paintings, a retrospective of Tom Thompson paintings, and a number of works by members or associates of the Group of Seven. No attempt was made to build a relationship between the Native and non-Native items on display. Instead the Native items were separated from the Western paintings. Placed in a poorly lit alcove, they were dwarfed in comparison to the carefully exhibited groupings of paintings.³⁷

³³Information in a letter from Eric Brown, to W. H. Collins, Director, Victoria Memorial Museum, Ottawa, 23 February 1927, NGC Archives.

³⁴ Dawn, How Canada stole, 79.

³⁵ For a more detailed explanation of the circumstances surrounding the inclusion of Aboriginal art in this exhibition please see: Leslie Dawn, How Canada stole the idea of Native art: the group of Seven and images of the Indian in the 1920's, PhD thesis, University of British Columbia, 2003, 75-87.

³⁶ Information in a letter from D. Jenness, Division of Anthropology, National Museum of Canada, to H. O. McCurry, National Art Gallery, Ottawa, 8 March 1927, NGC Archives.

³⁷ Dawn, How Canada stole, 76.

Despite being displayed poorly the Aboriginal art attracted considerable attention.

As expressed by Dawn:

The story line which narrated the transition from colony to modern nation, from cultural dependency to cultural autonomy, obvious in Canada and Britain, was not grasped by the large part of the French critical audience... This small selection [of Aboriginal art] came out of the margins, from behind the curtains, stole the show and upstaged the artists who were being touted as representing Canada, thus further disrupting the reading of the exhibition.³⁸

This surprising turn of events lead to several significant occurrences: First of all, according to Leslie Dawn (the only scholar to date to have analysed this matter closely) the *Exposition d'art Canadien* at the Jeu de Paume in Paris was seen by the NGC as a failure and purposefully forgotten.³⁹ The full extent of the Parisian response was, therefore, never permitted to reach the Canadian public. Secondly, much to the dismay of Flugence Charpentier of the Canadian Embassy in Paris, the NGC continued to turn down offers to hold a second survey of Canadian art in France, for which a large portion of work from the NMM was desired, well into the 1950s.⁴⁰ Thirdly, Brown took it upon himself to use the already planned *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern*, as a platform for correcting and overriding the Parisian misinterpretation of the position and role of Aboriginal art in Canada's art historical narrative.⁴¹

The *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern* was shown at the NGC from December 2 to 31, 1927. The following statement by Brown in the exhibition catalogue made it very clear that the purpose of this exhibition was to address the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal art in Canada:

³⁸ Dawn, *How Canada stole*, 101.

³⁹ Dawn, *How Canada stole*, 112.

⁴⁰ Information in a letter from Flugence Charpentier, Canadian Embassy, Paris, to Saul Rae, Information Division, Department of External Affairs, Ottawa, Canada, NGC Archives.

⁴¹ Dawn, *How Canada stole*, 288.

The purpose of... this exhibition... is to mingle for the first time the art work of Canadian West Coast tribes with that of our more sophisticated artists in an endeavour to analyse their relationships to one another, if such exists, and particularly to enable this primitive and interesting art to take a definite place as one of the most valuable of Canada's artistic productions.⁴²

As illustrated by this sentence, although being promoted as Canadian art, Aboriginal art in this show was to be understood as subordinate to the artistic productions of non-Aboriginal Canadian artists.

This exhibition was not only the project of Brown but equally that of Barbeau. It was planned as a collaboration between the NGC and the NMM during a period in which the two museums were housed in the same building, the Victoria Memorial Museum, and during which both individuals were seeking to lay the foundations for their institutions.⁴³ For a short time during the early histories of these two museums it seemed that a similar path was being followed and the good working relationship between these two gentlemen and their respect for each other's knowledge would result in two more exhibitions including Aboriginal art.

This 1927 exhibition was also shown at the Art Gallery of Toronto (later the Art Gallery of Ontario) and at the Art Association of Montreal. It grouped historical Aboriginal art together with modern non-Aboriginal art to show how both had been inspired by the landscape of the Canadian West Coast. This manner of mixing of art types, which was unprecedented, was labelled as an "experiment."⁴⁴ Work by Gitksan,

⁴² National Gallery of Canada, Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern (Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1927), 2.

⁴³ Douglas Ord, The National Gallery of Canada: Ideas Art Architecture (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003) 272.

⁴⁴ Douglas Leechman, "Native Canadian Art of the West Coast" The Studio, Nov 1928, 285 and Diana Nemiroff, "Modernism, Nationalism, and Beyond: A Critical History of Exhibitions of First Nations Art," in Land Spirit Power (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992), 20.

Haida, Kwakwaka'wakw, Nisga'a, Nuuchah'nulth, Tlingit, and Tsimshian⁴⁵ artists was included and organized in the catalogue by type under eighteen different headings (e.g.: Drums and Rattles, Painted Root Hats, Bracelets, Headdresses). Modern work by artists such as Lawren Harris, Varley, J. E. H. McDonald, A. Y. Jackson, E. H. Holgate, Emily Carr, and W. Langdon Kihn, among others was also displayed alongside them, with larger centrepieces in the middle of the walls and smaller works around the outsides. The Aboriginal work was not separated from non-Aboriginal work as had been the case at the Jeu de Paume and as was true of the anthropological museums from which most of the pieces were borrowed. The decision to mount the works in this manner illustrated Brown's desire to make the display of Aboriginal objects "artistic first and ethnological after."⁴⁶ Having non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal pieces hung side by side helped to validate the viewing of the Aboriginal work as art, but it did not mean that they were seen as art in the same sense as the "moderns."

The Aboriginal works were borrowed primarily from the NMM (now the Canadian Museum of Civilization), as well as from the Royal Ontario Museum, the McGill University Museum and the Art Gallery of Montreal. Most of the non-Aboriginal works were, on the other hand, borrowed directly from the artists. The difference in origins between the Aboriginal and the other artists' work was due to the widely held belief at the time that Aboriginal peoples were no longer producing art. As stated in the *Toronto Globe* on January 12, 1928: "Trade and commerce of the white man have

⁴⁵ Lynda Jessup, "Hard Inclusion," in *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery*, eds. Lynda Jessup and Shannon Bagg (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2002), xv.

⁴⁶ Information in a letter from Eric Brown, to J. Murray Gibbon, Esq., General Publicity Agent, Canadian Pacific Railways, Montreal, 10 October 1927, NGC Archives.

changed the Indian, and apparently driven from him the desire for self-expression.”⁴⁷ At the time of the exhibition numerous statements such as this appeared in the media, further perpetuating this misconception. The Aboriginal works were understood within the context of the salvage paradigm as examples of a vanishing art that could not be revived and that was best collected by museums to preserve what little remained.

Placing historical Aboriginal art next to recognized contemporary work by Western artists further emphasized the conception that Aboriginal peoples and their art were ‘pre-historic,’ that they existed in a romanticized and indeterminate past, even though they were a source of what was seen as purely Canadian references for “modern” artists. As stated by Barbeau: “The artistic work of the western Indians has so much character and life to it, so much modern artists find inspiring, and so much which is distinctly Canadian and which might well be used to help form the basis of a national art.”⁴⁸ The *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern* confirmed that Aboriginal art, though seen as primitive in comparison to Western art, had an important role to play in the Canadian art historical narrative. Aboriginal art could be used to demonstrate that Canadian art had Canadian roots and was, thus, independent of other Western arts. The success of this show indicated that this would not be the last time Aboriginal art would be included in the Gallery’s national narrative.

Encouraged by Brown’s interest in Aboriginal art, Barbeau sent Brown a small sample of Nisga’a pieces in 1929 thinking that he might want to start a collection of Native work for the NGC.⁴⁹ Brown, however, turned him down and the work went

⁴⁷ “West Coast Indian Art” *Globe*, Toronto, 12 January 1928, NGC Press Clippings File.

⁴⁸ Marius Barbeau quoted in “To Hold Unique Exhibition of Paintings and Handicrafts at National Gallery,” *Evening Citizen*, Ottawa, 10 November 1927.

⁴⁹ Jessup, “Hard Inclusion,” xvi.

instead to places such as the Royal Ontario Museum.⁵⁰ Brown seemed interested only in exhibiting Aboriginal art, not in collecting it.

In 1936, Brown began corresponding with J. B. Manson, the director of the Tate Gallery in London, England, about the possibility of setting up a “retrospective exhibition”⁵¹ of Canadian art at the Tate. This discussion developed into the creation of a show entitled *A Century of Canadian Art*, which was shown at the Tate from October 15 to December 15, 1938. This exhibition was proclaimed to be the “first fully representative exhibition of Canadian art ever held in the Home country.”⁵² It provided an opportunity for the NGC to demonstrate to England and the rest of Europe that Canada had a longstanding history of art which was developing into something on a par with European art but distinctly Canadian. The importance that this exhibition held for the NGC, which assumed all the costs associated with the show,⁵³ was demonstrated by the fact that the number of galleries the NGC was prepared to rent quickly grew from three to six along with the scale of the exhibition.⁵⁴

Brown’s aspirations for the exhibition were expressed to Vincent Massey, the High Commissioner for Canada in Great Britain and a NGC Trustee involved in the planning of the show, as follows:

We are starting the story with one or two West Coast Indian Argillite carvings and a Chilkat Blanket and going from there to Quebec for a group of French Canadian wood-carvings... From that background we

⁵⁰ Jessup, “Hard Inclusion,” xxvi.

⁵¹ Information in a letter to J. B. Manson, Director of the Tate Gallery, England, from Eric Brown, Director of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 12 May 1936, NGC Archives.

⁵² British Broadcasting Corporation, “In the Illustrations Supplement, Programmes for December 11-17,” *BBC Overseas Press Bulletin*, No. 113, November 1938, NGC Press Clippings File.

⁵³ Information in a letter from Eric Brown, to J. B. Manson, Esq., Director and Keeper, The Tate Gallery, Millbank, London, England, 27 October 1937, NGC Archives.

⁵⁴ Telegram from H. O. McCurry Assistant Director of the NGC to Eric Brown, 1938, NGC Archives.

shall start on the painters and sculptors and carry on the story to the present day.⁵⁵

Despite his lack of interest in collecting more Native art, Brown's vision of a complete narrative of Canadian art included an Aboriginal presence. Intended to showcase over a hundred years of Canadian art, *A Century of Canadian Art* included over 263 pieces of which only six were Aboriginal (less than 0.02%). Since it was still believed that Native art was dying out, only historical work was included. The Aboriginal artwork consisted of two Tlingit ceremonial robes and an argillite Haida pole from the NGC's own collection as well as two argillite totem poles and one wooden pole from the NMM,⁵⁶ borrowed through Barbeau.⁵⁷ The Aboriginal art pieces, though few in number, received a fair amount of attention in the press, even though, as noted by Northrop Frye, "the English can see better totems in the British Museum."⁵⁸ Frye's remark also suggests how closely Aboriginal art was still associated with the anthropological collections of museums rather than art in galleries.

The exhibition was arranged chronologically and the Aboriginal work was placed with the earliest settler art, primarily seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French Canadian woodcarvings and religious paintings. As the following description of the show demonstrates, this section of the exhibition was not seen in the best of lights: "The period covered will be approximately one hundred years from, say, 1840 to the present day.

⁵⁵ Information in a letter to Hon. Vincent Massey, High Commissioner for Canada, Canada House, Trafalgar Square, London, England, NGC Archives.

⁵⁶ Tate Gallery, *A Century of Canadian Art* (London: The Tate Gallery, 1938), 36.

⁵⁷ Information in a letter from Eric Brown, to C. M. Barbeau, Esq., The National Museum of Canada, 27 June 1938, NGC Archives.

⁵⁸ Northrop Frye, "Canadian Art in London" *Canadian Forum*, January 1939, NGC Press Clippings File.

There will be a few earlier things but they will not be of great importance.”⁵⁹ If Brown had felt that the earlier items were significant, he could have borrowed more items from the NMM and could have created an impressive display. The status of the Aboriginal art was also seen as being less important by reviewers who made comments such as: The “old Canadian Indian work serve[d] as a background”⁶⁰ for the early settler pieces. This perception was further confirmed by the catalogue in which Native art from the West Coast was compared to Mexican, African, and South American Aboriginal art.⁶¹ Thus, although included, Aboriginal art was presented as being inferior to even the least significant Euro-Canadian art.

The next (and last) national survey to include Aboriginal art prior to *Art of this Land* was *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art* in 1967. It was heralded as the “largest and most comprehensive art exhibition ever organized in Canada,”⁶² and ran from May 12 to September 17, 1967 at the NGC. A slightly scaled down version of this show was then shown at the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the AGO) from October 20 to November 26, 1967. This was the first of two exhibitions planned by the NGC to celebrate the centennial of Canadian Confederation.⁶³

This exhibition was primarily the project of R. H. Hubbard, Chief Curator of the NGC. He was assisted with the selection of post-WWII works by Jean-René Ostiguy, the NGC’s curator of Canadian Art. Together they created an exhibition of 378 examples of Canadian art which took up three floors of the Lorne Building, spanned nearly three-

⁵⁹Information in a letter to C. R. Chisman Esq. The Art Exhibitions Bureau, London, England, 20 June 1938 (presumably from Brown), NGC Archives.

⁶⁰ “A Hundred Years of Canada: Man Who Walked Across it,” *Children’s Newspaper*, London, 28 October 1938, NGC Press Clippings File.

⁶¹ Tate, *Century*, 36.

⁶² Judy LeMarsh, Secretary of State, quoted in W. Q. Ketchum, “300 Years of Canadian Art Makes Sense,” *The Ottawa Journal*, 12 May 1967, NGC Press Clippings File.

⁶³ The second exhibition was entitled *A Pageant of Canada*. It did not include any Aboriginal art.

hundred years, and included a wide variety of media beyond the habitual painting and sculpture.

Both the catalogue and the galleries themselves were organized according to a strict chronological sequence, a structure which was considered quite novel at the time.⁶⁴ The show was then sub-divided into five sections: *French Colonial (1668-1755)*, *English Colonial (1766-1866)*, *Post Confederation (1869-1900)*, the *Twentieth Century (1900-1950)*, and the *Twentieth Century (1951-present)*. The Aboriginal art that was included consisted of two Haida masks, a Tsimshian “Wolf Mask” and a Kwakiutl “Interior House Post,” all of which were borrowed from the NMM.⁶⁵ Although completely overlooked by the media, one other piece of Aboriginal art was also included in this exhibition; a painting by Norval Morrisseau.⁶⁶ After having attended an opening of an exhibition of Morrisseau’s work at the Musée du Québec in 1966, Ostiguy wrote to Dr. Herbert T. Schwarz of Regency House in Montreal to announce that the NGC would “be willing to consider the painting “Misshipesh, the Water God and Miskinuki, the Turtle, 1965... price \$950.00 for acquisition next spring.”⁶⁷ However, Ostiguy wrote to Schwarz again on April 28, 1967 to inform him that although the NGC Trustees had declined the purchase of the Morrisseau painting he still wanted to include it in *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*.⁶⁸ The NGC would not purchase its first piece of Aboriginal art until nearly twenty years later.

⁶⁴ Information in a letter from Ferdinand Eckhardt, director of the NGC, 8 August 1967, NGC Archives.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 76.

⁶⁶ An Inuit sculpture by the artist Sheroapik entitled “Mother and Child” was also included in the twentieth Century 1951-present section.

⁶⁷ Information in a letter from Jean-René Ostiguy, Curator of Canadian Art, NGC, to Dr. Herbert T. Schwarz, Regency House Montreal, 12 December 1966, NGC Archives

⁶⁸ Information in a letter from Jean-René Ostiguy, Curator of Canadian Art, NGC, to Dr. Herbert T. Schwarz, Regency House Montreal, 29 April 1967, NGC Archives.

The narrative of this exhibition opened with the art of New France.⁶⁹ As emphasized by the following excerpt from the catalogue, it was believed that Aboriginal work had no influence on early French settler art:

The distinctive features of French colonial art were brought into being not by a mingling of European and Indian elements (as in New Spain) but by the local exploitation of purely European elements (as in New England). The meager arts of the eastern North American Indian offered little of inspiration to the French; rather it was the French who had something to offer the Indians.⁷⁰

No Aboriginal work was included in this section. The key image representing the early period, however, Frère Luc's *France Bringing the Faith to the Indians of New France* from 1671, very aptly reflected the 1967 view of relations between Aboriginal peoples and early French settlers. This eight foot high painting depicting a female representation of France giving a religious painting to a submissive Native clothed in a robe with fleur-de-lis motifs, was given an entire wall to itself. Praised by the media as being a remarkable example of classic French art,⁷¹ this painting reinforced the belief that Aboriginal peoples had "abandoned paganism, and adopted Christianity"⁷² and given up their traditional arts.

Paul Kane and Cornelius Kreighoff were featured in the second section; *English Colonial (1766-1866)*. Due to their dates of execution and the strict chronological organization of the exhibition, the historical Aboriginal works were part of the third section; *Post Confederation (1869-1900)*. However, through the use of a carefully

⁶⁹ W. Q. Ketchum, "300 years of Canadian Art Makes Sense," The Ottawa Journal, 12 May 1967, NGC Press Clippings File.

⁷⁰ R.H. Hubbard and J. R. Ostiguy, Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1967), 6.

⁷¹ Denis Cote, "L'art au Canada à l'époque coloniale," Le Droit, Ottawa, 7 June, 1967, NGC Press Clippings File.

⁷² "Arts Abandoned with Beliefs of Paganism: Once Essential Measure of Social Standing with West Coast Indians," Toronto Mail and Empire, 11 January 1928, NGC Press Clippings File.

planned layout the two were kept together. The historical Aboriginal works were grouped together on one wall, across the dividing walkway from other artwork of the same time period. This separated them from the other work in their section and placed them at the entrance to the area of the gallery displaying the work of Kreighoff and Kane. The Aboriginal works were, thus, visually linked to the romanticized images of Aboriginal peoples.⁷³

Although *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art* was put together forty years after the *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern*, its approach was fundamentally the same. By this time Euro-Canadian artists' use of Aboriginal symbols to create a nationalist art had been ingrained in the Canadian art-historical narrative. Through the creation of a Canadian nationalist narrative, which distinguished itself from that of other Western countries, Aboriginal art was given a place in Canada's art history. However, the role of Native art was to authenticate the motifs used by non-Native artists in the twentieth century and to validate the claim that these were uniquely Canadian artistic productions. The Aboriginal works were not seen as being on the same level as the other Canadian work, but rather as "primitive" artforms created by primitive peoples who had lost their traditions and were dying out.

⁷³ In the catalogue, Aboriginal art was discussed in relation to the second section but was completely overlooked in the third. It noted that: "West-coast Indian art, though it began its great development during this period, appeared as an influence on Canadian painting only in the twentieth century." For more information see Hubbard and Ostiguy, *Three Hundred Years*, 23.

Positioning Aboriginal Art as “Other”

During these years Aboriginal art continued to be relegated to a lesser artistic category even when displayed on its own or in exhibitions dealing with a specific theme. Aboriginal art had become “other” to that of the Western male artist, depicting what Western art was not. As explained by Homi Bhabha:

The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and establish systems of administration and instruction... colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once ‘other’ and yet entirely knowable and visible.⁷⁴

As a result Western and Aboriginal art were defined in opposition of one another. While Western art was associated with civility, intellect and the mainstream, Native art, being its binary, was seen as primitive, infantile, and exotic. This understanding also established a hierarchy between the two which placed Western art in the dominant role.

Most of the handful of exhibitions in which Aboriginal art was presented as “other” at the NGC were initiated by people outside the Gallery who sought to highlight, and in some cases elevate, art from the margins. The first of these exhibitions, *The Arts of French Canada, 1613-1870*, was the fourth and last NGC project to include Aboriginal art through the help of Barbeau. This show was not organized in collaboration with Brown (as the others had been) due to his sudden death in 1939.⁷⁵ In 1939 Brown’s good friend, H. O. McCurry, who had been the Assistant Director up to this point,⁷⁶ became the director of the NGC and would hold the position for the next sixteen years. The strong working relationship established between the NGC and the NMM continued throughout McCurry’s term. Barbeau wrote: “I am used to working in collaboration with the

⁷⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, “The Other Question: Difference Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism,” *in the location of culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 70.

⁷⁵ Ord, *The National*, 96.

⁷⁶ Ord, *The National*, 96.

National Gallery; I enjoy executing plans with Mr. McCurry.”⁷⁷ The open working environment between the NGC and the NMM was especially apparent during Barbeau’s involvement in *The Arts of French Canada, 1613-1870* which opened in 1947 following two years of development. Although displayed and backed in part by the NGC (and not the NMM) this exhibition was more Barbeau’s show than the Gallery’s.

In 1945 E. P. Richardson, the Director of the Detroit Institute of Arts, began corresponding with Barbeau about an idea he had for an exhibition. His desire was to organize a show which would help to remind the people of Detroit, and other American cities, of their French heritage.⁷⁸ In response Barbeau told him that:

The only practical way of organizing this exhibition in Canada before sending it off to your institution, would be to secure the National Gallery’s full cooperation. The National Museum is unfortunately, not in a position to do anything to help but lend my services and agree to the enterprise.⁷⁹

Barbeau’s services were lent to the fullest extent. He wrote the majority of the essays for the catalogue, traveled to each venue to give lectures, and even, by request of Richardson, drew up the initial plan of what should be included in the exhibition.⁸⁰

This temporary exhibition of 243 objects of silver, textiles, painting, furniture, sculpture, folk and Aboriginal art, traveled to six museums: The Detroit Institute of Arts, The Cleveland Museum of Art, The Albany Institute of History and Art, The Art Association of Montreal, The National Gallery of Canada, and Le Musée de la Province de Québec. It was at the NGC from March 29 to April 18, 1947.

⁷⁷ Information in a letter from Marius Barbeau, to Mr. E. P. Richardson, Director, The Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan, 1 November 1945.

⁷⁸ Information in a letter from E. P. Richardson, Director, The Detroit Institute of Arts, to Marius Barbeau, National Museum of Canada, 26 October 1945, NGC Archives.

⁷⁹ Information in a letter from Marius Barbeau, to E. P. Richardson, Director, The Detroit Institute of Arts, 1 November 1945, NGC Archives.

⁸⁰ Information in a letter from E. P. Richardson, to Marius Barbeau, 26 November 1945, NGC Archives.

Given Barbeau's personal interest in the Huron-Wendat of Lorette and their encounters with French settlers it is not surprising that a number of works highlighting this meeting of cultures were included. The section that included Native art was entitled *Frontier Between the French and the Indians in Art*. This section had: a Huron-Wendat "Table Cloth" from the NGC, a "Naskapi Indian Jacket" from the NMM, five boxes made by Ursuline nuns from the Monastère des Ursulines in Quebec and from the Hôtel-Dieu de Québec, two "Cradle Boards" from the Antiquarian and Numismatic Society, "Tête-de-Boule Indian Drinking Cups" from the Séminaire des Trois-Rivières and the Château de Ramezay, and an Aboriginal-made "Oval Box of Ash Splints" also from the Séminaire des Trois-Rivières.⁸¹ The purpose of the grouping of French-Canadian with Aboriginal art was to demonstrate the influence that French creativity was said to have had over the 'impressionable' Natives. As a result of this pairing the Aboriginal work was framed as being one step below, or as the catalogue says, "beyond" folk art.⁸² Barbeau thus used Aboriginal art to elevate French art and to affirm the strength and dominance of French culture, which was often seen as subordinate to that of Canadians with an English heritage. In the catalogue Barbeau remarked: "Not only did [the Ursulines] contribute much to the evangelization of the Natives, but they trained Indian girls in the handicrafts with a perseverance worthy of greater success than they actually achieved."⁸³ He also noted that certain arts taught by the French were "now made in a

⁸¹ Marius Barbeau, "The Arts of French Canada," in *The Arts of French Canada 1613-1870* (Michigan: The Detroit Institute of Arts, 1946), 49.

⁸² Barbeau, "The Arts of French Canada," 10.

⁸³ Barbeau, "The Arts of French Canada," 15.

derivative way by the Micmacs and other Indians.”⁸⁴ Thus, through comparison to Native art, Barbeau was able to place the French in the role of colonizer instead of the colonized.

Aboriginal art was also seen as acceptable for display in two craft shows organized by the NGC. The first of these was the *First National Fine Crafts Exhibition* in 1957. Organized by the Associate Director at the time, Donald Buchanan, this show consisted of approximately two-hundred articles of ceramics, enamels, weaving, silver, woodwork and print-work, which were solicited by invitation only⁸⁵ as well as nine Inuit sculptures. Of these, eighty-five were also selected by a jury to be included in the Fine Crafts section of the Canadian Pavilion in Brussels, Belgium.⁸⁶ The exhibit was set up in the Victoria Memorial Museum from June 7 to 26, 1957 and also traveled to The Winnipeg Art Gallery, The London Public Art Museum and Library, and The Art Gallery of Hamilton.

In terms of the history of Aboriginal representation at the Gallery this exposition is significant because this was the first occasion that the work of a contemporary Aboriginal artist was included in a NGC exhibition. Three pieces of jewellery by Bill Reid, one bracelet and two brooches with Haida motifs incorporated into the design, passed the jury selection and, therefore, traveled to Belgium after touring the show's Canadian locations. And while his Aboriginal heritage was not mentioned in the catalogue it did not go unnoticed by the newspapers. Reid was described in the Brockville Recorder as: “A Vancouver Craftsman, descendant from the Haida Indians

⁸⁴ Barbeau, “The Arts of French Canada,” 16.

⁸⁵ National Gallery of Canada, *First National Fine Crafts Exhibition* (Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1957), n.p.

⁸⁶ Information in a Press Release, NGC, “Eighty-five Works Chosen for the Fine Crafts section of the Canadian Pavilion in the Brussels Fair,” 1958, NGC Press Clippings File.

[who] has linked his tribal skills to modernity in a bracelet and brooches on view.”⁸⁷

Reid’s jewellery would not appear at the National Gallery again until 2003, as part of *Art of this Land*, when it would finally breach the permanent exhibition space and be acknowledged as art.

The next ‘fine crafts’ show at the NGC was the *Canadian Fine Crafts* exhibition of 1966-67. It opened at the Gallery on December 13, 1966 and closed January 13, 1967, after which it was split into two equal sections and toured around the country. This was one of the first exhibitions executed during the tenure of the first female director of the NGC, Jean Sutherland Boggs, who had been appointed just seven months prior. In her Foreword to the catalogue Boggs stated that this was “the first time the National Gallery has assembled a comprehensive exhibition of Canadian hand crafts by inviting submissions from every part of Canada.”⁸⁸ During Boggs’ time at the NGC a number of exhibits, such as this, which welcomed a variety of objects that extended beyond the ‘pure’ arts realm, would be orchestrated. However, these later shows took place primarily as a result of the NMM’s involvement and didn’t appeal to Boggs. Rather than putting her energy into ventures to display art outside the mainstream, Boggs preferred to mount shows that were “aggressively Eurocentric.”⁸⁹ Therefore, in the case of the *Canadian Fine Crafts* exhibition, which was not a cooperative project, Boggs did little more than write the obligatory forward for the catalogue.

⁸⁷ “Local Talent On Display In Ottawa Exhibit,” Brockville Recorder, 23 July 1957, NGC Press Clippings File.

⁸⁸ The National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Fine Crafts (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1966) 2.

⁸⁹ Ord, The National, 244.

It was Norah McCullough, the NGC's western liaison officer who "thought a Canadian [crafts] exhibition well overdue"⁹⁰ and who traveled across the country and selected the one thousand initial items.⁹¹ The best of these were then selected for the *Canadian Fine Crafts* exhibition by the American Daniel Rhodes, a potter and associate art professor at Alfred University in New York. In his introduction to the catalogue Rhodes expressed what he thought was the difference between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal art included in the exposition. He believed that:

The contrast between the work of Indian and Eskimo craftsman and the work of the majority reveals the problems faced by both groups. The Indians and Eskimos are generally on sure ground with respect to workmanship and function, but they are experiencing a diminishing conviction and clarity in their relationship to their traditional design. The others, cut adrift from one surviving coherent tradition of design, often have difficulty in making the needed synthesis of method, material, function, and meaning.⁹²

As seen in this quotation the Aboriginal works were critiqued and treated in a different way than the non-Aboriginal pieces, which were referred to as the "majority," a synonym for mainstream. This imagined division between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal art was reinforced throughout the show.

Unlike the fine crafts exhibition of ten years prior, the *Canadian Fine Crafts* show separated the Aboriginal artists from the other Canadian artists and grouped them in the catalogue under the heading "Eskimo and Indian Crafts."⁹³ In addition, the Aboriginal artists were not identified by name nor were contact addresses provided as was done for the other participants. Visitors were informed in the catalogue that if they were interested

⁹⁰ "The Arts: Beauty by Design," *Time*, CDN edition, Montreal, 23 December 1966, NGC Press Clippings File.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² The National Gallery of Canada, *Canadian Fine Crafts*, 4.

⁹³ The National Gallery of Canada, *Canadian Fine Crafts*, 20.

in purchasing the Aboriginal work they were to contact the Northern Handicraft Co-op Association in Saskatchewan or the Indian Affairs Branch of the Arts and Crafts Centre in Ontario (i.e. one did not obtain the Aboriginal work directly from the Aboriginal artists).⁹⁴

Contrast was also created between Native and non-Native art in the displays where the idea of “Indian” art was treated as a sub-theme. Aboriginal art was, therefore, grouped together, in cases or physically intertwined with each other in the installations on the wall along with a few pieces of non-Aboriginal work that *looked* Native. For example, a lacrosse stick, a pair of mukluks and a pair of wrap-around moccasins, all by Aboriginal artists, were hung with a child’s pullover with a salmon design by an artist from Newfoundland and a Norwegian-style scarf which looked similar to the Native sash. This strategy reinforced stereotypes of what Aboriginal art was or should be. If, on the other hand, the intention in this instance had been to group the works by function, several interesting comparisons could have been set up. For example Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal containers could have been grouped together in the same display case.

The blatant treatment of Aboriginal art as something different, as something ‘other,’ seen in this show reflects a continuation of the beliefs regarding Aboriginal art which had been repeated at the NGC since the 1927 *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art Native and Modern* and that appeared unlikely to fade out. However, during the month of April of 1967 a change occurred which Douglas Ord identifies as resulting in “The National Gallery’s implicit demotion from a “pure” art museum” and the appearance of “wake strains around the edges of admissible art.”⁹⁵ The NGC was united

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ord, *The National*, 242.

under a common administrative structure with three other institutions, with the passage of the National Museums of Canada Act (the Museum of Natural Science, the Museum of Man and the Museum of Science and Technology).⁹⁶ Boggs was quite unhappy with this amalgamation. This is not surprising since it resulted in her being demoted and losing her deputy minister privileges.⁹⁷ Furthermore, being under the same administrative roof as the NMM forced Boggs to lend the resources of the NGC to two exhibitions that went against her adherence to a Eurocentric mainstream and promoted Aboriginal objects as art. The first of these was *Masterpieces of Indian and Eskimo Art from Canada* in 1969/70.

Masterpieces of Indian and Eskimo Art from Canada was exhibited first in Paris at the Musée de l'Homme from March to September, 1969 and then at the NGC from November 21, 1969 to January 11, 1970. Marcel Edvrard, the commissioner of exhibits for the Musée de l'Homme, came up with the idea for the exhibition and made several visits to Canada to participate in the selection of the objects.⁹⁸ The NMM provided most of the material and arranged to have it exhibited in Paris. The NGC was brought on board primarily for the use of its space which was larger and considered more adequate for this exhibition.⁹⁹ William Taylor, the then director of the NMM, was quoted in The Beaver as saying: "It is exasperating that, after two years work, this stunning exhibition cannot be presented in the National Museum of Man... but we have no respectable hall to house it."¹⁰⁰ The NMM's hand was especially evident in the selection of objects. One critic

⁹⁶ Ord, The National, 230.

⁹⁷ Ord, The National, 234.

⁹⁸ Barry Conn Hughes, "Here's what wowed'em in Paris," The Canadian Magazine Toronto Daily Star, 8 November 1969, NGC Press Clippings File.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Paquerette Villeneuve, "Canadian Exhibition in Paris: Masterpieces of Indian and Eskimo Art," The Beaver, Autumn 1969, 52.

labelled it an “ethnologist’s exhibition,” and pointed out that “all the items in [the exhibition] were actually used by their makers.”¹⁰¹

It is obvious from the letters exchanged between Boggs and Taylor that the NGC and the NMM were not working well together on this venture. Early on in the project Boggs even questioned whether this truly was a joint endeavour for the two museums. This angered Taylor who sent her the following reply: “I had thought from the outset that this was understood to be a joint undertaking of our two institutions, that having worked on it for two years the National Museum of Man had contributed not insignificantly in time, money, expertise and specimens. I suppose in referring to the project as a joint project I had assumed too much.”¹⁰² Boggs was determined to make working with the NGC as difficult as possible for Taylor. For example: she insisted that only NGC staff be permitted to touch the Aboriginal items during the installation,¹⁰³ turned down the poster the NMM had prepared for the show,¹⁰⁴ and refused to allow the photographer hired by the NMM to take pictures of the exhibition.¹⁰⁵ All the while she continued to reinforce the “philosophic difference between your museum and ours,” and went on to state, “We feel that the emphasis must be placed upon the work of art, and you obviously see it... in relation to its environment.”¹⁰⁶ If these items were going to be displayed in *her* Gallery,

¹⁰¹ Barry Lord, “A Spectacle of ivories and totems” Toronto Star, 21 November 1969, NGC Press Clippings File.

¹⁰² Information in a memorandum from Dr. W. E. Taylor, to Jean Boggs, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 29 July 1969, NGC Archives.

¹⁰³ Information in a letter from Jean Sutherland Boggs, to Dr. W. E. Taylor, National Museum of Man, Hull, 9 October 1969, NGC Archives.

¹⁰⁴ Information in a letter from Jean Sutherland Boggs, to Dr. W. E. Taylor, National Museum of Man, Hull, 18 August 1969, NGC Archives.

¹⁰⁵ Information in a letter from Dr. W. E. Taylor, To Jean Sutherland Boggs, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 12 March 1970, NGC Archives.

¹⁰⁶ Information in a letter from Jean Sutherland Boggs, to Dr. W. E. Taylor, National Museum of Man, Hull, 18 August 1969, NGC Archives.

Boggs was going to have it done her way; they were going to be exhibited as art on her terms.

Boggs' installed the works in the modernist style as she would have any other Canadian art.¹⁰⁷ Each piece of artwork was given its own space and evenly lit. The theatrical lighting used in the Parisian installation was eliminated. This seemed unusual to some of the critics who made comments such as: "The Masterpieces show has been spread thin over the big galleries and lit with the light of common day. The individual items are easier to see, but the drama is missing and with it much of the significance."¹⁰⁸ The manner of display, thus, conflicted with the public's expectations and their interpretation of the objects. That the installation did not try to reinforce the work's exoticism was quite surprising for viewers. Boggs' modernist inclination also contrasted with the primitivist style of the Parisian installation and the "interests" of the NMM, which, in her view, were "primarily archaeological and ethnographic."¹⁰⁹ Boggs even hired Joan Vastokas, professor of fine arts at the University of Toronto, to write the text and the acoustiguide for the NGC's version of the exhibition.¹¹⁰

All of the artwork in this exhibition was historical, except for a mural by Robert Davidson that was commissioned by the NGC specifically for this show and which was only included in the Gallery's exposition. Even Davidson's mural was viewed as

¹⁰⁷ For more information on the gallery as an "evenly lighted *cell*" see Brian O'Doherty, "Notes on the Gallery Space," in Inside the White Cube: The ideology of the Gallery Space (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 13-34, which was original printed in Artforum magazine in 1976.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Ayre, "Art from the Floes & Forests," The Montreal Star, 29 November 1969, 10-11, NGC Press Clippings File.

¹⁰⁹ Information in a letter from Jean Sutherland Boggs, to Joan M. Vastokas, Department of Fine Arts, University of Toronto, Toronto, 1 May 1969, NGC Archives.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. A comparison between the Parisian and the NGC text was not possible since only the NGC's acoustiguide text was included in the archival files for *Masterpieces of Indian and Eskimo Art from Canada*.

“carrying on the tradition of his ancestors”¹¹¹ rather than as a contemporary work of art. The show consisted of 185 pieces, borrowed from eleven different Canadian Museums,¹¹² and covered a time-span from 700 BC to the 1930s. Items on display included twenty-one Inuit sculptures, Haida masks, totems, Dorset and Thule amulets, rattles, a buffalo effigy, spindle whorls, embroidered clothing, Ojibway birch bark scrolls, Haudenauasnee masks, saddle bags, headdresses, shell gorgets and a ‘Naskapi’ (Innu) jacket –many of which would re-enter the NGC in 2003 for *Art of this Land*. This exhibition also included photographs of Haida villages which were taken towards the end of the 19th century and portraits by Paul Kane.

Since this show, unlike any previous NGC exhibitions, focused primarily on Aboriginal work, a greater variety of items than had ever been featured before were included. The first section of the display consisted of Inuit and Dorset sculpture, the second section showcased West Coast work (specifically: Salish, Tsimishian, Kwaiutl, Haida and Nootka) and the third and forth sections were made up of a mixture of objects from the remaining central provinces and Quebec (Ojibway, Haudenauasnee, Sioux, Algonkin, and ‘Naskapi’ (Innu) pieces were shown).

Like its predecessors this exhibition was premised on the salvage paradigm. Saving what remained of Aboriginal creations was, according to Taylor, of primary concern to the NMM.¹¹³ This idea was further emphasized by the NGC’s reference to the

¹¹¹ “Tradition” Vancouver Province, 13 November 1969, NGC Press Clippings File.

¹¹² Works were borrowed from: The McCord Museum, The Glenbow Foundation, The Vancouver City Museum, The Manitoba Museum, The Provincial Museum of BC, The Eskimo Museum, The University of British Columbia, The Saskatchewan Museum, The Quebec Museum, The Royal Art Museum and the National Museum of Man.

¹¹³ “Art May be Lost Forever,” Simcoe Reformer, 21 November 1969, NGC Press Clippings File.

art included in this show as “pre-historic”¹¹⁴ in its press release. Evard, in the catalogue, also directly related the creation of these works to beliefs in magic, thus reinforcing myths about Aboriginal peoples as primitive and exotic.

Some cynicism towards this type of showing, however, was beginning to emerge. In a Toronto Star article entitled “A Spectacle of ivories and totems,” Barry Lord, pointed out that “It’s ironically fitting, considering the way we’ve helped ourselves to their culture, that our government had the show opened by a French baroness and an Ottawa cabinet minister, ignoring the chiefs of the tribes who created the art. The exhibition has at least as much to do with relations between France and Canada as it does with the Indians and the Eskimos.”¹¹⁵ The use of Aboriginal art to promote a sense of nationalism, history and unique culture (with a long-standing tradition of art originating from the land) solely for Western gallery visitors was losing favour with some observers and creating a taste of what was to come.

The second exhibition that Boggs was obliged to house at the NGC for the NMM was the *Installation of Northwest Coast Indian Works* in 1971. This was a temporary installation that was held at the NGC while the NMM, which was still in the Victoria Building, was closed for renovations. The display was scheduled to run indefinitely as it was unknown exactly how long the renovations would take.¹¹⁶ The show ended up running from April to August 1971.

The NMM was, thus, able to retain some public presence in Ottawa while under renovations. The preliminary agreement was as follows: “That in the period during which

¹¹⁴ “Art of Canadian Indians, Eskimos Acclaimed in Paris,” NGC Newsletter, 30 May 1969, NGC Press Clippings File.

¹¹⁵ Lord, “A Spectacle.”

¹¹⁶ “Northwest Coast Indian Art on display,” The Ottawa-Gloucester Guardian, Vol. 2, #22, 11 August 1970, NGC Press Clippings File.

the galleries of the National Museum of Man are closed to the public that the finest examples of Canadian Indian and Eskimo art be exhibited at the National Gallery on part of the sixth floor, displacing part of the War Collection, so that the public will not be deprived of the opportunity of seeing this important Native Canadian art. It should be understood, however, that the material would be displayed as works of art rather than as anthropological specimens.”¹¹⁷ A committee made up of staff from both the NGC and the NMM was formed to answer this demand. Put together by Taylor and Boggs, the committee included Major R. F. Wodehouse from the NGC and Barbara Taylor and Barrie Reynolds from the NMM. In the official press release only Wodehouse’s name was listed suggesting that he headed the project. The committee was responsible for selecting the best examples of Aboriginal *art* from the NMM’s ethnographic collection. In the end, the seventy artworks to be displayed were all picked from the NMM’s selection of Northwest Coast material; implying that artwork from the Northwest Coast was superior to Aboriginal art from any other part of the country.

This grouping of historical Northwest Coast work included the, now usual, assortment of rattles, masks, house posts, boxes, blankets and hats. However, in contrast to *Masterpieces of Indian and Eskimo Art from Canada*, the selection of objects reflected a focus on aesthetic objects and the tools used to produce them, such as paint bags, paint brushes, a paint pot and adzes. The addition of tools used to produce the works was most likely an ethnographic intervention, on the part of the staff from the NMM, in response to Boggs’ insistence that the show be primarily artistic.

¹¹⁷ Information in a memorandum approved at the Board of Trustees meeting 16-17 October 1969, NGC Archives.

While the selection of objects reflected an artistic angle the labelling describing the pieces did not. The text panel was filled with a surprising number of ethnological details for an exhibition that was supposed to be purely aesthetic. It said nothing of the art itself other than what materials would have been available to produce it and what animals were known and thus able to be depicted. This labelling format was continued for the entire show and only varied when it came to the artistic tools in the display, for which a brief description of how they were used was included. Thus a pair of rattles was described as: "Pair of Tsimshian rattles probably representing the wolf, one of the four clan designations of the Coast Tsimshian speaking tribes. Collected by I. W. Powell in 1873."¹¹⁸ As seen in this example, no attempt was made to discuss Aboriginal aesthetics or meaning in the art and the works were dated, like ethnographic specimens, based on when they were collected rather than on when they were executed. As expressed by Peter Vergo: "The notion that works of art, in particular should be left to speak for themselves takes no account of the fact that such works are for most visitors, remarkably taciturn objects. Left to speak for themselves, they often say very little."¹¹⁹ Since no basis of understanding was provided for these objects and since the public was still unfamiliar with reading them as art, the objects remained mute.¹²⁰

The previous discussion shows that although the NGC aspired to position Aboriginal objects as art in this exhibition, ethnographic associations continued to affect the interpretations of these objects. A change of tactic was yet needed if the Aboriginal works' artistic merit was to be recognized.

¹¹⁸ Information from a label for Installation of Northwest Coast Indian Works, 1970, NGC Archives.

¹¹⁹ Peter Vergo, "The Reticent Object," in The New Museology, ed. Peter Vergo (London: Reaktion Book Ltd., 1989), 49.

¹²⁰ Fisher, Making and Effacing, 20.

In February of 1981 the National Gallery Association submitted a brief to the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee. Under article 5., "Acquisitions," it was stated that "The collection of a national gallery should ideally be all-embracing, including work of artistic excellence without regard to race or nationality. Some suitable arrangement should be made between the National Museum of Man and the National Gallery so that Inuit and Indian art may be appropriately represented in the collections of the National Gallery."¹²¹ Even though this and the submissions of other institutions would not be compiled to form the "Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee" until 1982, the multicultural sentiments of this sentence were reflected in an exhibition which went on display later on in the same year. This exhibition was entitled *The Comfortable Arts: Traditional Spinning and Weaving in Canada*. It was displayed at the NGC from September 24 to November 22, 1981 after which it traveled to the Macdonald Stewart Art Gallery in Guelph, the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery in Regina and the Vancouver Museum.

The Comfortable Arts was the project of Dorothy Burnham, who had been a curator in the Royal Ontario Museum's Textiles Department until she retired in 1977.¹²² According to her introduction in the catalogue she contacted the NGC and recommended the show after being "tired of [her] favourite subject being treated, at best, as a minor decorative art."¹²³ The resulting exposition was organized based on the history of settlement in Canada and featured not only Aboriginal, French and English works, as had

¹²¹ National Gallery Association, A Brief Submitted to the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee by the National Gallery Association (Ottawa: The National Gallery Association, 1981), 6.

¹²² Ronald Grant, "Busier than ever, textiles expert won't slow down" The Globe and Mail, 28 July 1980, NGC Press Clippings File.

¹²³ Dorothy K. Burnham, The Comfortable Arts: Traditional Spinning and Weaving in Canada (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1981), xii.

become the norm for NGC exhibitions that illustrated early Canada, but also Scottish, Irish, German, Icelandic, Hutterite, Ukrainian and Doukhobor pieces.

Many of the reviewers and even Burnham herself praised the NGC for its acceptance of textile works as ‘fine’ arts and for subsequently accepting the artistic validity of *all* cultures who created these works and were featured in the show. However, as illustrated by the Forward to the catalogue written by the Director at the time, Hsio-Yen Shih, this was merely an example of tokenism and not a true case of acceptance. According to Shih: “As a museum of art, the National Gallery recognizes aesthetic quality, historical significance, and intellectual content in applied, decorative, or the minor arts as in the “fine” arts... Exhibitions such as this one of Canadian textiles, and the help of scholars from outside the gallery, are methods by which the Gallery seeks to redress possible imbalances posed by the limitations of its collections.”¹²⁴ In other words this sort of show was supposed to make up for gaps in the Gallery’s permanent installation and collection without having to make any changes to either of these or having to acknowledge the equivalent value of the decorative arts, which Shih viewed as “minor.”¹²⁵

All of the items included were historical examples of textile art. The 162 textile pieces were borrowed from thirty-seven institutions and two private owners; of these one third came from the ROM.¹²⁶ Several of these items also reappeared at the Gallery twenty years later in *Art of This Land* such as a Chilkat Tunic from the British Columbia Provincial Museum (now the Royal British Columbia Museum), a Swampy Cree knife

¹²⁴ Burnham, *The Comfortable Arts*, vii.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Kay Kritzwiser, “Textiles come into their own in exhibit of Comfortable Arts,” *The Globe and Mail*, 3 October 1981, NGC Press Clippings File.

sheath with carrying band from the NMM, and a man's moose-hide jacket from the Provincial Museum of Alberta.

The exhibition was organized according to region, ethnicity and the history of settlement. In unprecedented fashion it began with a section devoted solely to Aboriginal pieces, thus recognizing for the first time ever in an NGC exhibition that the history of Canada began before the arrival of any Europeans. From there the display moved from east to west and forward in time along with the settlers of each area. Not just artworks, but props and tools such as looms, spinning wheels and graphics were included in the exhibition to help convey to the viewer a full understanding of the textile as art form along with its method of production. Perhaps due to Burnham's background at the ROM, the resulting style of the exhibition would have looked more natural in a museum than in a gallery. As one reviewer stated:

The exhibit is staged like a history lesson. At the entrance is an Ojibwa rabbit-skin parka flanked by two pairs of snowshoes; an early twentieth century Athabaskan pair and a pair of "swallowtail" snowshoes dated about 1911. The lesson runs throughout the exhibit in reproductions of early photographs and authentic weaving and spinning tools that illustrate the 162 textiles on display... They seem out of place, however, amidst the white smoothness of the walls of the National Gallery, even though an attempt has been made to mute this starkness with the installation of wood veneer paneling.¹²⁷

This style of display was one of the things that worked against Burnham's desire to promote this work to the level of 'fine' art. Adding to this was the fact that inappropriate perceptions of Native peoples and their arts appeared in the reviews pertaining to this exhibition as well. Most markedly was the idea that museums are the only resource for Aboriginal pieces or information on Aboriginal peoples and that Aboriginal items should

¹²⁷ Gayle Aitken, "Practical beauty from times of hardship" *The Charlatan*, Vol. II, # 6, October 1981, NGC Press Clippings File.

be in the care of museums.¹²⁸ Burnham herself confessed that she used museums as her primary resource for materials, and those areas that were lacking, be they Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, were the result of a lack in the corresponding museum.¹²⁹

Although outdated views of Aboriginal peoples and their art continued to appear in some articles, many critics signaled a change in attitude among the public towards a) Aboriginal arts and b) arts that were previously categorized as 'lesser arts.' For example Pilar Moreno gave the work the following praise:

Weaving has been set a little bit apart from the other arts, probably because it has been a domestic and functional pursuit long considered only as necessary work done by women as part of their household tasks. But each textile piece in the exhibition is a work of art and each relates the art of textiles to other forms of visual art.¹³⁰

Susan Warner Keeno stated in Canadian Forum that, "For variety of technique and richness of surface embellishment... the textiles of the Native peoples cannot be matched in this collection."¹³¹ These reviews reinforced Burnham's conviction that, by being exhibited in the NGC, textiles were finally being accepted as art and that the Aboriginal work provided some of the most exceptional pieces in the show. Opened while still waiting for the results of the Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, *The Comfortable Arts*, with its more positive attitude towards Native content, foreshadowed a shift in the format of exhibitions that included Aboriginal art.

¹²⁸ The struggle for Canadian museums to 'reclaim' historical items displayed in this exhibition was championed by the media. For example, as Ronald Grant remarked in an article entitled "Busier than ever, Textiles expert won't slow down," which appeared in Globe and Mail on Monday July 28, 1980: "under a federal Government program, some of the early articles are being "repatriated" from Europe where they'd been taken by early seventeenth-century travelers and missionaries in Canada. Some of these include the beautiful combinations of weaving and porcupine quills." None of the articles proposed the possibility of returning these items to the peoples from which they came or even consulting Aboriginal people regarding their care.

¹²⁹ Burnham, The Comfortable Arts, xii.

¹³⁰ Pilar Moreno, "Varied collection of textile art illustrates the history of Canada," Leader-Post, March, 1982, NGC Press Clippings File.

¹³¹ Susan Warner Keeno, "The Other Arts," Canadian Forum, March, 1982, NGC Press Clippings File.

So long as Aboriginal art was seen as “other,” as being in some way different from what was generally accepted as art, it was placed in an opposing position, and the hierarchical relationship between it and non-Aboriginal art, between it and “fine” art, remained in place.

Contemporary Aboriginal Art Takes the Stage

In October of 1978 a number of Aboriginal artists met at the first Native Artists' Conference to explore the key forces that have affected Native art and artists over the past decade.¹³² In a number of discussion groups organized by this conference, representatives of museums and the Aboriginal artists confronted one another with their assertions and feelings of injustice. One of the most potent statements from this conference was that of the artist Alex Janvier, who was quoted by Tom Hill as follows:

[This is] from the tape of that conference by Alex Janvier when he sort of stormed out of one of the sessions when he said: “It is obvious from my (point of) view that these organizations we have come across are of little value, or of no use to us. It seems that they have their priorities and are engaged in something a little different than what we are. I think we have commitment, a commitment to ourselves as artists, to our tribes and to our Indian people in general!” Slam went the door and out walked Alex Janvier!¹³³

This slammed door is said to have echoed throughout the Canadian art community.¹³⁴

Shortly after this moment in time the NGC's actions towards Aboriginal art began to be put under the gun, leading to changes in the NGC's acquisitions policy which had

¹³² Tom Hill, “Session 1: Canada's Major Art Institutions and Artists of Native Ancestry –Policies and Responsibilities,” in Networking: Proceedings From National Native Indian Artists' Symposium IV, ed. Alfred Young Man (Lethbridge: Graphcom Printers Ltd., 1988), 8.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Brydon Smith, “Session 1: Canada's Major Art Institutions and Artists of Native Ancestry – Policies and Responsibilities,” in Networking: Proceedings From National Native Indian Artists' Symposium IV, ed. Alfred Young Man (Lethbridge: Graphcom Printers Ltd., 1988), 14.

previously made no mention of Aboriginal art¹³⁵ and, therefore, received the bulk of the criticism. One of the first of many updates to the NGC's collections policy was written shortly after this, in 1980, with an addendum which read:

The Contemporary Canadian Native Art collections of the National Museum of Man and the National Gallery of Canada are held in public trust by the National Museums corporation with primary collecting, custodial, and display responsibilities resting with the National Museum of Man. These extant collections are available for exhibitions to all National Museums and any others that can meet custodial requirements. The National Gallery of Canada in collaboration with the National Museum of Man will continue to purchase for its collection, or borrow for display, contemporary and historic Native Art when these objects demonstrate the highest level of aesthetic achievement or are deemed exemplary in the development of Canadian Native Art.¹³⁶

Unfortunately this still placed the majority of the responsibility for displaying and collecting Aboriginal art on the NMM and virtually absolved the NGC of the need to do anything that might step into the NMM's area.

When the Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee (also known as the Applebaum-Hébert Report) came out in November 1982, it championed the idea of Canada as multicultural, as "a meeting place for the world's cultural traditions."¹³⁷ This report goes on to state that Canada's Aboriginal peoples need special consideration, in this new view of Canada, and that the federal government is responsible for their care.¹³⁸ The Committee felt that federal heritage policies should be modified to give attention to Native culture and that this would help rectify the view that everything Aboriginal was from a distant and dead era. Although it was stated that both historical and contemporary

¹³⁵ Jean Blodgett, Report on Indian and Inuit Art at the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa: J. Blodgett, 1983), 6.

¹³⁶ Smith, Networking, 14; Blodgett, Report, 6.

¹³⁷ Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee (Ottawa: Information Services, Department of Communications, Government of Canada, 1982), 10.

¹³⁸ Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, Report, 11.

Aboriginal work needed to be promoted, the focus was on contemporary art. As stated in the Report: “This Committee is convinced that Native artists must be recognized first and foremost as contemporary Canadian artists.”¹³⁹ The lack of inclusion of Native art in federal institutions was specifically noted and, according to this report, the NGC neither collected nor exhibited Aboriginal art.¹⁴⁰ The Report’s focus on contemporary art was also expressed in relation to the NGC, whose current contemporary art collection, it was felt, needed improvement. (In fact the report went so far as to recommend that a separate museum of Canadian Contemporary Art be constructed and that this institution be given the contemporary art collections currently housed by the NMM and the NGC among others).¹⁴¹ The Committee also highlighted the fact that the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs had a collection of Aboriginal art which was not being used to its full potential – due, in large part, to the fact that this institution did not have an exhibition space.¹⁴² The concerns regarding Aboriginal art expressed in the Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, especially as they applied to the NGC, did not fall on deaf ears. However, the NGC decided that before anything could be done a full review of the extent of the problem was needed.

In 1983 Jean Blodgett submitted her completed Report on Indian and Inuit Art at the National Gallery of Canada. This Report stated that the NGC did not have a clearly stated policy that addressed either the display or collection of Aboriginal art,¹⁴³ that what the NGC did have in terms of an Aboriginal collection was very poor and “of no

¹³⁹ Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, Report, 11.

¹⁴⁰ Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, Report, 111.

¹⁴¹ Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, Report, 149.

¹⁴² Blodgett, Report, 49.

¹⁴³ Blodgett, Report, 7.

importance in the development of Indian and Inuit art,”¹⁴⁴ and that the NGC had never initiated or executed an exhibition of Native art on its own.¹⁴⁵ Blodgett’s report concluded that the NGC could contribute both to the collecting of Aboriginal art, especially contemporary, and to the exhibition of both historical and contemporary Aboriginal art.¹⁴⁶ As a result of this the NGC’s collection policy was rewritten in 1984 to include the following line: “This policy should include the acquisition of representative examples of Contemporary Inuit and Indian Art with the advice of the curators from the Museum of Man.”¹⁴⁷

In 1983 another conference of Aboriginal artists was held.¹⁴⁸ The most significant outcome of this conference was the creation of the Society of Canadian Artists of Native Ancestry (SCANA). SCANA’s goal was to convince galleries across Canada to open up their doors to Aboriginal art.¹⁴⁹ According to Brydon Smith, who was the Assistant Director at the time, it was decided, after a series of discussions between the NGC and SCANA, that the responsibilities of Native art should fall on the shoulders of the current associate curators of contemporary art, then Diana Nemiroff and Jessica Bradley.¹⁵⁰ Smith went on to say that the NGC “would not be setting up a special curatorship to deal with [Aboriginal art], or at that point a special budget, but it would come from the total

¹⁴⁴ Blodgett, Report, 9.

¹⁴⁵ Blodgett, Report, 10.

¹⁴⁶ It is interesting to note that the only piece of Indian art in the NGC’s collection listed by Blodgett is a Northwest Coast argillite pole from 1885 that was acquired in 1927. No mention is made of the Aboriginal sashes in the Gallery’s collection or a collection of Aboriginal works which were de-accessioned in the late 1970s (this collection included two Chilkat robes, a moosehide embroidered tablecloth and a Haida box).

¹⁴⁷ Smith, Networking, 15.

¹⁴⁸ This was in fact the third such meeting as there was also one in 1979 in Saskatchewan at the University of Regina.

¹⁴⁹ Jim Logan, “Space the Final Frontier”, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 26 May 2000, <http://www.jimlogan.net/Space.htm>, 22 February 2004.

¹⁵⁰ Smith, Networking, 15.

acquisition budget for contemporary art.”¹⁵¹ Even without assigning staff or budget specifically to the promotion of Aboriginal art at the Gallery, the new focus on contemporary Native art completely altered the basis for the selection and display of Aboriginal art at the NGC.

Aware of a general consensus that the NGC was disregarding Native art, Nemiroff set out to curate a number of installations and exhibitions that would demonstrate Aboriginal inclusion. The first of these, an installation entitled *Cross-Cultural Views*, addressed the need for improvements in the area of collecting and exhibiting Aboriginal art and contemporary art at the NGC as recommended by the Applebaum-Hébert Report and the Report on Indian and Inuit Art at the National Gallery of Canada. This installation made use of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs collection, which was seen, by both reports, as needing to be better utilized. This installation was a visual statement that demonstrated the NGC’s new commitment towards Aboriginal art. As stated by Tom Hill this “was the first time in the history, I suppose, of the National Gallery that Indian Artists conveying contemporary realities, were integrated into an exhibition without all that ethnological labelling or baggage that we’ve had to carry along before.”¹⁵² In short, the NGC recognized its neglect of Aboriginal art and began to compensate for it.

This temporary installation ran from November 4, 1986 to March 29, 1987. It featured only contemporary works (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) and was installed in the contemporary galleries of the Lorne Building. Its focus was the NGC’s newly acquired Carl Beam work, *The North American Iceberg*. Purchased in August

¹⁵¹ Smith, *Networking*, 15.

¹⁵² Tom Hill, *Networking: Proceedings From National Native Indian Artists’ Symposium IV*, ed. Alfred Young Man (Lethbridge: Graphcom Printers Ltd., 1988), 9.

1986, *The North American Iceberg* was the first piece of contemporary Aboriginal art to be purchased by the NGC, and it was felt that the purchase of this Native artwork by the NGC would encourage other Canadian galleries to follow suit.¹⁵³ Besides the work of Carl Beam, the exhibition included Canadian Aboriginal work by Robert Houle, Jane Ash Poitras, Edward Poitras, Joanne-Cardinal Schubert and Bob Boyer as well as non-Aboriginal work by John Scott, Shelagh Keeley, Jorg Immendorff, Jenny Holzer, Jamelie Hassan, Hans Haacke, Oliver Girling and Paterson Ewen. Joanne Cardinal-Schubert complained that the Canadian Aboriginal artists whose work was displayed in this exhibition were not informed that their art was being featured in an NGC installation,¹⁵⁴ thus, signalling her desire for a more consultative relationship.

The works were hung together, as equals to each other without regard to the artist's ethnicity. The pieces all highlighted problems which occur in a multicultural society such as racism, inclusion and exclusion, oppression and abuse of power. Nemiroff's curatorial statement stated that, "by displaying works by Indian artists in the collection together, we want to recognize the cultural specificity of each, while pointing to those issues and concerns that link them."¹⁵⁵ More indirectly, the works were also linked by the fact that all of the issues discussed in the art on display were relevant to the relationship between Western and Aboriginal peoples in Canada. As a result, this show, which was mounted in part as a response to Aboriginal groups lobbying against the Western art gallery, seemed to critique itself. *Cross-Cultural Views* marked the beginning

¹⁵³ H. Bernard and S. Rothwell, "Indian Art Purchased By National Gallery," Press Release, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, December 1986, NGC Archives.

¹⁵⁴ Joanne Cardinal-Schubert, "In the Red," Fuse, Fall 1989, 26.

¹⁵⁵ NGC, Communiqué, Ottawa, 3 November 1986, NGC Archives.

of the new trend in the exhibition of Aboriginal art at the NGC to focus only on contemporary work.

The fourth *Native Indian Artists' Symposium* was held from July 14 to 18, 1987 in Lethbridge, Alberta. This conference at which the NGC¹⁵⁶ was represented for the first time by Smith and Nemiroff gave the gallery the chance to inform contemporary Aboriginal artists of the recent changes in the policy which concerned Aboriginal art. The Gallery was put in the hot seat regarding its acquisition budget, its late start and its method of selecting artists. Nemiroff also explained her involvement with the exhibition of Aboriginal art since her arrival at the NGC three and a half years prior. The overriding message of the conference can be expressed by the following statement made by Carl Beam: "what they're saying [to the institutions represented here] is, continue to work. I think there was an overwhelming response to that, that we should continue what we're doing, although these major issues do continue to be discussed. The issues of collections and the issues of exhibitions..."¹⁵⁷ It was felt that, though long overdue, progress had been made, but that the momentum needed to be kept up. Not enough had yet been done to reverse the tide.

Another matter brought up by Smith during this conference was the forthcoming opening of the new National Gallery¹⁵⁸ building designed by Moshe Safdie on the 21 of

¹⁵⁶ David Genereau, "Session 1: Canada's Major Art Institutions and Artists of Native Ancestry – Policies and Responsibilities," in *Networking: Proceedings From National Native Indian Artists' Symposium IV*, ed. Alfred Young Man (Lethbridge: Graphcom Printers Ltd, 1988), 24.

¹⁵⁷ Gerald McMaster, "Session 2: Acquisitions and Exhibitions: What are the Major Institutions Buying and Showing," in *Networking: Proceedings From National Native Indian Artists' Symposium IV*, ed. Alfred Young Man (Lethbridge: Graphcom Printers Ltd, 1988), 30.

¹⁵⁸ Smith, *Networking*, 15.

May, 1988.¹⁵⁹ Beam's *The North American Iceberg* was displayed in the opening installation of the new building.

The first major exhibition to be planned by Nemiroff in the new building was the *Canadian Biennial of Contemporary Art*, which opened on October 6 and ran until December 3, 1989. At the *National Native Indian Artists' Symposium IV*, Nemiroff had offered a general invitation to artists in the audience to submit their *curricula vitas* along with slides so that they could be considered for admittance to the show.¹⁶⁰ Of the forthcoming show she noted: "I would find this a very interesting context in which to show the work of Indian Artists."¹⁶¹ Given the level of lobbying organized by SCANA, it is surprising that only one Native artist was included in this show, Edward Poitras.

The Canadian Biennial was intended to be the first of a series of shows. Each participating gallery was to organize an exhibition. The galleries involved were The Art Gallery of Ontario, The Vancouver Art Gallery, The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, and the Winnipeg art Gallery.¹⁶² The idea behind the collaboration was that the galleries were located in distinct areas from each other and would help convey the series'

¹⁵⁹ The Lorne Building, in which the Gallery was currently housed, was falling apart; "even after the multimillion dollar "facelift" of 1976, [the Lorne Building had] a leaking roof, dysfunctional washrooms, pipes bound with rags to prevent their clanging, and blank spaces left on walls, where paintings had been removed to protect from condensation" (Ord, *National*, 279). The construction of a new building for both the NGC and the NMM was announced by Pierre Trudeau on the 18 of February, 1982 in the West Block of the Parliament Building. This announcement also marked the beginning of the dismantling of the NMC and the formation of a new supervisory crown corporation, which became known as the Canada Museums Construction Corporation. A year later the location and architects for each building were announced. The NGC was to be constructed by Safdie in the area of Nepean Point and the NMM was to be built by Douglas Cardinal, just across the river from the parliament buildings, in Hull [For more information see Douglas Ord, *The National Gallery of Canada: Ideas Art Architecture* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003)].

¹⁶⁰ Diana Nemiroff, "Session 2: Acquisitions and Exhibitions: What are the Major Institutions Buying and Showing," in *Networking: Proceedings From National Native Indian Artists' Symposium IV*, ed. Alfred Young Man (Lethbridge: Graphcom Printers Ltd, 1988), 36.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Diana Nemiroff, *Canadian Biennial of Contemporary Art Biennale Canadienne d'art contemporain*, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1989), 8.

theme of community and its sub-theme of the different identities within each community.¹⁶³ Unfortunately, the next gallery in line was unable to secure enough funding to follow through with this plan and, as a result, the show was never fully realized.¹⁶⁴ In her essay for the catalogue, “Local Practice,” Nemiroff explained the series’ theme for the Canadian Biennial at the NGC as the relationship between national and local identity. She argued in support of Philip Monk, whom she cited as articulating the need for ““a more complex notion of nationalism that extends and attends the local.” To this she added the need to “recuperate from the counterculture the values of community and local practice.”¹⁶⁵ To further this perception the artists were displayed according to their place of residence, starting with artists in the West and running eastward across the country.

Poitras’ work was entitled *Morningstar Manifesto*, from 1989. This work, which deals with the unfair advantage given to the British by the treaty for the North Saskatchewan River region, tied in nicely with the exhibition’s perception of the rapport between national and local identity because it also demonstrated how a smaller Aboriginal culture can endure within the larger dominant Western culture.¹⁶⁶ It is ironic that this message was also (unintentionally) transmitted by the fact that Poitras was the only Aboriginal artist included in this exhibition.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Personal communication, Diana Nemiroff, Carleton University, Ottawa, 7 September 2004.

¹⁶⁵ Nemiroff, *Canadian Biennial*, 17.

¹⁶⁶ Nemiroff, *Canadian Biennial*, 49.

¹⁶⁷ As well as Poitras, this show also included the work of Ian Wallace, Kati Campbell, Stan Douglas, Joey Morgan, Jerry Pethick, Mary Scott, Eleanor Bond, Ian Carr-Harris, Liz Major, Robin Collyer, Kim Adams, Colette Whiten, Shelagh Alexander, Shirley Wiitasalo, Will Gorlitz, Jocelyne Alloucherie, Gilles Mihalcean, Guy Bourassa, Geneviève Cadieux, Jana Sterbak, Barbara Steinman, Michael Fernandes, Lani Maestro and Jan Peacock.

In the NGC's filmed walking tour of the exhibition Nemiroff explained that one of her goals was to create a dialogue between the works in each gallery.¹⁶⁸ Since Poitras' work was a large installation which took up an entire gallery on its own it was impossible to include in one of these orchestrated conversations.

The NGC's move to exhibit contemporary Aboriginal art can be understood not only as an effect of the lobbying of contemporary Aboriginal artists but also as its response to other exhibitions being mounted at this time. The exhibition that had the most significant impact on the way curators and the public viewed and treated Aboriginal material was *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples*. Opened on January 14, 1988, in conjunction with the XVth Winter Olympic Games, this became the most controversial event in the history of Aboriginal art exhibitions. The exposition was attacked from three angles. First it was attacked because of Lubicon Lake Cree's outrage over its sponsorship by one of the oil companies drilling on their land and the resulting destruction of the natural environment they counted on for a livelihood.¹⁶⁹ Second, objections were raised by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike at the inclusion of inappropriately sacred objects and the fact that these and other items of particular historical significance were in the hands of museums rather than those of the peoples from which they were taken.¹⁷⁰ Third, and most influential on the actions of galleries such as the NGC, the show was criticized for including only historical Aboriginal work.¹⁷¹ In relation to this third point, Cardinal-Shubert stated: "We protested the fact

¹⁶⁸ Information for a tape of a walking tour by Diana Nemiroff of the *Canadian Biennial of Contemporary Art*, 1989, NGC Archives.

¹⁶⁹ Robyn Gillam, *Hall of Mirrors: Museums and the Canadian Public*, (Banff: The Banff Centre Press, 2001), 102.

¹⁷⁰ Gillam, *Hall of Mirrors*, 103.

¹⁷¹ Gilliam, *Hall of Mirrors*, 115.

that Native culture was being used by the Olympics to foster a world view that Native culture was dead, all over, collected; and that what was still practiced was frozen in the 18th century. We believe that the Olympics should have held exhibitions featuring contemporary Native art as it is now.”¹⁷² This response suggests a further possible reason why no historical Aboriginal objects were exhibited as art in NGC exhibitions and installations between 1982 and 2003.¹⁷³

A reference to *The Spirit Sings* also appears to be present in the title of the first exhibition presenting Native art to be mounted at the NGC after the biennial: *Strengthening the Spirit*. This installation was presented in connection with *Indigenous 500*: an international Aboriginal conference sponsored by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) addressing the strength and persistence of Aboriginal people since the arrival of Columbus in the Americas (whose quincentennial was scheduled to be celebrated in 1992). The exhibit was held between November 10 and 14 1991 in Ottawa and Hull.¹⁷⁴ Curated by Janice Seline, Assistant Curator of Contemporary art, it was launched at the same time as the conference and ran until February 2, 1992.

In the conference’s opening Ovide Mercredi, the Chairman of the *Indigenous 500* committee and the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, articulated the desires of the peoples involved in the conference as follows:

The Indigenous Peoples of the Americas seek nothing more than their collective rights and freedoms. We seek to be respected with the dignity

¹⁷² Cardinal-Shubert, “In the Red,” 23.

¹⁷³ In 1983 one argillite pole was on display in the installation of historic Canadian art and in 1992 Aboriginal items used as references for Benjamin West’s painting “The Death of General Wolfe” were included in the exhibition “The Death of General Wolfe: Related Prints and Native Artifacts from Benjamin West’s Studio.”

¹⁷⁴ Information in the introductory panel from *Strengthening the Spirit: Works by Native Artists Presented in Conjunction with Indigenous 500*, National Gallery of Canada, 1991, NGC Archives.

owed to all human persons and collectives. We seek respect for the equality of individuals and respect for the equality of distinct peoples. We seek to enjoy justice in the exercise of our collective inherent human rights which are for all people the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world...¹⁷⁵

The exhibition expressed these same desires. The introductory text panel, which explained the show's relationship to the conference, summed up the purpose of the conference and linked the artists whose work was being displayed under the theme of "their commitment to voicing the concerns of their people through art."¹⁷⁶ Thus, the artworks in this installation were grouped together based on common articulation of Aboriginal concerns ranging from sensitive issues such as the Oka crisis to residential schools.¹⁷⁷

The exposition consisted of twenty-one examples of contemporary Aboriginal art. Seline borrowed ten works from the Indian Art Centre, three from artists associated with the private Ottawa Ufundi Gallery and eight from the permanent collection of the NGC.¹⁷⁸ Carl Beam, Domingo Cisneros, Joe David, Robert Houle, Mary Longman, Gerald McMaster, David Neel, Ron Noganosh, Jane Ash-Poitras, Arthur Renwick, Joane Cardinal-Shubert, Bob Boyer, Robert Davidson, Pierre Sioui and Bill Reid were each represented by one or more pieces.

The response of many critics was less than favourable. Nancy Baele of the Ottawa Citizen, for example, was put off by the fact that "there [was] no guide for the visitor as

¹⁷⁵ Ovide Mercredi, "Opening statement excerpts, November 10th Conference Inauguration," in Strengthening the Spirit Beyond 500 Years: Indigenous Nations of the Americas International Conference, (Ottawa: Indigenous 500 Committee, 1991), 4.

¹⁷⁶ Information in the introductory panel from *Strengthening the Spirit: Works by Native Artists Presented in Conjunction with Indigenous 500*, National Gallery of Canada, 1991, NGC Archives.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Janice Seline, "Strengthening the Spirit: The Definitive List," 16 February 1999, NGC Archives.

to background, esthetics or the curatorial concept”¹⁷⁹ and she also felt that Seline did not take advantage of the opportunity to create any dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal works or even much dialogue among the Aboriginal works themselves.¹⁸⁰

John Bentley Mays, of the Toronto Globe and Mail, approached Aboriginal exhibitions as though they were an insult to Euro-Canadians and a personal offence to him. He labelled the show as “angry” and critiqued the quality of the works:

I have no doubt about the sincerity of the featured artists –or at least about their unalloyed desire to score points against a dominant white culture they’ve come to view rightly or wrongly as oppressive and soul-stealing. Their sincerity about art making is another matter... the flimsiness and absence of disciplined material practice, the sloppiness and vagueness that come when more attention is paid to sloganeering than to working within the stuffs of art.¹⁸¹

Due to the response of critics like Mays, positioning contemporary Native art as primarily political inadvertently contributed to the formation of a new stereotype for Native art: that it was angry first and artistic after.

Eight months after *Strengthening the Spirit* came down, a second and much larger Aboriginal exhibition was mounted in association with the 500th anniversary of Columbus’s voyage to the Americas and the controversy surrounding his “discovery” of these lands. This exhibition was *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada*, arguably the most important and widely discussed exhibition of Aboriginal art ever to have been held at the NGC. The show ran from September 25 to

¹⁷⁹ Baele, “Native art.”

¹⁸⁰ Nancy Baele, “Native artists’ exhibition stays true to its bearings, culture,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 1 December 1991, NGC Press Clippings File.

¹⁸¹ John Bentley Mays, “Making visual sense of a mixed heritage,” *The Globe and Mail*, 29 November 1991, NGC Press Clippings File.

November 23, 1992 and was curated by Nemiroff, Charlotte Townsend-Gault and, Aboriginal artist and curator, Robert Houle.¹⁸²

The anniversary of Columbus's arrival was being greeted with mixed emotions in North America, and this had an impact on the response to the show. The very mounting of a Native art exhibition in relation to this historic event was looked upon by some with scepticism. Mays was even more critical of this show than he had been of *Strengthening the Spirit*. This time his objection was not to the position taken by the artists but that taken by the Gallery:

Despite the hypocrisy involved, many a traditional art museum has opted to use this moment to extend to Native artists promises of "acceptance," of the sort such museums have never kept and, I strongly suspect will never keep. Land, Spirit, Power, a large group exhibition now on view at the National Gallery of Canada, is best understood as this kind of exercise: a large, flattering, expansively installed, white guilt exhibition of work by Canadians and Americans from Aboriginal backgrounds, most of whom have never been seen before at the NGC, and will probably never be seen there again.¹⁸³

Seemingly in expectation of this sort of review the catalogue opened with an essay by Nemiroff entitled "Modernism, Nationalism and Beyond: A critical History of exhibitions of First Nations Art." In this article Nemiroff reviewed the history of the slow acceptance of Native objects as art and the NGC's participation in this process. She admitted that the Gallery's involvement with Aboriginal art had been scant, and a true commitment had been late in coming, and she also highlighted the positive changes that

¹⁸² *Land, Spirit, Power* was also exhibited at Regina's Mackenzie Gallery, Calgary's Nickle Arts Museum, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Houston, Texas.

¹⁸³ John Bently Mays, "Breaking traditions," The Globe and Mail, 10 October 1992, NGC Press Clippings File.

had been made in terms of the NGC's acquisition policy and its recent flurry of contemporary Aboriginal exhibitions.¹⁸⁴

In her reflections on the visits she and the other curators made to the artists, written a year later, Townsend-Gault noted that the validity of holding an exhibition of exclusively Native art was also discussed and that grouping the Aboriginal artists with other ethnic artists had also been considered. But when this was suggested to Alex Janvier he "was adamant" and told them "this was a symbolic moment to be seized: 'the National Gallery should send an un-mixed message.'"¹⁸⁵ Houle complicated these sentiments by stating in an interview with Baele that although he felt that having these Aboriginal artists invited to the NGC to display their work was a "breakthrough," he "hope[d] there will never be another show devoted solely to Native artists at the gallery [after this one], that they will from now on be shown in contemporary shows." The fear was that shows such as this could ghettoize Aboriginal art, and, indeed, for critics like Mays it did.

The curators visited over fifty artists before deciding on the eighteen who were included in the show.¹⁸⁶ The final list consisted of Carl Beam, Rebecca Belmore, Robert Davidson, Teresa Marshall, Alanis Obomsawin, Alex Janvier, Lawrence Paul Yuxwelptun, Dorothy Grant, Faye HeavyShield, Zacharias Kunuk, and Dempsey Bob from Canada, Jimmie Durham, James Lavadour, Hachivi Edgar Heap of Birds, Truman Lowe, James Luna and Kay WalkingStick from the United States and Domingo Cisneros

¹⁸⁴ Diana Nemiroff, "Modernism, Nationalism, and Beyond" in Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992) 16-41.

¹⁸⁵ Charlotte Townsend-Gault, "Pictures of an Exhibition: Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada," draft for Anthropology Today, from September 15 1993, 8, NGC Press Clippings File.

¹⁸⁶ Townsend-Gault, "Pictures of an Exhibition," 9.

from Mexico.¹⁸⁷ The inclusion of artists from outside Canada was in itself a statement that was problematic for some. It acknowledged the fact that for many Aboriginal peoples the boundaries between these countries were a further result of Columbus' landing that had forcibly imposed and created unwanted divisions between their communities.¹⁸⁸

How these artists were to be understood, added yet another level of controversy to the exhibition. This is incisively illustrated in the following example cited by Scott

Watson, writing for Canadian Art Magazine:

Townsend-Gault... suggests that the works in *Land, Spirit, Power* spring from values and ways of knowing that are "fully comprehensible only to those who live them..." (that is to say, the work is to be understood as *outside* the art world's mainstream). On the other hand, she proposes that the artists share a sense of investigation and exploration that positions them "within the discourse of post-modern art" (that is to say, the work is to be understood as *inside* the art world's mainstream).¹⁸⁹

In the early 1990's, the problem of how to frame Aboriginal art was still being ironed out through the structuring of exhibitions.

Unlike *Cross-Cultural Views* and *Strengthening the Spirit*, the show was interpreted as being extremely political while the works themselves were seen as surprisingly passive. Mays said this was due to the "general absence of anti-white, anti-European hysteria"¹⁹⁰ in the pieces selected. Watson commented more fully, stating that:

The version staged by the National Gallery took the tone of redress and tried to strike an optimistic note about the possibilities for change. The exhibition was solid but cautious, even conservative. Most of the artists have established reputations. None of them used the occasion to challenge the institution that, after all, has on permanent display elsewhere in the building a very Eurocentric version of Canada's art history.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Although from Mexico Cisneros was living in Quebec at the time of the show.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Scott Watson, "Whose Nation?: First Nations Art in the Past and Present," Canadian Art, Spring 1993, (vol. 10, num. 1) 36.

¹⁹⁰ Mays, "Breaking traditions."

¹⁹¹ Watson, "Whose Nation?," 36.

Such views, however, were formulated by comparing this exhibition to the Canadian Museum of Civilization's¹⁹² show *Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives* (which shared some of the same display time as *Land, Spirit, Power*).¹⁹³ In contrast to *Land, Spirit, Power*, *Indigena*, curated by Gerald McMaster and Lee-Ann Martin, was seen as quite political, and some of the works even seemed to question the sincerity of the CMC.¹⁹⁴ If anything, these exhibitions brought attention to the difficulties galleries and museums had in terms of finding a way to properly exhibit and discuss Aboriginal art. As noted by Ruth Phillips, "Make space for Native artists and what do you get? Deconstruction in the Museum and ethnography in the Gallery."¹⁹⁵ Aboriginal art was not an easy fit for either institution. Perhaps partially as a result of these difficulties, observations such as Watson's, which highlighted the irony of this exhibition in the face of the colonial content of the NGC's permanent installation of Canadian art, would have to wait over another decade before being addressed.

Although a change to the permanent Canadian installation would have to wait, preparations to make a change to the Contemporary installation which would help appease the continuing pressure from the media and the Aboriginal art community, were begun in 1994.¹⁹⁶ This entailed the development of a gallery in the permanent installation devoted to the display of contemporary Native art. This installation was created in response to a suggestion by John Kim Bell. Bell had been hired by the NGC to provide

¹⁹² Previously the National Museum of Man, this institution was renamed when it moved into a new building, designed by Douglas Cardinal, which opened June 29, 1989.

¹⁹³ For an in-depth comparison of these two exhibitions see W. Jackson. Rushing, "Contingent Histories, Aesthetic Politics." *New Art Examiner* 20, March 1993, 14-20.

¹⁹⁴ Watson, "Whose Nation?," 42.

¹⁹⁵ Phillips, Ruth, "Making Space," *The Canadian Forum* 71, no. 816 (1993): 18-22.

¹⁹⁶ "Projects for the Contemporary Galleries -1995-1996," Exhibitions Permanent Collection, Contemporary Art Installations -7265-C03-94 Vol. 2 1994/1995 NGC folds.

the Gallery's managers with sensitivity training towards Aboriginal perceptions. As noted by Nemiroff: "[Bell] felt that many visitors, himself included, were unaware that we were collecting works by Aboriginal artists because they were not highlighted. The creation of a gallery focussing on an artistic movement led by Aboriginal artists was a strategy to overcome this invisibility."¹⁹⁷ This gallery, B204, displayed Aboriginal art from April 1995 until August 1999.¹⁹⁸ The curatorial team for the Contemporary Galleries at this time included Nemiroff and Seline, who had the experience of their past Aboriginal exhibitions and installations to guide them. This gallery became a space through which Aboriginal works already in the NGC's permanent collection and newly acquired Aboriginal works could be shown in rotation.

The installation included an introductory text panel which explained the work of the First Nations artists on display as an art movement which had begun in the 1980s,¹⁹⁹ as well as extended labels for each piece which consisted of quotations of the artists speaking about their work. There was never an official naming of gallery B204 as an indigenous space.

During the first year of this gallery's operation as a space for contemporary Native art the work of Joane Cardinal-Schubert, Carl Beam, Dorothy Grant, Robert Davidson, Robert Houle, Kay Walking Stick, Bob Boyer, and Faye Heavy Shield was included.²⁰⁰ As was the case in *Land, Spirit, Power*, and as is the norm for the NGC's other contemporary galleries, artists from outside Canada were welcome. The

¹⁹⁷ Personal communication, Diana Nemiroff, Carleton University, Ottawa, 7 September 2004.

¹⁹⁸ Gallery B204 was devoted to the exhibition of Aboriginal art again in 2003 in conjunction with "Art of this Land" due to the fact that the story of contemporary Aboriginal art extends beyond the time restrictions of the Canadian installation.

¹⁹⁹ Information from the introductory text panel for Gallery B204, Exhibitions Permanent Collection, Contemporary Art Installations -7265-C03-94 Vol. 2 1994/1995 NGC folds.

²⁰⁰ Exhibitions Permanent Collection, Contemporary Art Installations -7265-C03-94 Vol. 2 1994/1995 NGC folds.

aforementioned artists were, over the course of the next four years, joined and/or replaced by artists such as Jane Ash Poitras, Lawrence Paul Yuxwelptun, and Alex Janvier.²⁰¹ The artworks on display in gallery B204 were also related to outside events such as *World Indigenous Peoples Day* and to other installations in the contemporary galleries such as *The Artist and Human Rights*, which ran from June 1998 to January 1999.²⁰² Thus, as this last example shows, even though they were hung in a separate gallery the works by Aboriginal artists were not treated as being completely isolated from the other contemporary works. In fact, while gallery B204 was operating as an Aboriginal gallery there was also an installation mounted two galleries down, in B202, that included Native artists. This Installation was entitled *Canadiana: New Perspectives* and was hung from November 10 1997 to February 3, 1998. It compared and contrasted contemporary work by Robert Houle, Lawrence Paul Yuxwelptun, Ron Hamilton, Joanne Tod, and Liz Magor with traditional images of Canada represented by Emily Carr, James Hamilton, Cornelius Krieghoff, Paul Kane, Ozias Leduc, Herbert S. Palmer, F. H. Varley, an engraving of Benjamin West's work by William Woollett, John Hammond, Percy F. Woodcock, and Tom Thomson.²⁰³ The curator, Seline, chose works that encouraged conversations between the historic and contemporary pieces. The result was a post-modern attempt at a historic continuum which critiqued traditional ideas of "Canadian."²⁰⁴

In September 1999 gallery B204 was disbanded as an Aboriginal gallery. In March of 2000 Nemiroff left the position of contemporary curator. She was replaced by

²⁰¹ Exhibitions Permanent Collection, Contemporary Art Installations -7265-C03-94 Vol. 2 1994/1995 to 7265-C03-99 Vol. 5, NGC folds.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Information in an email to the author, from Diana Nemiroff, Ottawa, 16 September 2004.

²⁰⁴ Unfortunately, time did not permit a detailed investigation of this installation.

Kitty Scott who opted for a more integrated approach to the display of contemporary Aboriginal art than gallery B204 provided.²⁰⁵ An example of Scott's strategy was the selection of Robert Houle to be re-included in gallery B204 as part of a "thematic hanging on the subject of Canadian identity."²⁰⁶ Featuring Native artists such as Houle in new installations quietly carried forward the message presented in gallery B204 from 1995 to 1999, that Aboriginal art was being considered on equal ground for installations.

Understandably, some members of the Aboriginal art community were sorely disappointed to discover that gallery B204 was no longer functioning as a space for Native art and that the work had been instead hung throughout the rest of the contemporary galleries.²⁰⁷ Without this gallery it was possible that viewers who had not yet had the time to fully understand Aboriginal art on its own would misinterpret its occasional inclusion in contemporary installations at the NGC as a sign of assimilation. Looked at another way, however, the continuing presence of a gallery solely devoted to Aboriginal art could be interpreted as a form of benevolent aid for the less fortunate who were otherwise unqualified to have a place in the NGC.

A paradoxical question emerges from the history of exhibiting Aboriginal art at the NGC: How can Aboriginal art be included as part of and on equal basis with other forms of Canadian art while still maintaining its own distinct identity and history? A possible solution to this problem was suggested by the NGC in 2003 through the creation of *Art of this Land*, a re-installation of the permanent display of Canadian art, which is currently ongoing.

²⁰⁵ Personal communication, Diana Nemiroff, Carleton University, Ottawa, 7 September 2004.

²⁰⁶ Exhibitions Permanent Collection, Contemporary Art Installations -7265-C03-99 Vol. 4, NGC folds.

²⁰⁷ Information in an email from Joane Cardinal-Schubert, to Greg Hill, subject "Re:thanks and some thoughts on current exhibit," June 25, 2003 11:15 p.m., Hill's *Art of this Land* curatorial files.

IV. Art of this Land

One metaphor which has often been suggested as a model for the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples is that of two parallel lines as seen in the Two-Row Wampum. Greg Hill, one of the curators for *Art of this Land*, has described his version of the Two-Row Wampum model as follows:

I've always tried... chosen lately to think of it as those intersections being things that should be there, in a tradition of Mohawk bridge-building, [let's] say --bridges between cultures—but as long as they're by choice. So long as those intersections aren't imposed on you, then sure, why can't there be crossover between those parallel lines? Why can't they converge and go apart when they want to?²⁰⁸

Being an artist himself, Hill has incorporated the idea of the Two-Row Wampum into his artwork, such as a performance piece in which he, as Joe Brant, and his wife, as Venus, exchange plastic toys that serve as representations of the stereotypical conceptions of “Indian” and “woman.”²⁰⁹ This model is also visible in Hill's most recent project (though curatorial rather than artistic), *Art of this Land*, the 2003 re-installation of the NGC's Canadian Galleries, which he co-curated with Denise Leclerc.

The Two-Row Wampum or the Kahswenta,²¹⁰ is a belt made of two rows of purple wampum beads on a background of white wampum. The earliest known use of this wampum belt was either in 1664 to commemorate the Treaty of Fort Albany between the British and the Five Nations after the British took New Amsterdam (now New York) from the Dutch,²¹¹ or in 1613 to mark a treaty made between the Haudenosaunee and the

²⁰⁸ A thesis: Greg Hill, *Re-Investing the Kahswenta: Rotinohsyonni Identities Today*, M.A. thesis, Department of Canadian Studies, Carleton University, 1998), 152.

²⁰⁹ Hill, *Re-Investing*, 148.

²¹⁰ Also spelled Guswentah.

²¹¹ *Council Fire*, (Brantford: Woodland Cultural Centre, 1989), 7.

Dutch.²¹² Regardless of which was actually its first use, the interpretation of the Two-Row Wampum remains consistent with each retelling: “The lines symbolize the distinct identities of the two peoples and a mutual engagement to coexist in peace without interference in the affairs of the other,”²¹³ or, put another way, “We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our own boat. Neither of us will try to steer the other’s vessel.”²¹⁴

Both Native and non-Native individuals have questioned whether the Two-Row Wampum is an appropriate model for the relationship between their two cultures since it seems to imply that these two peoples are to share the same path without affecting each other. As Alan C. Cairns states in his book Citizens Plus: Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian State: “the two-row wampum vision of separate societies on separate paths heading to separate destinations... casts a blind eye to our interconnectedness....” He goes on to point out that “neither our togetherness nor our separateness can be escaped from.”²¹⁵ Gerald McMaster, now deputy assistant director of cultural resources for the National Museum of the American Indian, articulated a similar viewpoint in his essay “Our (Inter) Related History,” in which he noted that “if we were to use this symbol as a model for discussion, we would still be traveling down the river separately, not knowing each other. Our institutional structures of culture – museums and galleries – would

²¹² Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Canada, People to People, Nation to Nation: Highlights from the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996), 135.

²¹³ Howard R. Berman, “Perspectives on American Indian Sovereignty and International Law,” in Exiled in the Land of the Free, eds. Oren Lyons and John C. Mohawk (Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishers, 1992), 135.

²¹⁴ Grand Chief Michael Mitchell, “An Unbroken Assertion of Sovereignty,” in Drumbeat: Anger and Renewal in Indian Country, ed. Bruce Richardson (Toronto: Summerhill, 1989), 110.

²¹⁵ Alan C. Cairns, Citizens Plus: Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian State (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 9.

remain dichotomous.”²¹⁶ Based on these views, an accurate model would, thus, have to illustrate that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples are connected yet distinct at the same time. Such a model would indicate the constant intercommunication between the two cultures. McMaster suggests that with a slight alteration to the conception of the Two-Row Wampum this problem can be solved. This is the simple addition of segments linking the two paths together. For McMaster this new design takes the form of a double helix DNA molecule.²¹⁷ In Hill’s view, however, those connections already exist as bridges in the Two-Row Wampum:

I consider the Kahswenta to already contain the capacity for bridge building/exchange; first, because it is an agreement between parties and is about an ongoing relationship; and second because of the importance of the trade relationships historically and culturally to the Rotinonshyonni. This is embodied in the three rows of white beads that run between the two purple lines on the belt which are said to contain the spiritual values of peace, kindness, and respect.²¹⁸

Hill’s interpretation of the Two-Row Wampum addresses the problems envisioned within this model, thus, demonstrating that the Two-Row Wampum and its history of use are still relevant and applicable to present times.

I will argue here that the conception of an interconnected relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples is reflected in *Art of this Land* by the constant tension created through the use of devices that at once link these two cultures together and allow each to maintain its own identity. By comparing the strategies, motivations, and messages of *Art of this Land* with previous exhibitions and installations held at the NGC which have included Aboriginal art, I will demonstrate that, as in Hill’s use of the

²¹⁶ Gerald McMaster, “Our (Inter) Related History,” in On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery, eds. Lynda Jessup and Shannon Bagg (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2002), 6.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 6.

²¹⁸ Information in an email to the author, from Greg Hill, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 19 July 2004.

metaphor of the Two-Row Wampum with bridges, the two cultures are presented as equals, each with its own history. Neither side overpowers the other, nor does one side disappear into the other. Rather, they remain at once separated and linked by the intersections. There is a dialogue between the two sides, there are bridges.

The history of the *Art of this Land* project dates back to 1996, when Leclerc, Associate Curator of Modern Canadian Art, started discussions with other professionals in the museum field, such as McMaster, about the possibility of a temporary exhibition which would demonstrate innovative post-colonial approaches in the display of Aboriginal art.²¹⁹ It was felt, however, that it would be inappropriate for the Gallery to embark on such a project without first updating its own displays, and, thus, the premise for this project was transformed into a proposal to reinstall the Canadian galleries to include Aboriginal representation.²²⁰ Research for the reinstallation was started in 1999 with the expectation that the final project would be implemented between Fall 2002 and April 2003.²²¹ Shortly after the project was begun, Hill, an Aboriginal artist and curator of Mohawk descent who was then working on the First Peoples' Hall at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, was brought on board as co-curator.

As discussed in the previous chapter, since 1983, when the NGC had begun discussing the exhibition of Aboriginal art with contemporary Native artists through organizations such as SCANA, a growing understanding of artists' concerns had been reflected in the Gallery's shows. The cumulative effect of these discussions is noted as one of the key incentives for embarking on the re-installation of the Canadian galleries,

²¹⁹ Audio recording of "Initiating Dialogue: A meeting to discuss the inclusion of works by Aboriginal artists within the Canadian Galleries of the National Gallery of Canada", recorded 4 March 2001 at the National Gallery of Canada, NGC Archives.

²²⁰ Audio recording of "Initiating Dialogue," NGC Archives.

²²¹ Audio recording of "Initiating Dialogue," NGC archives.

understood by the Gallery as “a bold step” and as “a response to Aboriginal artists who have long felt their work should not be relegated to museums of ethnography or kept separate in Aboriginal art exhibits.”²²² As part of the research for this installation the NGC also formed an advisory committee made up of key figures concerned with the exposition of Aboriginal objects. This committee included four Aboriginal and four non-Aboriginal members.²²³ The advisory committee served as a sounding board for the preliminary concepts of the installation, but the decisions regarding the selection and exhibition of the objects were ultimately those of the curators.

The curators and other staff members involved in the re-installation first met with the committee on March 4, 2001. This gathering was entitled “Initiating Dialogue: A meeting to discuss the inclusion of works by Aboriginal artists within the Canadian galleries of the National Gallery of Canada.” A second meeting was held with the committee on March 24, 2002 and was entitled “Update on Progress, and Discussion of the *Aboriginal Installation Project*.”²²⁴ At these meetings the Gallery staff presented their initial concept for the installation and asked for feedback. The committee, in turn, shared both their fears and suggestions for the project. Many of the critiques stemmed from the appearance of the Canadian galleries at the time of the meeting. As noted by McMaster: “There is no evidence [in the National Gallery] that Canada had a visual culture before 1675.”²²⁵ What we know of the National Gallery is that its identity is colonialist. I think we have to use that term and its history is a meta-narrative, its antecedents are in

²²² National Gallery of Canada, *Facts/Données*, an information sheet included in the press kit for art of this land, 2003, 1.

²²³ The Aboriginal members were: Stephen Augustine, Tom Hill, Gerald McMaster, and François Vincent. The non-Aboriginal members were: François-Marc Gagnon, Ruth Phillips, Marie Routledge, and Judy Thompson.

²²⁴ *Aboriginal Installation Project* was the working title for the re-installation before it was renamed *Art of this Land*.

²²⁵ The date of the earliest piece in the gallery at this time

Europe.”²²⁶ The curators received positive feedback, as well as much to think about, regarding their desire to integrate the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal works and to present them from a primarily aesthetic, as apposed to anthropological, point of view. Of the numerous points brought up by the committee, the two that would prove to be the most telling in terms of the final product were: 1) the need to acknowledge an Aboriginal presence and Aboriginal art creation in the lands now known as Canada before the arrival of any Europeans and the inappropriateness of commencing the historical sequence in New France as was currently the case, and 2) a reaffirmation of the role and importance that extended labels would have in shaping the viewers’ understanding of the objects on display.²²⁷ The first of these required a drastic change to the architecture of the Canadian galleries. The first room of this installation had been constructed to showcase the high altar from the old church at Longueuil from 1741. Based on the suggestions of the committee it was decided that a dividing wall be built in the first room to separate the first Aboriginal items to be included from the impact of the French Catholic alter. The recordings of the proceedings of these meetings indicate that this was a major alteration for the gallery and its staff.

The NGC also polled its visitors regarding the possibility of including Aboriginal art in the permanent installation of Canadian art. This endeavour was taken on by Anne Newlands of the NGC’s Education Department. From December 29, 2001 to June 23, 2002, staff from the education department wheeled a case containing five Aboriginal

²²⁶ Gerald McMaster, Audio recording of “Initiating Dialogue: A meeting to discuss the inclusion of works by Aboriginal artists within the Canadian Galleries of the National Gallery of Canada,” recorded 24 March 2001 at the National Gallery of Canada, NGC Archives.

²²⁷ Audio recording of “Initiating Dialogue: A meeting to discuss the inclusion of works by Aboriginal artists within the Canadian Galleries of the National Gallery of Canada,” recorded 24 March 2001 at the National Gallery of Canada, NGC Archives.

works into the Canadian galleries and asked visitors to respond to a series of questions about the objects and about how acceptable it would be to include them in the permanent installation of Canadian art. The objects in the case were: a beaded felt bag from the early 19th century made by a Mik'maq artist, a pair of West Main Cree moccasins from the early 20th century, a set of beaded leather gauntlets from the early 20th century, a model totem pole by a Kwakwaka'wakw artist from the 19th century, and a model totem pole, c. 1885, by a Haida artist.²²⁸ One interesting discovery from this research was that the visitors were equally split on whether or not Aboriginal art should be integrated with non-Aboriginal art in the Canadian galleries. In spite of this split opinion, however, 70% of these visitors considered the items in the case to be works of art and 90% felt that they should be part of the installation in the Canadian galleries.²²⁹ This questionnaire not only affirmed that the Gallery's public was supportive of having Aboriginal art displayed at the NGC but also informed the staff of what kind of thoughts, feelings and knowledge the visitors had regarding these objects. These views included confusion and mixed feelings about Aboriginal art, about Aboriginal peoples themselves, and about the boundary between art and craft. In short, this research indicated the need to create a clear narrative throughout the installation to guide the visitor to the desired interpretations of the objects.

In addition to the normal process for bringing new objects into the Gallery space, a number of Aboriginal protocols were also followed. To prepare the Canadian galleries themselves Elder William Commanda from Kitigan Zibi enacted a smudging ceremony "to bless and cleanse the Canadian galleries before the arrival of the Aboriginal

²²⁸ Anne Newlands, Front-End Audience Research The Aboriginal Project Summary of Findings, Report for NGC, 2002.

²²⁹ Ibid.

works.”²³⁰ This ceremony consisted of the burning of sage in the locations where the Aboriginal works were to be placed and, thus, necessitated some bending of conservation rules that normally prevent any form of smoke within the gallery space. The smudging ceremony also served as an acknowledgement of the land claims being fought in court by the Algonquin peoples by involving the representative of the band with claims for ownership of the NGC site.²³¹ As stated by Hill “it would be extremely disrespectful not to have this ceremony.”²³² For Hill this action marked the true beginning of the re-installation.²³³ Elder Commanda returned to perform a second smudging ceremony, that took place in the auditorium, as part of the official opening ceremonies for *Art of this Land*, which were held on June 22, 2003.²³⁴

Aboriginal etiquette was also respected in relation to the specific needs of several of the objects which were to enter the NGC. For the *Stone with Incised Turtle*, from the Devil’s Lake-Sourisford Complex (c. 850-1350 AD), which the Gallery has borrowed from the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, for example, the curators communicated with a group of elders regarding the treatment and display of their object. Being a sacred object and being of the land, it couldn’t be out of contact with the land and traveled to the NGC by truck. It is stored covered on a bed of red cloth when it is not being exhibited. The curators also verified that the objects next to it when on display were acceptable to the elders. Another example of this attempt to respect Aboriginal interests and beliefs is the

²³⁰ Anita Lahey, “Pride of Place: Aboriginal Art Transforms the Canadian Galleries,” *Vernissage*, Spring (2003): 10.

²³¹ Greg Hill, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art, National Gallery of Canada, interview by the author, Ottawa, Ontario, 11 December 2003.

²³² Greg Hill, interview by the author, 11 December 2003.

²³³ Anita Lahey, “Pride of Place: Aboriginal Art Transforms the Canadian Galleries,” *Vernissage*, Spring (2003): 10.

²³⁴ National Gallery of Canada, *Art of this Land: Let Your Spirit Soar*, invitation to the opening ceremonies, 2003.

considerations that the Gallery took when trying to secure permission to display the Nanaimo Petroglyph. This petroglyph is estimated to be around four thousand years old. It was originally located near Jack Point in Nanaimo but was removed from its site without permission in the 1960s and now sits just outside the Nanaimo District Museum.²³⁵ Although the petroglyph has been legally returned to the Snuneymuxw First Nation of Nanaimo, they have yet to raise funds to move it back to its original location where they believe it belongs.²³⁶ As part of the loan agreement the National Gallery offered to pay to have the petroglyph returned to its original location after the two year exhibition period.²³⁷ However, after much discussion between the two parties, the Snuneymuxw First Nations decided that to send the petroglyph to the other end of the country would contradict their claim of its cultural significance. The Nanaimo Petroglyph is associated with a salmon ceremony which the members of the Snuneymuxw First Nation hope to recover as they rebuild their culture.²³⁸ It has become a symbol of hope for the Snuneymuxw First Nation and has consequently only increased in importance.²³⁹ As these actions demonstrate “the Gallery finds itself learning how to treat works of art as sacred objects.”²⁴⁰

Before conducting an in depth examination of the final product it is important to examine further the constraints within which the curators of *Art of this Land* had to operate, and the effect that these constraints had on the project’s final form. The NGC has a very limited Aboriginal art collection and it was therefore necessary to borrow

²³⁵ Greg Hill, interview by the author, 7 March 2003.

²³⁶ Greg Hill, interview by the author, 7 March 2003.

²³⁷ Greg Hill, interview by the author, 7 March 2003.

²³⁸ Greg Hill, interview by the author, 7 March 2003.

²³⁹ Greg Hill, interview by the author, 7 March 2003.

²⁴⁰ Anita Lahey, “Pride of Place: Aboriginal Art Transforms the Canadian Galleries,” *Vernissage*, Spring (2003): 12.

approximately 90% of the Native artworks from other institutions, private collections or Aboriginal communities.²⁴¹ Although to some degree this necessity opened up new options and created opportunities to reunite objects which had been exchanged between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, it also meant that the curators' first choices were not always available or seen as fit to travel from their current location. Since lenders were willing to part with their possessions for varying periods of time, the need to borrow objects was also one of two factors that determined the length of time that an item would remain on display. The second factor was the architecture of the Gallery building itself. The Canadian Galleries were designed to allow a fair amount of natural light into the exhibition space, something that limits the length of time a light sensitive object can remain within the space.²⁴² The narrative of the Canadian galleries would, therefore, need to be able to accommodate a continual shifting of the specific contents of the installation. One final factor that limited the possible shapes this project could take was its intended purpose. The first working title of the re-installation, *Aboriginal Installation Project*, as well as the introductory panel placed at the entrance to *Art of this Land*, both make it clear that the goal of the installation was to integrate Aboriginal art into the *existing* narrative structure of the Canadian galleries. In the introductory panel the re-installation is described as "a new and exciting project to include Aboriginal works of art in the Canadian galleries."²⁴³ Basic structural components such as the regional and chronological organization were thus maintained as were the Gallery's exhibition

²⁴¹ Information from a "Fact Sheet" circulated by the National Gallery during a meeting regarding the "Update on Progress, and Discussion of the Aboriginal Installation Project," held at the National Gallery, 24 March 2002, Files provided by Denise Leclerc, associate curator of Modern Canadian art.

²⁴² Doris Couture-Rigert, Audio recording of "Initiating Dialogue: A meeting to discuss the inclusion of works by Aboriginal artists within the Canadian Galleries of the National Gallery of Canada", recorded 24 March 2001 at the National Gallery of Canada, NGC Archives.

²⁴³ National Gallery of Canada, Introductory panel for *Art of this Land*, installed Fall 2002.

aesthetics. As noted in the NGC's magazine, *Vernissage*, "its galleries, which have a classic, neutral-walled design, look much the same as before."²⁴⁴ Hill, however, viewed this from a positive angle, for he felt that having to work with the existing structure "gave [the curators] a backbone to react against."²⁴⁵ Due to the need to maintain the gallery aesthetic, and to ensure that the re-installation and the Aboriginal objects themselves would blend in with the feel of the Gallery, the visual effect is essentially the same as it was before the re-installation. The thinking behind the exhibition of these objects, however, is not.

Art of this Land may have officially opened on June 22, 2003, but due to the continual shifts in the items on display and the ongoing efforts of the curators, it remains to a certain degree an open-ended work in progress.²⁴⁶ This re-installation spans thirty-three galleries starting with room A100 and ending with A114. Its goal is to "show the diversity, richness, continuity, and change over time of Aboriginal artistic production in order to have a more comprehensive representation of the history of art in Canada as it is presented in the Canadian Galleries of the National Gallery of Canada."²⁴⁷ The beginning of Canada's art history in the Canadian Galleries is, therefore, located with the indigenous peoples who lived on the lands now known as Canada through objects dating back as far as eight thousand years ago²⁴⁸ and, from there, demonstrates the development of Aboriginal art up to the end of the 1970s. From the 1970s onwards the history of

²⁴⁴ Lahey, "Pride of Place," 12.

²⁴⁵ Greg Hill, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art, National Gallery of Canada, interview by the author, Ottawa, Ontario, 11 December, 2003.

²⁴⁶ Greg Hill, interview by the author, 11 December, 2003.

²⁴⁷ Information from a handout for the "Initiating Dialogue Meeting" provided by the National Gallery of Canada, 4 March 2001. Files provided by Denise Leclerc, associate curator of Modern Canadian art.

²⁴⁸ Information from a "Fact Sheet" circulated by the National Gallery during a meeting regarding the "Update on Progress, and Discussion of the Aboriginal Installation Project," held at the National Gallery, 24 March 2002, Files provided by Denise Leclerc, associate curator of Modern Canadian art.

Canadian art is incorporated into the Contemporary galleries. However, one piece from 1991, Lucy Tasseor Tutsweetok's *Unaliit amma Qablunaat*, has also been included in *Art of this Land* as a pointer forward to the existence of later Aboriginal works displayed at the NGC. One of the factors that contributed to the ease with which the three-dimensional historic Aboriginal artworks were able to enter the gallery space was the fact that the Canadian galleries already featured a variety of works from outside the traditional definition of pure arts. Thus, works such as those from the Henry Birks & Sons Ltd. Collection of silverworks which were donated in 1979 and George A. Reid's furniture from the 1900s help create a sense of balance and equality between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal inclusions.²⁴⁹

Art of This Land seeks to illustrate Canada's Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples as equally important contributors to Canadian artistic production. The result is clear: "By displaying [Aboriginal art] alongside non-Aboriginal art, [the exhibit] gives both traditions an equal voice from which to begin a new dialogue about their interrelated histories and their relationship to each other."²⁵⁰ This dialogue between the objects indicates the bridges between the two cultures, and reminds the viewer that since the first European settlers came to the lands now known as Canada, neither has been travelling down the river completely alone, but rather, each has been affected by the presence of the other.

Exhibitions and installations are created not simply to display interesting items, but to relay a particular conception of the world to the public. A critical reading of a

²⁴⁹ Greg Hill, interview by the author, 11 December, 2003.

²⁵⁰ National Gallery of Canada, *Facts/Données*, an information sheet included in the press kit for *art of this land*, 2003, 1.

museum exhibit²⁵¹ reveals how a particular culture or nation wants itself to be perceived. As stated by Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine in their text, Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display: “Decisions about how cultures are presented reflect deeper judgments of power and authority and can, indeed, resolve themselves into claims about what a nation is or ought to be as well as how citizens should relate to one another.”²⁵² Museum displays illustrate the beliefs, values and views of the curator(s) and the host institution(s). As already noted in the introduction, an exhibition is a type of argument.²⁵³ Thus one object of the narrative of a museum is to either question or confirm how the visitor positions him- or herself in relation to others, and, if the visitor’s position is questioned, to present a strong case to convince him or her that the perspective *it* illustrates is the correct one. In the museum objects can either provide support to the statements made in the accompanying text or they can, when used in conjunction with other items, create a point that cannot be conveyed by one object on its own. As noted by Michael Baxandall, “[The label] does not describe the object. It describes the exhibitor’s thinking about the object, or that part of his thinking he feels to be his purpose to communicate to the viewer;”²⁵⁴ or, as expressed by Mieke Bal, “The painting... is not only semanticized by the caption, it also forms a “sentence in conjunction with its

²⁵¹ The term museum is used to refer to all types of museums including art, anthropological and history museums.

²⁵² Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, “Introduction: Museums and Multiculturalism,” in Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 2.

²⁵³ Mieke Bal, “Introduction,” in Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), 2.

²⁵⁴ Michael Baxandall, “Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of the Visual Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects” in Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 38.

neighbour.”²⁵⁵ This mixture of visual, textual and spatial components works together to form an interpretive message, or, in the words of Bal, a “speech act.”²⁵⁶ Bal explains that “exposition as display is a particular kind of speech act. It is a specific integration of constative speech acts building up a narrative discourse.”²⁵⁷ Every element within an exhibition affects viewers’ understandings of the items on display and the statements they believe these items are making. The architecture of the space, the lighting, the display cases and mounts, the labels, the placement of the works, the circulation path, etc., are all used to build up the three-dimensional text of the museum installation/exhibition. Through an examination of three galleries in the reinstallation, located at the beginning, middle and end of *Art of this Land* I will develop close readings of the exhibit’s narrative discourse. Through comparison of these installations to previous exhibitions and installations of Aboriginal art at the NGC, I will interpret in more detail the changed vision of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples that is being presented in this particular re-installation.

The Telariolin-Zacharie Vincent Gallery

Gallery A102a, or the *Telariolin-Zacharie Vincent* Gallery (fig. 6), is the second side gallery encountered by a visitor to *Art of this Land*. Since this gallery is located towards the beginning of the installation it plays a role in setting the tone for the rest of the exposition. Bal’s argument suggests that gallery A102a is also important because visitors are more likely to absorb and retain information given to them early on in the

²⁵⁵ Mieke Bal, “The Talking Museum,” in *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), 115.

²⁵⁶ Bal, “The Talking Museum,” 88.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

installation.²⁵⁸ The fact that it is a side gallery is also notable since Hill, when possible, sought to “use... side galleries for elaboration on a particular theme.”²⁵⁹ The primary subject of gallery A102a is the nineteenth-century Huron-Wendat painter Zacharie Vincent, and the theme of this gallery is the relationship between early Native and settler peoples. This theme is also evident in the preceding galleries, but gallery A102a allows for a tight side narrative which clarifies the curators’ intended message. Perceptions of the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the first settlers have been presented in a variety of ways in previous NGC exhibitions, and it is therefore important that the approach being taken towards this relationship in *Art of this Land* be established before visitors get too far into the installation.

In early NGC shows such as the *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern* in 1927 and *A Century of Canadian Art* in 1938, the belief was expressed that Aboriginal peoples had no need for or interest in their own traditional arts for two reasons: 1) they were dying out and 2) having given up their traditional ways and taken up Christianity they had also given up their traditional art forms. As stated by Barbeau during a lecture on Native peoples’ “abandon[ment of] paganism, and adopt[ion of] Christianity,”²⁶⁰ given in conjunction with the *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern*: “They do not believe in traditions any longer... they do not indeed, believe in themselves. They no longer believe in art for its own sake as they once did.”²⁶¹ These messages can also be read in the installation design of *A Century of Canadian Art*

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 88.

²⁵⁹ Greg Hill, “Discussion Paper for Aboriginal Installation Project (Working Document)”, January 26, 2001, from Hill’s *Art of this Land* files.

²⁶⁰ “Arts Abandoned with Beliefs of Paganism: Once Essential Measure of Social Standing with West Coast Indians,” *Toronto Mail and Empire*, 11 January 1928, NGC Press Clippings File.

²⁶¹ Marius Barbeau quoted in “Arts Abandoned with Beliefs of Paganism: Once Essential Measure of Social Standing With West Coast Indians,” *Toronto Mail and Empire*, January 11 1928, NGC Press Clippings File.

(fig. 2). Three small argillite totems and three religious carvings were grouped against the wall on either side of a relief carving of the Last Supper. Above these hung two Chilkat robes. Although today one might read this balanced display as a demonstration of equality, the perception of Aboriginal art promoted by the critics, the catalogue, and even Brown (seen in chapter 1) suggests that grouping the Christian work with the Aboriginal work and positioning the image of the Last Supper as the central focus this display supported the view of the Natives' conversion to Christianity and abandonment of their own traditions as outlined in Barbeau's lectures. The belief that Native peoples were no longer producing art and that they were dying out was further reinforced by the fact that no contemporary Aboriginal works were included in this exhibition.

The assertion that Aboriginal peoples no longer wanted their own art was a self-fulfilling prophecy. It led to the appropriation of Aboriginal art as the "past" of Canadian art and to the use of Aboriginal art during modern times as a resource from which 'modern' artists could glean Canadian motifs.²⁶² This use for Aboriginal art was even noted when historical Native and 'modern' Western art were exhibited in different rooms as was the case in *A Century of Canadian Art*. This is demonstrated in the following comment by a London Times critic: "A growing interest in primitive art has led to a use of Indian motifs in modern painting, and the visitor to the Tate Gallery is able to observe in one room the totemic art of the West Coast Indians, and in another its influence permeating the work of such moderns as Emily Carr."²⁶³ In *A Century of Canadian Art* Native works were, instead, displayed with settler productions. However, this still evoked

²⁶² For more information on this topic see Leslie Dawn's doctoral thesis, How Canada stole the idea of Native art: the group of Seven and images of the Indian in the 1920's, PhD thesis, Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2003.

²⁶³ "Canadian Art," Times, London Eng. 24 October 1938, NGC Press Clippings File.

images of the disappearance of traditional Aboriginal culture resulting from Native peoples' acceptance of Christianity and helped justify the 'modern' artists' use of Aboriginal art as a resource for Canadianess, which one encountered further along in the exhibition.

The idea of a true relationship and exchange of knowledge between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples did not emerge in an NGC exhibition until the 1947 exhibition, *The Arts of French Canada, 1613-1870*. The section of this exhibition that included Aboriginal art was entitled the "Frontier between the French and the Indians in Art." Here works by Ursulines were displayed next to Aboriginal pieces as it was believed that the Aboriginal work on display was created under the influence of the French nuns. Stories of the encounters between Aboriginal peoples and the first French to arrive were referenced throughout the catalogue and made real by the presentation and descriptions of the objects themselves. As seen in the following excerpt, the French basis for Aboriginal innovation was continually reiterated: "we find the Naskapi Indians of northern Quebec imitating in their caribou hide garments the clothing of French merchants, and the Indians of Caughnawaga using the motives of Ursuline embroidery to decorate the cradle boards in which they carried their babies."²⁶⁴ The catalogue also claimed that the artistic influence of the French, specifically the Ursulines' teachings, "spread from their cloisters [through all Canadian Aboriginal peoples] to almost every point on the American continent."²⁶⁵ Although an exchange of knowledge between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples was presented in this NGC exhibition, this

²⁶⁴ *The Arts of French Canada 1613-1870*. Loan Exhibition. (Michigan: The Detroit Institute of Arts, 1946), 10.

²⁶⁵ *The Arts of French Canada 1613-1870*, 13.

exchange was illustrated as being uni-directional, that is to say the French were portrayed as giving artistic inspiration and education to the Aboriginal peoples with no return. In short the influence that the French had over Aboriginal art was used as a means to demonstrate the strength and dominance of French settler art.

A sense of a back and forth exchange between Native and non-Native peoples was not seen in an NGC exhibition until *The Comfortable Arts: Traditional Spinning and Weaving in Canada*, which opened in 1981 and was curated by Dorothy Burnham. It was in the second section of this exhibition, "Braiding of the Native Peoples and the French," that this notion of exchange was promoted. This was done in two different ways. The first consisted of two cases in which Aboriginal and French sashes were placed side by side to allow for careful scrutiny (fig. 5). Burnham boldly asserted in the catalogue that:

Braiding... was fully developed very shortly after the time of European contact and is probably an indigenous technique... There was considerable interchange of ideas on textile techniques, as on other matters, between Native peoples and the early comers of Europe. It therefore seems likely that an indigenous patterning technique was picked up by Quebec women, elaborated and improved upon, and applied to the making of the sashes that were part of the folk costume.²⁶⁶

This statement went against the beliefs of the time, which were more in keeping with the perceptions illustrated through *The Arts of French Canada, 1613-1870*. In several interviews Burnham acknowledged that she "risked curatorial argument"²⁶⁷ by going against convention.²⁶⁸ The second strategy that Burnham employed to demonstrate the trading of ideas between Native and non-Native peoples was by pairing traditionally

²⁶⁶ Dorothy K. Burnham. *The Comfortable Arts: Traditional Spinning and Weaving in Canada* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1981), 36.

²⁶⁷ Kay Kritzweiser, "Textiles come into their own in exhibit of Comfortable Arts," *The Globe and Mail*, 3 October 1981, NGC Press Clippings File..

²⁶⁸ Susan Hallett, "The Comfortable Arts: Traditional Spinning and Weaving in Canada" *The Beaver*, Winter (1981): 41, NGC Press Clippings File.

made Aboriginal items with objects that had been altered as a result of their encounter with early European settlers.²⁶⁹ This balanced the display of sashes which argued that “the French-Canadians copied the Indian designs,”²⁷⁰ and illustrated Burnham’s belief that “the introduction of trade goods provided a stimulus and the highest point in the artistic production of Indian textiles came after trade goods were available.”²⁷¹ The Native and European peoples were, therefore, each demonstrated as having had a profound and equal impact on the other. Unfortunately, as in the two previous examples, no contemporary work was displayed in this exhibition and so this story of exchange was not continued into more modern times.

Gallery A102a takes the recognition of back and forth exchange between these two cultures one step further by using every single item on display in this room to contribute to, and thus further enforce, this understanding. It is safe to presume that these items were very carefully selected for this purpose since all but one of them,²⁷² Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal pieces included, were borrowed from outside sources. The items on display, in the order that they appear in the room from right to left, are: *Self-portrait* by Zacharie Vincent (Telari-o-lin) from the mid 19th century, *Zacharie Vincent and his son Cyperien* by Zacharie Vincent circa 1851, *Zacharie Vincent* by Antoine Plamondon from 1838, *Crown of Huron Chief Nicolas Vincent* by Joseph Tison circa 1824, *Brooch* by Joseph Tison circa 1820, *Beaded Sash with Arrow Design* by a Huron-Wendat artists circa 1800-1850, *Zacharie Vincent* by Eugène Hamel circa 1880,

²⁶⁹ Nancy Baele “Weavings exhibited as art,” Ottawa Citizen, 26 September 1981, NGC Press Clippings File.

²⁷⁰ Kay Kritzwiser, “Textiles come into their own in exhibit of Comfortable Arts,” The Globe and Mail, 3 October 1981, NGC Press Clippings File.

²⁷¹ Burnham. *The Comfortable Arts*, 2.

²⁷² The only item on display in this gallery that is from the NGC’s own collection is *Beaded Sash with Arrow Design* by a Huron-Wendat artist circa 1800-1850 see National Gallery of Canada, “Art of this Land: List of Works,” in press kit distributed by the gallery in 2003.

Embroidered Moccasins by a Huron-Wendat Artist from 1838-53, *Headdress* by a Huron-Wendat Artist from the 19th century, and *Wampum Belt* by a Huron-Wendat Artist from the 18th century. Furthermore, each article on display in this gallery is accompanied by an extended label to help direct this interpretation of the objects.

One enters this side gallery through Gallery A102 which is entitled *Art in Quebec 1820-1860*. As a result the entrance to the *Telariolin-Zacharie Vincent* Gallery falls in the edge of one's view while contemplating Joseph Légaré's painting *Josephte Ourné* (1845). In the museum setting Bal has observed that "the viewer... is not static before one [work] but walks from one to the other, and sees each one with the other out of the corner of her eye. Within the narrative of the walking tour, they "touch" each other."²⁷³ Comparison is, thus, intended between Légaré's image and the painting framed by the doorway of gallery A102a; Antoine Plamondon's *Zacharie Vincent*. The similarities between the two further facilitate a connecting dialogue. Both canvases consist of portraits of Aboriginal individuals done by artists born in Quebec. In each image a three-quarter view of a figure with the head turned away from the viewer occupies the centre of the frame. The individuals have been rendered realistically while the surrounding landscape serves more as a backdrop. As well both people have been depicted sporting a large metal trade brooch. The style of these images is so similar, in fact, that one can deduct without any textual aid that the one artist was taught by the other; and in fact Plamondon was the "most famous"²⁷⁴ of Légaré's students.

Légaré's *Josephte Ourné* is an obviously romanticized picture of an Aboriginal female, or as stated in the audioguide: "This portrait is not accurate from an ethnographic

²⁷³ Bal, "The Talking Museum," 95.

²⁷⁴ Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 45.

point of view. Having chosen to idealize his subject Lgar is primarily concerned with expressing his vision of Amerindian culture which was primarily similar to those of many of his contemporaries.”²⁷⁵ Josephte Ourn has been made to look attractive and exotic through the addition of details such as the feathers in her hair, the dark woodland setting and the freshly caught fish in her hands. She is also, as a result, made less believable to the critical contemporary viewer. Plamondon’s image, in contrast, lacks these romantic details and is more likely to be accepted as accurate. However, the two images share so much that one is kept on guard. Upon entering the *Telariolin-Zacharie Vincent* Gallery one is able to read the extended label for Plamondon’s painting of Zacharie Vincent where one discovers that he too had an unrealistic perception of Aboriginal peoples. The label reveals that “an inscription on the back [of the painting] refers to the twenty-three-year-old Vincent as ‘the last of the Hurons of Lorette.’”²⁷⁶

Following a natural tendency, one turns to the right after entering this gallery²⁷⁷ and heads towards the introductory text panel. The purpose of the grouping of items in this gallery is very clearly expressed in the following sentence from this text: “Vincent’s paintings and the objects exhibited here are important examples of Huron-Wendat culture and reflect the exchange with Europeans.”²⁷⁸ One is also informed that one of the things that was shared was the Western tradition of easel painting, which Zacharie Vincent took up presumably after having had his portrait painted by Plamondon.²⁷⁹ Continuing along the right hand wall, one next encounters two paintings that Vincent made of himself.

²⁷⁵ National Gallery of Canada, Audioguide for Joseph Lgar’s *Josephte Ourn*, 2003.

²⁷⁶ National Gallery of Canada, extended label for Antoine Plamondon’s painting *Zacharie Vincent* borrowed from a private collection, 2003.

²⁷⁷ David Dean, *Museum Exhibition: Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 51.

²⁷⁸ National Gallery of Canada, introductory text panel for the *Telariolin-Zacharie Vincent* Gallery (Gallery A102a), 2003.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

These are entitled *Self-portrait* and *Zacharie Vincent and his Son Cyperien*. In both of these images Vincent has pictured himself adorned in items of trade. This includes Euro-Canadian made trade-silver brooches (as also seen in the Plamondon and the Légaré portraits) as well as a silver crown, a Queen Victoria medal, and Native made wampum belts, argillite pipe, and sash. Examples of almost all of these items have also been included in this gallery to expand upon the significance of the passing of these items between Huron-Wendat and French and English Canadians and the credibility of these images as indicators of these encounters.

These two self-portraits also provide an alternate perception of Aboriginal peoples to that offered by the Légaré and the Plamondon. In particular *Zacharie Vincent and his Son Cyprien* is set up to directly conflict with Plamondon's belief that Vincent was "the Last of the Hurons"²⁸⁰ through the inclusion of his offspring. This is also stated in the extended label for this piece to ensure that this does not go unnoticed by the visitor. This label-text reads as follows: "Posed here with his eldest son Cyperien, he seems to refute the notion of demise implied in Plamondon's inscription... and to boldly affirm the continuity of his people."²⁸¹ The pairing of these two portraits gives the viewer insight into how European settlers viewed Aboriginal peoples and compares it to how the latter viewed themselves. It also demonstrates that Native peoples were not passively colonized but have been actively challenging Western misconceptions since at least the 1800s.

Following these paintings is a case containing two metal works by Joseph Tison of Montreal: *Crown of Huron Chief, Nicolas Vincent* and *Brooch*. These pieces are very

²⁸⁰ National Gallery of Canada, extended label for Antoine Plamondon's painting *Zacharie Vincent* borrowed from a private collection, 2003.

²⁸¹ National Gallery of Canada, extended label for Zacharie Vincent's painting *Zacharie Vincent and his Son Cyperien* borrowed from the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, 2003

similar to the crown and brooch worn by Zacharie Vincent in his self-portrait and, as noted in the accompanying label, the crown actually belonged to Zacharie Vincent's father, Nicolas Vincent. This adds a further level of reality to the paintings. The extended label for this case also states that:

From the mid-17th to the early 19th centuries, silver was traded to Aboriginal peoples by European fur traders. It also became a symbol of friendship and alliance, and was sometimes presented as a gift to chiefs with whom the Europeans wanted to trade.²⁸²

Through the use of this text one is encouraged to read the objects on display as *proof* of a friendly and fruitful relationship between Aboriginal peoples and European settlers; an idea which is not inherent in the aesthetics of the work itself.

Through the use of extended labels, the art on display in this gallery becomes evidence of the exchanges that took place between early Aboriginal and European-Canadian peoples. This strategy is also used in the gallery in the text for *Beaded Sash with Arrow Design* and *Embroidered Moccasins*. The creation of both of these items, one is told, was the result of the sharing of artistic practices between Aboriginal peoples and French settlers. For example the extended label for the moccasins reads:

In the late 18th century, many Huron-Wendat girls and women were taught European Renaissance floral embroidery by the resident French nuns. In turn, the Aboriginal women introduced the nuns to the use of moosehair embroidery. By the mid 19th century Aboriginal women developed their own style of floral motifs that greatly appealed to the Victorian tastes of the European newcomers.²⁸³

²⁸² National Gallery of Canada, extended label for Joseph Tison's *Crown of Huron Chief, Nicolas Vincent* and *Brooch* borrowed from the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, 2003.

²⁸³ National Gallery of Canada, extended label for *Embroidered Moccasins* by a Huron-Wendat artist borrowed from the Thaw Collection, Fenimore Art Museum in Cooperstown New York, 2003.

The belief in a back and forth exchange of knowledge is made quite clear.²⁸⁴ Compare this to the following excerpts from the catalogue for *The Arts of French Canada*:

In the seventeenth century, the Ursulines of Quebec taught the crafts of embroidery, leather working, etc, to Indian girls, who carried this knowledge back to their own tribes... even the use of porcupine quills to decorate birch bark was derived from the nuns.²⁸⁵

Unlike the previous text, here there is no mention of cross-exchange. Instead the message conveyed is that of the influence of one culture over another.

The inclusion of Eugène Hamel's portrait of Zacharie Vincent and the Headdress by a Huron-Wendat artist also contribute to the narrative of an equally profitable exchange of objects, knowledge and perceptions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples who were living in Canada in the 17-1800s. However, it is the last object one encounters in this gallery, *Wampum Belt* by a Huron-Wendat artist, which truly encompasses all the ideas presented through the previous works. The text for the Wampum Belt states:

This example was displayed by Vincent's Father, Grand Chief Nicholas Vincent Tsawenhohi, when he met King George IV in London in 1825, and may have been made to mark the conclusion of a peace treaty at the time of the British conquest in 1760. The central image on the belt is a tomahawk peace pipe that was apparently presented to the Huron-Wendat by the British. The diamond shape symbolizes the Great Council Fire at Kahnawake. The fifteen white bars confirm the alliance established between the Confederacy of Nations that settled along the St. Lawrence River, the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy, and the British.²⁸⁶

The wampum belt in this gallery is used to demonstrate that not only were objects and ideas shared between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, but that these objects

²⁸⁴ For more information on the history of moosehair and birchbark embroidery and its use by the Ursulines see Ruth Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1998), 103-154.

²⁸⁵ *The Arts of French Canada 1613-1870*, 13.

²⁸⁶ National Gallery of Canada, extended label for Wampum Belt by Huron-Wendat artist borrowed from the McCord Museum of Canadian History in Montreal, 2003.

represented agreements. The agreements reflected in the display and labelling of the objects in gallery A102a are related to the sharing of artistic practices, such as easel painting, embroidery, and sash weaving; for friendship, represented by the giving of items like the trade brooch; and for peace between the two cultures, as expressed by the wampum belt.

This gallery instructs the viewer to read the placement of Native items next to non-Native items as evidence of an historical dialogue between the two cultures. It also instils a sense that each culture had its own traditions, aspirations for the outcomes of the encounter with the other, and unique past. Most importantly, however, the *Telariolin-Zacharie Vincent* Gallery demonstrates the impact, and makes the viewer aware, of back and forth exchanges between Aboriginal and European Canadian peoples – a conception that is inscribed by the rest of the installation and that reflects the metaphor of the Two-Row Wampum belt with bridges.

The Early Twentieth-Century Modernism & Pacific Northwest-Coast Aboriginal Peoples Gallery

The *Early Twentieth-Century Modernism & Pacific Northwest-Coast Aboriginal Peoples* gallery (fig. 7), or gallery A107, is located towards the middle of the *Art of this Land* installation. This gallery illustrates how the *Art of this Land* curators have attempted to create a narrative, both visually and textually, which presents the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal art on an equal plane.

Prior to this gallery, one encounters very few Northwest-Coast Aboriginal pieces: A bowl by a Haida Artist (c. 1500) and *Dogfish Head Pile Driver* by a Kwakwaka'wakw Artist (c. 400-1800) are included in the first gallery of the installation (which is entitled

Art of the Ancient Ones, which consists of a display of artistic productions made before the arrival of European settlers), and *Box*, by an early 20th century Haida Artist, is featured in the gallery directly preceding gallery A107, *Confederation and the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts*. The reason for such sparse coverage up to this point is simple: after establishing the beginning of Canadian art history with the Aboriginal peoples who inhabited the lands now known as Canada several thousands of years ago, the installation's narrative follows east to west movement of colonization and recounts the settlers' encounters with specific Aboriginal peoples who were already inhabiting these 'new' areas. As we are told through the installation's text panels, it was not until "Railway construction... in 1885 extended to the Pacific coast, uniting a vast, sparsely settled country,"²⁸⁷ that significant numbers of European people were able to reach Canada's West coast, and it is, therefore, not until this point that the Aboriginal peoples of the Northwest-coast became known to Euro-Canadians and their art collected.

The basis for the organization of *Art of this Land* is quite different from any of the previous NGC exhibitions that included Aboriginal art because it uses region of origin and chronological order to create an easy to follow narrative that accounts for a diversity of Aboriginal and European peoples and includes artwork from historic to present times. Regional and chronological categorizations were frequently used in previous NGC exhibitions and installations, but their function was to separate the Aboriginal peoples from each other and from the European newcomers rather than to connect them.

This style of organization also differs from the earlier approach by not insisting on a greater prominence and acceptance as art of objects from the Northwest-coast in

²⁸⁷ National Gallery of Canada, introductory panel for Gallery 107, *Confederation and the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts*, 2003.

comparison to Aboriginal arts from other areas of Canada. Sixty percent of all NGC exhibitions to include historical Aboriginal art favoured work from the Northwest-coast, and those that didn't were generally devoted to specialized themes. The *Exposition d'art Canadien* (1927); *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern* (1927); *A Century of Canadian Art* (1938); *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art* (1967); *Masterpieces of Indian and Eskimo Art* (1969); and the *Installation of North-west Coast Indian works* (1970) all promoted Aboriginal art from the Northwest Coast above all other Native productions.

Of the many different historical Aboriginal arts then, those from the Northwest-coast were seen as being superior to all others. This belief was supported by the critics. When reviewing *Masterpieces of Indian and Eskimo Art* in 1969, Barry Lord felt that:

Marcel Evrard... wisely allowed the northwest coast Indians to dominate the show, as in quality and quantity they should.... Of the 185 items on view more than half come from... the Haida and from their neighbours, the Kwakiutl, the Tsimshian, the Nootka and the Tlingit.²⁸⁸

The reason behind this obvious favouritism is that anthropologists, most notably Bill Holm and Franz Boas, had developed influential systems for reading and evaluating Aboriginal art from the Northwest-coast. The first version of this codification was printed as early as 1897 in the *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History* and then reprinted and updated in numerous later texts.²⁸⁹ They applied the same basic criteria used to interpret the success of Western art, such as line, form and symmetry. As explained by Michael Ames:

²⁸⁸ Barry Lord, "A spectacle of ivories and totems" *Toronto Star*, 21 November 1969, NGC Press Clippings File.

²⁸⁹ Michael Ames, "How Anthropologists Help to Fabricate the Cultures They Study," in *Museums, The Public and Anthropology: A study in the Anthropology of Anthropology* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986),

Anthropologists produced a distinctive and widely influential interpretation of the material culture collected from the Northwest Coast. This interpretation included both a *codification* of the elements or principles of Northwest Coast Indian design, and a *redefinition* of its meaning or aesthetic quality, from a “primitive” or curio art to a “fine” or “high” art comparable to the arts of western civilization.²⁹⁰

The texts produced by Boas and Holm were used by others, including anthropologists and Native artists alike in the revival and interpretation of these art traditions.²⁹¹ As is demonstrated by the following quotation taken from a review in *The Beaver* on the *Masterpieces* exhibition, these ideas also influenced the opinions of the general public:

As one observer put it: “Basically of painted wood, they are sufficient to explain why West Coast art is held to be one of the great art forms of mankind –the strength, assurance of the complexity of line, the balance and cohesion of forms are among the eloquent qualities that permit this art to register on our senses despite those senses being so deeply conditioned by training in a non-Indian European art heritage.”²⁹²

These codifications translated Aboriginal art from the Northwest-coast into a language which could be easily understood by, and was compatible with, the Western art world and, therefore, led these objects to be more readily recognized as ‘fine’ art. This was possible because Aboriginal peoples of the Northwest-coast produced work that was similar to the free-standing monumental sculpture and two-dimensional painting classified as fine art in the Western tradition.

It also led to the misconception that Aboriginal art from the Northwest-coast all looked quite similar in style. As is noted in *The Studio*’s review of the *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art Native and Modern*:

Whatever the medium adopted, the same conventional designs appear. As a general rule these are animal forms. Bears, beavers, whales, sharks,

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ames, “How Anthropologists,” 51.

²⁹² Paquerette Villeneuve “Canadian Exhibition in Paris: Masterpieces of Indian and Eskimo Art,” *The Beaver*, Autumn (1969): 54.

eagles, hawks, ravens and other totemic forms are distorted and dissected, forcing them to fit the field to be decorated. To such length is this distortion carried that it is frequently difficult to decide what animal is intended, and it has been found necessary for the artist to adopt a system of arbitrary symbols to distinguish one animal from another...²⁹³

Art of this Land, in contrast, promotes the diversity and quality of Aboriginal arts both from within and outside of the Northwest-coast. In the introductory panel for gallery A107 this is noted in the following key sentence: "Although the styles of embellishment varied, these peoples generally followed aesthetic traditions that reflected heraldic kinships and spiritual beliefs."²⁹⁴ Not only is the notion of the codification omitted, but the existence of a variety of styles is acknowledged.

Gallery A107 is a large room with six exits, two on either side of the middle section and one in the centre of each of the other two sides. This gallery has been divided into four distinct areas with the expectation that the viewer will weave in and out through the many doorways. Stepping into the gallery the visitor first comes across several paintings by James Wilson Morrice, which are located to either side of the entranceway. From here the viewer may choose to go right and enter a gallery of primarily twentieth century Quebec paintings, which then feeds back into gallery A107; go left and into a sun-lit sculpture garden that also leads back into gallery A107 (but also to several other galleries); or to stay in the room. In the middle section of the gallery the viewer finds on his or her right a second grouping of David B. Milne paintings along with a sculpture of Caughnawaga women by Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté and, opposite these, a third grouping consisting of a selection of Aboriginal art from the Northwest-coast. This third

²⁹³ Douglas Leechman, "Native Canadian Art of the West Coast," *The Studio* November (1928): 332.

²⁹⁴ National Gallery of Canada, introductory text panel for the *Early Twentieth-Century Modernism & Pacific Northwest-Coast Aboriginal Peoples* gallery, Gallery A107, 2003.

group includes a Niaka'pamux blanket made before 1862, a 19th century Tlingit tunic, a Haida hat, a Hul'qumi'num Quw'utsh Spindle Whorl made before 1927, a Dakelh-ne basket from 1923, and a Haida Model Crest Pole from 1885. At the far end of this room is a fourth grouping of paintings by Emily Carr.

Although the four distinct areas may be visited in any order, they are cohesively interconnected by the narrative presented in the introductory panel. This text begins with a brief description of Northwest coast peoples and their arts. It goes on to explain the influence these arts had on Emily Carr and her earlier studies in France, identified as “the primary destination for Canadian artists who wanted to further their education.”²⁹⁵ Canadian artists' interest in France also provides a link to Morrice who also spent a great deal of time there and to Milne who spent time in New York. This introductory text is one of the tools used in gallery A107 to promote a balanced and equal interpretation of all four sections.

The selection of artworks on display in this gallery is comparable to that of the *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern* (fig. 1), but the effect is very different. In the 1927 exhibition the Aboriginal works were interpreted as being “other” to the ‘modern’ paintings, and, thus, as being ‘primitive.’ In this gallery, as in the rest of the *Art of this Land* installation, the Aboriginal art is presented on a par with the non-Aboriginal art. This is achieved by several strategies: by grouping Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal works separately to create a distance between them, by creating four groups to avoid a split between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, by clearly identifying all the works in the room as being from the same time period through the use of tombstone labels, and by framing them with a revisionist introductory panel. Furthermore, as with the non-

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

Aboriginal selections, the Aboriginal works in this gallery, and throughout the entire installation, were chosen because of their status as masterpieces – attained through their involvement in previous exhibitions – for the corresponding time period.²⁹⁶

The view of Carr in *Art of this Land* highlights the contrast that exists between this installation and earlier expositions. Barbeau described Carr's career in a lengthy review of the *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern* in The American Magazine of Art:

After training abroad, from 1910 to 1912, she filled her studio with hundreds of sketches and canvases illustrative of the Indian life and art, and wild landscape... Of all the painters, she is the one whose interpretations of the coast are, in a way, the most authentic and novel... Fond of the Natives, she made friends with them and so found things which without the approach of real friendliness would have been lost, as they have since disappeared.²⁹⁷

The reader is told not only that Carr's renditions of Aboriginal art, life and landscape were successful, but also that she saved part of Aboriginal culture that would have otherwise been lost. Gallery A107 presents an alternate view of this story:

Emily Carr, a painter from Victoria, British Columbia, recognized the visual and symbolic power of Aboriginal art and sketched the crest poles, house fronts, and villages that she saw on her travels. Her frustration with her inability to convey the power and strength of Aboriginal artistic expression led her to France to learn about the 'new art... that made recent conservative painting look flawless, little, unconvincing.'²⁹⁸

In this account Carr's inability to match the power and strength of Aboriginal art is presented as the reason for her engagement with French modernism. Aboriginal art is thus accorded an equal, if not higher, standing than Carr's work, which occupies a

²⁹⁶ Greg Hill, interview by the author, 11 December, 2003.

²⁹⁷ Marius Barbeau, "The Canadian Northwest: Theme for Modern Painters," The American Magazine of Art Vol. XXIV, No 5, May (1932).

²⁹⁸ National Gallery of Canada, introductory text panel for the *Early Twentieth-Century Modernism & Pacific Northwest-Coast Aboriginal Peoples* gallery, Gallery A107, 2003.

glorified place in the mind of the average Canadian viewer. In addition, the introductory text also remarks on the persistence of Aboriginal peoples and their arts: "In spite of Government repression and the 1884 to 1951 outlawing of the potlatch... they continued to create works of exceptional merit."²⁹⁹

Another factor which contributes to a more balanced reading of the Native and non-Native artworks in this room is that each of the four areas is treated equally in terms of space and lighting. In past NGC exhibitions lighting had sometimes been used for Aboriginal art to create a mood of mystery and magic. In the *Installation of North-West Coast Indian Works* (fig. 4), for example, the objects were "lit to emphasize their dramatic qualities,"³⁰⁰ and one "Haida transformation mask [was] shown closed, but by means of a color slide and a slanted pane of glass, it [was made to look] as though it [were] opening wide."³⁰¹ The use of such 'special effects,' contributed to the idea of exoticism that had come to be associated with the work. The *Masterpieces* exhibition was criticized because it was "lit with the light of common day," so that "the drama is missing and with it much of the significance."³⁰² Another critic elaborated on this by stating:

They were placed in an atmosphere of mystery, magic and semi-darkness in Paris, which may have been preferable to the somewhat clinical isolation and stark light in which they are seen here... the masks and totems might be heightened in impact by a more environmental presentation.³⁰³

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ National Gallery of Canada, "Northwest Coast Indian Art on Display," NGC Press Release, 1970, NGC Archives and "Northwest Coast Indian Art on Display" *The Ottawa-Gloucester Guardian* Vol. 2 #22, 11 August 1970, NGC Press Clippings File.

³⁰¹ National Gallery of Canada, "Northwest Coast."

³⁰² Robert Ayre, "Art from the Floes & Forests," *The Montreal Star*, 29 November 1969, 10-11, NGC Press Clippings File.

³⁰³ Barry Lord, "A spectacle of ivories and totems," *Toronto Star*, 21 November 1969, NGC Press Clippings File.

This sort of response is exactly what the curators of *Art of this Land* did not want. Even though avoidance of dark, potentially dramatic rooms created problems since a great number of the Aboriginal artworks are light-sensitive, the curators and designers adopted a governing concept that “Canadian light be used to highlight Canadian art as much as possible within conservation reasons”³⁰⁴ in order to eliminate an undesirable reading of the objects.

The fact that art from the Northwest-coast was not presented fully until the middle of the visitor’s path, in gallery A107, is a reflection of the narrative structure and its intention to create an equal representation of Aboriginal groups from all regions of Canada and to promote the Aboriginal art as being on par with the Western art. Labelling, lighting and organization of the art on display are carefully used to control the visitors’ interpretation of the objects and their relation to each other.

Engaging Memory, the 1960s and 1970s Gallery

Engaging Memory, the 1960s and 1970s gallery (fig. 8), or gallery A113, is located towards the end of the *Art of this Land* installation. It focuses on a small selection of contemporary artists who were prominent in the 1960s and 1970s. To the right of entrance, one finds the following works: Norval Morrisseau’s *Untitled (Child)* (c. 1971), *Untitled (Shaman)* (c. 1971), and *Container* made with Mrs. David Kakegamic (1963); Alex Janvier’s *Coming of the Opposite* (1972); Michael Snow’s *Clothed Woman* (1963); Joyce Wieland’s *Cooling Room II* (1964); Jack Chambers’ *Plus Nine* (1966); and Greg Curnoe’s *The Best Profile in the World* (1963). The first thing made evident by this list is

³⁰⁴ Ellen Trecoikas, Audio recording of “Initiating Dialogue: A meeting to discuss the inclusion of works by Aboriginal artists within the Canadian Galleries of the National Galleries of Canada,” recorded 24 March 2001 at the National Gallery of Canada, NGC Archives.

that there is an equal number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal works. The viewer has the opportunity in this gallery, as in most of the galleries in the *Art of this Land* installation, to compare and contrast the work of artists of Native heritage with that of artists of Western heritage. This is facilitated by an imaginary line which runs from the entrance to the doorway diagonally across the room, dividing the gallery the gallery Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal art. In her article entitled “Inventing the ‘Postcolonial’: Hybridity and Constituency in Contemporary Curating,” Annie E. Coombes reflects on the dangers of exhibiting Western art with so called ‘other’ arts, or art from the periphery. She warns her readers that:

While the celebration of cultural diversity may well produce worthwhile reassessments of certain racial and cultural stereotypes, the use of ‘difference’ and ‘diversity’ as analytical devices for the dissipation of grand narratives can ultimately produce a homogenizing and levelling effect that has serious consequences.³⁰⁵

The decision to include Aboriginal art forces curators, then, to engage in a tricky balancing act to ensure that both Native and Western art are considered to be on the same playing field while still retaining their own distinct identity. This task can be particularly trying in the case of contemporary art where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal traditions seem to converge.

A brief review of the strategies used in previous NGC exhibitions and installations to display contemporary Aboriginal art, demonstrates how difficult it can be to find this balance. Two of the first NGC exhibitions to include contemporary Aboriginal work were the *First National Fine Crafts Exhibition* in 1957 and *Three-hundred Years of Canadian Art* (fig. 3) in 1967. Both of these exhibitions provide

³⁰⁵ Annie E. Coombes, “Inventing the ‘Postcolonial’: Hybridity and Constituency in Contemporary Curating,” *New Formations* Winter (1992): 31.

examples of cases where the Native ancestry of the artists was not fully recognized. As noted in chapter one Bill Reid was not acknowledged as being Aboriginal in the catalogue for the *Fine Crafts Exhibition* and Morrisseau's Aboriginal heritage, though clearly identified in the catalogue for *Three-hundred Years of Canadian Art*, was overlooked by the media. In her essay "Enfolding Feminism," Mieke Bal examines the effect omitting identity has on another marginalized group; women:

All departments have united under the banner of women's studies, now renamed gender studies, thereby further expanding their reach but at the same time diluting feminism's visibility... "I'd rather be accepted as a woman/as a black person than refuted as one" – which is my bottom line policy in these things. And having failed to make the connections that – women's/gender studies departments fear – would make them invisible, they are now available for the taking.³⁰⁶

By not naming the artists Aboriginal, just as in the case of not identifying the program as women's studies, their identities risk being re-inscribed or overwritten by that of their Western counterparts.

A second strategy used in expositions of contemporary Native art was to promote it as being primarily political. This has two potential negative effects: first of all it can lead to pigeonholing Aboriginal art into one specific type and secondly, when used as a theme to relate Aboriginal art to non-Aboriginal art, the individual voice risks being lost in all the political outcries. This second scenario occurred in *Cross-Cultural Views* in 1986, in which the message became more important than the maker in the eyes of the critics. The curator, Diana Nemiroff, sought to relate the Native and Western artists through the shared concerns expressed by their art. As the following excerpts from

³⁰⁶ Mieke Bal, "Enfolding Feminism," in *Feminist Consequences*, eds. E. Bronfen and M. Kavka (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 323.

reviews will demonstrate, she was perhaps too successful, as the artists' similarities supplanted their differences:

Diana Nemiroff... seems to take as her central premise that Indian artists' attitudes and the warning signals they create in their art are not isolated phenomena but part of a current of thought that is found in works by contemporary artists in North America and Europe.³⁰⁷

Cross-Cultural Views tells us that the world is a small place, that the entire population has much in common and that we are all oppressed in one way or another by either too much or too little power. Native artists speak for themselves, white North American and European artists speak for themselves and Everyone else. That too is power.³⁰⁸

For conservative critics such as these, the political content of the works and the political aspirations of the curator seemed unwarranted even though it is an important aspect of the work that was presented in this show.³⁰⁹ The Aboriginal artists' explorations of political concerns, therefore, came across in the media as a global trend. Globalization, by treating everything as the same, erases individuality. As expressed by Paul Ricoeur:

The phenomenon of universalization, while being an advancement of mankind, at the same time constitutes a sort of subtle destruction... of traditional cultures... We have the feeling that this single world civilization at the same time exerts a sort of attrition or wearing away at the expense of the cultural resources.³¹⁰

In viewing Aboriginal art as political, and political work as something commonly practiced by Western artists, the specificity of this work was reduced.

When Aboriginal art was installed in the contemporary gallery B204 in 1995, it was presented as a movement. As explained in the introductory text panel:

³⁰⁷ Nancy Baele, "National Gallery show alerts us to dangers," *Ottawa Citizen*, 11 December 1986, NGC Press Clippings File.

³⁰⁸ Angela Marcus, "Cross-Cultural Views at the National Gallery," *Artpost* February/March (1987):32-37, NGC Press Clippings File.

³⁰⁹ Personal communication, Diana Nemiroff, Carleton University, Ottawa, 7 September 2004.

³¹⁰ Paul Ricoeur quoted in "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points Towards an Architecture for an Architecture of Resistance," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (New York: The New Press, 1983), 16.

This is not a movement based around a common style, a single region or teaching, although there is much sharing among artists and older schools, like the Woodland School that grew up around the innovations of Norval Morrisseau... – indeed, the contemporary movement is marked by diversity and individuality. The artists hold in common a will to nourish and renew cultural expression whose continuity has been severely disrupted by history.³¹¹

Though presented as a movement, it was very clearly stated that Aboriginal art did not encompass a single style. This may be why the extended labels for the work, rather than being discussions of the art, were quotations from the artists. The introduction of a multiplicity of voices into the installation further enforced the idea of a diversity of styles and motivations. Bob Boyer's quotation, for example, speaks against labelling his art as political. He is quoted as having said:

My great-grandfather and my great-uncle were both killed at Batoche. But I don't consider myself political, I'm just very socially aware, which is quite different. If I were politically aware, I'd be afraid of some of the things that I do. People who are involved in politics are always very guarded and I'm not guarded about what I do.³¹²

The art on display in Gallery B204 demonstrated an acceptance of the contemporary artists' perspective by grouping work together simply because the artists were Aboriginal. This highlighted a range of Aboriginal work. However, Aboriginal artists who did not fit into the contemporary mode of gallery B204, either because their work was too old or too traditional, were not included. Furthermore, by being segregated into its own gallery, there was no chance for conversations between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal art on display in the contemporary galleries, and it risked being perceived as being in the margins of the mainstream.

³¹¹ National Gallery of Canada, introductory text panel for Gallery B204, Exhibitions Permanent Collection, Contemporary Art Installations -7265-C03-94 Vol. 2 1994/1995 NGC folds.

³¹² Bob Boyer quotation from 1992, used in Gallery B204, Contemporary Art Installation, Exhibitions-Permanent Collection, 7265-C03-95 vol. 1, 1994/1995, NGC Folds.

The challenge that arises in *Art of this Land* is to present Aboriginal and Western art as being, since the time of the first meetings between these two peoples, at once comparable and unique without the constraints of stylistic criteria. The first part of this problem is answered eloquently in gallery A113 and the second is answered by the large number of galleries, which allow the installation to showcase a full range of periods and styles.

As previously mentioned gallery A113 has the same number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal pieces on display. This creates a balance in the room that is echoed in the manner of installation. The works on display are linked together by a loose theme and by the artists shared interest in abstraction. As expressed in the introductory text:

The works of art in this gallery... are linked by the theme of memory. Despite these artists' shared attraction to bright colours and semi-abstract styles, their uses of materials and sources of inspiration were highly individual.³¹³

The theme of memory is made very open in this grouping, and while it unifies the works it also draws attention to their originality and the artists' diverse influences. The extended labels written for each artist carry this one step further by providing a brief synopsis of their backgrounds and how it contributed to the creation of the work on view. The extended label for Janvier's work, for example, reads as follows:

Janvier, the self-styled "first Indian modernist," combines Western abstraction inspired by the Russian Expressionist painter Wassily Kandinsky with the shapes and colours of Dene quillwork and beadwork.³¹⁴

³¹³ National Gallery of Canada, introductory text panel for Gallery A113 of the *Art of this Land* Installation, 2003.

³¹⁴ National Gallery of Canada, extended label for Alex Janvier's *Coming of the Opposite* in Gallery A113 of the *Art of this Land* Installation, 2003.

In this example both Janvier's Native and Western references are acknowledged. This makes it clear that the Aboriginal works, though similar in colour and style, are not to be seen as "significant only because of [their] western roots."³¹⁵ The theme in this case has, therefore, been used to draw the artists together while reinforcing their differences and individual heritages at the same time.

A sense of equality between the works is created, not only by a shared theme, but also by the layout of the room. Through the breaks in the walls created by the doorways and corners of this gallery, each piece gets its own clearly defined space. This presents the works as each contributing equally and, in conjunction with the relatively small scale of the room, adds to this gallery's ability to speak as a whole. The sense of unity between the works is emphasized by the bright colours found in each, which seem to jump across the room from one piece to another. A feeling of equilibrium is further achieved by the placing of the works in terms of their visual characteristics. The figures in each of the two Morrisseau paintings, which are located in the lower right hand corner upon entering, face to their left and lead the viewer's eye back to the centre of the room. This is mirrored by the figures in the Curnoe and the Chambers paintings located in the lower left hand corner of the gallery. The other figurative painting in the room, Snow's *Clothed Woman*, is located opposite these. This carefully planned hanging of the paintings organizes the gallery asymmetrically yet creates balance for the viewer's eye. This is further enforced by the placement of the two three-dimensional pieces, Morrisseau and Kakegamic's *Container* and Wieland's *Cooling Room II*, which balance each other by being located in opposite corners. The arrangement of this gallery, therefore, causes the works in the room

³¹⁵ Carol Podedworny, "First Nations Art and the Canadian Mainstream," *C Magazine* Fall (1991): 31.

to be perceived as having equal weight. Furthermore, ordering the gallery in this fashion, though subtle, encourages the Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal sides of the room to be read as mirrors of each other; since each is located on its own side of the gallery and presented at once as opposites and as the same.

As demonstrated by the works on display in this gallery, contemporary Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists often use the same media to produce their works and are often influenced by the same styles or artistic movements. Some things have, therefore, been done in this installation that ensure that the Aboriginal artists' identities are always evident. Firstly, as in the rest of *Art of this Land*, the Aboriginal artists' names for themselves and/or in their own language have been added to the tombstone labels. For example, Morrisseau's label reads as follows: "Norval Morrisseau, Miskwaabik Animiiki [Copper Thunderbird]."³¹⁶ Morrisseau was named Miskwaabik Animiiki by his grandfather and it is the name he used to sign his art after the 1950s.³¹⁷ A second thing in this gallery that brings the Aboriginal artists' presence into relief is the inclusion of three Morrisseau pieces. This highlights Morrisseau, the best known and most influential Aboriginal artist from this time period. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the extended labels explain the traditional Aboriginal motifs and/or techniques referenced by these artists. This creates a link between these works and the Aboriginal art on display in the previous galleries, which are also visible through the doorways. When standing on the side of the room where all the Aboriginal art is hung, Rita Letendre's *Atara* (1963) is perfectly framed by the entrance. The use of doorways to allow works to speak to each

³¹⁶ National Gallery of Canada, tombstone Label for Norval Morrisseau's *Container*, in Gallery A113 of the *Art of this Land* installation, 2003.

³¹⁷ National Gallery of Canada, *Art of this Land* website, http://cybermuseum.gallery.ca/cybermuseum/showcases/aotl/index_e.jsp, 15 May 2004.

other is a common practice amongst galleries. As cited by Bal quoting from The New Nineteenth Century European Paintings and Sculpture Galleries, a booklet about the reinstallation of the former André Meyer Galleries in the Metropolitan Museum, the use of doorways is made explicit: “And through a careful placement of doors, we have been able to provide many desirable juxtapositions.”³¹⁸ Thus, through a simple diagonal line which leads the eye through the door, the Aboriginal art from this area is linked to the Aboriginal art in the adjacent area.

Engaging Memory, the 1960s and 1970s gallery, then, presents contemporary Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal art as equals. This is achieved, in part, through the balanced arrangement of the works on display. The use of an open ended theme and the selection of works of a comparable style also contribute to this sense of unity. While the shared modernist roots of these contemporary artists is made evident through the use of extended labels, the unique background and individual identity of each is also promoted. The labelling, selection of works, and set up in this gallery also reinforce the identity of the Aboriginal artists and relate the works on display in this room to the art the viewer would have seen earlier on in the installation. Together all of these characteristics help to create a narrative that is compatible with the metaphor of the two-row wampum with bridges.

³¹⁸ The New Nineteenth Century European Paintings and Sculpture Galleries quoted in Mieke Bal, Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis (New York: Routledge, 1996), 101.

As illustrated in Hill's interpretation of the Two-Row Wampum belt, the interrelated history of Aboriginal and European Canadian peoples can be conceptualized through the use of this metaphor as having distinct paths as well as an interconnectedness; it acknowledges both their similarities and their differences. This vision of the relationship between Native and non-Native peoples and their arts is reflected in the narrative of *Art of this Land*.

As seen in the close readings of galleries A102a, A107 and A113, the integration of Aboriginal productions into the installation of Canadian art at the NGC provides an opportunity to create a dialogue between the Native and Western objects. In *Art of this Land* this dialogue situates the beginning of a relationship between Native and non-Native peoples in the fruitful back-and-forth exchanges of items during the early contact period which represented the sharing of knowledge and the making of agreements. This concept of cross-exchange between the two cultures is then carried forward through the rest of the installation. While the impacts of these encounters on each are reinforced throughout the installation, so too is the fact that both groups have their own identities and histories.

In terms of the representation of Aboriginal identity, the selection and display of objects have been used to reflect the diversity and artistic merit of Native productions from all regions of Canada. Although the regional and chronological organization is retained in the installation as it had been before Native art was integrated into the Canadian galleries, the curators have used it advantageously to show the continuation of Aboriginal artistry from times before the arrival of European settlers through to more

recent eras and as a means of acknowledging the breadth of Native peoples and their arts without unduly favouring the arts of one region.

Native and non-Native pieces are promoted as being of equal value and artistic merit. There is an attempt in each gallery to create a balance between the Aboriginal and the Euro-Canadian items on view. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples are presented as each having their own traditions which have allowed each of them to contribute to the narrative of Canadian art history communicated through these galleries.

Art of this Land presents a narrative that builds upon and overwrites those of past exhibitions and installations at the NGC which have included Aboriginal art. Sharon Macdonald and Roger Silverstone explain this process as follows:

At a time when the old dominant fictions of museum display are losing their authority, the writing of a new gallery inevitably plays its part in inscribing the new fictions on which museums identities will be based.³¹⁹

The reinstallation of the Canadian galleries represents a desire to create both a new image of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and the relationship between the NGC and Aboriginal art.

³¹⁹ Sharon Macdonald and Roger Silverstone, "Rewriting the Museums Fictions: Taxonomies, stories & readers," in Representing the Nation: A Reader, Histories, Heritage and Museums, eds. David Baswell and Jessica Evans (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 422.

V. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the history of Aboriginal representation at the NGC leading up to *Art of this Land* and to compare the strategies used in this re-installation to those of previous exhibitions which included Native art. The creation of a historical narrative has allowed me to identify four distinct phases in this history, each of which has involved a different approach to the display of Aboriginal art and each of which is associated with different motivations, messages and themes. The research for this thesis began before *Art of this Land* was opened to the public and marks a specific moment in time of a project that has developed further during the course of the writing and that will continue to evolve. Due to the constant shifts in the installation resulting from the necessity of short display periods for light sensitive objects and the reluctance of some lenders to part with their pieces for long periods of time, this installation cannot have a fixed narrative. As new objects have entered the Canadian galleries this installation has been altered and planning has already begun for a complete overhaul during the cyclical maintenance of 2005.³²⁰ The close analysis I have performed is, thus, necessarily relevant to the early and developmental stages of the project, and it will be necessary to revisit it as it continues to change in order to develop a full understanding.

Because critical distance has yet to be gained on this project and because reviews are still emerging, it is, furthermore, not yet possible to evaluate the full critical response to the project. The critiques which have been printed to date are primarily positive and praise the Gallery for attempting to end “the cultural apartheid between Aboriginal and

³²⁰ Greg Hill, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art, National Gallery of Canada, interview by the author, Ottawa, Ontario, 11 December 2003.

European based Canadian art.”³²¹ However, the sincerity of this endeavour is still questioned by some. After reading about *Art of this Land* in the *Ottawa Citizen*, Maureen Korp wrote in to state, “I am not holding my breath... to see how serious the National Gallery is,” and that it is not enough to “just include artists of native origin in the collection.”³²² For a specialist in Aboriginal art history such as Korp, further development is still needed at the NGC to demonstrate its long-term commitment to Aboriginal art.

My research leads me to conclude, however, that *Art of this Land*, should be recognized as an important and much needed next step. In addition to marking a new chapter in the history of Aboriginal representation at the NGC as discussed in this thesis, *Art of this Land* also puts the Gallery in a position to develop its permanent collections through the addition of new Aboriginal works. The installation signals to donors that the NGC is a possible location for Aboriginal art. It also makes the NGC an appropriate space for temporary solo exhibitions of influential Native artists, such as a retrospective exhibition of the work of Norval Morrisseau, for which planning has already begun. Furthermore, the NGC sets an example for the rest of the country, and its actions may well encourage other Canadian art galleries toward more inclusive long-term exhibits.

The question of how Canadian galleries can provide a proper and adequate account of Aboriginal art continues to be raised as new shows emerge and as exhibition theory is developed. As this occurs it will be important to continue to reassess past strategies of display to track what progress has been made. It will also be illuminating to build on the research presented here by developing in-depth explorations of the historic exhibitions briefly discussed in this thesis to help further this process.

³²¹ Paul Gessell, “When does a tea cosy become art?: When it is displayed in the National Gallery alongside aboriginal moccasins and a canoe,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 29 May 2003, E1.

³²² Maureen Korp, “Make native art more visible,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 27 February 2002.

Appendix 1: List of National Gallery of Canada Exhibitions and Installations to Have Included Canadian Aboriginal Art, 1927-2003

- 1927 *Exposition d'art Canadien* at the Jeu de Paume, Paris
Exhibition displayed from April 10 to May 10, 1927.
- 1927 *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern*
Exhibition displayed at the NGC from December 2 to 31, 1927
- 1938 *A Century of Canadian Art* at the Tate Britain, London
Exhibition displayed from October 15 to December 15, 1938
- 1947 *The Arts of French Canada, 1613-1870*
Exhibition displayed at the NGC from March 29 to April 18, 1947
- 1957 *First National Fine Crafts Exhibition*
Exhibition displayed at the NGC from June 7 to 26, 1957
- 1967 *Canadian Fine Crafts*
Exhibition displayed at the NGC from Dec 13, 1966 to January 13, 1967
- 1967 *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*
Exhibition displayed at the NGC from May 12 to September 17, 1967
- 1969 *Masterpieces of Indian and Eskimo Art from Canada*
Exhibition displayed at the Musée de L'Homme, Paris, from March to September, 1969 and at the NGC from November 21, 1969 to January 11, 1970
- 1971 *Installation of Northwest Coast Indian Works*
Temporary installation displayed at the NGC from April to August 1971.
- 1981 *The Comfortable Arts: Traditional Spinning and Weaving in Canada.*
Exhibition displayed at the NGC from September 24 to November 22, 1981
- 1987 *Cross-Cultural Views*
Temporary installation displayed at the NGC from November 4, 1986 to March 29, 1987
- 1989 *Canadian Biennial of Contemporary Art*
Exhibition displayed at the NGC from October 6 to December 3, 1989
- 1992 *Strengthening the Spirit*
Exhibition displayed at the NGC from November 10, 1991 to February 2, 1992

- 1992 *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada*
Exhibition displayed at the NGC from September 25 to November 23, 1992
- 1995 Gallery B204
Installations were mounted in this NGC gallery from April 1995 to August 1999
- 1997 *Canadiana: New Perspectives*
Installation mounted in the NGC's gallery B202 from November 10, 1997 to February 3, 1998.
- 2003 *Art of this Land*
Re-installation of the permanent display of Canadian Art, Opened June 22, 2003

Figure 1

Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, installation shot no. 0085, 1927.

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Figure 2

A Century of Canadian Art, installation shot no. 0288, 1938.

115

Figure 3

Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art, installation shot no. 1253, 1967.

116

Figure 4

Installation of Northwest Coast Indian Works, installation shot no. 1365, 1971

117

Figure 5

The Comfortable Arts: Traditional Spinning and Weaving in Canada,
installation shot no. 1680, 1981.

118

Figure 6

Floor plan of The *Telariolin-Zacharie Vincent* gallery, 2003 (diagram: the author).

Figure 7

Floor plan of The *Early Twentieth-Century Modernism & Pacific Northwest-Coast Aboriginal Peoples* gallery, 2003 (diagram: the author).

Figure 8

Floor plan of *Engaging Memory, the 1960s and 1970s gallery*, 2003
(diagram: the author).

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